

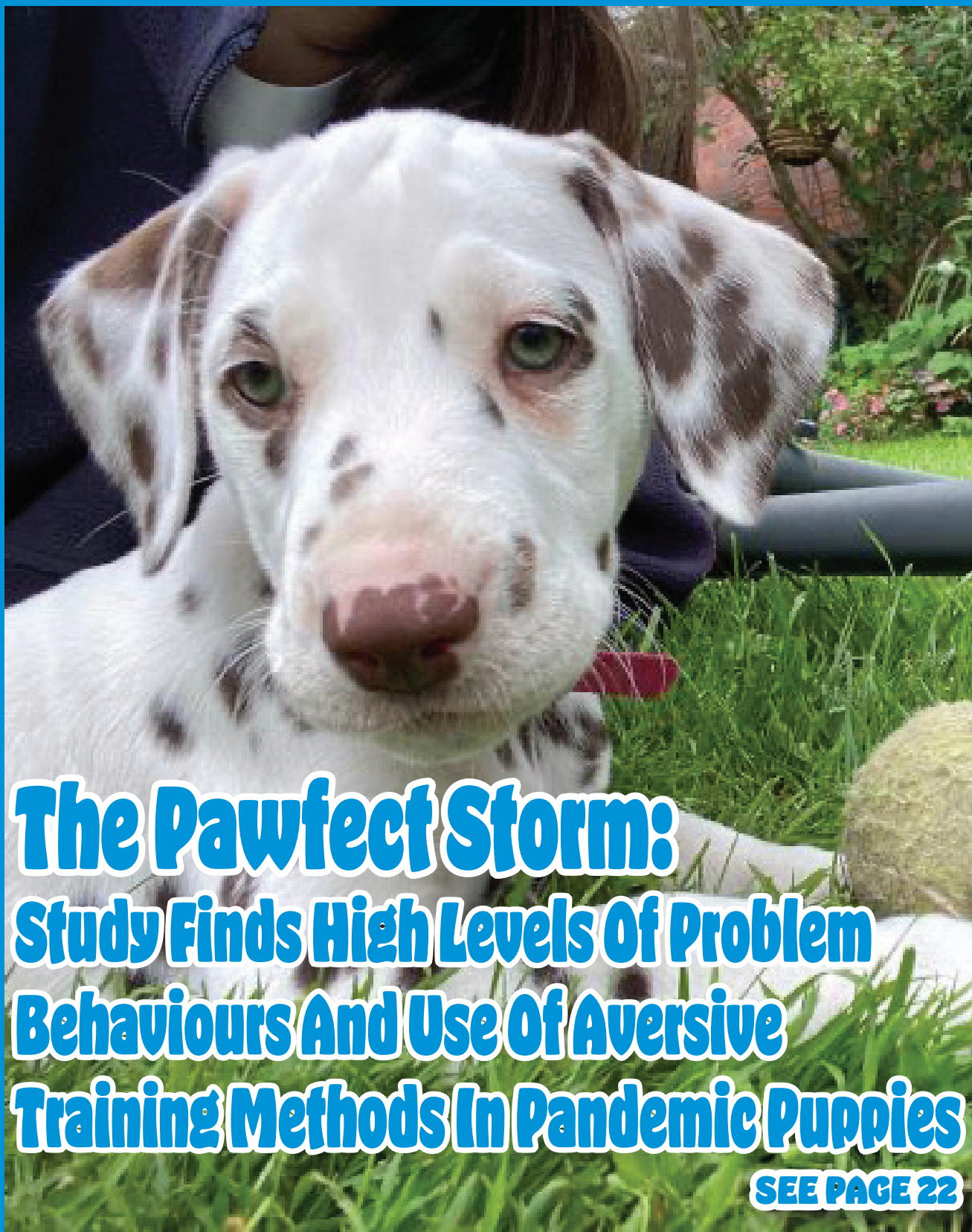
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Yorkshire Reporter[®]

FEBRUARY 2024

NORTH YORKSHIRE EDITION

Your Local Monthly Newspaper



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Linzi, Editor

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Council's Launch Is Set To Realise Millions Of Pounds In Savings

Millions of pounds in savings are set to be achieved through the launch of North Yorkshire Council to help to protect front-line services for communities and businesses across the county.

Detailed plans for the budget for the next financial year have been revealed and show the benefits that are due to be realised following the creation of the authority in April 2023.

The launch of the council has coincided with massive pressures on finances for the public sector across the country, and they are facing a predicted shortfall of more than £32 million in the budget for the second year of operation if savings are not made.

However, the vast majority of vital frontline services are set to be protected from swinging cuts that are having to be enforced by other local authorities, as the benefits of bringing the previous eight councils in North Yorkshire into a single organisation are becoming evident.

The launch of the new council has seen the possibility of achieving in the region of £40 million in savings, with more financial benefits set to be achieved over the coming years.

Council leader, Cllr Carl Les, said: "We have always been aware of the benefits of bringing services under the control of one council, and a great deal of work has been undertaken to ensure that these can come to fruition.

"The council is still not a year old, but we can see just what it means to have a single authority to cover the whole of North Yorkshire.

"As a council, we know the financial pressures which taxpayers are

facing, and we are committed to ensuring that every pound of residents' and businesses' money is used as effectively and efficiently as possible."

A medium-term blueprint has identified £46 million in savings across the next three financial years. Of that figure, more than £36 million is set to be brought about by the biggest overhaul of local government in North Yorkshire for almost half-a-century.

The savings brought about by local government reorganisation are not impacting on frontline services and are due to include efficiencies of almost £11.8 million from bringing together services, a saving of £6.7 million in support services and nearly £2 million in transforming technology and streamlining IT systems. Income generated through a more co-ordinated approach to fees and charges is set to see savings of £6.6 million achieved up until the end of the 2026/27 financial year.

Work is continuing to deliver further opportunities to ensure even greater savings with the launch of the new council, which will be developed over the next 12 months.

In addition, £3.1 million in savings have already been secured in the first year of the council's operation through reducing the number of senior managers alongside cutting the number of councillors from 319 to 90 members.

Alongside the benefits of local government re-organisation, which saw the merger of the previous North Yorkshire County Council and the seven former district and borough authorities, a further £10.1 million in savings is

predicted to be made over the next three financial years.

This includes cutting the cost of commissioning by £3.1 million by reducing, for instance, the number of high value care packages, and a further £1.2 million by bringing together highways services.

The opportunity to streamline the way in which key services ranging from waste and recycling to education, highways and planning are delivered to nearly 33,000 businesses and the 615,000 residents in North Yorkshire is seen as essential to helping to tackle the growing demands on the council's finances.

The proposed budget for 2024/25 would see a rise of council tax of 4.99 per cent, including a two per cent precept for adult social care, in North Yorkshire to counter the financial challenges, equating to an increase of £87.80 for an average Band D property to a total bill of £1,847.62.

However, other authorities in the country are proposing council tax increases as high as 10 per cent as they have been given special dispensation by the Government to raise more funding to tackle intense financial pressures caused partly by the ongoing high rates of inflation. Issues surrounding supply chains and rising staffing costs have also compounded financial pressures on the public sector nationally.

Increasing demand for support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) alongside a soaring need for adult social care have amplified the financial pressures in North Yorkshire.

The county has a higher average age of its residents than other parts of the country. According to the 2021 Census, a quarter of North Yorkshire's 615,000 residents are aged 65 and over, compared to a national average of 18.4 per cent.

The proposed budget would see £6.5 million of the council's reserves used to balance the books in the next financial year.

Council deputy leader, Cllr Gareth Dadd, who is also the executive member responsible for finance, said: "We have had to look extremely closely at the proposed budget and while we are acutely aware of the financial pressures which people are facing, we have to balance this with the fact that key services would have to be cut without a rise in council tax.

"We will continue to support those most in need in North Yorkshire, and we have managed to achieve savings that will protect the vast majority of frontline services.

"I would suggest that the proposed savings are among the least controversial of anywhere in the country, and this has been brought about thanks largely to the opportunities of local government reorganisation and also prudent management of our finances over many years."

Among the savings that are being proposed are changes to home to school transport which would mean that families are given funding for pupils to attend their nearest school rather than in the wider catchment area, and fees and charges are also set to increase to reflect inflation.

The proposed budget will be considered at a full council meeting this month, before it is adopted for the council.

The scale of operations across England's largest county means they have an overall spend of about £1.4 billion, including £343 million on schools.

Go-Ahead For Transformation Of North Yorkshire's Leisure Services

One of the biggest council-led leisure operations in the country is to be transformed into a new sport and active well-being service.

Councillors have given the go-ahead for the new service which will see a greater focus on health and well-being, providing more opportunities for people to participate and be active and focus on addressing inequalities.

Leisure centres will be transformed into active well-being hubs operating alongside more locally based services and activities and there will be increased support for community-based sport.

Members of the executive gave the go-ahead for the introduction of a new delivery model, which triggers the start of the next phase of the authority's strategic leisure review.

Councillors were told that work so far has included input from local communities and sports groups, as well as stakeholders like Sport England and North Yorkshire Sport. A cross-party working group of councillors has also visited sites across the county to help shape the proposals.

Executive member for culture, leisure and housing, Cllr Simon Myers, said: "With one of the largest leisure portfolios in the country we now have the opportunity to transform the way we deliver those services and put us at the forefront of a national movement towards improving physical and mental health and well-being.

"We will be creating a service bespoke to North Yorkshire with locally-based services and targeted provision, with particular emphasis on the needs of groups that may face barriers to participation. The UK population is 20 per cent less active than it was in the 1960s and we want to reverse that by providing the high quality, accessible and inclusive services people want, where they want them.



"We also want to work in greater partnership with the NHS and social care providers as we recognise the benefits of physical activity in preventing and managing long term health conditions.

"This is a very exciting time for leisure in North Yorkshire – local government reorganisation has given us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to look at our expansive portfolio and consolidate the services by building on best practice to create a new sport and active well-being service."

Currently the council's leisure portfolio - which includes 19 leisure centres, 16 swimming pools, three well-being hubs, a nursery and

Harrogate's Turkish Baths are run by five different operators. Those arrangements will be moved to the single in-house model in a phased way – with the aim of the service being fully integrated and transformed by 2028. The first change will be for services in the former Selby district where the contract with IHL comes to an end this year.

The next phase of work is to create a leisure investment strategy, progressing work already undertaken during recent asset condition surveys at the leisure centres. This will look at the condition of each site, their future roles and sustainability as part of the new delivery model and identify sites where investment is needed.

Adult Education Service Making 'Significant Progress'



Significant improvements in education for adults have been recognised by independent inspectors with wide-ranging work helping to ensure the service is more effective for communities across North Yorkshire.

The focus of a recent monitoring visit by Ofsted was to evaluate the progress made in resolving four areas for improvement identified during a previous inspection in February last year.

Now, it has been recognised that the council made effective progress against the four themes outlined in last year's inspection:

- Ensuring processes are in place to maintain quality in adult education
- Progressing and aligning the curriculum
- Improving written communication in apprenticeships
- Integration of fundamental British values into adult learning

The Ofsted report from the monitoring visit in December 2023 highlighted that actions are already having a beneficial impact on learners. The inspectors noted that the improvements are sustainable and based on thorough quality assurance procedures for adult learning and apprenticeship provision.

The report highlighted that career progression is a focus with education and training programmes having a clear pathway. The Ofsted report noted that tutors engage in rich discussions with learners and apprentices, facilitating comprehensive career planning which sets clear goals and successfully addresses identified skills gaps.

The adult learning curriculum has also been praised for deepening the understanding of fundamental British values. The Ofsted report noted the fact tutors effectively utilise real-world events to integrate democratic principles into various subjects.

While progress has been made in improving apprentices' written communication skills, the council recognise the need for further training. Apprenticeship assessors have completed valuable training, particularly in correcting spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Apprentices now demonstrate increased proficiency in internal and external written communications.

Executive member for education, learning and skills, Cllr Annabel Wilkinson, said: "The recent monitoring visit and subsequent report reflects our dedication to providing quality education and ensuring continuous improvement.

"We are committed to addressing the identified areas for improvement and ensuring that adult learners and apprentices in North Yorkshire receive the best possible education to support their future careers and lives."

The council's assistant director for education and skills, Amanda Newbold, added: "I'm delighted to see that Ofsted inspectors recognise that our strategy for improvement is paying off. When the initial visit was taken, we were at the start of a journey of transition.

"The strategy and subsequent work we had already started to implement is well under way now. The commitment to continuous improvement is evident in the positive progress observed during the recent monitoring visit, which highlights too that the strategy is working."

She added: "We will remain focused on our mission to provide high-quality education for adults, aligning with the evolving needs of our residents and communities."

Multi-Million Pound Maritime Hub To Boost Career Opportunities

A £10 million investment will be made into a North Yorkshire town to place it at the forefront of the expanding offshore renewable industries and help to boost job opportunities for the local community.

North Yorkshire Council are starting a pre-planning consultation on a new Whitby Maritime Hub, which will provide training and certification opportunities for the maritime, marine and offshore industries, to residents of Whitby and the wider area.

The funding for the project will come from the £17.1 million that was given to Whitby as part of the Government's Town Deal scheme which awarded the town as well as Scarborough a total of £37.3 million in 2021.

Building on Whitby's proud fishing and sailing heritage, the hub in Endeavour Wharf will address a local need to develop a better supply of technical abilities in the maritime sector and put the town at the forefront of the growing renewable energy sector.

Additionally, the hub will also provide accommodation for maritime businesses and service providers to further support economic growth in the Whitby area.

Executive member for open to business, Cllr Derek Bastiman, said: "This is a £10 million investment and we believe the hub will become a renowned centre of maritime training and enterprise which strengthens and supports the local seafaring sector.

"It will open the door to new economic and tourism growth for Whitby and Scarborough as well as the wider area and help to create the next generation of skilled apprentices and professions by providing first-class training and facilities for a range of maritime industries.

"Young people will have a route into highly-skilled maritime trades, like the growing offshore renewables sector, from on their doorstep without the need to travel out of the area."

The hub has been designed to blend in with the existing views of the town.

Workshops on the hub's ground and first floors will house the current and new wharf-based operations and functions of the Harbour Authority.

There will be space for classroom-based training, engineering workshops and marine biology laboratories, offering opportunities for training and employment in areas ranging from marine biology to emerging industries, such as off-shore wind.

The second floor will be an office space for marine-based start-up businesses and other maritime industries. The space is intended to be occupied by local, regional and national businesses and organisations, making Whitby a hub of maritime activity.

