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January 2026, Edition – Issue 106

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

## Future forest



Councillors and volunteers helped plant the first trees in the new Pucklechurch Wood, part of a plan to create a new forest for future generations to enjoy. Full story: Page 9

## Developer takes on greenfield site

A DEAL has been struck to develop land earmarked for more than 2,000 homes near Lyde Green.

Developer and social housing provider Places for People says it has secured use of the land, on the other side of the M4.

The site is currently in the Green Belt but would have its legal status changed so it can be developed, if South Gloucestershire Council's draft Local Plan

is approved by the government.

Named the North Lyde Ecotech Village, it would include 2,050 homes, more than 600 of which would be classed as affordable for social rent or shared ownership.

The development would also include a proposed extension for the Bristol & Bath Science Park.

Full story: Page 4



## Dom's song

Dominic Carey has written a new Christmas song to help an accessible music group facing a cash crisis.

PAGE 12

## Generating cash

Two giant wind turbines to be built near the M4 would be owned "by the community, for the community".

PAGE 3

## Expansion bid

Plans to expand an abattoir where thousands of pigs are slaughtered daily are opposed by more than 100 people.

PAGE 5

## Yes to scooters

Hired electric scooters are being allowed on the Bristol and Bath Railway Path for the first time.

PAGE 6



Telephone Nicola on 07769341242 to book a free consultation

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## DEADLINES

Our February edition deadline is January 14.

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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



# Burglar found in kitchen is jailed

A BURGLAR who was discovered by a Mangotsfield woman in her kitchen has been sentenced to more than two years in jail.

Kai Rossiter, aged 44, was carrying a hammer when he was found by the householder in Rodway Road on the morning of September 16.

He fled from the house, and several other residents reported seeing a man running through gardens and climbing fences in nearby roads, including Burley Crest.

Police were able to track down and arrest Rossiter, of Thornbury, soon afterwards.

He appeared before Bristol Magistrates' Court the following day and later pleaded guilty to a single charge of burglary.

In December a judge at Bristol Crown Court sentenced Rossiter to a total of 876 days in prison - just under two years and five months.

After the sentencing, Avon & Somerset police detainee investigating officer Jessica Clark said: "This incident was able to be quickly managed due to the support from the public in calling police and allowing us to keep track of Rossiter before he could flee the area.

"This is just one example of the impact the public have on helping us find offenders and bring them to justice, and I'd like to thank those who reported the incident which is what led to this outcome. The custodial sentence of two years and five months will hopefully offer some solace to the community and prevent any further harm."



**Kai Rossiter**

## Overnight M4 closures

NATIONAL Highways will close the M4 between Bristol and Bath overnight for a week in January as work to finish the new Badminton Road bridge progresses.

The motorway will shut from 9pm until 6am every night from Monday January 5 to Saturday January 10, 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 the new deck and parapet concrete poured. Moving forward, there will be a full week of overnight closures to allow us to remove the concrete casings at the start of January. Once removed, in January and February we will be undertaking earthworks and other work to move the bridge towards completion, before reconnecting it to the existing A432. All work in the new year is weather dependent, but we are on course to reopen the bridge in the spring."

The old bridge next to the Wick Wick roundabout, which carried thousands of cars a day across the motorway on the A432 between Downend and Yate, was closed in July 2023 when an inspection discovered deterioration and cracking in the concrete.

It was demolished in March, and new steel beams that form the frame of the bridge were fitted during October, in the last of three weekend closures of the motorway.

## Crittall Windows

AN article in December's Voice about the closure of Panoramic window and door company in Mangotsfield referred to the company's association with Crittall Windows.

We have been asked to make it clear that, while Panoramic was

a distributor of Crittall products during the 2000s, this association was terminated in 2021 and the company never traded as or was allowed to brand itself as Crittall Windows.

Steel window and door manufacturer Crittall Windows continues to trade.

We are happy to set the record straight.

# Community will own wind turbines

TWO giant wind turbines to be built next to the M4 would be owned "by the community, for the community".

Profits from the turbines planned for Leigh Farm, between Pucklechurch and Westerleigh, would benefit people in South Gloucestershire, say the groups behind the project, "with particular focus on communities closest to the site".

The project to build turbines to generate 8.5 megawatts of renewable energy - enough to power 6,000 homes - was first revealed when South Gloucestershire Council's cabinet decided in July to allow them to be built on 228-acre Leigh Farm, between the M4 and Westerleigh Crematorium north of the M4.

Renewable energy organisation Bristol Energy Network, which is leading the project and working with Emersons and Lyde Green Community Energy (ELCoE) and South Gloucestershire Community Energy Network (SGCEN), has announced a series of public consultation events where residents can find out more.

Bristol Energy Network has already worked with residents in Lawrence Weston, on the western side of Bristol, to build a single community-owned turbine. Surpluses from the turbine, which is forecast to make a profit of around £100,000 per year, are committed to local projects including schemes to tackle fuel poverty.

Bristol Energy Network said: "These two wind turbines would be owned through a community benefit society structure, with all financial surpluses committed to benefiting people in South Gloucestershire, with particular focus on communities closest to the site."

"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 themselves identify through this consultation process.

"Community engagement will help shape the proposals to best meet local people's needs, which will then be brought forward to be taken through the formal planning process."

Residents are being invited to a series of drop-in events to learn more about the project, look at early plans and ask questions.

Bristol Energy Network says people's feedback "will directly inform the design and development" of the project.

The public consultation events take place at Pucklechurch Community Centre on January 19 from 3.30–6.30pm, Westerleigh Village Hall on January 20 from 3.30–6.30pm and Lyde Green Community Centre on January 31 from 11.30am–3.30pm.

Bristol Energy Network project development manager David Tudgey said: "We're excited to bring this proposal to the community."

"Building on our experience with the Lawrence Weston turbine, we know that locally managed wind energy can deliver real, lasting benefits."

"These turbines represent an opportunity to generate clean energy, support local priorities like tackling fuel poverty, and ensure the financial benefits stay in South Gloucestershire."

"We're committed to working closely with residents, local and parish councils, the regional authority, and community groups to make sure this project reflects what matters most to the people who live here."

Work on the project to date, including environmental and ecological assessments, has been funded with a grant from the West of England Combined



Authority.

Bristol Energy Network says working with ELCoE and SGCEN means the proposals "will be powered by the community, for the community".

The turbines will be owned through a "community benefit society" structure, rather than individual residents.

The consultation aims to find out how people think the financial benefits should be distributed.

Although the turbines would generate enough to power 6,000 homes, in July the council was told that a "bottleneck" in connecting new energy projects to the National Grid meant that it was more likely power could be instead be supplied directly to the Bristol and Bath Science Park in Emersons Green, to power the new Bristol University Isambard-AI supercomputer, which was officially switched on in the summer.

## Drink-driving arrests rise

AVON & Somerset police say the number of people arrested during the opening week of their festive campaign against drink and drug driving was 62 - up from 47 in the same period in 2024.

Police have been making high-profile roadside stops during the campaign. They are urging people who know of someone on the road driving under the influence of drink or drugs to call 999.

People can be anonymously reported, on the police website, at a police station or by calling Crimestoppers 0800 555 111.

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# Developer takes on 2,050-home site

A SOCIAL enterprise has taken over a site earmarked for 2,050 new homes near the M4.

Places for People says it has secured use of the land known as the North Lyde Ecotech Village, which is on the opposite side of the motorway to Lyde Green, subject to future planning permission.

The area is bordered by the M4, Westerleigh Road and the railway line serving the Westerleigh fuel depot.

Much of it is currently farmland but it also includes the Windmill Leisure Golf and Activity Centre, Windmill Fishery, South Gloucestershire Showground and Pilgrims Europe abattoir (see page 5).

The site was highlighted as a major potential development site in South Gloucestershire Council's draft Local Plan, which is currently with the government pending a public examination.

The plan proposed 2,050 homes could be built on the site if it is taken out of the Green Belt, along with 18 hectares of employment land to extend the Bristol & Bath Science Park across the motorway.

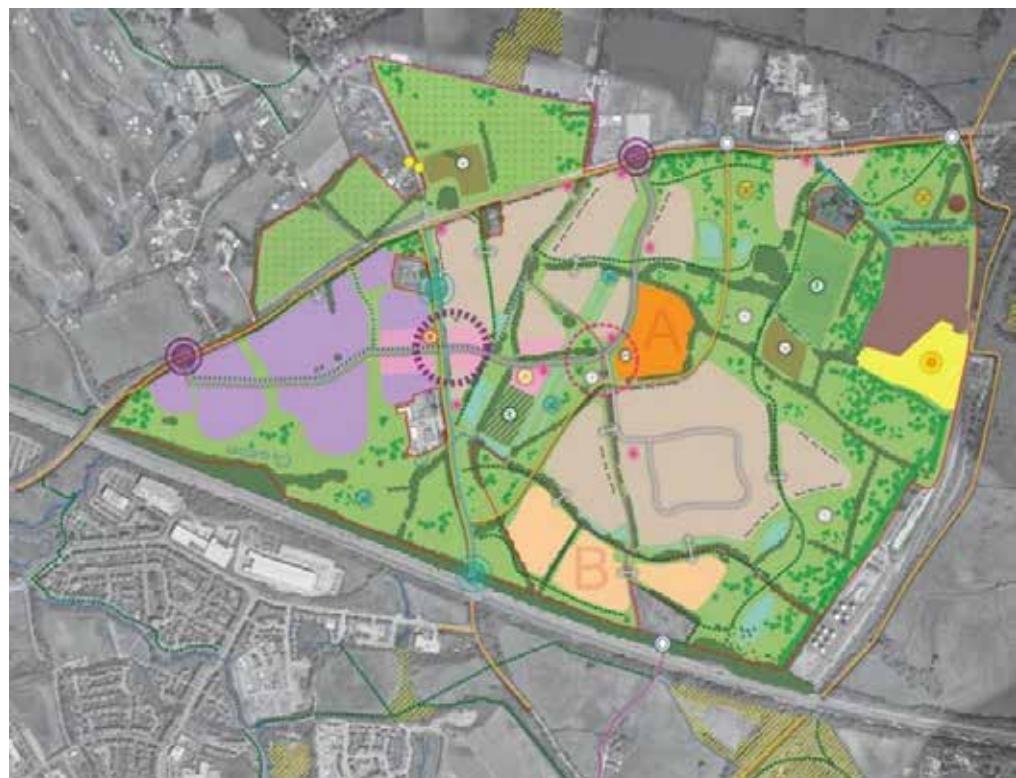
If the Local Plan is approved it would clear the way for the site to be developed - but the government is not expected to make a decision until the autumn.