This will enable new and innovative commercial opportunities in the maritime and marine sectors to support growth in the local economy and reduce reliance on seasonal employment

The manager of Whitby Lobster Hatchery, Joe Redfern, said: "We still have a thriving fishing industry dependent on crab and lobster stocks.

"Bringing together different organisations all together under one roof in the maritime hub will provide an amazing opportunity for young people in Whitby to explore a career in these industries."

The consultation is now open and will run for four weeks, closing on Friday, 9 February.

Cllr Neil Swannick, the member for the Whitby Streonshalh division on North Yorkshire Council, said: "The hub will give Whitby an economic boost and move the town away from a reliance on seasonal tourism and hospitality.

"The consultation is now open, and I would urge people to give us their feedback as we head to the planning application stage."

Libraries Offer Free Access To 60 Years Of Screen History

A new streaming service showcasing six decades of rich film and television history is now on offer to library-goers across North Yorkshire.

The British Film Institute (BFI) Replay service is available to public libraries, showcasing about 100,000 digitised videos and television programmes.

The footage includes soap operas such as Coronation Street, Brookside and Crossroads, as well as Albion Market, General Hospital and Family Pride, the first British-Asian soap opera. The collection includes children's TV with episodes of Metal Mickey and Animal Kwackers.

Filmmakers and actors explain their craft in a series of vintage interviews with the likes of Robin Williams and Ben Kingsley.

Ground-breaking multicultural TV from the 1970s onwards is explored through a number of magazine shows intended to address diverse audiences. This includes Central TV's Midlands multicultural arts review series Here and Now, featuring a young Benjamin Zephaniah, the renowned poet who died in December.

BFI Replay also celebrates the heyday of regional television, including popular figures such as Richard Whiteley in Yorkshire TV's Calendar People interviewing famous names from the region.

Executive member for libraries, Cllr Simon Myers, said: "I'm

delighted to see the introduction of this new service to our libraries, which are a fantastic resource to gain access to culture, information and creativity.

"The BFI Replay service offers something unique and is another asset for our communities to enjoy. I would encourage anybody with an interest in social history from the last 60 years to explore the collection."

The clips cover screen history from the 1960s to the 2010s, offering a glimpse into Britain's past, people and places. They record and reveal an era of rapid social, industrial, political and technological change.

Drawn from the collections of the BFI National Archive and partner UK Regions and Nations Film Archives, they also include material from ITV and Channel 4, revealing a picture of public life in the video era.

Anybody who signs into a library computer using their library card can access the streaming service.

North Yorkshire's library service offers an array of free research websites, including Ancestry, Find My Past, the British Newspaper Archive, GreenFile and the 1921 Census. See more details about libraries via;

www.northyorks.gov.uk/leisure-tourism-and-culture/libraries

Development Of Beccs At Drax Power Station Projected To Save UK £15bn And Offset Carbon Emissions Equivalent To Taking 3 Million Cars Off The Road



New analysis by Baringa and commissioned by Drax Group (Drax) - The Value of BECCS at Drax Power Station - finds that Drax's proposals for bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) could save the UK up to £15bn in whole economy costs between 2030 and 2050.

This saving is equivalent to around £700m per annum, or £25 per household per year, and could help provide a more efficient pathway to meeting the UK's Net Zero targets.

BECCS is currently the only credible technology that can create carbon removals while also supporting UK energy security by generating renewable electricity. Drax could initially convert two of its generating units to the technology at its North Yorkshire site.

Baringa's findings demonstrate that without BECCS at Drax, meeting carbon reduction targets is more complicated and expensive for the UK. Government and carbon savings would be needed in other sectors. Including, for example, investment in synthetic natural gas production facilities costing £8.5bn, committing to 735,000 more heat pumps beyond existing stretch targets, costing £5bn, amongst other measures.

Will Gardiner, CEO Drax Group, said: "Climate change is the greatest challenge we face and the UK needs to use every option available to reduce carbon emissions and reach Net Zero as urgently as possible.

"This research shows BECCS at Drax Power Station offers the most cost-effective, straightforward and efficient way to help the country meet climate

targets and could save billions of pounds, remove millions of tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere and support the UK's energy security.

"To hit the UK's annual carbon removal target, we need to build BECCS at Drax Power Station. Policy support for deploying BECCS grew in 2023, including the publication of the Biomass Strategy, and we believe that we will see the launch of a consultation on the bridging mechanism shortly."

With around 7 GW of nuclear and coal capacity expected to close between 2024 and 2030, and growing uncertainty around timelines for new nuclear deployment, Baringa's research underscores the critical role of Drax in delivering both cost effective energy security today and following potential BECCS conversion, in the future. The power station generates around 4% of the country's power and 9% of its renewable electricity by output.

The report also shows that the implementation of a bridging mechanism between the end of Drax's renewable contracts in 2027 and the potential start of BECCS operations could save around £2bn over the period, if gas prices remained similar to the current winter period. This is the equivalent to reducing each UK household's yearly energy bills by £5. Under Baringa's model, if gas prices spiked over one winter period, as they did in 2021/22, then the mechanism could save households around £3.5bn in one winter period alone.

Drax investment in UK BECCS could also deliver up to 10,000 high-skilled jobs across the UK at the peak of the project's construction, as well as safeguarding up to 7,000 direct and supply chain jobs.

Two York City Centre Storm Overflows To Be Improved

Yorkshire Water is improving the performance of two storm overflows in York that discharge into watercourses in the city during periods of prolonged or heavy rainfall.

The two projects, totalling a £170,000 investment, will focus on the overflow under the Boots store on Coney Street, which discharges to the Ouse, and the Fishergate overflow on Fishergate, which discharges into the Foss.

A significant proportion of overflows at these two sites are caused by water from the rivers entering the sewer network following heavy or prolonged rain in the area.

Modelling indicates the work could half discharges from the Coney Street overflow and reduce overflows by approximately 10% at Fishergate.

The work is part of a two-year £180m investment by Yorkshire Water to reduce discharges into watercourses across Yorkshire. The utility has also submitted plans to Ofwat for approval, outlining a further £1.4bn investment in the reduction of overflows between 2025 and 2030.

Martin Ineson, project manager at Yorkshire Water, said: "We have committed to reducing discharges into watercourses across the region, as we know it is an issue that is important to our customers.

"In York, many of the discharges are due to the river flowing into the sewer network, as we experienced in recent weeks, following a prolonged period of heavy rain. The work we are carrying out on Coney Street and Fishergate will limit these instances and reduce overflows into both the Foss and Ouse. As well as these projects, we are planning more investment in York's overflows in the next two years and beyond to further reduce discharges."

Work on the two sites will include:

- Altering the operation of the Coney Street overflow, meaning greater flows of wastewater would be required before overflows occur.
- Upgrades to stop the river inundating the sewer and to prevent blockages, which can also cause an increase in discharges to the watercourse from Fishergate.

Yorkshire Charities Received Over £32,000



■ A collection of gifts from Skipton Step into Action's elf appeal, which received a donation of £2,000

With its largest year of donations to date, Skipton Building Society Charitable Foundation has donated £32,797 to Yorkshire-based charities in 2023.

Throughout 2023, the Foundation has supported charities across Yorkshire. From supporting the homeless, baby banks to vulnerable children, the Skipton Building Society Charitable Foundation has supported 18 charities providing vital services across the region.

The year saw the Foundation's largest year of donations since its records began, with more than £457,481.27 being shared amongst a total of 230 charities in 2023. This is a 54% increase from 2022's donation of £295,233.26.

The quarterly donations made by the Skipton Building Society Charitable Foundation provides vital cash boosts to charities across the UK, with a focus on causes providing support to children, young people and the elderly.

Alison Davies, Chair of the Foundation, said: "It has been a big year for the Foundation. We have received the largest number of applications and seen our biggest annual donation to charities since its creation.. We have even reached the milestone of £3 million donated over almost 24 years. It's clear that the economic environment continues to be a challenge for the charity sector and that's been reflected in this year's influx of requests."

"The Board and I remain committed to supporting as many charities as we can as they continue to navigate through the effects post-Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis. It's a privilege to be able to support so many hard-working charities across our heartland. And thanks to the Skipton Building Society's generous increase in their donation last year, we have been able to consider and support even more charities in need of funding."

The Skipton Building Society Charitable Foundation was founded in 2000 and to date, has donated over £3 million to charities across the UK. Skipton Building Society, part of the Skipton Group, makes an annual payment to the charitable foundation to fund all the donations. Funding applications are invited four times a year, with the next meeting taking place in March 2024.

Listed Places Of Worship In Skipton And Ripon Awarded £130,000

Listed places of worship across Skipton and Ripon have been awarded £134,311 since August 2022 as part of the £42 million Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme.

The scheme, which recognises the particular challenges of looking after historic buildings, aims to redress financial shortfalls and support listed and protected architecture for the benefit of present and future generations.

It provides grants towards the VAT paid on repairs and maintenance to the nation's listed places of worship, of any religious group or denomination, and handles around 7,000 claims every year.

Those responsible for looking after listed places of worship can find out more at www.listed-places-of-worship-grant.dcms.gov.uk.

MP Julian Smith said, "We have some cherished, historic buildings in Skipton and Ripon. Schemes like this are key to protecting that heritage for future generations to enjoy.

"I'm grateful to my colleagues at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport for recognising this and for their work safeguarding our history."

Act Now For A Warmer Home – With Available Help From The Warm Home Discount, Free Advice Line & Energy Saving Packs



With the sub-zero temperatures gripping Yorkshire, households have been urged to check and register if they are eligible for the Warm Home Discount from the Government before 29 February.

The Warm Homes Discount is available from the Government and is a £150 discount rebate on energy bills to households who are most at risk of fuel poverty. Most of the eligible households will automatically receive the energy bill support. But some households who would have already received an initial letter, will need to confirm their details before the end of February.

West Yorkshire energy experts YES Energy Solutions is on hand to help households during the cold weather to save money on their energy bills with their UK wide free Warmer Homes Advice Line to combat the cold.

The growing team of friendly energy experts answering the queries on the YES Warmer Homes Advice Line can offer help and advice on staying warm and saving money. By calling the line, households can get easy tips and confidential advice to help, as well as discover free funding opportunities for home improvements for insulation, new boilers and more. Since the advice line launched in early 2023 the team have helped hundreds of households across the UK and YES as a company has helped over 10,000 people in the last three years alone. The free funding comes from government, local authority and energy company obligation schemes to help as many people as possible to have a warm home this winter, meaning every household - both homeowners and renters - can get the advice from the YES team of energy experts.

The team at YES Energy Solutions has also curated a completely free energy saving pack filled with simple tips, practical tools, and useful gadgets, designed to both help families make their homes more energy-efficient and help cut down energy costs. So far, the community company has given away over 4,500 packs up and down the country. Residents are urged to text ADVICE to 82228 or call 03301 359 110 to receive their pack and get tailored support.

Duncan McCombie from YES Energy Solutions, says, "It's tough out there, and we understand the huge challenges posed by high energy prices and the cost-of-living crisis across the county. If you're struggling with your bills or just want some help getting to grips with your energy use ready for the winter, we're here for you. We want to help people understand how they can manage their bills and access funding which could include free financial support for loft insulation or a new boiler. Our support means people and families will improve their energy efficiency in their homes and improve their household budget for the longer-term."

"We've invested over £200,000 into creating a free advice line, accessible to all, to help more people be warmer and help make their bills more affordable. Our service is completely free because we're a community company established to assist families, not to generate profits. We've been running for over 20 years and have helped thousands of families in that time. Last year alone we helped over 6,000 families to reduce energy use and make bills more affordable. From us, you will receive honest, independent advice and support from our friendly team. Please call today on 03301 359 110 or text ADVICE to 82228 to get support this winter."

Dangers Of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Highlighted During Cold Weather

As winter continues, Northern Gas Networks is urging people across the North of England to familiarise themselves with the potential causes of carbon monoxide poisoning and take some simple steps to keep them and their families safe this winter.

WHAT IS CARBON MONOXIDE?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous, colourless and odourless gas that is produced when carbon fuels are burnt. It can leak from incorrectly fitted, badly repaired or poorly maintained gas appliances as well as flues, chimneys and blocked vents.

You can't see or smell it, so you can't detect it if it begins to build up in your home, and if you breathe it in, it can make you seriously ill.

THE CAUSES OF CO POISONING AND STEPS TO TAKE TO STAY SAFE

• CAR EXHAUST FUMES

A build-up of car exhaust fumes can cause CO poisoning, and on cold winter mornings many of us spend time warming up our car engines before setting off. To avoid this danger, never leave your car running in an enclosed garage – even with the doors open – as it only takes a couple of minutes for a large amount of CO to build up in a small space.

• GAS BOILERS

Our boilers work extra hard over winter to heat our homes and water, but badly maintained or poorly fitted boilers can cause CO poisoning. To make sure your boiler is safe, have it serviced every year by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

• GAS FIRES AND COOKERS

Older, faulty or badly installed gas fires and cookers can be dangerous, so you need to take care when using them. Lazy yellow and orange flames, as well as a pilot light that frequently blows out, can be a sign that your cooker

or fire isn't working properly and could be leaking CO. If you notice these signs, turn off the appliance immediately and have it checked by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

• LOG BURNERS AND OPEN FIRES

Log burners and open fires help to keep many of us cosy over the winter, but they need a clear, clean, well-functioning flue or chimney to allow smoke to escape and ensure CO doesn't build up inside your home. To stay safe when keeping warm, have your chimney swept at least once a year by a reputable chimney sweep.

INVEST IN AN AUDIBLE CO ALARM

As well as taking the steps above, one of the easiest ways to stay CO safe this winter is to invest in an audible CO alarm. Similar to a smoke alarm and costing around £15, CO alarms are activated when CO is detected in the air and will sound an alarm to alert you of the danger. They're small and easy to install, and you should have at least one on each floor. If you have a gas fire, log burner or open fire, it's a good idea to have one in the room it's in too.

THE SIGNS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING AND WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT IT

Signs of CO poisoning include headaches, dizziness, nausea, breathlessness, collapse or loss of consciousness.

If you think you may have carbon monoxide poisoning, immediately turn off the appliance you think may be causing it, open windows and doors, leave the building and seek urgent medical advice. You must also call the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999 and an engineer will come straight out to investigate and make the situation safe. This line is in operation 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

To find out more about how to stay CO safe this winter, visit: <https://brmw.ch/21wES7y>

Blind Cord Safety

 Office for Product Safety & Standards

Looped blind cords and chains can strangle young children

Secure them out of the reach of little hands

✓ Keep them safe, make it safe

Blind cords and loops pose a potential danger to young children but there are steps people can take to reduce the risks. New blinds with looped cords must have child safety devices installed at the point of manufacture or be sold with the blind.

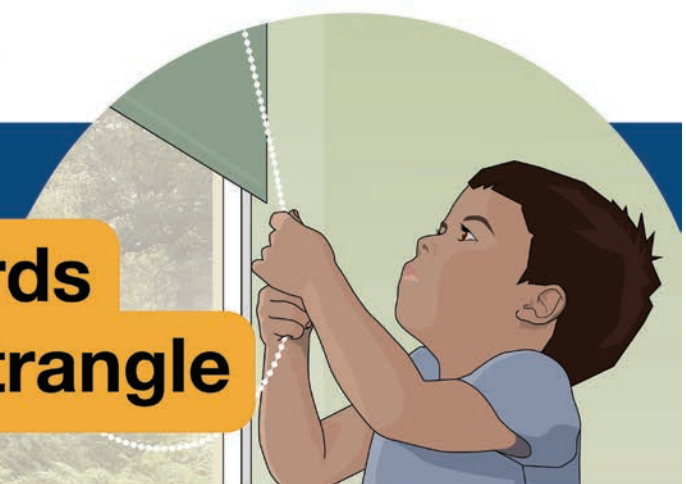
FIT A TIDY, TENSIONER OR CLEAT

Tidies and tensioners should be firmly fixed to an adjoining surface to ensure that the cord or chain is permanently held tight.

Cleats should be positioned out of children's reach on an adjacent surface that is at least 1.5 metres from the floor. After blind use, cords should be fastened up in a figure of eight making sure all the spare cord is secured on the cleat.

MOVE FURNITURE AWAY FROM WINDOWS

Children love to climb so keep furniture away from blinds. This includes cots, beds, highchairs, and play pens.





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Call For New School Governor Volunteers

Looking for a great way to build your professional skills? Becoming a School Governor could help you take the next step in your career.

If you're looking to develop your career with leadership experience outside of work, City of York Council has a number of volunteering opportunities available that will also enable you to support your local community.

Schools across York and the surrounding area are looking for governors from a broad range of professional and personal backgrounds to join their boards.

The role provides an excellent opportunity for people to gain real world experience in senior level roles in order to help progress their own careers. There is no requirement for governors to have a formal understanding of the educational system and some employers even provide 'reasonable time off' to allow employees to complete their governor duties.

Full training and support is available and individuals with experience in the following areas would be particularly welcome:

- education
- leadership roles
- human resources
- legal
- finance
- building maintenance
- corporate governance

As part of a new campaign, the council is sharing experiences from existing governors to highlight the many benefits of being a school governor.

Councillor Bob Webb, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education, said:

"School Governors and trustees play a hugely important role in our local communities.

"They help shape the educational experiences of young people across the city, influencing how they develop into adulthood.

"Along with offering a great way for anyone to get involved in their local community, the leadership and board-level experience these roles offer is a great way to build your professional expertise too. I would strongly encourage anyone thinking about developing their careers to think about what a great opportunity these roles could be."

Governors are required to attend board meetings, which are usually held on an evening, to make important decisions about the development of their school. They also need to get to know their school or academy well, which may involve visiting the school during the day and attending events to meet staff and parents.

Anyone interested in learning more about becoming a school governor can visit the council website, email governance.service@york.gov.uk or telephone: 01904 554210.

Saint Catherine's Hospice Seeks Local Heroes

Saint Catherine's Hospice, a cornerstone of community care, is asking for local residents to volunteer their time and support to help them open their shops over more days.

Currently the charity shops are open five or six days a week, providing essential funding for the services they can offer to those suffering from life limiting illnesses in the local community. They must raise £11,200 a day to run services and need to look at increasing our opening hours to maximise the income coming into the hospice.

"We are so excited about the prospect of extending our charity shop hours to seven days a week and believe that with the support of our community, we can achieve this goal." expressed Jennifer Rowan, Retail Operations Team Lead at Saint Catherine's Hospice.

"Volunteers play a pivotal role in our organisation, especially across our retail operations. Quite simply without volunteers we wouldn't be able to run our shops. As well as the increased funding coming in from opening 7 days a week, we also know how important our shops are for the local communities and we know there's a need to be open and available to our supporters as much as possible."

Individuals interested in contributing their time to this meaningful cause are encouraged to contact Saint Catherine's Hospice.

To learn more about this volunteer opportunity, please contact 01723 351421 or via email at volunteering@saintcatherines.org.uk. Your involvement can make a substantial difference in the lives of those we aim to serve.

Letters To Editor;



Dear Editor,

As one of the country's largest youth organisations, we at St John Ambulance are incredibly proud of our young people and their achievements.

In 2023 alone, 2,000 of our Badgers and Cadets (aged 5-17) gave an astonishing 54,000 hours of their time over 12 months, covering events, training, teaching first aid and helping their communities. That works out to over six years of volunteering in just 12 months.

We want to continue helping our young volunteers thrive and would like your readers to consider volunteering, themselves, as part of the Youth Team. They'll be instrumental in helping the next generation of first aiders develop their skills and help save lives.

They can find out more and apply via our website at www.sja.org.uk/youthteam. We have opportunities all over the country and they don't need any previous first aid experience.

Readers can also help us with a donation. A generous gift of £15 could help us cover the cost of one first aid lesson, enabling St John to empower young people with essential lifesaving skills. And a gift of £50 today could contribute to training a Youth Leader who could learn how to equip hundreds of young people with crucial first aid knowledge and leadership skills that last a lifetime. Those who wish to help us in this way can visit www.sja.org.uk/donate/. We're immensely grateful for whatever amount they can spare.

However you choose to support St John Ambulance, we wish you a healthy and happy 2024 and our team looks forward to seeing and helping you in communities around the country.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Atkinson

National Youth Operations Lead

RNIB Invites Youngsters With A Vision Impairment To Enter Writing Competition Judged By Michael Morpurgo

Dear Editor,

Gearing up for the celebrations of this year's World Book Day on 7 March 2024, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) is inviting children with a vision impairment to submit a piece of creative writing for its World Book Day writing competition.

The final competition winners will be judged by multi-award-winning children's writer Sir Michael Morpurgo – author of books including War Horse and Private Peaceful. The overall winner will receive ten signed copies of Michael Morpurgo's books.

Writing submissions must be on the theme of 'adventure'. Taking the lead from RNIB's motto, 'See differently', the charity wants to celebrate different ways of seeing, sensing and taking part in an adventure that children have been on, or that they can imagine.

No previous experience of creative writing is required and RNIB is keen to receive submissions from as many young people aged 5-12 as possible.

Writing and being creative is hugely beneficial and enjoyable for everyone, especially when going through big life-changes such as growing up. Hearing the unique perspectives of young writers who have a vision impairment will be a real privilege and I can't wait to read the fabulous work that I'm sure will be created. We are delighted that Michael Morpurgo has agreed to pick the winner for us as part of his support for RNIB's World Book Day celebrations.

Competition Rules

- The competition is open to any child or young person between the ages of 5-12 years with a vision impairment in the UK.
- The competition runs to midnight 18 February 2024.

- Send in an original piece of writing up to 500 words in a Word document, MP3 audio or MP4 video, via email.
- The piece of writing must be based on the theme 'Adventure'.
- Submissions must be in English.
- The use of AI, such as ChatGPT is not permitted.
- One submission per author: this will be the first entry emailed to us.
- Email all entries with the subject of "WBD competition" to lara.marshall@rnib.org.uk.
- The top three entries will be sent to award-winning author Michael Morpurgo for him to choose the final winner.
- All entries submitted will be read and shortlisted by RNIB's library team.

Prizes

- The winner will receive a signed set of ten of Michael Morpurgo's books, in their preferred format.
- Some suggestions to inspire you, but please feel free to come up with your own ideas too:

- Travelling somewhere new on holiday.
- Having a crazy dream.
- Encountering a strange individual.
- Finding an interesting artefact. Going on a quest to find mysterious treasure.
- Finding yourself lost in a place you've never been before.
- Having to save a friend in peril.

Good luck!

Lara Marshall, Library Engagement Manager, RNIB



York Fashion Week Extends Branded Merchandise And Announces 2024 Part One Dates

York Fashion Week (YFW) has extended its official apparel in a collaboration with the charity, 'Smart Works Leeds'. Nicky Hayer, Creative Director at YFW, was head of creative on the range, which includes four stunning T-shirts emblazoned with nods to life affirming quotes from famous people including 'Think for yourself. Aloud,' by Coco Chanel and "I know who I am" by Michele Obama. The T-shirts, which are available in navy and white, can also be ordered in both a casual or cinched fit, and can be ordered via the website with £5.00 from each purchase being donated to Smart Works Leeds, a dynamic, high profile and fast-growing charity that dresses and coaches unemployed women for success at their job interview.

Nicky Hayer explained: "When I met the Smart Works Leeds team, I was blown away by their enthusiasm and the work that they deliver. They're changing lives, and the way that they use fashion and style to empower felt very in line with the ethos of York Fashion Week. A collection of collaboration tees is a really beautiful way to celebrate them and is a great starting point to our working relationship. The quotes have been taken from speeches or interviews that left the audience feeling inspired, and that are all about making an impact, believing in yourself and achieving great things."

The new collection complements the existing range of YFW branded merchandise including hoodies and T-shirts available in shades of black, white, cranberry, mustard, and sand and bottle green as well as a bestselling black tote bag. The stylish apparel comprises collections such as "Not New York" and "Model Life".

YFW received much praise from its community for launching the new collection in a gender inclusive manner, which meant offering the styles in either casual or cinched, so the customer can choose which fit is right for their body shape. The YFW merchandise can be purchased from the York Fashion Week website.

The launch coincides with the announcement of the dates for York Fashion Week 2024 Part One – 2nd-6th May 2024 - which will once again take over the historic city. It will bring together a community of talented creatives,

fashionistas, stylists and volunteers passionate about flying the flag for fashion with a particular focus on grassroots and student design.

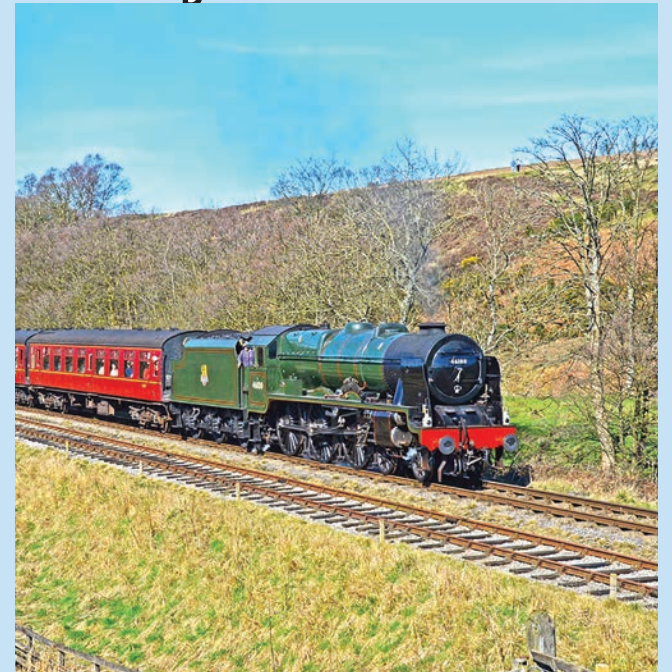
York Fashion Week launched in 2018, and even with a two year break due to Covid, the event has grown year on year. It has been the first to host runway shows in iconic venues such as York Art Gallery and The Guildhall. YFW has worked with brands such as Rolls-Royce Motorcars Leeds and Gary James McQueen, and has welcomed guests from as far as China to the events. Since its growth, the event is proudly sponsored by NIMA, York Bid and MARK. With Associate Sponsors including Rae & Rae Opticians, House of Dandelions and Party Octopus.



A series of networking events will take place across the city in the run up to York Fashion Week 2024 Part One. These events provide a platform for individuals to learn more about how they can get involved with YFW and for existing members to come together to forge plans for the runway shows.

To sign up to the newsletter for further information and to register your interest in attending the networking events then please visit www.yorkfashionweek.co.uk

Steam Locomotive Royal Scot To Replace Britannia For February Half-Term Services



The NYMR have announced that the iconic No. 46100 Royal Scot will now be the guest locomotive during February half-term for a series of special pre-booked services. Named Royal Scot after the Royal Scots regiment, the original 6100 was the first of its class, built in 1927 by the North British Locomotive Company in Glasgow.

No. 46100 Royal Scot is replacing the previously announced guest locomotive, No. 70000 Britannia; work on No. 70000 has been delayed due to awaiting parts needed for vital repairs.

Alongside the seat-allocated tickets on board the Royal Scot, families can take part in a range of half-term activities, including a fun-packed interactive fairy tale themed show on 13th February, for two to seven-year-olds, with Story Craft Theatre, in the cosy classroom at Pickering Station.

Interactive signal box demonstrations are also on offer for families to experience the inner workings, while crafty corner sessions will encourage children to unleash their artistic side by creating masterpieces inspired by the golden age of steam locomotives, on 12th & 16th February.

Laura Strangeway, Acting CEO at NYMR said: "Sometimes these things happen in the railway world with delays to repairs, but we are so excited to be open over February half-term, and even more so now that Royal Scot is involved. It's set to be a real spectacle."

For more information and to book your tickets visit, www.nymr.co.uk/royal-scot

Tickets are £45 for adults, kids go free (aged 0-15), and Member rates are available. Return visits using an Annual Pass are valid for these special services, they must be booked online with your unique code. When paying the standard £45 rate (not Member rate), you get 12 months free, at no extra cost, to hop on and off the standard Bronze, Silver, and Gold services in the 2024 season.

BBC Announces Recipients Of Small Indie Fund 2024

The BBC has announced the 57 companies supported through this year's Small Indie Fund.

Launched in 2020, the Small Indie Fund supports the growth of small independent production companies from across the UK with turnovers below £10m across Drama, Entertainment, Comedy, Factual, Daytime and Children's – and for the first time this year, BBC Film.

The 2024 cohort sees the highest ever number of diverse-led producers – with 77% (44) companies having at least two individuals in specific leadership roles from one of the following under-represented groups: Black, Asian or minority ethnic, Disabled and/or Working class. The Small Indie Fund also continues to focus support for companies based in the Nations & Regions with 67% (38) companies based outside of London, with an increase in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the West Midlands this year.

All recipients receive strategic investment and a BBC commissioning editor as a mentor to help them grow. With the inclusion of BBC Film, the companies will receive around £1.5m in total this year.