Places for People says it is working with asset managers St Congar and landowners to create a development that will "help address the region's critical housing need".

It says it will also "deliver above the 30% affordable home policy provision, reaffirming the organisation's commitment to creating inclusive, thriving communities".

Group managing director of developments Andrew Usher said: "This development is a flagship opportunity for PfP in the South West to bring together our full breadth of expertise, from housing and extra care to placemaking, estate management, leisure, and social impact."

"This project is the result of multiple complex land acquisitions and collaborative agreements and is a testament to our long-term commitment to delivering quality, affordable housing."



How the North Lyde Ecotech Village appeared on the Local Plan map

"We're proud to be investing in South Gloucestershire and contributing to a future where everyone has access to a safe, secure, and sustainable home."

PfP says a "programme of public involvement" will take place in the coming year, giving people the opportunity to help shape the emerging masterplan.

PfP says the new development will include a new primary school, extra care housing, sports pitches, play areas, allotments, and community spaces, with new habitats and open green spaces.

Investment group Columbia Threadneedle Investments have put up the money for "two key parcels of freehold land".

Agents Tudor Real Estate said the investment group "sees North of Lyde Green as a long-term, sustainable growth opportunity".

The monetary value of the deal has not been disclosed.

Under the draft Local Plan, between 1,050 and 1,350 homes would be built before 2041 and the rest afterwards, with buildings up to six storeys tall.

The proposal to develop the land was opposed by Emersons



Andrew Usher of Places for People

Green Town Council in its response to the draft Local Plan.

It said the site's status as 'significant' Green Belt land had been "conveniently downgraded", so that development "would not be deemed urban sprawl".

The town council said overall Local Plan strategy was far too

reliant on a small number of large-scale developments, and said the experience of delays building Lyde Green's schools and the lack of new medical services for the area showed that relying on developers to provide or contribute to the infrastructure and services needed was "problematic".

# Slaughterhouse expansion plan opposed

PLANS by a meat processing firm to expand an abattoir where thousands of pigs are slaughtered every day have been opposed by more than 100 people.

Pilgrim's Pride has applied to South Gloucestershire Council for planning permission to build new facilities at its Pilgrim's Europe slaughterhouse at Oakley Green Farm, Westerleigh, on the opposite side of the M4 to Lyde Green.

The company says the work will "upgrade and expand" the livestock processing facility, adding: "The proposals aim to improve operational efficiency, enhance environmental performance, and provide modern infrastructure in support of the site's existing lawful use."

An odour assessment report by consultants Redmore Environmental submitted with the application says work would "increase the processing capacity of the facility from 19,000 to 25,000 pigs per day".

It says pigs will be delivered to the site between 5am and 5pm daily, with activities on site ranging from "dispatch" and butchery to chilling of products, freezing and packaging.

The changes planned include a new chill store for meat, a "bone trailer" and waste storage, new lorry park, lorry wash and private access road off Oakleigh Green Farm Lane, chemical and effluent storage and a security cabin at the site entrance.

Pilgrim's Europe is one of the UK's biggest food companies, producing chicken, pork and lamb for a variety of brands including Richmond sausages.

The abattoir at Westerleigh has been the subject of a long-



Animal rights campaigners outside the Pilgrim's Europe abattoir in March

running protests by animal rights campaigners, who believe the method used to stun the pigs before slaughter, using carbon dioxide gas, is cruel and that the animals suffer "immense distress" during transportation to the plant in trucks.

The protests, which take place every other Monday morning outside the plant and on nearby Westerleigh Road, are coordinated by the Bristol Animal Rights Collective, and also involve members of other groups, including Bristol Animal Save and We The Free.

A report by planning agents Trundley Design Services said planning permission for the abattoir dates back to the 1970s.

They said: "Pilgrim's Pride is a major employer in the local area, providing skilled and unskilled jobs in food processing, logistics, and associated roles.

"The facility plays a key role in the UK's meat production and distribution network and contributes to national food

security. The proposals support local employment by upgrading existing facilities, improving working conditions and safeguarding jobs for the long term.

"There are no residential dwellings immediately adjacent to the site that would be negatively impacted by the development in terms of noise, odour, or visual effect."

However people who live near the plant have lodged objections on the council's planning website, saying they are plagued by "disgusting" smells from the plant - and also raised concerns about pollution of waterways and from an increase in traffic.

As the Voice went to print, 139 people had written to object, most citing smell, noise, traffic and pollution grounds, as well as some objecting over animal rights.

Tom Goble, who lives nearby said: "Currently the smell can be horrible. When I go running down by the railway crossing

on Oakley Green Farm Lane the smell can be overwhelming and lead me to retch.

"Villagers regularly complain of the smell, and it features often on our village WhatsApp group. A group of locals have visited the abattoir and the smell on site is quite disgusting."

He said an investigation had found the plant was breaching environmental regulations on smells.

Alan Price told the council he had lived in Westerleigh for 63 years and said his home was often plagued by a "disgusting stench", adding: "Westerleigh is known by many as 'The Smelly Village'."

Lydia Jefferies said: "If this goes ahead this would inevitably mean a substantial rise in heavy goods vehicle movements, worsening congestion on already stretched rural roads and increasing the risk of accidents for residents, cyclists, and pedestrians."

Emily Mills said: "There are also concerns around the increased volume of animal by-products and waste generated by a larger facility, and the risk this poses to the local environment if disposal or handling fails."

Four people had written in support, including farmer Angharad Seabury, who said: "With the number of smaller abattoirs closing, we as farmers need reliable outlets to sell our livestock to."

The plans can be seen on the planning section of South Gloucestershire council's website by searching for application P25/02416/F.

The council is accepting comments until January 5.

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# Hire scooters allowed on Railway Path

ELECTRIC scooters are being allowed on the Bristol and Bath Railway Path for the first time under the region's hire scheme.

Metro Mayor Helen Godwin announced the change, which sees the path opened to the e-bike and e-scooter service operated by Dott, in December.

The path, which links Staple Hill, Mangotsfield and Emersons Green to the city centre, is being opened up to scooters from Lyde Green and Bitton, through the junction at the former Mangotsfield railway station all the way to its western end in St Philip's.

It is also expanding into South Bath, following expansions into the Winterbourne and Yate area during the summer.

Previously scooters on the hire scheme had been barred from using the path, which is used by cyclists and pedestrians.

But the West of England Combined Authority, which has been running the scheme on a trial basis since 2020, says a safety campaign called Scoot Safe has improved rider behaviour

- as well as cutting the rate of bad parking, after 11,000 fines of £10 to £15 were levied for bad parking in the space of two and a half months.

WECA says the move will provide "a convenient alternative to the main roads" for scooter renters and says it has worked with South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol City Council and the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, formerly known as Sustrans, to ensure that hired e-bikes and e-scooters can "integrate seamlessly into this section of the network".

Complaints about dangerous riding on the path have centred mainly on privately-owned scooters, which are illegal to ride on public roads and paths, and illegally-modified bikes that go above the legal speed limit of 15.5mph, have a battery of more than 250w or can operate with a throttle instead of the pedals.

Over the summer police seized several illegal bikes and scooters during a crackdown targeting crime and antisocial behaviour on the path between

Mangotsfield and Fishponds.

Voi scooters are limited to the legal maximum.

Ms Godwin said: "As I have said before, convenient travel for some should not inconvenience others, particularly where people share space.

"That's why our combined authority is working with councils to roll out more marked parking areas to keep things tidy and, through our Scoot Safe campaign, raise awareness of the need for responsible riding and parking to keep riders - and others - safe."

"With enforcement from operator Dott, the introduction of fines for poor parking has improved parking standards significantly."

"Coupled with easier ways for people to report issues and bans for users who engage in two-up riding, we're working to strike a better balance for everyone."

Dott has also introduced 24-hour rentals.

The firm's head of public policy Iqbal Ahmed said: "By increasing coverage in South Bath and opening up more



routes in Bristol, we continue our commitment to support local mobility needs but always with respect for the safety and needs of both riders and non-riders alike."

The West of England e-scooter trial has more than 1,500 e-bikes and 2,500 e-scooters, with around 10,000 rides made every day across the region.

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## NEWS

# Festival will happen again

MANGOTSFIELD Village Festival will go ahead in 2026 after a new chair stepped forward to take charge.

The future of the festival was in doubt after chair Paul Mallorie and two other long-standing committee members stepped down in the autumn, after years of helping to run the event.

However another committee member, Madeleine Bills, has stepped forward to take on the chair's role.

Madeleine said a 34th festival would happen - but more volunteers are needed to provide practical help with setting it up and running it.

June's festival was attended by more than 3,000 people, who enjoyed music, entertainment, fairground stalls and competitions including a dog show at Pophrey Hill North playing fields, off Johnson Road in Emersons Green.

A date for the next festival is expected to be confirmed at an upcoming committee meeting.

Organisers have been promised funding from Emersons Green Town Council and Staple Hill & Mangotsfield Parish Council, both of which provided grants for 2025's event.

Madeleine said: "We've still got people on the committee who are working very hard but we will need more volunteers, especially on the day to help make sure everything is running smoothly."

"We also need people the day before, putting out lines on the grass for stalls and getting the tents up - we can do it again, as long as we've got the manpower."

"We're looking for some new people to join us, helping with jobs and giving us a little bit of strength when needed."

Madeleine said people interested in helping with planning the event are also welcome, adding: "We've been doing it a long time and are happy for new ideas to be looked at."

Anyone who would like to get involved should call Madeleine on 0117 956 0805 or email [madeleinebills@gmail.com](mailto:madeleinebills@gmail.com).

## NEWS

CHILDREN at a primary school in Emersons Green have been learning about the meaning of Christmas - and charming families with their Nativity performances.

Reception children at Mangotsfield C of E Primary School put on costumes, learned songs and lines for a traditional Nativity performance, retelling the story of the first Christmas.

Meanwhile Year 1 children went to nearby St James church in Mangotsfield to speak to vicar Rev James Cannan about its history.

Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 lead Jo Sihag said: "We have been enhancing our understanding of Christianity this winter.

"We have also all been learning about Advent and the importance of this time of year for Christians.

"We had a whole school Advent craft day and created window displays to retell the story of Christmas.

"We also have a daily Advent worship throughout December which focuses on different aspects of the Advent journey.



# Celebrating and understanding Christmas



Year 1 children visited St James Church in Mangotsfield

# No money for new hospital

CAMPAIGNERS say it is a "scandal" that there is no funding for a new community hospital in Frenchay - almost 21 years after the project was agreed.

The Save Frenchay Community Hospital Group is calling on the NHS body responsible for funding local services to invite Health Secretary Wes Streeting to the area to show him the need for a rehabilitation unit to serve an area where thousands of new homes have been built, with more on the way.