Mark Perry, Flashing Lights Media, said, "As the makers of successful CBeebies Magic Hands, we're delighted Flashing Lights Media has been chosen as a beneficiary of the BBC Small Indie Fund. As a deaf-led company, we are proud to champion diversity and encourage new perspectives on the world around us. We collaborate with the best to make children's series, formats, documentaries and aspire to do so much more. We cannot wait to use the BBC Indie Fund to accelerate our growth and reach new audiences."

The BBC had an unprecedented number of applications for the Fund this year, and in response to that BBC Commissioning will be offering small indies a range of additional insight sessions across all genres with the aim of supporting future pitches. More details will follow in the coming weeks.

Matt Travers, Head of Business, TV Commissioning and Business Development, says: "We thank all producers who applied to the Small Indie Fund this year. We know it remains a challenging time for the sector, and the Fund demonstrates our continued commitment to supporting smaller producers, right across the UK."

Emma Kayee Head of Production, BBC Film says: "The sheer

number of strong applications we received is testament both to the outstanding talent in our independent film sector and the unprecedented challenges so many producers are currently facing. We're excited to be working with these ambitious, forward-thinking companies and we can't wait to see what they do next."

Founders Rosie Crerar and Ciara Barry of Scotland-based barry crerar: "BBC Small Indie Fund support comes at a crucial time for barry crerar. We are proud of our ongoing commitment to authored, groundbreaking storytelling that seeks to inspire, provoke and entertain, working with women and underrepresented collaborators both in front and behind the camera. As a Glasgow born indie that works predominantly with Scottish based talent, we are so delighted to have BBC Small Indie support across our work in both Film and Drama this year and can't wait to get started!"

The companies in Yorkshire selected for the 2024 Small Indie Fund

- Candour Productions Ltd
- ClockWork Films
- Public Dreams Ltd

GARDENING

Raindrops On Snowdrops And Wind On The Willows, Brown Paper Seed Packets Tied Up With String, These Are A Few Of My Favourite Things



BY MARTIN S WALKER

As the days draw out my thoughts turn to what I should be doing in the garden, but like most I find it hard to venture out if its pouring with rain or icy outside, preferring instead to delay my exodus into the garden by making another cup of tea (other hot beverages accepted). I used to work with a gardener at Golden Acre Park in the early 1970's who always had a pint pot of tea at break time, a huge mug that would last a good 15 minutes. These days there are fancy insulated cups which are supposed to keep the drink hot for longer and designed for people on the go, but let's face it the pleasure of the cup of tea is as much for relaxation and contemplation as a warm drink.



Enough of my daydreaming its time to tackle a few jobs in the garden, wrap up warm and grab your secateurs and shears, its time to start trimming back grasses, but a word of caution, not all grasses need cutting back, if the grass is an evergreen, it will undoubtedly have some dead leaves, wearing stout gardening gloves comb your fingers through the plant and the dead leaves should come away, leaving the green ones to provide colour and shape. Grasses that die down completely can be cut down to about 7.5cm (3ins) from the ground. Before you start cutting back grasses gently move the leaves apart and if there are signs of new growth then cut to that height. If you cut new growth the leaf will develop with a cut at the end spoiling the effect of long arching leaves. Pampas grass can provide a very dramatic display but keeping it tidy can be a challenge, the leaves are razor sharp so never try to pull them off. If the plant is really untidy then the whole plant can be cut down in spring, again avoiding any signs of new growth. If your grasses have been in for a few years and are getting little too large for the space, spring is a good time to lift and divide the clumps, they can be replanted where they were before, they don't generally need feeding but a weak liquid feed in late spring can help them establish. Grasses make good container plants too, used to soften bright colourful flowering containers adding texture and movement.

Snowdrops must be perhaps the most popular of all spring bulbs flowering with little regard to the weather conditions, I have often seen them pushing their way through a blanket of snow to display their pretty shapely flowers. There are enthusiasts with an insatiable passion for snowdrops who collectively are known as 'Galanthophiles' (the botanical name for Snowdrop is Galanthus). Recently a new cultivar of snowdrop was sold at auction for £1800.00 but thankfully the more common species are much more affordable and once established can be easily divided and spread around the garden. As the flowers fade snowdrops can be lifted and divided 'in the green' (still with green leaves), and are often sold in this state at garden centres and nurseries. They establish quickly and will gently seed around never needing much attention apart from dividing every few years. Happy in containers or borders amongst other plants or naturalised in grass areas.

There are quite a number of gardens that open during February

inviting visitors to see their snowdrop displays. A search on the internet will reveal those closest to you, but perhaps one of my favourite gardens is York Gate in Leeds where the snowdrops display their charm in this intimate space.



As the year kicks off, we are bombarded with media promoting healthy eating which is great but don't feel you need to rush headlong into sowing vegetable seeds or planting potatoes, its way too early. Instead start by doing a little research around what space you will need, what type of vegetables you like and more importantly how much time you have. Get the combination right and you will enjoy every mouthful of the things you produce.



The issue of space and time work hand in hand, so if you have limited time and/or limited space then start small, maybe a few containers with salad vegetables and leaves. Mixed leaves are quick and easy, ready to crop in four weeks they will regenerate after cutting and be good for a further three crops over a four to six week period. Salad onions and mini leeks are easy and fairly quick. From a March sowing you will be harvesting in about three months. Sow thinly in a 15cm (6inch) pot every two to three weeks from March and you will have a steady supply until early autumn. Small veg grown this way are great for salads or stir fries. If you have a few larger containers then mini veg cultivars of carrot, broccoli, cauliflower, beetroot, french beans and even peas are a great thing to try. Using a general purpose compost, and liquid feed you will be surprised just how easy it is. Keep an eye out for pests and make sure the containers don't dry out.

Happy Gardening,

Martin

Next month, time to start sowing seed, don't forget your flowering bulbs, seasonal lawn care.

Top Tip - How Confusing Is Composting Compost?



As if gardening wasn't confusing enough, the word compost is used to describe the process of breaking down organic matter on a compost heap, (grass clippings, vegetable waste, and plant material or dead flowers), and the stuff you buy in bags to grow plants and seeds on.

Well let's change the wording, all the composts you buy from a nursery or garden centre that are for growing plants in should be called 'Growing Medium' (a suitable mix of organic material with some fertiliser and maybe grit, sand or perlite for drainage).

Before you glaze over and shout boring, here's the important bit. In most instances you can reuse the compost you buy to grow plants in or indeed you can use it as a mulch around garden plants.

I have a couple of the 'Dalek' type compost bins where throughout the year I only fill with the growing medium/compost remains of any pot or container, including grow-bags. Firstly removing any plant remains and woody stalks, these are put on the compost heap with the grass clippings. If the growing medium from the pot is solid with roots that doesn't matter, just lob it in the 'Dalek' if its loose and falling apart then just pour it between the rooty bits. I tend to leave this for about ten to twelve months or so particularly if theres a lot of rooty stuff in there. Over that time the roots will break down and the compost will look more or less like it does in the original bag.

We plant quite a few containers in autumn with spring flowering bulbs, and this second use compost is perfect, and saves money. You could add a little fresh compost, say 25% or 50/50, particularly if you plan to reuse the bulbs or plant them in the garden. You can also use this compost 50/50 with new compost for your summer containers as they need a little more feed. The key is to keep it separate from your main compost heap, and don't include the growing medium from plants that have had pests or diseases as these may attack future plants.



New Ways To See The Cosmic Wonders During This Year's Dark Skies Festival

New art experiences, simulated space walks and a recently-opened constellation trail will all be part of this year's Dark Skies Festival (9-25 February), the popular annual event which showcases the International Dark Sky Reserves above the North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales National Parks.

A number of artists have come up with creative ways that people can enjoy the National Parks' pristine dark skies and be inspired by the experience to create their own pieces of art.

For instance electronic dance poets Claire Hind and Robert Wilshire will walk with a group after dark along Blakey Ridge before reaching a place to listen to the duo's creative score, The Long Dead Stars, inspired by the North York Moors landscape. During the return walk people will be encouraged to write their own material using performance writing techniques.

There are also several new starry night watercolour workshops being run by artist Ione Harrison at locations including Helmsley and Nunnington, while talented photographers will share how to

create mesmerising nightscape and astro images at locations such as Castle Howard and Whitby.

Those who are in awe of space travel can experience how NASA uses underground cave systems to help train astronauts by heading to Stump Cross Caverns in Nidderdale and follow in the footsteps of a rocket scientist who once spent 105 days in the subterranean environment collating data that helped advance space science.

Parents with younger children can try the new permanent dark skies themed trail at either Sutton Bank or Danby Lodge National Park Centres where paper and crayons can be used to rub across a series of brass plaques to create images of ten star constellations such as Orion or Ursa Major. Alternatively there's the Planet Trail at Aysgarth Falls in the Yorkshire Dales where youngsters can learn fun facts about the Universe while spotting planets in the woods.

No dark skies festival would be complete without the astronomy evenings and this year there are several new locations for events, including Birkdale Farm at Terrington in the Howardian Hills,

Ashes Farm near Ribbleshead Viaduct and a weekend combining stargazing with yoga, hiking and live music at Low Mill Outdoor Centre in Askrigg.

Mountain Goat is laying on a special minibus journey touring some of the iconic spots in the Yorkshire Dales during an afternoon before ending up at the atmospheric surroundings of Bolton Castle in Wensleydale as darkness falls for a stargazing safari.

Astrophysicist Professor Carole Haswell, who hails from Saltburn, will also be holding an online interactive presentation talking about the latest research and discoveries of worlds beyond Earth.

Following on from the success of its first event during last year's Fringe Festival, Sutton Bank Bikes will be repeating their night bike ride, while over in the Yorkshire Dales, Stage 1 Cycles will be running an afternoon cycling and planet pizza making event and an evening's mountain biking followed by a warming meal at the Firebox Café.

Activity-seekers can also join a night run at Reeth or go on a dark skies walking adventure in the company of experienced guides at beauty spots such as Rievaulx Abbey, Robin Hood's Bay, the Hole of Horcum or over moorland to the mysterious rock formations known as the Wainstones.

Throughout the Festival, dark skies-friendly accommodation will be offering guests an 'out-of-this-world' experience including Stay and Gaze packages at The Stone House Hotel near Hawes and The Fox & Hounds at Ainthorpe near Danby.

Phoebe Smith, Marketing Assistant for the North York Moors National Park comments: "This will be the ninth Dark Skies Festival since we organised the first event back in February 2016 and it is safe to say it has now become a popular annual fixture for so many people because of the broad range of events that appeal to all ages."

Derek Twine, Member Champion for Promoting Understanding at the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority adds: "While enjoyment and discovery are at the heart of the Festival, it's also a reminder to us all of the vital need to do everything we can to protect one of nature's greatest wonders, the night sky, from light pollution so that we can help safeguard the natural world as well as our own health and wellbeing."

The Festival runs from 9-25 February at venues right across both National Parks and National Landscapes. The events are individually priced and some are free. For more programme information, including individual event booking details and pricing go to www.darkskienationalparks.org.uk

Farming Scholarship For Yorkshire Entrepreneur On Soils Mission

Digital entrepreneur Tom Scrope from North Yorkshire is embarking on an international mission to understand how more farmers can unlock the benefits of healthier soils, thanks to a prestigious Nuffield Farming Scholarship sponsored by the Yorkshire Agricultural Society.

Tom, aged 29, who grew up on a small farm on the edge of the North York Moors in Great Ayton, will explore 'Growing Together: Exploring new ways of farmer knowledge exchange to secure stronger soils' during his Scholarship journey. He is keen to understand how farmers can learn from what has, and has not, worked on other farms to improve soil health so that farmers can avoid making mistakes that have already been overcome by others.

As part of his Scholarship studies, Tom plans to visit France and Australia where established networks of farmers, academics and government are sharing soil knowledge and data in ways that are not yet happening in the UK. He also hopes to visit the US and will travel throughout Yorkshire and elsewhere in the UK on his fact-finding tour.

Since 1980, farming charity the Yorkshire Agricultural Society has sponsored Nuffield Farming Scholarships which provide the opportunity to study and travel abroad, meet like-minded people and explore cutting edge developments in the agricultural industry.

Allister Nixon, Chief Executive of the Yorkshire Agricultural Society said: "The Yorkshire Agricultural Society is delighted to be sponsoring Tom's Scholarship, not least because we recognise the importance of knowledge exchange between farmers. This is something we actively encourage through the work of our own farming networks that bring farming and industry professionals together throughout the year. We wish Tom well on his journey and look forward to hearing his findings on this important topic."

Tom said: "I'm really looking forward to learning new things during my Scholarship and working out what's applicable to bring back to Yorkshire and the rest of the UK, and it would not be possible without the generosity of my sponsor the Yorkshire Agricultural Society."

Tom is already part of a data revolution in farming. Last year, having stepped away from a career in accounting, he co-founded the



■ Nuffield Scholar Tom Scrope and Allister Nixon, Chief Executive of the Yorkshire Agricultural Society

forward-thinking data analytics start-up, Soil Benchmark with Ben Butler, a former Digital Soil Scientist at the James Hutton Institute in Aberdeen. Their innovative software venture interprets complex farmland data to produce soil health action plans for farmers, agronomists and advisors, helping farms to position themselves to benefit from the Government's new environment-based farm payment schemes.

Yet, Tom believes there needs to be a greater network for knowledge exchange to speed up the adoption of best practice amid the "compelling" dual challenges of climate change and the need to feed a growing population.

Tom said: "What I want to understand is what sort of networks we need in England to make sure knowledge exchange happens at scale, to unlock the true potential of farmland soils. Through Soil Benchmark, we have found that agronomists are usually well-placed for disseminating knowledge, but what are the other routes?"

"Better soil health is critical if we are to get to the NFU's net zero ambitions for the industry by 2040, but it's also about more than net zero emissions. Good soil health can bring about benefits for water quality, it reduces costs to a business through the need for fewer inputs, and it increases financial resilience. It could be that good soil health can generate income and save costs in a way that replaces single farm payments which are now being phased out by the Government."

Tom plans to set off on his international tour in Summer 2024. In the meantime, he would welcome recommendations from those in the industry on anyone he should visit, both in the UK or abroad. Tom can be contacted via email at tom@soilbenchmark.com. After his trip, Tom will present a report to the Nuffield Farming Scholarship Trust in 2025 when his findings will be published and shared with the wider industry.

Jake Bugg At York Barbican!!