But the area's integrated care board (ICB) told the Voice there is no funding available to take the project forward, even though a site has been waiting to be developed for more than ten years.

Barbara Harris of the Save Frenchay Community Hospital Group has been campaigning for a new community hospital for more than 20 years.

It was first agreed in 2005 as part of a plan to move all North Bristol NHS Trust acute hospital services onto one site, with a new hospital built at Southmead and the old Frenchay Hospital shut.

The upgraded Southmead Hospital opened in 2014, the same year Frenchay closed.

While most of the old buildings have been replaced by housing, the site reserved for a community hospital remains empty.

Funding for a community hospital, with 84 rehabilitation beds for patients who no longer needed to be on acute wards, as well as 28 mental health beds, was approved in 2010 - but cancelled after that year's general election by the incoming Coalition government.

Two years later plans were

revived for a 50-bed facility but despite repeated assurances that the project had not been forgotten, nothing happened.

Mrs Harris said she had been assured by the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire ICB in early 2025 that a business case for the Frenchay site was going forward.

However in December she received a letter from the ICB saying it had "not been able to progress" the work and couldn't give any updates.

Mrs Harris told the ICB's December board meeting: "I'm furious that this is about the fifth halt, with no prospect of anything happening in the future.

"We need community provision now."

She called on the ICB to invite Mr Streeting and NHS chief executive Sir Jim Mackey on a drive around the area to see how the population had grown - including hundreds of new homes in Lyde Green which have been built since the old Frenchay Hospital closed.

Mrs Harris told the Voice: "Our point is that Wes Streeting is not aware of the lack of healthcare provision in this area, the loss of so many beds and the massive housing developments that have increased the population of South Glos."

"There is no-one who is speaking up for us and the ICB just accept what the Department of Health tell them to do, without a fight. It is the ICB's job to ensure adequate and safe provision and they are not doing it. Twenty one years of neglect is a scandal."

Earlier this year Mr Streeting announced a shake-up of ICBs, including a series of mergers



**A site earmarked for a community hospital stands empty next to the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit in Frenchay**

and cost-cutting due to be implemented from April.

The Voice asked the ICB whether it still intends to commission a healthcare facility at Frenchay, what the current timescale and budget is and what action it was taking to press the case for funding a new community hospital at Frenchay with the Department for Health and Social Care.

A spokesperson said: "Due to the significant changes currently underway for all ICBs, we have not been able to progress some areas of work as previously anticipated. This includes Frenchay. "Additionally, capital funding is not available to develop the Frenchay site at present.

"Rehabilitation provision is available in a number of locations across the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire area for people requiring this support; this includes the Henderson Rehabilitation Unit in Thornbury and Skylark Rehabilitation Unit in Yate."

The Frenchay site is owned by South Gloucestershire Council, which bought it from North Bristol NHS Trust.

A council spokesperson said:

"It has long been an ambition of the council to support BNSSG Integrated Care Board in developing the NHS-owned site of the former Frenchay Hospital.

"We have worked closely with the ICB over a number of years to build the evidence base for service planning at Frenchay and for all our local communities, and we remain committed to that collaboration going forwards."

Filton & Bradley Stoke MP Claire Hazelgrove, whose constituency includes the site, said she had met with the ICB about its plans and was told they were reviewing data "to assess today's local need and options".

She said: "However, the ICB has confirmed that it has been unable to make the expected progress on this review due to wider changes and resource challenges. I am writing to them to understand what their new timeline is, as we have not had clarity here for years.

"I support the ICB's evidence-led approach. It's important that any site, using limited funds, meets the need of today's local population."

The Department for Health & Social Care had not responded to a request for a comment as the Voice went to print.

## Starlight dancers shine

MEMBERS of a Downend cheerleading squad signed off their 15th year with a clutch of trophies.

Bristol Starlight, founded by mother and daughter Deb and Ally Denny, has competition squads at under-9, U12 and U16 age groups, as well as seniors and masters.

The first competition of the season in late November at Hartpury Sports College saw the squads, with 47 dancers aged from six to 40, win four first places, one second place, the overall pom dance category and the Spirit Award for the team that best embodies the concepts of energy, enthusiasm, sportsmanship and support for other teams.

Head coach Deb said: "It was a fantastic way to end our 15th year as a pom dance club."

Anyone who is interested in having a go at pom dancing can contact Deb at [bristolstarlightcheersquad@gmail.com](mailto:bristolstarlightcheersquad@gmail.com)



# A new forest is born

A PROGRAMME to plant 44,000 trees to create a part of a new forest for the West Country has begun.

Planting sessions for Pucklechurch Wood, a 30-hectare site equivalent to around 42 football pitches, started at the end of November and will continue until March.

It will form part of the Western Forest, a programme to increase trees and woodlands from the Cotswolds to the Mendips.

The new wood is being created on South Gloucestershire Council-owned land.

The authority says it will become "a future woodland which will evolve into a vibrant green space for people and nature for generations to come".

A selection of 22,000 "native and climate-resilient" trees are



being planted by volunteers this winter, and another 22,000 will be planted in a year's time.

A council spokesperson said: "In 10-15 years, the young trees will be recognisable woodland, with some trees reaching up to 10 metres in height.

"Tree species were carefully selected to ensure climate resilience, combining native trees like the English oak with a small range of non-native species including the sweet chestnut, also known as the European chestnut, that can withstand warmer, drier conditions."

Council cabinet member for the climate and nature emergency, Louise Harris, said: "Pucklechurch Wood will be the largest new woodland ever planted on South Gloucestershire Council-owned land.

"This will be a flagship project for our work to increase the area's tree canopy cover, restore nature, and build community resilience for generations to come."

Pucklechurch Parish Council chair Gail Boyle said: "This new woodland will deliver lasting benefits for local people – from

cleaner air and improved biodiversity to opportunities for enjoying access to nature.

"This is a proud moment for our village and a powerful symbol of how local communities can come together to lead the way in improving our environment."

Funding has come from the government's Trees for Climate programme, via charity Forest of Avon trust, and from Pucklechurch Parish Council.

The site will be managed by South Gloucestershire, the parish council, Forest of Avon and volunteers.

It will include pond and wetland areas funded by the West of England Combined Authority as part of the Common Connections project.

The Western Forest project aims to plant 2,500 hectares of new woodland in the next five years and plant 20 million trees by 2050.

Residents, community groups and schools are being invited to sign up for volunteer at planting days at Pucklechurch Wood via Eventbrite at [tinyurl.com/2vujxerzn](https://tinyurl.com/2vujxerzn) - no previous experience is needed.

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# £4.7m for new special needs places

MANGOTSFIELD School is one of three in South Gloucestershire which will have new facilities for teaching children with special educational needs and disabilities.

The new 'resource base' at the school on Rodway Hill will have 20 places as part of a £4.725 million project to improve SEND provision at mainstream schools, in the face of a national crisis where demand for support far outweighs provision and funding.

Resource bases are facilities in schools where children can receive extra support from specialist staff, while still being able to learn with other pupils in the wider school.

The idea is to give children specialist facilities in their local area, without them having to travel long distances to receive the support they need.

The new places will be to support children with social, emotional and mental health needs, with moderate learning difficulties or speech language

and communication needs.

As well as the 20-place facility at Mangotsfield School there will be two new 10-place facilities at Coniston Primary School in Patchway and Tyndale Primary School in Yate.

South Gloucestershire Council's coalition cabinet agreed in December to add the projects to its capital programme, with the funding provided by the government as part of a school improvement programme.

The council announced in October's budget consultation that it needed to improve SEND facilities in mainstream schools for pupils with less complex needs to tackle "rapid increases" in costs to transport children to specialist schools.

Council cabinet member for schools Ian Boulton said: "All our children deserve the opportunity to be able to go to a good local school that meets their needs.

"These investments will help more families be able to choose their local school with

confidence, knowing that the specialist help their children need is available locally, meaning they can learn and grow with their friends and neighbours.

"We know that pupils who need extra help really benefit from accessing resource bases, where they can have more individually tailored, specialist help, including learning in smaller groups and specialist resources and services.

"The specialist staff who work in resource bases also help support the wider schools they are part of, improving outcomes for SEN pupils across the school."

The council aims to have the new places available for children to use from the 2027/28 academic year, following consultations with local communities to give families a chance to comment on the plans.

The government is due to set out reforms for SEND support in the New Year, after a report by the House of Commons



**Ian Boulton**

Education Committee in September called for a "root and branch transformation" of the way mainstream education caters for children with special needs.

It said: "SEND must become an intrinsic part of the mainstream education system, rather than an addition to it."

## Minister hails school's 'fantastic example'

A GOVERNMENT minister has visited a primary school to find out more about its work with pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities.

School standards minister Georgia Gould said Blackhorse Primary School's work on SEND is a "fantastic example of best practice" and would help shape national reforms planned for the New Year.

Ms Gould visited the school in Blackhorse Lane, Emersons Green, at the start of December, with Filton & Bradley Stoke MP Claire Hazelgrove, regional schools director Lucy Livings, South Gloucestershire Council co-leader Ian Boulton and Ross Newman, who leads the organisation that runs the school, the Leaf Trust.

She saw at first hand work that takes place at the school's resource base for children with social communication needs, discussed the provision of more resource bases, increasing SEND funding and improving access to specialist services.



**Schools standards minister Georgia Gould (centre, in yellow) with school and trust staff, MP Claire Hazelgrove and DfE regional director Lucy Livings.**

The minister said the visit had been "invaluable", adding: "Blackhorse Primary is a fantastic example of best practice – not only locally but nationally, too.

"Seeing the work done here to support children with additional needs will help inform much-needed reforms for SEND support that our government will set out in the new year."

Head teacher Simon Botten said the minister had asked to visit after being told it was considered a "beacon of

excellence" by the Department for Education for its work on inclusion.

Mr Botten said: "She was impressed that Blackhorse was able to marry both high academic standards for all children, with excellent provision for children with SEND."

He said the minister praised the access to a speech and language therapist, counsellor, a pastoral team and specialist teachers and teaching assistants, and described the resource base as "the best she'd

seen".

Ms Hazelgrove ran an event and online survey for parents on the future of SEND support over the summer, sharing the results with Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson.

She said: "I'm glad the schools minister has now visited our community to see our local reality in person while reforms are being developed.

"South Gloucestershire has also long been at the very bottom of the league table for funding per pupil head in England, through the funding formula inherited from the last government.

"I've raised this in the House of Commons, too, and was glad to be able to discuss this further."

The MP arranged for the minister to meet Christine Lote, a constituent from Stoke Gifford with incurable cancer who is campaigning for a change in school admissions policies to consider medical needs, after her daughter was denied a place at their nearest school.