Jake Bugg announces his **Your Town Tour** for 2024, which will see him play 15 headline dates across the UK at some of the country's smaller towns and venues, bringing live music back to the heart of communities.

"I can't wait to get out and play tons of tunes to people in their hometowns", Jake says, and who is coming to York on March 12th. He will perform two sets per night, acoustic and electric, rattling through his biggest hits, as well as tracks from his latest album, the Top 3-charting *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning*.

With local venues constantly under threat of closure, and grassroots music scenes dwindling, the *Your Town Tour* is Jake's bid to bring a high profile live show back to some of the country's towns that have seen drop offs in big touring artists visiting in recent year.

Tickets are available at www.yorkbarbican.co.uk

Swiftogeddon – The Taylor Swift Club Night At York Barbican!!



Swiftogeddon, coming to York Barbican 22nd March, is a night for fans to come together and worship at the altar of Taylor Swift: non-stop Swiftie all night: deep cuts, extended mixes, fan favourites and all the hits.

The greatest songwriter of her generation? That's not for us to say. But if it were, then we would say: absolutely yes.

So far, Swiftogeddon has performed over 280 shows across the UK, Ireland and the US since launching in August 2019.

Tickets are available at www.yorkbarbican.co.uk

The Music Scene

With Stuart Glossop

This month we highlight a few gigs that may have flown under the radar and two new albums that will almost certainly feature in most "Best Of 2024" lists come the end of the year



■ Caity Baser

Caity Baser is one of the UK's fastest-rising, unique and in-demand pop acts of today. She is an acclaimed singer, songwriter, and pop provocateur with an endearing, larger-than-life personality which has helped forge her huge legion of die-hard fans in such a short space of time. Only 12 months ago Caity was playing in front of 100 people a night and now the highly-acclaimed rising star has announced her biggest tour to date: the 'Still Learning' tour, where Baser will perform eleven shows across the UK in support of her upcoming mix-tape of the same name. Maintaining her pledge to her fans during the cost of living crisis, Caity has ensured tickets for the forthcoming *Still Learning* tour have also been made available at a capped, reduced price for her gig at the O2 Academy Leeds on the 26th March.



■ Olivia Dean

2023 was huge for Olivia Dean, it saw the release of her acclaimed debut album *Messy*, which debuted at number 4 in the UK Official Album Charts and was nominated for the prestigious Mercury Prize. She recently completed her first headline tour of the US and Canada, which included three nights in New York, two nights in LA and concluded at Corona Capital in Mexico. The Summer saw Olivia play to packed audiences across the UK and beyond, at festivals including Glastonbury (with headliner Elton John singing her praises: "I think she's a big star ... she's a fabulous singer, she's beautiful, she's got that personality that really shines through") All Points East, Montreux Jazz festival and many more, as well as a sold out outdoor show at Somerset House, which was the fastest selling of the whole series. You can catch Olivia at Leeds University Stylus on 26th April.



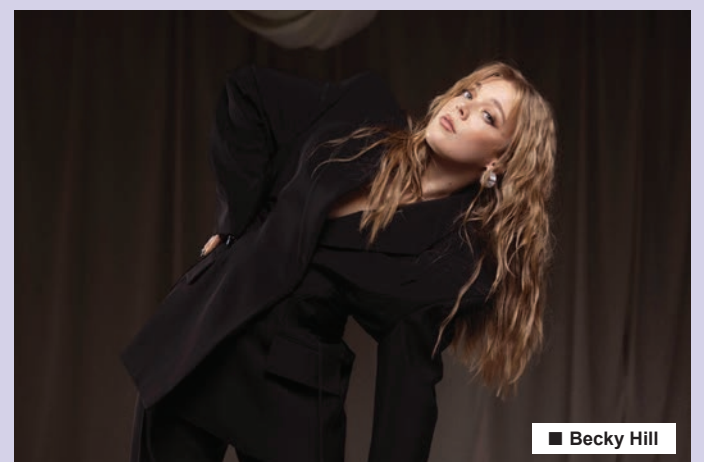
■ Crawlers

Liverpool four-piece Crawlers have announced their eagerly awaited debut album. The album digs deeper into what fans already know and love about Crawlers' eclectic alt-rock sound and takes on a whole range of challenging topics going on in a young person's life. Across the record, feelings of loneliness, insecurity and toxic forms of dependence are held up to the light and examined in close context. Rather than forcing themselves in any one sonic direction, they maintained the free-wheeling spirit of 2022's mix-tape *Loud Without Noise*, producing a striking debut which cements their status as the UK's next big crossover alternative act. "The Mess We Seem To Make" is out now.



■ Another Sky

Another Sky have released their second album *Beach Day* and it is a corker! The band have spent the last few months teasing with a series of hard-hitting and exciting comeback singles, and are excited to announce that a third album will be here before the end of 2024. With the band's sophomore album *Beach Day*, they open a doorway to the most confident, fully formed and forthright version of Another Sky so far. Lead vocalist Catrin Vincent points out the relationship between anger and freedom on this record. The anger and the fight is real, and it's everything – but that doesn't mean it always will be. Hold onto that feeling while it lasts: Another Sky are steadfast and galvanised to make you understand everything that got them here. How they survived. All you have to do is listen.



■ Becky Hill

British singer and songwriter, Becky Hill, is set to grace stages across the UK in October 2024 as she embarks on her biggest headline shows to date with a nationwide arena tour in support of her highly anticipated upcoming second album. With an irrefutable aptitude for writing chart-smashing dance-pop songs and a reputation as a leading force in the UK music scene, Becky Hill is without a doubt one of the UK's most exceptional talents, having secured two BRIT Awards, eighteen Top 40 singles (including the current hit 'Disconnect') and billions of streams. Playing arena shows across the country, this tour will mark an incredible milestone in Becky's career. The sensational live shows will once again showcase her incredible vocal prowess, captivating stage presence, and her ability to connect with fans in an unparalleled way. Becky plays the First Direct Arena on 16th October.

Pilot Theatre's Stage Adaptation Of David Almond's Award-Winning Novel A Song For Ella Grey Comes To York Theatre Royal



Image © Esther Richardson

Award-winning Pilot Theatre – in association with York Theatre Royal and Northern Stage – bring *A Song for Ella Grey*, Zoe Cooper's new adaptation of David Almond's award-winning novel contemporary retelling of the Orpheus myth, to York Theatre Royal from 20-24 February 2024.

Claire and her best friend, Ella Grey, are ordinary kids from ordinary families in an ordinary world. They and their friends fall in and out of love, play music and dance, stare at the stars, yearn for excitement, and have parties on the beautiful beaches of Northumberland. One day a stranger, a musician called Orpheus,

appears on the beach, and entrances them all but particularly Ella.

A Song for Ella Grey is a tale of modern friends and ancient forces, a tale told since the dawn of time and told again today.

The cast features actress, writer and - to her 729.1k followers - celebrated Tik Tok creator (with a following of 729.1k) Grace Long (Breeders, Sky One, which Grace is also on the writing staff for and the film *Three Days Millionaire*, Shush Films) as Ella Grey; Beth Crame (The Sorcerer's Apprentice, Northern Stage) as Angeline; Jonathan Icton (Down the Lines, The Customs House) as Jay;

Amonik Melaco (Singin' In The Rain, Sadlers Wells and Heathers The Musical, The Other Place) as Sam and Olivia Onyehara (All's Well That Ends Well, Royal Shakespeare Company and The 39 Steps, Stephen Joseph Theatre) as Claire.

David Almond is one of the most prolific and highly acclaimed writers of novels for children and young adults. His novels have included *Skellig*, *Kit's Wilderness*, *My Name is Mina*, *Joe Quinn's Poltergeist*, *The Tightrope Walkers*, *The Savage*, *A Song for Ella Grey*, *Half a Creature from the Sea*, *The Colour of the Sun*, *The Tale of Angelino Brown*, *The Dam* and many more novels, stories, picture books, plays, songs and opera libretti. His work has been translated into over 40 languages and has won a string of major awards around the world. In 2022 he was awarded an OBE for services to literature.

Novelist David Almond said: "A Song for Ella Grey is so close to my heart. The novel itself came with great force, demanding to be told. It's my version of the great Orpheus myth, which has been told many times in many forms and will be told forever more.

"This version takes place in ordinary north eastern streets, on wild north eastern beaches, among ordinary northeastern teenagers. Hades lies just beneath the city. Orpheus appears on the shores of the North Sea. Ella Grey and her dear friends are drawn rapidly into this ancient tale of love and death, of music and joy. I'm so thrilled that Pilot Theatre and Zoe Cooper are bringing the tale to the stage."

Zoe Cooper's recent plays include *Out of Water* (Orange Tree Theatre/RSC) which was a finalist for the 2020 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and shortlisted for the Evening Standard Most Promising Playwright Award, and *Jess and Joe Forever* (Orange Tree Theatre/UK tour) which won the Most Promising Playwright Award at the Off West End Awards 2017 and was longlisted for the Evening Standard Most Promising Playwright Award. Her new adaptation of *Northanger Abbey* will be co-produced by the Orange Tree, Theatre by the Lake, Stephen Joseph Theatre and Bolton Octagon in January 2024.

For more information on *A Song for Ella Grey* visit:

www.pilot-theatre.com



York Light Opera Company Presents Disney's The Little Mermaid

Following the stand-out performances of *Sweeney Todd*, York Light Opera Company bring the much lighter, heartfelt classic Disney's *The Little Mermaid* to York Theatre Royal for a very technically spectacular show to end their 70th-year celebrations. Director Martyn Knight and Musical Director Paul Laidlaw have revelled in the beautifully quintessential iconic music and colourful staging of this beloved Disney underwater adventure tale brought to life by a talented cast of local performers, showcasing the company's commitment to producing high-quality musical theatre for the community.

Based on the classic 1989 Disney animated film, *The Little Mermaid* tells the enchanting story of Ariel, a mermaid who dreams of trading her tail for legs and exploring the human world. With the help of her mischievous sidekick, Flounder, and the cunning Ursula, Ariel strikes a bargain that will change her life forever.

But all is not what it seems...

The York Light Opera Company production of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* will feature stunning projection, dazzling costumes, and unforgettable musical numbers, including *Under the Sea*, *Part of Your World*, *Poor Unfortunate Souls* and *Kiss the Girl*. With additional toe-tapping choreography by Rachael Whitehead, this production promises to be an enchanting experience for audiences of all ages.



"We are incredibly excited to bring Disney's *The Little Mermaid* to the York stage," said Martyn Knight, Director. "This is a timeless story that has captivated audiences for generations, perfect for all the family, and we can't wait to delight you all this half term."

Ariel is being portrayed by the alluring Monica Frost, superstar in the rising Ryan Addyman is Flounder, a favourite of York audiences Jonny Holbek picks up the mantle of Sebastian, the now renowned witch performer Pascha Turnbull will charm you as Ursula, King Triton by the inimitable stalwart of the York stages - Rory Mulvihill.

Join them for lots of singing, dancing, and plenty of adventure as we bring this timeless Disney classic to life on the main stage where all tickets are £20 or less.

TICKET INFORMATION

An amateur production by arrangement with Music Theatre International.

York Light Opera Company presents

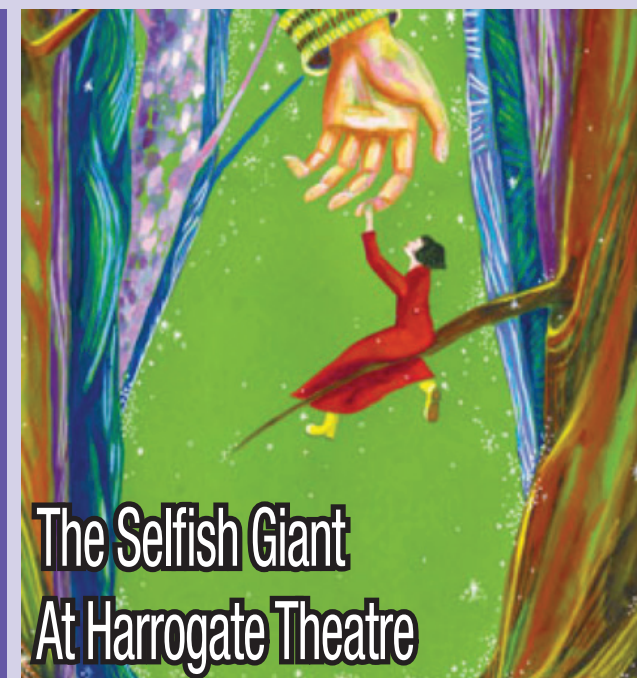
Disney's *The Little Mermaid*

York Theatre Royal, Main House

07 - 17 February

Tickets from £15

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The Selfish Giant At Harrogate Theatre

Inspired by the touching children's story 'The Selfish Giant' by Oscar Wilde, Bristol's two leading family theatre experts are combining forces to explore an unusual friendship, and how even the grumpiest giant's heart can melt when spring finally comes.

Grinter is a giant. She lives happily alone in her huge cold house, surrounded by her huge snowy gardens, enclosed by her high, frost-covered walls. She shuts out the world, because long ago, the world shut her out, and so she hides, safe and quiet in her peaceful, icy home. Outside the towering walls of her enormous garden, the world has been changing and there is very little green left. One day, the children – tired of playing on hard roads and grey rooftops – find a chink in the giant's wall and climb through, changing the course of the children's and Grinter's lives forever.

Powerful storytelling, captivating puppetry, beautiful design, enchanting music and a sprinkling of magic sums up this very special show.

For tickets visit:

www.harrogatetheatre.co.uk/events/the-selfish-giant

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Leap Year; The Science, The History & The Folklores

29

February

BY LINZI DAVIES

This year is a leap year, and of course that means that February has an extra day, ending on the 29th rather than the 28th. The name leap year is said to have arisen because in a normal year a date will fall on the following day to what it did the year before. However, on a leap year, it skips a day or ‘leaps’ over it. Have you ever wondered why we have leap years and when they occur? Who came up with the idea and is it the same all over the world? In this feature we ‘leap’ into the science, the history and even the folklore associated with leap years.

The Scientific Bit

Leap years have 366 days rather than the usual 365, and they occur every 4 years – on years which are evenly divisible by 4. It gets slightly more complicated though when we look at century years as we only consider one out of every four of them to be a leap year. This is because the actual length of a year is 365.242 days – just short of 365.25. So, by adding an extra day every four years, over the space of 400 years, we accumulate an extra 3 days which we need to lose. We can work out the century years by remembering

that if they are evenly divisible by 400, it will be a leap year. Therefore 2000 was a leap year, but 2100 will not be. Why does all this matter you may wonder, if we add a day here, and lose a day there? Because seasons and astronomical events do not repeat each year in a whole number of days, so our calendar starts to drift and no longer accurately tracks events over time. The Gregorian calendar is the standard one around most of the world and was designed to keep the vernal equinox on or close to 21st March. This way, the date of Easter remains close to the vernal equinox as it is always celebrated on the Sunday after the full moon on or after 21st March.