# Couple guilty of 'modern slavery'

A COUPLE from Staple Hill are in prison awaiting sentence after they admitted conspiracy to control prostitution for gain.

Benjamin Hopkins, aged 56, and 55-year-old Liu Xu Hopkins, both of the High Street, have been remanded in custody along with a third defendant, Khondakar Hasan, 39, from Morton Walk in Leicester.

They were among six people arrested in October following a series of raids on seven "massage parlours" in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Reading.

The raids were carried out as part of a modern slavery and human trafficking investigation by the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit.

Seven women were "offered safeguarding support" after the raids.

Three other people, a woman from London and two men from Suffolk, have been released on police bail.

The Hopkins and Hassan



Benjamin Hopkins



Liu Xu Hopkins



Khondakar Hasan

were charged with conspiracy in human trafficking, conspiracy to transfer criminal property and conspiracy to control prostitution for gain, and pleaded guilty to the latter charge at Bristol Crown Court in late November.

Detective Chief Inspector Adam Smith, of SWROCU, said: "Wiltshire Police referred this investigation to us following community concerns about two businesses in Chippenham, which have since been ordered to close by the court.

"This shows the importance of community intelligence, which is how this whole case started.

"Ultimately, the actions of

those people in Chippenham who chose to speak up rather than turn a blind eye have led to an investigation with three people convicted and remanded in custody while they await sentencing."

Anyone with information or concerns about potential modern slavery happening in their communities can report to their local police by calling 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111 or call the Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121 700 or visit [modernslaveryhelpline.org](http://modernslaveryhelpline.org) online.

## Immigration raid

IMMIGRATION Enforcement, police and council officers arrested five people during a raid on a traveller site.

The joint operation took place at Meadow View, on Shortwood Road, Pucklechurch.

The Home Office said five people were arrested on December 2 for immigration offences, with one detained for removal from the UK and four placed on immigration bail.

The Voice understands the raid was part of an investigation into people working illegally as food delivery drivers.

A Home Office spokesperson said: "Illegal working undermines honest employers, undercuts local wages and fuels organised immigration crime – the British public will not stand for it, and neither will this government. Enforcement action is now at the highest level in British history, with illegal working arrests up 63%."

South Glos Council said teams from planning enforcement, environmental enforcement and trading standards were involved.

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A DOWNDEND man has written a Christmas song to help save a community project running free accessible concerts and events.

Dominic Carey had the idea after Music Train, which has held more than 60 events at Christ Church over the past four years, lost its council funding after 12 years.

Dom, who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, takes part in Music Train sessions, where he often sings.

Music Train runs live accessible daytime concerts for people with disabilities across South Gloucestershire, Bristol and Bath.

Dom said: "Anyone can come and join in. A lot of people don't have the support in the evening so they can't come to live music or concerts in the pub, and also a lot of pubs are quite old buildings and aren't accessible and don't have disabled toilets, which makes it a bit harder to visit them. If you go to a Music Train event you know it's going to be safe and accessible."

Music Train founder Liz Gray set up the project in 2013 when her son's carers were unable to find any live music during the

# Dom's song to save Music Train

day. It was originally based at Avon Valley Railway - hence the name - but now runs around 164 events a year in 18 different venues.

In 2024-25 South Gloucestershire Council gave the group £19,000 in funding towards its estimated £50,000-a-year costs, but ended all financial support in March.

It has been surviving with support from Milestones Trust and individual donations, having had several funding bids, including to the National Lottery, turned down.

Music Train will have a new base at disability charity Paul's Place in Yate in the New Year, with continued support from Milestones Trust, but needs to raise around £10,000 to keep going until funding that Paul's Place can secure is available.

When he heard that Music Train might have to stop running, Dom said: "I said 'no way!' We can't let that happen."

Dom decided to write a song



Dom Carey with Liz Gray and Benny Hayes

to raise money and worked with Benny Hayes, a professional musician who works with Music Train and grew up in Downend, to create 'Time To Celebrate (We've Made It Through Another Year)'.

Benny recorded the song and Music Train filmed a video,

which can be seen on YouTube at [tinyurl.com/36re22pc](https://tinyurl.com/36re22pc).

The song can also be downloaded at Benny's Bandcamp page, [bennyjhayes.bandcamp.com](https://bennyjhayes.bandcamp.com)

A donation page has been set up at [justgiving.com/page/domssong](https://www.justgiving.com/page/domssong).

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**Kip McGrath**  
EDUCATION CENTRES

# School plants bluebells for the spring

THE team behind a project to create a sensory garden at Downend School has been busy planting for the spring.

Over two weeks in December staff and students planted bulbs and created a new wildflower area to provide a nectar-rich area for insects.

Pupils planted 400 plug plants, scattered seed, and learned about pollination and the wider ecosystem, working with South Gloucestershire Council's Common Connections project.

The school has been developing the sensory garden, to support the well-being and education of pupils, including those with additional needs, since June.

The project secured a £5,000 grant from the Sheila Coates Foundation, an independent charity that funds projects that



**Staff and students at Downend School planting bluebells**

enhance the education and mental health of young people with autism, to help create a "calming, accessible space".

Since the summer, grass has been cut, trees pruned and, during the October half term, a group of staff gave up their time to remove ivy and level the ground.

The school's gardening club has been heavily involved with the project, with pupils filling planters with flowers, weeding and working on ideas for the sensory garden.

A further £2,000 grant from the council will support the gardening club in planting

vegetables next year.

Education support lead Lynette Jackson said: "We are excited to see this space come to life next spring.

"We are also proud to have achieved the Level 1 RHS School Gardening Award, with an application for Level 2 now underway.

"Looking ahead, we will be working with the school's design and technology department and Downend in Bloom to create bug hotels, wind chimes, and bird boxes.

"As part of the garden design, we also plan to construct two benches with planters attached

at each end and lay a self-binding gravel path to form a calm and accessible space for all pupils.

"We now need the help of the local community. We would be incredibly grateful for any support residents can offer—whether that includes practical woodworking skills, tools, advice, materials, or hands-on help during school holidays or occasional after-school sessions."

Anyone who would like to get involved can call the school on 01454 862300 or email [down-admin@cset.co.uk](mailto:down-admin@cset.co.uk).

\*Year 7 students at Downend have taken part in a disability awareness workshop with Bristol Disability Equality Forum.

The workshop included conversations with adults who have disabilities, design challenges, looking at decision making and disability activism, as well as "accessibility audits" where they discovered parts of the school where there are barriers to access.

School director of curriculum and teaching Linda Ferris said: "The workshop was designed not only to raise awareness but to inspire action."

# Student venture gets time on supercomputer

A START-UP company created by three Bristol University students has been given access to the UK's most powerful AI supercomputer, based at Emersons Green.

Pitchwise has created technology enabling smartphones to film grassroots football matches by automatically following the play.

Graduates Philip Mortimer, Liam Jones and Jeremy Colfer had the idea when they were students studying computer science at the university, and playing football together.

Now their 'spin-out' company has been awarded £25,000 of computing time on Isambard-AI, which is based at the Bristol & Bath Science Park.

Their system combines a smartphone-mounted hardware device with AI-powered vision software that follows play, generates highlights, and provides insights into performances.

They say the aim is to "recreate the same excitement



**Jeremy Colfer, Liam Jones and Philip Mortimer. Picture: Pitchwise**

seen in the Premier League for every local community club".

Pitchwise has also developed an app which shares highlights and tracks statistics.

Philip originally developed the AI element of the project for his undergraduate dissertation, focusing on automated ball tracking.

Jeremy and Liam further developed the idea building the hardware and companion app for their masters' theses, while Phil was at Cambridge studying

for a masters in AI and machine learning. They are now working full-time on Pitchwise, building and testing working prototypes with several local teams and starting wider pilot programme, while refining their AI models.

The Isambard-AI access represents 5,500 "graphic processing unit hours" and has been awarded through the UK Research & Innovation AI Research Resource programme supported by national agency Innovate UK.

It will allow Pitchwise team to train their computer-vision models far beyond what would be possible on standard hardware.

Isambard-AI was officially switched on by Technology Secretary Peter Kyle at a ceremony in July, and was ranked as the 11st fastest supercomputer in the world and 6th fastest in Europe on opening.

The £225 million computer has 5,400 cutting-edge NVIDIA GH200 Grace Hopper Superchips and around 100,000 times more storage than a 256GB phone or computer, with a data network around 2,000 times faster than the average home broadband connection.

Liam said: "This is a really nice full-circle story, starting as a student venture at Bristol, and now using the university's world-leading infrastructure to advance our technology and mission.

"It's a huge boost in our journey to bring cutting-edge AI to community sport."

# Carols and trees in Mangotsfield

AROUND 80 people attended this year's carol service at the Dame School in Mangotsfield.

The outdoor service on December 12 included music from the Phoenix Wind Band and a choir from Ukraine singing traditional Christmas songs from Eastern Europe.

The event was organised by Mangotsfield Residents Association and St James Church, and led by MRS chair and community pastor Clive Heath, with St James vicar James Cannan.

Clive said: "Thanks to the Phoenix Wind Band and the lovely Ukraine choir for joining us, and to all who attended on such a cold night."

Visitors were treated to some warm hot chocolate and the Nativity scene was lit thanks to the loan of caravan leisure batteries after the MRA was unable to use mains from neighbouring Panoramic Windows after it ceased trading.

The event ran alongside St James Church's Christmas Tree Festival, which included a

wide variety of trees decorated by local groups and featured a celebration day with breakfast with Santa, children's crafts and musical entertainment.

Anyone who is interested in supporting the MRA can get in touch by email at [MangotsfieldRA@gmail.com](mailto:MangotsfieldRA@gmail.com), via the Mangotsfield Matters Facebook page or phone Chris Amos on 07918 701881 or Clive Heath on 07507 168700.

Donations towards the group's community work can be made at [tinyurl.com/yswsf7d9](http://tinyurl.com/yswsf7d9).



The church tree festival



The service at the Dame School



The Ukrainian choir sings

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### TURNERS HEARING CARE BLOG

## New year, clear hearing: Start the year the right way

The New Year is a time for fresh starts, new routines, and looking after yourself. While many resolutions focus on fitness or wellbeing, hearing health is often overlooked, yet it plays a vital role in everyday life.

After a busy festive season filled with social gatherings, noisy rooms, and perhaps a few late nights, you may notice your ears feeling blocked or sounds not as sharp as they should be. Winter weather can cause earwax to dry and harden, making blockages more likely, especially if you wear hearing aids or earphones regularly.

Clear hearing supports confidence, balance, and communication. Whether you're returning to work, enjoying winter walks, attending exercise classes, or simply catching up with friends, being able to hear comfortably makes everything easier and more enjoyable.

Professional ear checks and gentle micro suction offer a safe, effective way to start the year with clarity. Unlike cotton buds or home remedies, micro suction removes wax without pushing it deeper or irritating the ear canal. Many patients are surprised by the immediate improvement.

January is an ideal time to book an ear check. Appointments are calmer, routines are settling, and it's easier to address small issues before they become bigger problems later in the year.

If you've noticed muffled hearing, ringing in the ears, or a blocked sensation, don't put it off. A quick visit can restore comfort and give you peace of mind.

Make clear hearing part of your New Year self-care. Book an appointment with our friendly audiologist and enjoy a year filled with conversations, confidence, and clarity.

Happy New Year to you all. Here's to clarity & catching each moment in high-definition audio!

*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.**

# Santa seen on the streets

PEOPLE living in the Downend area have been treated to visits from three father Christmas floats during the festive season.

Downend Round Table has been running its Santa Sleigh for 17 years, raising more than £35,000 for community causes in that time.

Between November 30 and December 23 the sleigh was making 12 outings, including Mangotsfield, Bromley Heath, Downend, Emersons Green and Lyde Green, plus visits to Oldland Common and to Bristol city centre, for a parade organised to support the Bristol Lord Mayor's Children's Appeal.

One trip around Bromley Heath had to be cancelled due to stormy weather but as the Voice went to print, more than £2,000 had already been raised.

Paul Brown, from Downend Round Table, said: "Our priority has been to 'give back' to the local community, who have supported our fireworks displays for over 50 years.

"The raising of further funds is a significant bonus, as it allows us to help other groups and individuals locally."

The float made £1,000 during the four-hour Bristol parade from Whiteladies Road to Cabot Circus on December 11.

A spokesperson for Lord Mayor Henry Michallat, who rode on the sleigh for part of the



Father Christmas waves to crowds from the Downend Round Table sleigh outside the Bristol Hippodrome

journey, said: "He thoroughly enjoyed the route and seeing so many happy faces, and would also like to thank Downend Round Table for their continued support for the last ten-plus years providing the sleigh and manpower from their volunteers."

The area received more visits from Father Christmas courtesy of the Original Santa Float, a team of volunteers with a Somerset carnival-style float raising money for Bristol Children's Hospital's Guild of Friends and Time is Precious, a charity that aims to make children with cancer and their families more comfortable in hospital or at home.

They visited Mangotsfield, Staple Hill and Downend on December 12, where hundreds of families greeted them, in Lyde Green and Emersons Green on

December 13 and Pucklechurch on December 17.

The Float Group, raising money for Southmead Hospital Charity and St Peter's Hospice, visited Lyde Green and Emersons Green on November

29 and Downend and Bromley Heath on December 7, with a visit to Staple Hill and Fishponds on the 19th.

More details of the floats and online donations can be found via their Facebook pages.



The Float Group in Bromley Heath



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## TURNER'S VISION

### A clearer start to the New Year

As the New Year begins, many of us take a moment to pause, reflect, and set intentions for the months ahead. Whether it's improving our health, finding better balance, or simply taking more time for ourselves, January offers a natural opportunity for a fresh start.

One resolution that often gets overlooked, however, is our eye and vision health - even though our eyes play such a central role in everything we do.

After the busy festive period, it's common to notice tired, dry, or strained eyes. Late nights, extra screen time, winter heating, and long journeys can all take their toll. January is therefore an ideal time to check in with your vision and give your eyes the care they deserve.

**Why eye care matters more than you think**  
Your eyes don't just help you see clearly; they're also a vital indicator of your overall health. An advanced eye examination can reveal early signs of conditions such as glaucoma, macular degeneration, diabetes, and high blood pressure, often before any other symptoms appear.

If you've noticed headaches, blurred vision, eye strain, difficulty focusing, or simply feel that your eyes "aren't quite right," these may be subtle signs that your vision needs attention. Even small changes in prescription or visual comfort can make a significant difference to how you feel day to day.

#### A better vision routine for the year ahead

As part of your New Year reset, consider adopting a few simple vision-friendly habits:

- Rest your eyes regularly when using screens (try the 20-20-20 rule).
- Check your lighting, especially during darker winter months.
- Stay hydrated to help reduce dry or irritated eyes.
- Wear the right glasses for the right tasks; work, reading, driving, or screens.

If your lifestyle has changed, perhaps more home working, increased screen use, or new hobbies, your visual needs may have changed too.

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#### Wishing you a bright and healthy New Year

As we step into the year ahead, we'd like to wish all our patients a very Happy New Year. Thank you for trusting us with your eye care. If one of your resolutions is to look after your health a little better this year, your eyes are a great place to start.

Here's to a year of clearer vision, greater comfort, and confidence in everything you see.

To learn more, or to book an appointment, visit our website or contact our Henleaze (0117 962 2474) or Fishponds (0117 965 4434) practice today.

Thank you for trusting our family to care for your family's eyes - it's a privilege we never take for granted.

*Peter*

*Peter Turner is an Independent Prescribing Senior Optometrist at Turners Opticians in Bristol. He also works as a Senior Medical Optometrist at Bristol Eye Hospital and has a specialist interest in visual development and performance.*



**Peter Turner**  
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# Lotto funding will help mums rebuild lives

AN organisation supporting single mothers to rebuild their lives has been given a National Lottery award to fund its work.

The Anchor Room, a not-for-profit community interest company, is based in Lyde Green and was co-founded by confidence coach and business mentor Sophia Lorraine, creative business strategist Hali Jafari, and crystal healer and speaker Amy Burrage.

It has been awarded £9,800 from the National Lottery Community Fund to support its work with single mothers recovering from domestic abuse, trauma and challenges following separation.

The funding will help the Anchor Room launch its first full, free support programme for women from across South Gloucestershire.

Sophia said the programme has been designed using insights from the personal experiences of the co-founders and more than 70 in-depth survey responses from local women who shared their experiences, challenges and hopes for the future.

It will include well-being support, confidence-building sessions, peer-support circles, business and employment mentoring, workshops specifically for single mothers and access to funded coaching for women unable to afford private sessions.

A pilot programme will be launched in the new year, funded by the grant.

Sophia said: "We are absolutely thrilled that The National Lottery Community Fund has recognised our work in this way.

"This funding allows us to bring to life a project that has been shaped directly by not only our personal experiences but the women in our community - women who are rebuilding their lives after trauma, overcoming immense challenges, and doing it all while raising children on their own.

"Thanks to National Lottery players, we can now offer targeted support that helps women feel empowered, connected and confident about their future."

Sophia, Hali and Amy founded the Anchor Room earlier in 2025.

Sophia said: "We recognised a significant gap in support for single mothers navigating emotional recovery, co-parenting with abusive ex-partners, financial instability, and the lack of accessible well-being and empowerment services.

"Supporting women to rebuild their confidence, independence and emotional well-being will create a ripple effect into the well-being of their children and family life.

"Our aim is to create accessible, trauma-informed services that help women feel safer, more confident and better supported while raising their children alone."

Sophia said women who attended a taster workshop reported "feeling an increase in their confidence and hope for their future" as a result and believed similar support could help many others.

The Anchor Room is inviting women who have been affected by domestic abuse, facing single



**Sophia Lorraine at the Anchor Room taster workshop**

motherhood and looking to turn around their lives to apply for a place by emailing [contact@theanchorroom.co.uk](mailto:contact@theanchorroom.co.uk).

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**Emersons Green Voice January 2026 17**

## WHAT'S ON

### January 11

**■ ALPHA COURSE TASTER SESSION.** 5pm, Badminton Road Methodist Church, BS16 6NU. [www.badmintonroadmethodist.org.uk/alpha](http://www.badmintonroadmethodist.org.uk/alpha)

## 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.

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

**■ 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](http://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

### Wednesday

**■ THE WOMEN'S SECTION OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION** meets on the first Wednesday of the month, 1-3pm at THE YOUNG FOUNDATION, Page Road, Staple Hill

(by the long-stay car park). New members welcome. More details from Diane Roberts on 0117 956 3407.

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

**■ WARMLEY JAZZ CLUB**, £5 on the door. Cadbury Heath Social Club. Doors open 7.30pm. More details at [warmleyjazz.co.uk](http://warmleyjazz.co.uk).

**■ 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](http://www.frenchayfdc.co.uk) or email [FFDCSecretary@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

**■ 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

**■ 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](mailto:kingsmeadowmade4ever.org.uk) or call 07588 622 372

**■ 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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 Cossesham 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](http://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 Cossesham Street. Services start at 10.30 a.m. with different speakers each week. New members very welcome. For more details please

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

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

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](http://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](mailto:staplehillmethodist@hotmail.co.uk) or [www.staplehillmethodist.com](http://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.emersongreencurch.org](http://www.emersongreencurch.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](http://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.

# Schools and parents need more support

HAPPY New Year!

A special thanks to the emergency and key workers and those serving in our Armed Forces, who have been working over Christmas and New Year.

During December I was pleased to welcome Schools Minister Georgia Gould to Blackhorse Primary School in Emersons Green to discuss local special educational needs and disabilities best practice ahead of upcoming national reforms.

This follows my work listening to parents' local priorities for improved support, which I shared with the Education Secretary.

With the Schools Minister here, council co-leader Ian Boulton and I raised the issue of local schools' historic underfunding, and I arranged for local mum Christine Lote to meet her.

I support Christine's campaign, following



**Coffee with Claire event at Stoke Gifford Retirement Village**

an incurable cancer diagnosis, for school admissions policies to factor in exceptional medical need.

The cost of living and NHS are the top issues raised locally, which I push on nationally. I was pleased the Budget focused on both. Energy bills will be cut by an average £150 from April and prescription charges frozen. Train fares will be frozen for the first time in 30 years.

The minimum wage and state pension will rise again, helping with the cost of living.

Scraping the two-child limit on benefits will lift around 450,000 children out of poverty - around 1,640 locally. Alongside expanding free school meals, breakfast clubs, and funded childcare, this Parliament is set to see the largest-ever fall in child poverty.

There are new opportunities for young adults and small businesses too, with guaranteed six-month work placements for long-term unemployed 18 to 21 year olds, supporting them away from benefits. Apprenticeship training for under-25s will also be free for small and medium-sized businesses.

In Parliament, I was proud to vote for the Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, the biggest power transfer from Whitehall in a century, and the Railways Bill, bringing railways back into public ownership.



2025 marks my first full calendar year as your MP.

I've made 37 contributions in Parliament, my team and I have worked on 6,788 cases for residents and sent 12,890 emails.

I've been on 92 local visits, held 43 advice surgery appointments and 13 'Coffee with Claire' and 'Pub Politics' events, and knocked on doors to hear your priorities.