History

As with many things in our modern world, our calendar can be largely attributed to the Romans. Having previously used lunisolar calendars, to keep festivals occurring around the same season each year, they inserted a 22- or 23-day month every other year. The Julian calendar was developed by Julius Caesar in 46BC using calculations by his astronomer Sosigenes, which then became effective the following year, to simplify things. Days were added to different months of the year to create 365 days and one day added to

Februarius every fourth year. February 24th was to be doubled but for legal purposes the two days were to be known as one day with the second half of it being the added. By 725AD Bede wrote that the added day occurred before the last five days of February.

This was then amended by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 to simplify it slightly by making it so the leap year would fall on any year divisible by four. This became known as the Gregorian calendar which we use today.

Other Calendars

Some countries or faiths around the world use a different calendar to the Gregorian, but all still need to accommodate the fact that the world does not complete one full revolution around the sun in exactly 365 days. The Bengali Calendar of Bangladesh, the Indian National Calendar and the Thai Solar Calendar are all organised to synchronise with or be close to the Gregorian leap day so that dates can easily be converted.

The Ethiopian and Coptic calendars work differently. They have 12 months of 30 days, plus they add five epagomenal days which make up a 13th month. The calendar year begins on August 29th of the Julian calendar and every four years they add a sixth epagomenal day at the beginning of their year. There is a gap of seven to eight years between the Ethiopian and Gregorian calendars stemming from an alternative determination of the date of the Annunciation. Because the Ethiopian and Coptic calendars do not skip a leap year every 4th century, the vernal equinox moves a day earlier every 131 years.

Lunisolar calendars (those which take account of the moon phases as well as the sun) insert an extra month, often called an embolismic month. The Chinese calendar always adds the extra month to ensure that month 11 contains the northern winter solstice, and they call the embolismic month the same as the previous one, just with 'leap' in front of it. The extra month in the Hebrew calendar is called 'Adar Bet' and is added seven times every nineteen years in years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, and 19 to ensure that Passover always falls in the spring.

The Islamic calendar has lunar months of 29 or 30 days but no regular leap days. The tabular Islamic calendar, which is still used by some Muslims, having previously been used by Islamic astronomers in the Middle Ages, does have a leap day which is added to the last month of the lunar year. This is added in 11 years of every 30-year cycle. This last month of the year is the month of the Hajj.

The Solar Hijri calendar is the official calendar of Iran and Afghanistan. The Iranian Chronology is a succession of calendars which have been adapted and modified many times over the years to improve accuracy, and having being in use for over two millennia in the country previously known as Persia, it is one of the longest chronological records in human history. The Iranian calendar begins on the spring equinox and adds an intercalated day to the last month either every fourth or fifth year over a 33-year cycle. The first leap year is the fifth of the cycle, with the other leap years occurring every four years for the remainder. Occasionally the 33-year cycle is broken by one of 29 years. It has been suggested to adopt a similar rule for the Gregorian calendar as there is less deviation to the vernal equinox with this method. It is not likely that this would be changed any time soon though as the timing would have to be right.

Folklore and Traditions

The most famous leap day tradition is that of women proposing to their partner. Of course, today women can propose anytime they wish, but historically it was the responsibility of the man to ask for a woman's hand in marriage. This tradition is thought to have begun in Ireland during the 5th century when St Brigid of Kildare and St Patrick brokered a deal to balance the roles of men and

women in a similar way that the leap day balances the calendar. It soon spread across Europe, but in Scotland, women who are planning to propose in this way are advised to wear a red petticoat showing to give their intended fair warning!

Another tradition is linked to the leap day proposal, in case of a refusal. Apparently originating from a law passed in 1288 by Queen Margaret of Scotland, any man refusing a leap day proposal could be issued with a fine. This varies slightly in other countries – men in Denmark must supply the spurned woman with 12 pairs of gloves to hide the embarrassment of not having a ring on their finger, and in Finland the man should provide enough fabric to make a skirt.

In Germany, there are traditions for May Day which alter on a leap year. On an ordinary May Day, young boys can leave a ribbon decked birch tree on the doorstep of their love, and on leap years girls can do the same for their crush. The traditional maypole dancing is enjoyed by both sexes but on leap years only women may dance.

Anthony on the Texas-New Mexico border in the USA is known as the Leap Year Capital of the World thanks to the four-day long festival held there to celebrate leap day. It was first created in 1988 when neighbours Ann Brown and Birdie Lewis who both happen to be leap day babies approached the council to create a festival to celebrate the quadrennial event. People now travel from all over the world to join in the frivolity.

Not all leap year traditions though are positive. In Roman times, February was a month associated with the dead, so in Italy it is seen that the leap day simply extends an already morbid month. In several places around the world the 29th February is seen to be unlucky. In Scotland those born on leap day are predicted to live a life of suffering and farmers also worry, saying 'a leap year was never a good sheep year.' Superstitious Greeks believe that a marriage taking place during a leap year will end in divorce.

Leap Day Babies

People born on a leap day are known as 'leaplings' and for obvious reasons can only celebrate their true birthday every four years. On common years they choose to either celebrate on 28th February or 1st March. If they come of age during a common year, laws differ in countries as to when this happens legally – in the UK they must wait until the 1st of March but in New Zealand it is 28th the February. There is only a one in 1,461 chance of being born on a leap day and there are 5 million leaplings around the world.

There is a family in the Guinness Book of World Records for having three consecutive generations of leaplings. Peter Anthony Keogh from Ireland was born on 29th February 1940, his son Peter was born on the same date in the UK in 1964, and then Peter's daughter Bethany also arrived to share the same birthday in 1996!

There have been some famous leaplings over the years, notably Pope Paul III born in 1468, Morarji Desai, a former Indian prime minister born in 1896, American singer Dinah Shore born in 1916, American baseball player Al Rosen who was born in 1924, and more recently, rapper Ja Rule in 1976. In the UK, actor Joss Ackland (b1928), actress Wendi Peters (b1968) and footballer Darren Ambrose (b1984) are some of our very own leap day babies.

Incredibly, some leaplings have also died on a leap day, such as James Milne Wilson, 8th premier of Tasmania who was born on 29th February 1812, and passed away on the same date in 1880.

So what are your plans for leap day? Maybe you are a leapling and are getting to celebrate your true birthday, or perhaps you are planning to propose to the love of your life. For most of us though, it will be just another day in the year, but however you choose to spend 29th this month, enjoy it – it only comes around every four years!

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ENTERTAINMENT

WHAT'S ON TV & STREAMING



05 February - Our Flag Means Death, Season 2 - BBC iPlayer

Our Flag Means Death is (very!) loosely based on the true adventures of Stede Bonnet, a pampered aristocrat who abandoned his life of privilege to become a pirate.

05 February - Curb Your Enthusiasm, Season 12 (Final) - Sky Comedy

Larry David's ground-breaking comedy show returns.

07 February - Miss Scarlet and The Duke, Season 4 - Alibi

Nineteenth-century crime drama about the first-ever female detective in Victorian London.

08 February - Halo, Season 2 - Paramount+
Live action TV series based on the popular video game.

09 February - Ted, Season 1 - Sky Max

TV series based on the Seth MacFarlane films.

12 February - Air Crash Investigation, Season 23 - National Geographic

It's a hard one to guess because National Geographic seems to number some of the seasons differently to its native Canada, and previous seasons have not aired consistently.

16 February - Life & Beth, Season 2 - Disney+

Amy Schumer stars in a comedy about a woman whose life changes forever when a sudden incident forces her to engage with her past.



■ Star Wars: The Bad Batch

19 February - Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, Season 11 - Sky Comedy

'The Daily Show with more prep time' returns for a new, hilarious and genius season!

21 February - Star Wars: The Bad Batch, Season 3 (Final) - Disney+

New animated series following Clone Force 99 in a rapidly changing galaxy in the immediate aftermath of the Clone War.

21 February - Constellation, Season 1 - Apple TV+

A new conspiracy-based psychological thriller drama series starring Noomi Rapace and Jonathan Banks.

22 February - Avatar: The Last Airbender, Season 1 - Netflix

New live-action take on the beloved animated series

23 February - The Second Best Hospital in the Galaxy, Season 1 - Prime Video

The Second Best Hospital in the Galaxy follows Dr. Sleech and Dr. Klak—aliens, best friends, and intergalactically renowned surgeons—as they tackle anxiety-eating parasites, illegal time loops, and deep-space STIs.

27 February - Shogun, Season 1 - Disney+

An original adaptation of James Clavell's bestselling novel, created for television by Rachel Kondo & Justin Marks.

28 February - Quantum Leap, Season 2a - Paramount+

A part-reboot, part-continuation of the beloved sci-fi series, with Raymond Lee in the lead role.

AT THE MOVIES

09 February - The Iron Claw - 15

The true story of the inseparable Von Erich brothers, who made history in the intensely competitive world of professional wrestling in the early 1980s.

Stars: Zac Efron, Jeremy Allen White, Harris Dickinson & Maura Tierney.

14 February - Bob Marley: One Love - PG-13

The story of how reggae icon Bob Marley overcame adversity, and the journey behind his revolutionary music.

Stars: Kingsley Ben-Adir, James Norton, Lashana Lynch & Michael Gandolfini.



■ Madame Web

16 February - Madame Web - PG-13

Cassandra Webb develops the power to see the future. Forced to confront revelations about her past, she forges a relationship with three young women bound for powerful destinies, if they can all survive a deadly present.

Stars: Sydney Sweeney, Isabela Merced, Dakota Johnson & Emma Roberts.

23 February - Wicked Little Letters - 15

When people in Littlehampton—including conservative local Edith—begin to receive letters full of hilarious profanities, rowdy Irish migrant Rose is charged with the crime. Suspecting that something is amiss, the town's women investigate.

Stars: Olivia Colman, Jessie Buckley, Timothy Spall & Lolly Adefope.

GAMES



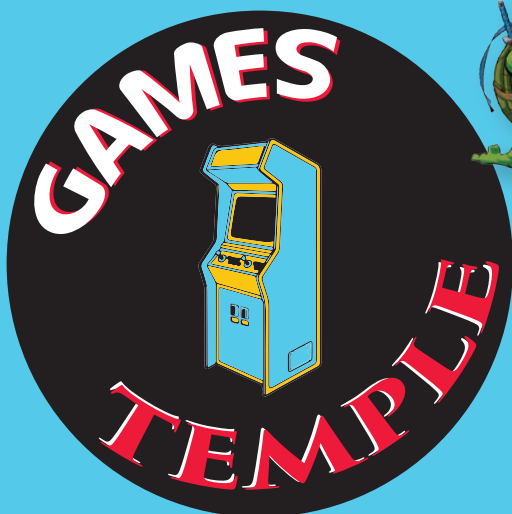
08 February - HELLDIVERS 2 - PS5



16 February - Skull And Bones - PS5 & Xbox



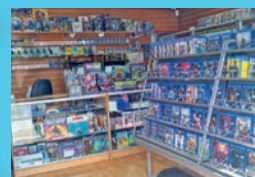
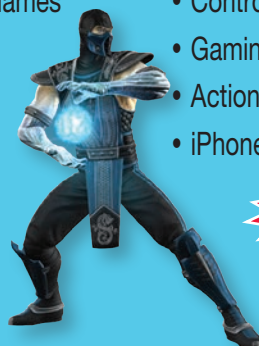
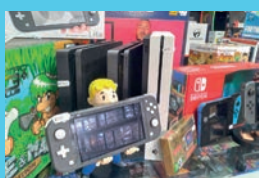
27 February - Shiren the Wanderer - Nintendo Switch



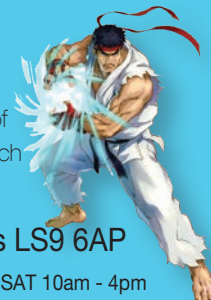
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Antiques And Collectables

With David Oddy

The world seems to be in turbulent times at the moment with the war in Ukraine still raging and now the Middle East. This sad time make me think of the terrible tragedies of previous conflicts, most importantly the consequences for human life but also the destruction of many historic buildings and fine antiques lost to the world forever.



■ Inside Antiques & Collectables

One example from World War Two was Dresden, home to some of the best pottery makers ever. I wonder how many precious items were destroyed during the bombing of that city and others like it in the following decades. I know of several dealers who travel to Europe to buy antiques to sell in England, however, this type of



■ Inside Antiques & Collectables

trading may soon become a thing of the past as the current situation will no doubt have an impact on the antiques sector as it is many others.

I have always had an admiration for European antiques, particularly items from the Black Forest region where depictions of bears are very popular. The region is also well known for the manufacture of clock cases which were exported to Switzerland for movement fittings. Humidors and assorted boxes made in the Black Forest have found their way into my shop over the years and I have a fondness for Bohemian glass and Austrian porcelain. However, Swiss watches remain the best in the world and can achieve very high prices.



■ Inside Antiques & Collectables



■ Inside Antiques & Collectables

Another important theme in today's world is climate change. I really admire the younger generation who are responding to the needs of the planet, and this is why despite never being a fan of painting old furniture I am beginning to change my mind on the subject. Mend and make do was what everyone did when I was a child. I remember well my father mending our shoes with leather. This was just after the Second World War when we couldn't afford anything new so my mother would darn our socks and most of our clothes were passed down through the children. We had a wonderful childhood and it never mattered if we went without material things – we were never hungry.



■ Inside Antiques & Collectables

I suppose having an antiques shop is the ultimate in reusing things from the past, so don't throw anything away. Bring it into our shop, you never know what it might be worth! And if you are looking for a new piece of furniture, why not visit the shop first before heading out for a flat pack. Old furniture is often extremely well made and as I am learning, can be upcycled to suit all modern homes.

Please see advert below for contact details and opening times.

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Picking the perfect engagement ring can be easier than you might think. When it comes to diamonds, size is important but often not as important as quality. A natural diamond is a piece of the earth's history and its colour and clarity can have as much impact on its value as its size. Most importantly you must not get bogged down with the decision making choices and confused by the millions of bits of separate advice you will receive both online and from retailers and this is where Christopher Brown Jewellers can really help. As well as having 9 branches all with unique and different rings you can select from, you can count on us to help you to find the perfect piece, either handmade or from our new and pre-owned range that will suit every taste and budget.