I believe in doing politics differently, bringing people together.

In November, my team and I worked on 550 new cases to support local people. I held my regular advice surgery in Bradley Stoke and a festive 'Coffee with Claire' event, open to all, in Filton.

Thank you to everyone who has been in touch, joined events, or had a chat while I've been out and about.

I look forward to seeing and hearing from you throughout 2026.

As always, do get in touch anytime at [claire.hazelgrove.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:claire.hazelgrove.mp@parliament.uk).



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# Kids make the most of their freedom

HAPPY New Year! I hope you are having a restful festive period.

Over the school holidays, Kids Go Free is back on the West's buses.

This means under-16s can travel for nothing once again throughout Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire between December 20 and January 4.

No registration or bus pass is required - just hop on board.

This follows on from the success of our scheme over the summer, in partnership with local councils and bus operators.

More than 910,000 free journeys were taken by kids across our region, putting almost £1 million back into the pockets of families and opening up our region for more young people.

The summer scheme saw 32% more children travel by bus than did in summer 2024.

We saw more footfall at local visitor attractions and retail centres, and got new people onto our brand-new green buses, inspiring the passengers of the future.

Almost half of the people in our sample survey said Kids Go Free had helped them visit new places they had not been to before, which would have otherwise been too costly.

December brought more good news on transport in the West. We secured over £40

million for buses as we plan longer-term on how to invest in things like Kids Go Free in the future. This was another real vote of confidence in the West Country, as we continue working together on a bus network that works.

Since May, we've secured the best part of £1 billion for transport in our region – better buses, more trains, and mass transit plans – soon we will spell out our vision for how to get the West moving.

The end of the year also saw the West start to catch up with other regions.

Active Travel England now rates the West of England alongside Greater Manchester and the West Midlands for better walking, wheeling, and cycling routes. We all know that active travel is good for our health and our planet, so it makes sense to make sustainable choices easier for people.

Our upgraded rating comes with £12 million for us to add to the green cycle lanes in South Gloucestershire, safe crossings like the one opened by Ralph Allen School in Bath in October and work progressing to improve Victoria Street in Bristol, linking town to Temple Meads.

December also saw the publication of the child poverty action plan for the region I mentioned in last month's column, after a welcome national strategy and November's Budget decision to scrap the two-child benefit



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

cap.

The majority of children affected are in working households, and our area is expected to be more than £20 million better off as a result.

Lifting kids out of poverty is a key part of our new Growth Strategy, which aims to secure the investment needed to create 72,000 new jobs in the region.

Together, we've turned the page and are writing a new chapter for the West of England.

I'm optimistic for what 2026 can bring, and determined to make a difference local people can see and feel, including on child poverty, economic investment, and transport.

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# WINTER SALE – 30% OFF Lasting Powers of Attorney

**"Lasting Powers of Attorney are now even more important than Wills"** according to Martin Lewis on his recent ITV show. The money expert explained it is a mistake to leave this until you are older as you need to put them in place when you are well. However young and well you feel, he said **"the right time to put them in place is NOW!"**

So, take advantage of this WINTER SALE offer from our local legal experts – Simpson Solicitors, to make sure you have up-to-date Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPAs) in place.

Start with their genuine **FREE review meeting** to find out more in plain English. You will not feel rushed, as they will take as long as you need. Then with no complicated forms, they will help you put this essential protection in place.

Michelle at Simpson Solicitors says "An LPA is how you appoint those you trust to support you to make sure your wishes are followed if you become seriously ill and need assistance. They can make sure your bills are paid, your finances are looked after and that you receive the medical treatment you would want."

• **NOTE** you can also use this 30% off offer to update

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# Staple Hill window company rounds off stellar year with national awards

Bristol-based window company, The Window Hub, has been named Installer of the Year at the prestigious G-Awards.

The Window Hub was recognised at a glittering gala, which celebrates the best window, glass, and door companies in the UK. It rounds off a stellar year for the Staple Hill-headquartered business, which also celebrated previous success at the National Fenestration Awards.

The Window Hub welcomed judges from inspection and auditing body Risa, which compared entries from dozens of window companies from across the British Isles.

"You don't get direct feedback from a Risa inspector," explained The Window Hub managing director, Danny Robb.

"But hopefully, they saw a genuine, decent company that was doing the right thing, not only by the people that work in the business, but also for the customers.



"We've got a 'Treating Customers Fairly' policy, to make sure that we do the right thing for our customers, from when they first speak to us all the way through the process to when we leave them with a Fensa certificate after the installation. And I'm hopeful that that's what shone through during the judging process."

The G-Awards success comes just weeks after The Window Hub was celebrated by its peers at the National Fenestration Awards, where accolades are decided by the industry itself. Two of The Window Hub's dedicated employees secured top honours, including Adam Smith, who was voted Office Manager of the Year, while Bradley Barber was

named Young Person of the Year.

The Window Hub operates strict guidelines that its employees must follow to ensure customers are always looked after. This includes an ethical sales police which, in addition to following legal obligations, includes a 'canvassing etiquette' which all salespeople must read, sign and stick to.

"It really isn't rocket science," said Robb. "But we make sure our employees close gates behind them, and don't walk on the lawn. And if they are asked not to return, they must inform their Team Leader immediately, so Head Office can make a record and send out a 'no knocking' sticker so all canvassers know never to return."

"Our sales team also have specialist training on being aware of vulnerable homeowners, so that everyone can make an informed decision. Sales begin and end with treating customers properly."



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# Ready to get stuck into another year

LYDE Green Community Association is ready to get stuck into another year.

For us, the mission will be to continue generating community spirit and making Lyde Green a great place to live and visit!

We're dedicated to ensuring that the community centre is a welcoming and inclusive place for everyone.

If you haven't visited us yet, come down and say hello!

You can see what's happening on our website, [lydegreenca.org](http://lydegreenca.org), or simply come down and relax: we're on the corner of School Square and Willowberb Road.

Aside from running a great community centre, we also work with partners such as Emersons Green Town Council and South Gloucestershire Council, the police and also local schools - with a view to addressing issues, but also sharing best practice and good news stories!

The LGCA represents the Lyde Green Community and to do that, we need involvement from the local community.

If you would like to help us make Lyde Green a great place to live and work, we'd love to talk



Little Red Riding Hood at Lyde Green Community Centre

to you. We have so many opportunities to get involved, from helping with various events, joining our Chatty Café Group on a Monday, volunteering with The Lyde GREEN Team on a Wednesday.

Maybe you'd even like to become one of our trustees, and really make your voice heard?

If you'd like to know more about getting involved, come see us in the community centre or email [info@lydegreenca.org](mailto:info@lydegreenca.org).

Our annual Christmas Panto is just one of the many events that we put on.

Just before Christmas we welcomed 125 people into the community centre to see Little Red Riding Hood - an awesome show!

Thanks to Chaplins Pantos 4 Kids for delivering a truly magical show.

It's just one of the great events hosted at Lyde Green Community Centre in 2025, along with our Christmas Fayre, Halloween Disco, Railway Modelling Open Day and July's fantastic Summer Sizzler.

Come along and see what 2026 has to offer!

**Max Ward**

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# The sale of the Stanbridge estate

ONE hundred years ago Downend was a relatively small village community on the outskirts of Bristol.

There were a few big houses (notably Cleeve Hill House), two churches, a handful of pubs, a school, a cricket ground and a few clusters of cottages built for agricultural workers and quarrymen.

Newly built Victorian villas lined North Street and Downend Road. All this was surrounded by countryside in the care of local estate owners and farmers, and consisted of pasture, arable land, market gardens and orchards.

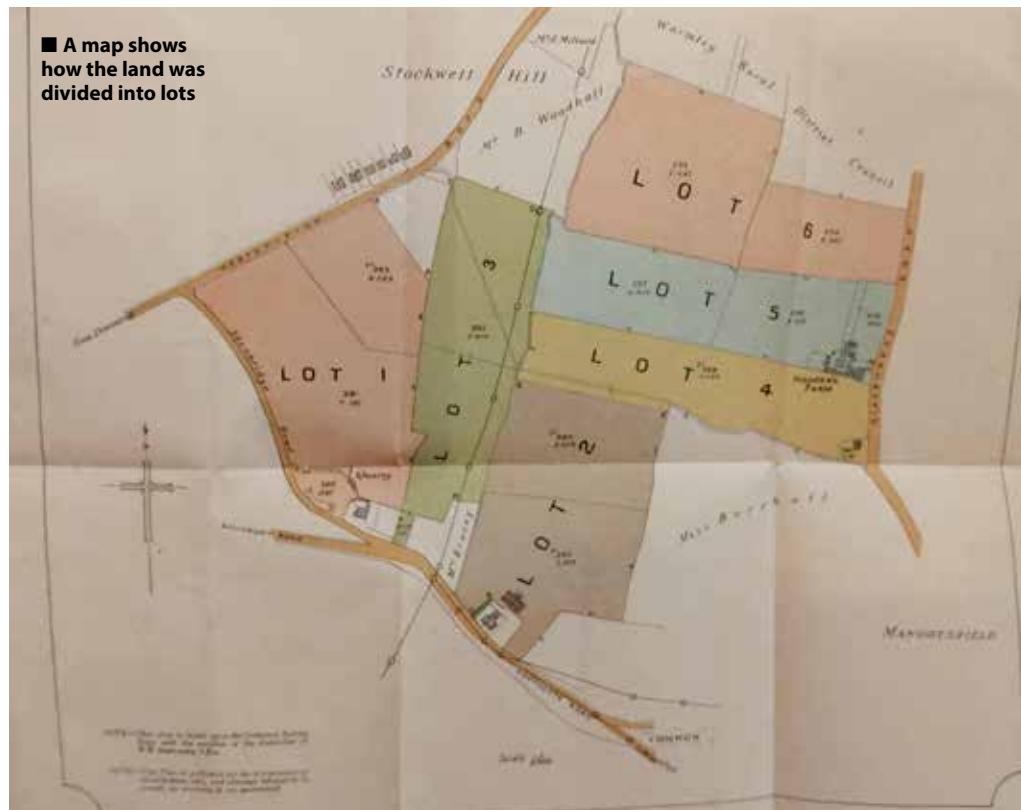
In the 1920s the manor house and estate of Cleeve Hill, belonging to the Cave family, was sold off in parcels to developers. Cleeve Hill House was sadly demolished, and the building of homes in Downend began in earnest.

New homes began to spring up following the sale of the old Cave estate, and over the next 20 years, Downend grew rapidly as a desirable suburb of Bristol.

The Second World War dramatically curtailed domestic building, but other landowners, including farmers, were keen to profit from the sale of parcels of land for housing.

One such farm belonged to Mrs Gerrish of Stanbridge House, and covered a large area bounded by Westerleigh Road,

■ A map shows how the land was divided into lots



Stanbridge Road, Northcote Road and Blackhorse Road. It included Hoopers Farmhouse and outbuildings on Blackhorse Road.

The land was put up for auction at the Grand Hotel in Bristol on July 27, 1944, and was divided into five lots.

It sold for an undisclosed sum to building developers, and now forms a substantial part of the post-war housing development of Downend and Mangotsfield.

A map produced for the sale shows how the land was divided up.

**LOT 1** was a parcel of land later used to build Stanbridge

Primary School and later Stanbridge Court Flats, when Stanbridge House was demolished. The quarry can still be seen from the road.

**LOT 2** became Royal Road, Graham Road and Barley Close Primary School. The handsome Victorian villa which belonged to the Gerrish family at 120 Northcote Road still stands, minus the outbuildings behind.

**LOT 3** formed the basis of East View, Brook Road and Stanbridge Close.

**LOT 4** is now home to Stockwell

Drive and Cherry Grove. **LOT 5** is now Springleaze and Springfield Park Playing fields.

I have looked for any remains of Hoopers Farm but cannot see any from the road or on maps. Does anyone know of any buildings remaining?

To contact Downend Community History and Art Project (CHAP), visit the website at [www.downendchap.org](http://www.downendchap.org), email [big.gin@yahoo.com](mailto:big.gin@yahoo.com) or write to CHAP, 49 Overhill Road, Downend, Bristol, BS16 5DS. **Jenny Alcock**

## BRISTOL u3a

# New Year, new start

ARE you looking for something different to do, or simply looking to extend your social circle? Joining Bristol u3a is a great way to do both.

We have almost 200 interest groups across Bristol, around 35 locally and there are lots of social activities.

If you're feeling creative, we have two local groups that might

interest you: Painting and Drawing, and the Eastside Crafters.

Both meet in Staple Hill and beginners/dabblers will be welcomed.

Email [learnlughlive@bristolu3a.org.uk](mailto:learnlughlive@bristolu3a.org.uk) if you are interested in attending either.

If appreciating art is more your style, you are welcome to go along to the Art Appreciation group's next talk, on Saturday February 7 at 2.30pm, in Stoke Gifford Retirement Village.

You'll hear an illustrated talk called 'Americana – from landscapes to Marilyn Monroe'; in

the company of other art lovers. There's no need to book, but email me if you have any questions.

A great way to find out more is to come along to one of our café socials, meet existing members and chat about all the things on offer.

We're at the Orchard Coffee & Bakery in St George on January 9 at 2pm, the Market Café and Lounge in Kingswood on January 13 from 2pm, the Crafty Egg in Fishponds on January 21 from 2pm and Mokka Downend on January 26 from 2pm: Everyone is welcome. Bristol u3a (you in your Third

Age) is for anyone with some spare time. There's no lower age limit but most members are in their fifties upwards.

We're proud to be 100% volunteer-led with no paid staff and no paid teachers - everything is offered by members for other members. Because costs such as hall hire are covered centrally by membership fees, you're unlikely to be asked for money to attend specific groups.

You can find out more – including how to join – by typing "Bristol u3a" into your favourite search engine. **Lindsay Gough**

### MANGOTSFIELD DOLLY MIXTURES

AT our craft evening in November we all made a table decoration.

One of our members prepared oasis, candles, ribbons, artificial flowers and some foliage as a starter kit, to which we added materials we had foraged for.

She demonstrated the process of building the shape, size and height; we then followed her example and created our own individual and unique decorations.

For refreshments two Dollies made cakes and presented them in an attractive display, with tea and coffee.

On the 29th the Dollies helped serve tea and coffee at St James's Christmas Fayre and raised £77 for the church.

Our Victorian market trip to Worcester involved meeting at Tesco in Eastville to get on a coach.

We arrived in Worcester at 11.15am, after a very comfortable journey. After coffee and exploring the market, we all met back later for a bite to eat, before boarding the coach at 5.15pm for the return journey. The Dollies all felt it was a wonderful market and a great day out.

We are involved with St James' Tree Festival and on December 8, a few of us took and decorated our tree with 50 bags of dolly mixtures, for donation to the church.

The Festival took place on December 11-14, with 22 trees in all.

Our Xmas meal was held at Madison's on the Westerleigh Road, where we had the room to

ourselves and booked Frankie Johns for some lively entertainment - starting and ending with 'Hello Dolly', of course!

The food was excellent: Jenny and her staff couldn't do enough for us, and we have already booked for next year.

Email [carol@applause.co.uk](mailto:carol@applause.co.uk) for more details about our group.

**Carol Coombs**

### BEECHMERE BELLES WI

IT doesn't seem very long since I was writing our article for the January 2025 edition of the Voice, and here we are again in a New Year – where does the time go?

We had a fabulous 2025 though – we had talks, activities, crafts and other events and outings.

And for 2026, we think we've planned an equally interesting, educational and fun programme for our members and guests.

January starts off with a talk from author Jane Duffus about the 'Women who built Bristol'.

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

The meeting is on January 22 at Emersons Green Village Hall at 7.30pm.

We think we are a friendly group, and whether you come on your own or with a friend, we promise to make you feel welcome and included.

It can be daunting to come out on these cold winter evenings but, once you come to our meeting, you won't notice that – we have hot drinks and cake to warm you up, and lots of new

friends to make.

We try to balance our meetings so we get time to catch up with each other along with the main event of the evening; we'd love you to join us if you're looking for friendship, education (but not too serious) and community.

We welcome guests to any of our meetings.

Your first meeting is free, 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 on the fourth Thursday of each month, except December.

If you would like to know more about our WI, please contact us via email at [beechmerebelles@gmail.com](mailto:beechmerebelles@gmail.com) or follow our Facebook page

**Wendy**

### RODWAY RUBIES WI

WE are looking to 2026 and planning events to share with our members throughout the year ahead.

We are holding our 'Xmas' lunch in mid-January at Salford Golf Club, then a quiz night on January 30 at 7.30pm in St James Church Hall in Mangotsfield, with all profits going to our chosen charity for the year: Parkinson's UK Bristol branch.

Our speaker for January is Jo Richardson, space detective, who will talk about life on board the International Space Station. Meetings are at St James' Church Hall, on Richmond Road, at 7.30pm on the third Monday of each month.

**Jane Eldon**

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DOWNEND Flyers have enjoyed a memorable month, combining strong performances across all senior teams with a moment in the TV spotlight!

The BBC visited a training session to film a feature in support of the UK's bid to host the 2035 Women's World Cup.

With more than 400 members and 27 teams, Downend Flyers is the largest female football club in the region, and the coverage highlighted the strength of its pathway and the supportive community that surrounds it.

Coaches, players, and volunteers all helped showcase the club's inclusive spirit, giving viewers a real sense of what makes the Flyers such a special place to play and develop.

On the pitch, November brought a mix of challenges and momentum building performances across our women's teams.

The First Team continued to show resilience, putting in competitive displays both home and away and maintaining steady progress in league and cup competitions.

Their performances have

# Flyers in the TV spotlight



Two Downend Flyers players are interviewed by the BBC

been consistent, displaying amazing team spirit the ability to respond well in tight, hard fought matches.

The Reserves experienced a month of real contrasts, a reminder of both the competitiveness of their league and the potential within the squad.

While they faced tough opposition early in the month, the team responded brilliantly

under new head coach Matt Smith, with a confident 5-2 victory against Stoke Lane that underlined their quality and capability when everything comes together.

The A Team, featuring several players in their first year of women's football after progressing through the Flyers' youth ranks, also enjoyed a period of impressive development.

Their performances showed growing confidence and maturity, including an eye-catching 3-0 victory against Lydney Town - one of the league's in-form sides - and a 2-1 cup victory.

The pathway from youth to adult football continues to be one of the club's greatest strengths.

Despite weather disruptions and the usual challenges of the winter schedule, the overall trend across the club has been overwhelmingly positive: growing belief, improving performances, and a real sense of momentum.

With TV recognition, a thriving family feel, and exciting progress on the pitch, Downend Flyers continue to fly the flag for women's football in the local area.

The club welcomes supporters to come along on Sunday afternoons at Popham Hill to cheer on the teams. All are welcome at Downend Flyers!

Nathan James

# Cup provides much-needed win for Mangos

SOME poor results have seen Mangotsfield United drop into what fans know as "mid-table obscurity": the teams at the top of the table seem as far away as the teams at the bottom.

Numerous injuries have hit the Mangos in the last few months, but that's not an excuse for some poor recent results.

The home game against Gloucester outfit Longlevens was a fairly even affair, although you always felt that the visitors might get a goal instead of the hosts - and that is exactly what happened in the final minutes of the game, with the Mangos losing 1-0.

Up next came Slimbridge away, where the Mangos have enjoyed some good results in the past, but not this time, as a 2-1 home win lifted the Swans to the top of the Hellenic League.

Mangotsfield gave their best throughout the game, with Spike Weaver scoring their goal on 64 minutes, but by then the hosts

already had two.

This was followed by an encouraging 0-0 draw away at Highworth Town, where a point is always seen as a good result, but the Wiltshire side have also had a disappointing season so far.

In a game played in challenging conditions, following all the heavy rain and wind of the previous few days, there were few chances created by either side and a point in the end was a fair result.

The Mangos took a break from league action in mid-December, with a home GFA Trophy tie against local Western League side Bristol Telephones on the 9th.

This time they got the right result, with a very good 3-0 home win against spirited opposition.

The first goal came on 35 minutes, when a good team move was finished off by Alex Lambert. Telephones created some good



chances of their own, but on 72 minutes, Hillard headed home from a corner for 2-0. Lambert tucked the ball home for 3-0 with just five minutes to go, and that clinched a much-needed win for the hosts.

Ahead of their two fixtures either side of Christmas, the draw at Highworth left them 12th in the league table, eight points behind fifth-placed Worcester Raiders, who currently occupy the final play-off spot.

The Mangos need to kick-start the rest of the season with a few wins if possible, especially as there are only 18 league games left!

You never know in football, so the boys will keep on going to keep the league season alive. Hopefully, the GFA Trophy win over Bristol Telephones will instil some confidence, with a lot of tough games coming up, including a very hectic January at Cossam Street!

## Upcoming fixtures:

- December 20: Cirencester Town (home)
- December 27: Hallen (away)
- January 3: Pershore Town (A)
- January 10: Droitwich Spa (H)
- January 17: Fairford Town (H)
- January 24: Roman Glass St George (H)
- January 31: Cinderford Town (H)

Dave Smale

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# Seb needs sponsors

A TEENAGE Downend kickboxer is looking for sponsors as he aims for a place on Team GB.