If you are already engaged or married, then perhaps it's time to buy an eternity or dress ring.

An eternity ring is the test of time and shows lasting affection and never-ending love signified with an unbroken circle or half circle of beautiful diamonds. A dress ring is a pretty gem set ring that can be worn on any occasion and most often on the opposite hand to the engagement ring. They needn't be expensive but are always really appreciated and beautiful to admire.

Necklaces are an excellent choice for almost any Valentine's Day situation. If your partner is long overdue for a really special Valentine's Day gift, then go all out with a stunning diamond pendant. A true classic available in a choice of carat weights and styles, the traditionalist in her will love it, and she'll be able to wear it with any outfit at any time. We also have a range of stunning silver necklets with hearts and stones that she will love which are on a 3 for 2 offer so you can really spoil her for less than the cost of a meal out.



Earrings are a wonderful gift and again can be diamond set or simple gold creoles or studs. Always appreciated, a girl can't have enough earrings and she will love the thought you have put into them.

Finally, if you really want to show you care, how about a luxury watch. What better than to give the love of your life a symbol of lasting quality and perfection such as a ROLEX, CARTIER, TAG or OMEGA. It takes a special person to make that investment and it will show how timeless your love is for each other!

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Valentine's Day 14th February...

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MOTORS

ROSPA - Drive With Added Caution During Cold Weather

With icy temperatures and 'disruptive' snow hitting large parts of Britain, and parts of the UK still grappling with flooding, leading road experts The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) has issued some vital road safety advice.

Advising on winter driving, Rebecca Guy, RoSPA's Road Safety Manager for England, said:

"Snowy conditions can pose a real challenge for drivers so it's worth knowing how to prepare yourself so your journey can be as smooth as possible. Before you set off, check the weather conditions to ensure you're not caught out, and don't forget to wipe off snow from the top and windows of your car. This will avoid snow falling onto your windscreen while driving and impacting your line of sight. In very bad conditions, avoid driving completely, unless you absolutely have to make the journey and driving is the only option.

"It's also a good idea to leave more time than usual for your journey, and to check your tyres, fluid levels, lights and fuel or charge levels before you set off. If your journey is essential, packing some warm clothing, a fully charged mobile phone, some food and a drink can help you to be prepared if you do break down – and even a pair of sunglasses can stand you in good stead in case the sun comes out and reflects on the road ahead.

"If you can, try and move off in second gear and change to a higher gear as soon as possible once the car is moving. Ensure you accelerate gently and smoothly, using low revs. Ideally, stay in a steady gear and leave as much room in front of you as possible so you can maintain a constant speed – and don't forget that stopping distance can be increased up to 10 times in snowy weather."

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER IF DRIVING IN SNOW OR ICE

- Slow down in plenty of time before bends and corners
- Braking on an icy or snow-covered bend is extremely dangerous. The centrifugal force will continue to pull you outwards and the wheels will not grip very well. This could cause your vehicle to spin
- Increase the gap between you and the vehicle in front. You may need up to 10 times the distance for braking in good conditions
- Visibility will probably be reduced, so use dipped headlights

IF YOU GET STUCK IN SNOW

- If you get stuck in snow, revving your engine to try to power out of the rut will just make the rut worse. Instead, move your vehicle slowly backwards and forwards out of the rut using the highest gear you can
- If this doesn't work, you may have to ask a friendly passerby for a push or get your shovel out

Rebecca went on to advise those encountering flood water:

"The past few weeks have seen a concerning level of flooding in many areas of the UK. It is essential to have the latest information at hand to avoid roads or pathways that are submerged in water. Not only can a flooded car be costly, it can lead to drowning so it is important to never attempt to drive through a waterlogged area, especially if the road has been closed off.

"Before leaving the house, consider whether your vehicle really is in a roadworthy condition for extreme weather, and check its tyres, brakes, lights and fluid levels. If your vehicle is not in tip-top condition, you are more likely to break down and get stranded. Therefore, keep an emergency kit in your car, especially if you're going on a long journey. If this seems unnecessary, take a moment to imagine yourself stranded in your car overnight."

If you're in a flooded area, it is also worth considering the following when nearing an affected road:

- Avoid the deepest water – which is usually near the kerb
- Don't attempt to cross if the water seems too deep
- If you are not sure of the water's depth, look for an alternative route
- If you decide to risk it, drive slowly in first gear but keep the engine speed high by slipping the clutch – this will stop you from stalling
- Be aware of the bow wave from approaching vehicles – operate an informal 'give way' with approaching vehicles

For more information, please visit www.rosipa.com

Double Win For Dacia At The 2024 What Car? Car Of The Year Awards



■ Dacia Jogger Extreme

Dacia has once again been recognised at the What Car? Car of the Year Awards, with the Sandero and Jogger being named 'Best Small Car for Value' and 'Best Seven-seater for Value' respectively.

It is the third consecutive year that the Sandero has won the title, and the 11th time the model has been awarded at the annual event. The What Car? judges were once again won over by its unrivalled value, practicality, efficiency and specification.

Highlighting the Sandero TCe 100 Bi-Fuel version, Steve Huntingford, Editor, What Car?, said: "There's more interior space than in most rivals, while fuel economy is good, and it can run on LPG, which is much cheaper than petrol. The Sandero is also decent to drive and – in our preferred trim – pretty well equipped."

Building on Dacia's haul of more than 20 UK industry awards in 2023, including the 'Best Seven-seater for Value' trophy at last year's What Car? Car of the Year Awards, the innovative Jogger

successfully defended its title after impressing the renowned magazine and website with its space, usability, and equipment.

Reflecting on What Car?'s decision to name the Jogger as its seven-seater value champion for the second year in a row, Steve Huntingford added: "There's a lot more to like than just its price. It's a very easy car to drive, and has plenty of space for adults in all three rows. Plus, our recommended Expression trim comes with all of the convenience features you're likely to want, including keyless entry, cruise control and rear parking sensors."

Luke Broad, Dacia Brand Director for the UK, said: "When it comes to offering family-focused cars that not only deliver great value but also durability and driver appeal, Dacia is unrivalled. Value will always be core to Dacia, but these awards reaffirm that there's so much more to our cars than just price. This is where Dacia excels, blending affordability with everything that car buyers and families need for years of fun adventures."

SMOOTH OPERATOR: AERODYNAMIC NEW VOLKSWAGEN PASSAT NOW ON SALE



The new Passat – Volkswagen's most aerodynamic estate car to date – is now available to order in the UK. It comes with impressive efficiency credentials that are sure to appeal to families and fleet managers, plus a revised interior with a new cockpit, large displays and a new infotainment menu structure. Prices start from £38,400 (RRP OTR).

More than 34 million Volkswagen Passats have been sold worldwide since the covers came off the first generation in 1973, and the ninth-generation model is set to continue this success.

The new Passat is the most aerodynamic Volkswagen estate the company has produced so far. Its coefficient of drag (Cd) is just 0.25 – lower than many sports cars – making this a particularly economical and cost-effective choice for anyone looking for a modern estate car.

The sleek architecture and proportions of the Passat have clearly changed: the surfaces are more sculptural, the lines more dynamic and the dimensions larger. The wheelbase is 50 mm longer than the previous Passat Estate (2,841 mm), the car is 144 mm longer (4,917 mm), and the width has increased by 20 mm to 1,852 mm. Meanwhile, the height (with aerial) is almost unchanged at 1,506 mm.

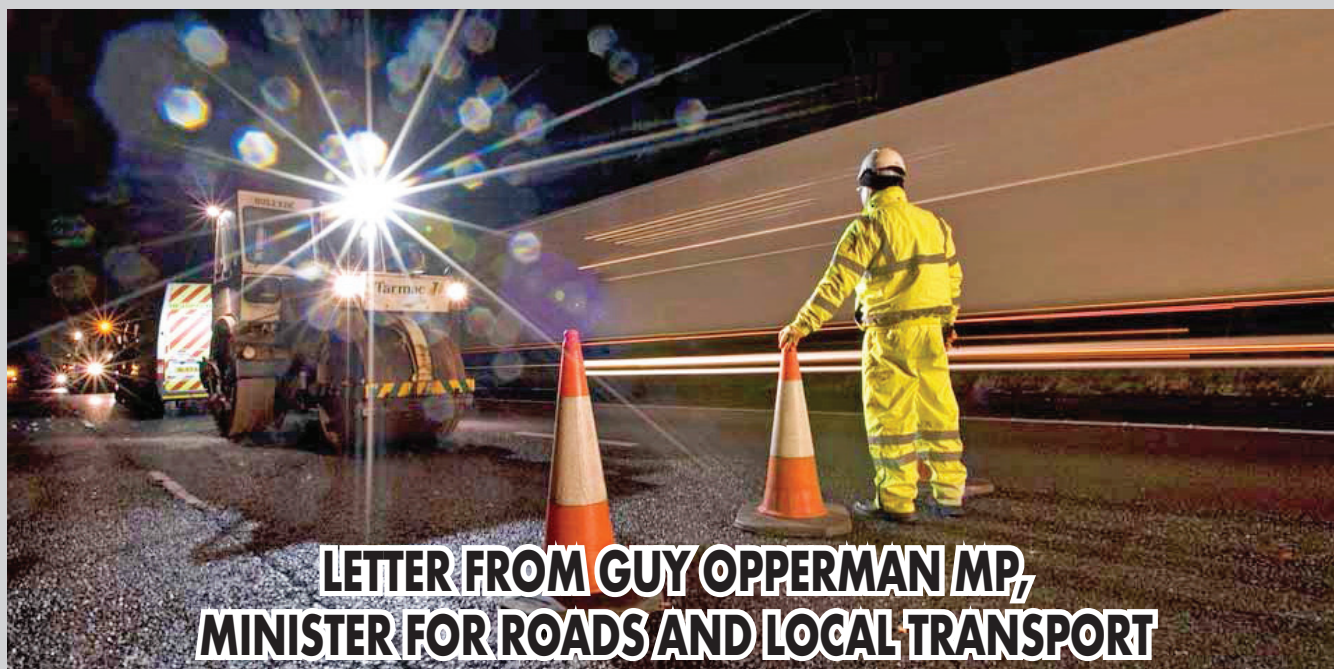
The car is built on the latest version of Volkswagen Group's hugely successful modular transverse matrix platform, MQB evo, which allows for a host of new systems to be included and is being used also for the new Tiguan.

Enhancements to the interior for this ninth-generation Passat are nothing less than expected for such a historically successful model. A completely redesigned digital cockpit incorporates the latest-generation (MIB4) infotainment matrix. Many system settings can be controlled using the new IDA voice control, and the large display in front of the driver has a new surface coating to reduce reflections and glare, removing the need for an overhang for providing shade.

The intuitive head-up driver display has been improved, while newly developed ergoActive seats with massage, ventilation and heating functions offer supreme travel comfort. With more space for five people, thanks to the longer wheelbase, and up to 1,920 litres of rear storage space, the new Passat Estate is an ideal all-rounder for business and leisure.

Comfort is enhanced further by high-grade materials and the DCC Pro adaptive chassis control, which represents a new level of running gear technology and sets benchmarks in the mid-sized class. The Passat is also equipped for the first time with a Vehicle Dynamics Manager. It controls the electronic differential locks (XDS) and shock absorbers in the DCC Pro system for optimum handling characteristics.

A new acoustic package introduces double glazing and an acoustic film laminated on to the side windows, reducing noise levels inside the new Passat Estate to those experienced in the upper mid-sized and premium classes.



**LETTER FROM GUY OPPERMAN MP,
MINISTER FOR ROADS AND LOCAL TRANSPORT**

Dear Sir/Madam,

When utility company roadworks overrun, it's motorists who pay the price with congestion, detours and longer journeys.

This is why I've announced a plan to crack down on works by utility companies overrunning. We are consulting on plans to toughen fines for utility companies if they overrun and increase the penalties for operating without a licence. Proposals include using money the utility companies pay councils to "block off" the streets, and putting it into resurfacing and improving local roads.

The result? We could generate £100 million extra each year to resurface roads and tackle potholes left behind by utility companies, while helping

tackle congestion, cutting down journey times and make driving a bit easier.

This is part of the first series of measures delivered from the Government's Plan for Drivers, a 30-point plan to support freedom to use your cars, curb unnecessary enforcement and back drivers.

This is just the latest boost for your readers who rely on our roads, who will also see the biggest ever funding increase of £8.3 billion to resurface local roads in England – improving the everyday journeys that so many people rely on.

Kind regards,

Guy Opperman MP, Minister for Roads and Local Transport



**Motorcycle Live Looks Ahead,
With Two Year Commitment
On Bikesure Partnership**

The UK's biggest, and most interactive motorcycle and scooter show, Motorcycle Live, is proud to announce a two year extension to their successful partnership with leading insurance provider Bikesure.

Motorcycle Live, in association with Bikesure Insurance for the 5th year, will see the five star defaqto rated insurance provider, and the UKs premier motorcycle show continue to capitalise on their relationship.

Grant Varnham, Business Development Manager of Bikesure, said: "Motorcycle Live offers Bikesure a unique platform to reach the most seasoned of riders across a multitude of genres, as well as budding enthusiasts. Echoing our own brand values, the show provides a premium experience to visitors, which replicates the service levels at Bikesure. Speaking directly to customers at the show gives us a great opportunity to interact with visitors and assist on their insurance related queries."

Finlay McAllan, Managing Director of Motorcycle Live added "We've been working closely with Bikesure since 2019 and we're pleased to have Bikesure partnering with us for the next two years. Our partnership goes beyond the simple inclusion of a logo, as they share our strong commitment to creating an interactive and fun-filled show."

The successful Motorcycle Live, and Bikesure partnership brings together thousands of enthusiasts, industry professionals, and thrill-seekers who make the world of motorcycling an exhilarating and welcoming community.

Motorcycle Live, in association with Bikesure, will open its doors at the National Exhibition Centre (NEC), Birmingham from 16th-24th November 2024.

'Early bird' tickets are on sale now, visit www.motorcyclelive.co.uk to get yours!



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WAGGING TALES!

The Pawfect Storm: Study Finds High Levels Of Problem Behaviours And Use Of Aversive Training Methods In Pandemic Puppies



The average number of owner-reported problem behaviours among 'pandemic puppies' was five, with problem behaviours more likely in owners using aversive training techniques, says the Royal Veterinary College

Four in five (82%) 'pandemic puppy' owners have reported using aversive training methods in attempts to address their dog's problem behaviours, according to a new study by the Royal Veterinary College (RVC). However, this rise in negative reinforcement/positive punishment (e.g., owners shouting at their dog or using training equipment that is unpleasant for dogs, rather than using reward-based methods such as praise and treats) not only negatively impacts animal welfare, but is often poorly effective, and in some cases, can even result in new problem behaviours in dogs due to the fear and anxiety it can cause.