Sebastian Heyes, aged 14, took up the sport three years ago and has won medals in several competitions in the past two years.

Training with Epic Martial Arts in Lyde Green, Seb is hoping to win a place representing his country after he competes at the national championships in February.

Since winning two gold medals in the 2024 Bristol Open, Seb has gone on to win two Skill Striker contests, gold and silver medals at the Yokoso Dutch Open last March and bronze medals at the GB Grandslam contests in Bath and Crawley in April and June.

Seb said: "I love kickboxing. My coaches have helped me in so many ways including helping to manage my anger. It keeps me fit, as I train five days a week."

"My next goal is to place gold or silver in the Nationals in Loughborough in February, so I can achieve a place on the GB Team. I would also like to compete in more international competitions."

Mum Kate Menear said: "Seb has an incredible passion for his sport."

"In a world that can sometimes feel overwhelming, kickboxing is where he truly shines."

"What makes me even prouder is that Seb doesn't just focus on himself. He volunteers as a junior assistant coach, helping his instructors deliver classes to younger students."

Coach Harrison Doyle said: "Seb is one of the most dedicated young fighters I've had the privilege to coach."

"His progression has been incredibly fast – not because of luck, but because of the hard work and consistency he puts in day after day."

"With the right support behind him, I truly believe Seb can continue rising through the ranks and make a real name for himself on the national and international competitive level."

Seb is looking for sponsorship to pay for kit and equipment, entry fees and travel and accommodation for competitions, and Kate is appealing for businesses who would like to sponsor him to get in touch at k84u@hotmail.co.uk.



Seb Heyes

# Ruby takes on pros

DOWNEND padel player Ruby Matthias made the last 16 in the adult category of the sport's UK national championships.

The 13-year-old Downend School pupil has started to play LTA grade 1 competitions in the indoor racquet sport, which include fixtures full-time professional athletes.

At the national UK Padel event, held in Bristol, she entered both the under-18 and adult categories.

Dad Stuart said: "She faced world-ranked players, which at 13 some may find daunting - but she shows no fear."

Ruby has also won recent LTA events in Kenilworth and Staffordshire, and in November played the top-ranked GB women at the Adidas HOP finals in Derby, in front of a live and streamed audience.

In 2026 she is planning to play in international competitions and take part in GB junior squad camps.



Ruby Matthias

# Celebrating a successful season

CARSONS and Mangotsfield Cricket Club celebrated a successful season with their end of season dinner in the Pavilion bar at Pomphrey Hill.

The guest of honour was Gloucestershire County Cricket Club head coach Mark Alleyne.

Outgoing club chair Andy King reflected on the season.

The first team had been in a tight race for promotion throughout the season and managed to move into second position following a win in the penultimate game of the season.

With extensive rain on the last day of the season, all games were cancelled, which meant the team secured the runners-up spot.

The team will now play in Division 3 of the Bristol and District Cricket League.

They also had a long run in the Bristol and District Cricket Association's Tony Hitch Knockout Cup, beating teams in higher divisions on their way to the final, which they lost to local rivals Coalpit Heath.

The second team did well in their first season in Division 7 East, finishing in a commendable third position.

The 3rds and 4ths also had good seasons in their respective divisions.

Mark congratulated the club in his speech and talked about the importance of club cricket to the professional game.

He also spent time speaking to some of the younger members of the club at the end of the dinner.

The final part of the dinner was the presentation of awards.

The club's 'Person of the Year' award went to Chelsea Brayley, for her work as social secretary.

Ian Coles

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# Cleve keep up the pressure

**UNDERSTRENGTH** Cleve were still too strong for Oxfordshire side Witney as they kept up their title challenge.

The game at the Hayfields on November 22 brought in a number of older ex-players, as Witney's past president was 70-year-old Gareth Lewis, who played for Cleve and whose dad was a past chairman. His old team-mates arrived to talk to him and have a meal.

The game looked to be a tough encounter, with Cleve missing some players but committed.

Witney started strongly and gained a number of lineouts in Cleve's 22, but as the clock reached five minutes, Cleve struck, moving the ball from their own 22 to Witney's line.

Harry O'Donnell picked up and went over, then Matthew

Jarvis converted.

Cleve now started pressuring Witney.

A poor clearance kick was fielded by Cleve's winger, who ran it back. The ball then popped out to Jarvis, who scored and then converted his try to make it 14-0 to Cleve.

The home side was also dominating in the scrum, pushing Witney's eight back.

A centre-pitch interchange of passes allowed full-back Henry Williams to score under the posts, making it 21-0 to Cleve.

Witney got back into the game after a yellow card saw Cleve go down a player.

The visitors went into Cleve's 22 and, with a pickup and drive, scored an unconverted try to make it 21-5 at half-time.

Gareth stated that Witney usually regrouped to play well in the second half. Cleve, however, were not going to let the game go so easily.

Harry O'Donnell drove relentlessly into Witney's defence, and was joined by his dad, Andy, in the front row.

This spurred the team on, and a breakthrough led to a Josh



Harry O'Donnell driving towards the line against Witney

Davis try to make the score 28-5.

Cleve were not going to let Witney off the hook. Movement across the backs led to a Matt Davis score and in the final minutes, an interception by Josh Davis saw him score under the posts.

Jarvis, who must be close to a 90% kicker, completed Cleve's tally, with the final score Cleve 42, Witney 5.

The following week Cleve completely overwhelmed Newbury: after 30 minutes the score was 60-0, believed to be a

club record, as Cleve had never scored two points a minute in the first half of a league game before.

The final score was Cleve 110, Newbury 5.

A 31-20 away win over Longlevens on December 6 was Cleve's seventh in a row since losing to Trowbridge - the only team above them in the Regional 2 Tribute Ale Severn league - at the beginning of October.

Trowbridge's highly-anticipated visit to the Hayfields is on January 10.

**Steve Bateman**

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## January Blog

### 138—new energy, new habits, and lessons from Joe Wicks and Eddie the Eagle

January always feels like the nation collectively comes up for air after December — a little rounder, a little slower, a little unsure whether we're meant to be doing life-admin or hibernating. And yet, beneath all that, January carries the unmistakable sense of a reset. A clean slate. A gentle nudge forward.

This year, I'm starting January feeling unusually energised — all thanks to two men who took centre stage at our recent BCA conference: Joe Wicks and Eddie "The Eagle" Edwards.

Hosting the conference as British Chiropractic Association President is always a privilege, but this year felt special. Inspirational. A reminder of the power of movement, mindset, community... and sheer human grit...also we celebrated an amazing 100 years of Chiropractic in the UK!

**Joe Wicks: Kindness, Movement, and the Power of Small Habits**

Interviewing Joe was an absolute pleasure. On stage, he exuded the same warmth he does on screen — grounded, kind, funny, open. There wasn't a hint of ego; just genuine passion for helping people move, eat well, and look after their minds. What struck me most was how aligned he is with everything we believe in as chiropractors. After a quick 'PE with Joe', we talked about:

- **Movement** as medicine — not punishing workouts, but joyful, accessible activity for everyone
- **Nutrition** that fuels rather than restricts — and his own shift away from ultra-processed foods
- **Sleep** as the foundation stone of good health
- **Mental wellbeing** — how movement, structure and self-care keep him on track
- **Simplicity over perfection** — one good decision at a time, repeated

Joe's approach is refreshingly real. No "New year, new you" nonsense. Just the idea that small habits done consistently will change your life. And hearing that from someone who has inspired millions felt like the perfect springboard into the New Year.

He had the whole room smiling, nodding and — I'll be honest — feeling ready to lace up their trainers. For a profession built on movement, it felt like a shared moment of clarity.

#### **Eddie the Eagle: Resilience, Humour, and a Story That Stays With You**

Now... Eddie.

Before the conference, I'd say half the room were buzzing to hear him speak and the other half were quietly thinking, "Really? Eddie the Eagle?"

But by the end? 100% of delegates were captivated.

Hearing his story "from the horse's

mouth" was something else entirely. You could feel the room shift.

His journey — from a plasterer in Gloucester to Britain's most iconic Olympian and, later, a household name — is nothing short of extraordinary. What inspired everyone wasn't the ski jumps or the fame; it was the grit. The relentless belief that he belonged on that starting line. The willingness to be underestimated, mocked, written off... and still keep going.

Eddie talked about:

- resilience in the face of absolute brick walls
- pursuing a dream even when no one understands it
- embracing who you are — quirks, failures and all
- the joy of doing something simply because you love it

By the end, the whole room was hanging on every word. It turned sceptics into superfans. And it reminded every single person there — myself included — that motivation isn't always loud. Sometimes it's quiet, stubborn and deeply personal.

#### **Bringing Their Lessons Into the New Year**

Between Joe's practical wisdom and Eddie's extraordinary journey, this year's conference felt like a masterclass in New Year motivation — the real kind, the sustainable kind.

Here's what I'm taking forward, and what I'd love our patients to take with them too:

#### **1. Move with joy**

Not punishment, not pressure — joy.

A short walk, a stretch, a class with a friend. Joe's right: it's the small bits of movement that change everything.

#### **2. Eat to nourish, not to restrict**

Less ultra-processed food. More

real food. More awareness. Not perfection — progress.

#### **3. Sleep like your health depends on it**

Because it does. Prioritise the wind-down, the routine, the chance to let your body repair.

#### **4. Be kind to your mind**

Joe spoke beautifully about mental wellbeing. Movement, structure, nature, connection — these are medicine too.

#### **5. Don't underestimate what you're capable of**

If Eddie can jump off a 90-metre slope with a grin... you can stretch, strengthen, walk more, start new habits, or make positive changes this year.

#### **6. You don't need to do it alone**

Even Olympians and global fitness icons have teams, supporters, communities. And you have us.

#### **A New Year Invitation From Cleve Chiropractic**

At Cleve, we're proud to be part of your health journey — whether you're trying to get back to regular movement, recovering from injury, building better habits, or simply wanting to feel more like yourself again after winter.

January isn't about reinvention. It's about recalibration. Reconnection.

Renewed purpose.

And thanks to Joe and Eddie, I'm heading into 2025 reminded of just how capable people truly are — especially when they feel supported, understood and encouraged.

So here's to a year of small wins, resilient spirits, stronger bodies and healthier minds.

*Happy New Year — let's make it a brilliant one.*

— Tim

**President, British Chiropractic Association  
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### PLUMBING & HEATING



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### PLUMBING & HEATING

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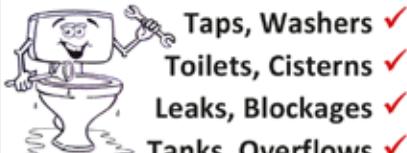
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