This study – funded by Battersea and part of the ongoing RVC Pandemic Puppies project that follows a cohort of puppies purchased during the covid pandemic in 2020 under the age of 16 weeks from breeders in the UK – sought to identify risk factors linked to four areas. These included owner-reported problem behaviours, use of training methods, expectations vs realities of behaviour and training, and seeking professional advice for behaviour and training of these puppies as they hit 21 months. This is a pivotal age when problem behaviours increase the risk of owners deciding to rehome or euthanise their dogs due to these issues.

More than 1,000 UK owners were asked to identify problem behaviours they saw in their young dogs. The list of 24 behaviours that owners considered as problems ranged from control behaviours (e.g., pulling on their lead) and attention-seeking behaviours (e.g.,

jumping up, clinginess) to aggressive behaviours (e.g., towards other dogs, people and guarding food), and fear/avoidance behaviours (e.g., anxiety/fear around other dogs, people, loud noises) and more.

Almost all (97%) owners reported their dog displayed at least one problem behaviour from the list. The average number of owner-reported problem behaviours at 21 months was five, while 20% of owners reported eight or more. The three most common behaviours that owners considered a problem were pulling on the lead (67%), jumping up at people (57%) and not coming back when called (52%).

When the behaviours were grouped, the most frequent behavioural problems were control behaviours (84%), attention-seeking (77%), fear/avoidance behaviours (41%) and aggressive behaviours (25%).

When asked about the dog training methods they used in the first 21 months of ownership, 96% of owners reported verbally praising their dogs as a training method. However, 80% also reported using one or more aversive methods/aids – with 39% of participants admitting to using two or more aversive training aids.

The most commonly used aversive training method/aid was physically moving the dog (e.g., pushing them off if they jump up at a person or on furniture) (44%), followed by shouting at them/telling them off (41%) and leash corrections (e.g., yanking their lead if they pull) (40%). Other methods reported included the use of a range of aversive training equipment including rattle bottles/cans/discs, water pistols/spray bottles, choke chains and more.

Owners were less likely to use aversive training techniques if they had attended online puppy classes with their dog (while they were under 16 weeks) during the pandemic, demonstrating the value of

educating owners in humane training techniques at an early stage of ownership.

Dr Rowena Packer, Lecturer in Companion Animal Behaviour and Welfare Science at the RVC, and lead author of the study, said:

“Problem behaviours in dogs are a major welfare challenge, not just for affected dogs but also for their caregivers, causing stress and lifestyle changes for many owners. Our findings indicate that problem behaviours are extremely common in Pandemic Puppies, and in many cases, are potentially being exacerbated by owners using punishment-based training techniques.

“Although we understand these problem behaviours can be very frustrating for owners, they are often a sign a dog is struggling to cope or that they haven't been taught an appropriate response in a situation, rather than dogs intentionally behaving 'badly'. Punishing problem behaviours can lead to dogs becoming anxious and fearful, going on to develop further problem behaviours, including aggression.

“Gaining a deeper understanding of the risk factors for problem behaviour development is important in helping us provide effective advice to owners. A key piece of guidance arising from our study is that attending puppy classes is a vital way to support owners in using the best training techniques available. We appreciate many pandemic puppy owners missed these opportunities due to lockdown restrictions, but thankfully, there are also many science-based behaviour professionals available running adult classes and consultations who can support owners and dogs using effective, humane training techniques, who we would encourage all owners troubled by their dog's behaviour to reach out to.”

Robert Bays, Battersea's Senior Animal Behaviour Manager, said:

“At Battersea we have seen a significant increase in the number of dogs coming to our centres with certain behavioural issues, such as separation anxiety, which can often be linked to the pandemic and the training challenges this unusual time presented. Without the right kind of positive training and support, a small behaviour problem in a puppy or dog can quickly escalate into a serious issue, so we are deeply concerned by this study's findings that so many owners are using aversive training methods. This approach can often cause further behavioural problems in adulthood and lead to suppression of behaviour, not to mention significantly damage the relationship between pet and owner, which can be challenging to overcome in the future.

“We believe that this new research from the RVC, supported by a grant from Battersea, will really help provide the animal welfare sector with a greater understanding of the behavioural needs of a whole generation of dogs, and in turn, the needs of their owners, so that we can offer the appropriate support and training advice they need.”

As a wider longitudinal study, later timepoints in this cohort of dogs' lives will continue to be investigated for the same and broader outcomes in the future, including the potential impact on these puppies' later adult-dog behaviour, their health, and their bond with their owners (including relinquishment).

Pet Expert Warns Against These Common Diet Foods That Are Deadly For Dogs

A pet expert has revealed which diet-friendly food items prove deadly to dogs, as many pet owners have resolved to eat healthier in the new year - and may not know how their new diet will affect their furry friend.

Pet business insurance specialists Protectivity warn that many foods recommended as healthy alternatives to fatty snacks may prove deadly for dogs, including grapes, raisins, macadamia nuts, onions, garlic, xylitol (found in chewing gum), and dairy products.

The experts said: “This time of year can be full of hazards for pets as owners juggle festive leftovers and changes to their diet - especially if they resolved to eat healthier in the new year. The best way to prevent accidents is by educating yourself on which items are toxic, keeping them out of the way.”

According to the experts, risky ingredients that may be prominent in a New Year's diet include:

GRAPES AND RAISINS - Grapes and raisins are naturally a low-calorie,

nutrient-dense, fat-free snack for those aiming to eat healthier, but few people know they are toxic to dogs. Grapes and raisins can cause canine kidney failure, even in small amounts.

MACADAMIA NUTS - These can be eaten raw and roasted, proving a popular pre-gym snack for diet-conscious people looking for a quick and easy energy boost. However, they can cause weakness, vomiting and hypothermia in dogs.

ONIONS AND GARLIC - Onions and garlic are staples for adding flavour to healthy dishes but are toxic for dogs in all forms (whether powdered, raw, dehydrated, or cooked). They can destroy a dog's red blood cells and lead to anaemia.

XYLITOL (CHEWING GUM) - People trying to eat healthier are often encouraged to consume gum to curb cravings, but when consumed by dogs, it can cause a rapid insulin increase that, in turn, can lead to hypoglycaemia.

DAIRY PRODUCTS - Incorporating healthy dairy into your diet, including yoghurt, low-fat cheese, and milk, is a great source of protein and calcium. However, many dogs are lactose intolerant and will experience digestive problems if they consume dairy.

Commenting on the dangers, a Protectivity spokesperson says: “As well as keeping problem foods out of reach, it's also key to set boundaries with your dog so that your pet knows what's expected of them. These boundaries aren't limited to dog owners but anyone who works around them, such as dog groomers or dog walkers.

“It can be tempting to indulge our four-legged friends, but these actions can have dangerous consequences. And while you may be aiming to improve your eating habits this year. It's important to remember that food that is healthy for you isn't always good for them.”



The RSPCA has revealed that it has found loving new homes for more than 11,000 animals in a decade in North Yorkshire, with the remarkable rehoming feat revealed to mark its 200th birthday in 2024.

The charity has come a long way since 1824 - when founding members of the charity met in a coffee shop in London determined to change animals' lives, creating the then SPCA and sparking an animal welfare movement that spread around the world.

Now - as the RSPCA enters its landmark 200th anniversary year - the charity wants to inspire a one million strong movement for animals, as the charity aims to "create a better world for every animal".

Today North Yorkshire is served by a team of RSPCA rescuers who save animals and investigate cruelty while also offering welfare advice and help to pet owners in need.

The county is also home to six independent RSPCA branches and one national animal centre - RSPCA Keighley, Craven and Upper Wharfedale, RSPCA Middlesbrough, South Tees and District, North Teeside & District, RSPCA Northallerton, Thirsk & Dales, RSPCA

Scarborough and District, RSPCA York, Harrogate & District and RSPCA Great Ayton Animal Centre - who rehabilitate and rehome rescued animals - ranging from cats and dogs to small furries like hamsters and guinea pigs.

Many will have endured horrendous suffering but with the care of dedicated staff and volunteers they will be helped to recover before they are found loving homes.

The latest available figures show that in the ten years up until the end of 2022 these centres have found new homes for a staggering 11,560 animals. Additionally they have helped pet owners in the county by providing:

- 15,242 neuters (to stop unwanted pregnancies and promote responsible ownership)
- 6,880 microchips - to help reunited lost pets with their owners

Nationally the charity has rehomed 405,839 pets in need of a new home since 2013 thanks to its network of 140 branches and animal centres across England and Wales - which equates to 111 animals every day.

Also during that time 615,000 animals have been patients at the charity's hospitals for anything from life-saving operations to welfare treatments and a staggering 1.7 million vet treatments have been carried out.

Throughout their history local RSPCA teams have helped thousands more animals in the county and are determined to carry on their amazing work as the RSPCA marks a new chapter - at a time when animals are facing bigger challenges than ever with the cost-of-living crisis.

Animal neglect and abandonment is sadly at a three-year high. In 2023, the RSPCA received 72,050 reports about animal abandonment and neglect - higher than in 2022, 2021 and 2020.

Dermot Murphy, RSPCA inspectorate commissioner, said:

"We have even more animals in need of help coming into our care - but at the same time rehoming has been declining sharply, meaning thousands fewer rescue pets are being adopted and our branches and centres are full to bursting.

"We are also faced with increased bills and less donations due to the cost of living crisis which is one of the biggest challenges facing animal welfare right now - and this economic hardship is continuing into our 200th anniversary year.

"But we are determined to rise to the challenge and help animals and pet owners who need us more than ever. That's why we're currently asking supporters to Join the Winter Rescue by donating to help our rescue teams reach the thousands of animals who desperately need them.

"Animals are now facing bigger challenges than ever as a result of factory farming, climate change, war and a cost of living crisis. In our 200th year we want to inspire one million people to join our movement to improve animals' lives.

"We've been changing industries, laws, minds, and animals' lives for 200 years. Together, there are actions, big and small, we can take to create a better world for every animal."

To find out how you can join our million-strong movement for animals visit www.rspca.org.uk/200

The charity is also asking supporters to Join the Winter Rescue and make a donation to help rescue teams reach the thousands of animals who desperately need them. More information can be found on the RSPCA's 200th anniversary webpage;

www.rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/whowere/history

**The local branches are part of the RSPCA family but are funded independently and rely on public support.

New Research Highlights Surprisingly Good Health Characteristics In Shih Tzu Dogs In The UK



New research from the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) has found the most common conditions diagnosed in Shih Tzu dogs in the UK are periodontal disease (inflammation of the gums and tissue around the teeth), anal sac impaction and ear disorders. While the findings suggest that the breed is predisposed to a number of conditions, the overall disorder profile of the Shih Tzu is surprisingly different and better than many other common flat-faced breeds.

The Shih Tzu is the seventh most common dog breed in the UK, with an estimated UK population of more than 300,000 that accounts for 3% of all UK dogs. Shih Tzu are a flat-faced breed, also known as a brachycephalic breed, with this extreme body shape linked to number of serious eye and breathing health issues because the short muzzle causes excessive facial skin folds and shallow eye sockets. However, until now, there has been limited information available on the most common health issues in the Shih Tzu breed.

The new study was led by the RVC's VetCompass Research Programme and investigated anonymised clinical information on 11,082 (3.29%) Shih Tzus from an overall study population of 336,865 dogs under veterinary care during 2016.

Dental (periodontal) disease was the most recorded disorder in Shih Tzu, with 9.5% of dogs diagnosed with the condition each year. Periodontal disease was more common in older dogs, emphasising to owners that extra veterinary and home care is needed to protect the dental health of their Shih Tzu ages.

The other common disorders found in Shih Tzu were anal sac impaction (7.4%), ear disorders (5.5%), otitis externa (4.7%; inflamed ear canal), vomiting (4.4%) and umbilical hernias (3.9%; when internal tissues push out through weakened muscle tissues).

However, despite the Shih Tzu being a flat-faced breed, their overall health profile of common disorders was quite similar to the health profiles of non-flat-faced dogs previously reported. This suggests the Shih Tzu is much less severely affected by its flat-faced conformation than other common brachycephalic breeds such as French Bulldogs, English Bulldogs and Pugs. For example, the reported frequency of otitis externa in French

Bulldogs was 14%, almost three times the level reported for Shih Tzus (4.7%), while the frequency of corneal (eye surface) disorders in Pugs was 8.7%, more than double that reported in Shih Tzus (3.5%).

Other key findings include:

The frequency of anal sac impaction, umbilical hernias and eyes problems were substantially higher in Shih Tzu dogs than previously identified in dogs overall

- Female Shih Tzu dogs had a higher probability of umbilical hernia, while males had a higher probability of aggression, heart murmur, skin lesions and haircoat disorders
- The average adult bodyweight for Shih Tzu overall was 7.9kg. The average bodyweight of males (8.5kg) was heavier than for females (7.3kg)
- The most common causes of death were bowel diseases (diarrhoea, vomiting etc.) (9.6%), heart disease (9.6%) and poor quality of life (9.6%)
- The overall average age at death of Shih Tzu was 12.7 years. This is longer than the average of 11.2 years reported for dogs overall in the UK

This information on common disorders can help vets, breeders and owners prioritise prevention and management of these disorders in Shih Tzu. Although some disorder predispositions were identified in Shih Tzu such as eye and anal sac problems, the overall longevity and disorder patterns were not that dissimilar to dogs overall suggesting that Shih Tzu can be considered as a more typical dog in terms of common health issues compared to other popular flat-faced breeds.



HEALTH

500,000 Women Benefit From Cheaper Hormone Replacement Therapy

Since launching on 1 April last year, more than 500,000 women in England have accessed cheaper HRT – the main treatment for negative menopause symptoms – helping to save hundreds of pounds in prescription charges.

A key pillar of the first year of England's Women's Health Strategy, which made menopause a priority area, the HRT PPC reduced prescription costs to just £19.30 per year. It can be used against a list of eligible HRT items that includes patches, tablets and topical preparations. Patients can use the HRT PPC as many times as needed throughout the year.

Making HRT more accessible through reducing its cost is one way the government is making menopause support more readily available to women. This year the government has also successfully tackled supply issues, by working with suppliers to encourage and support them to meet growing demand.

Health and Social Care Secretary Victoria Atkins said:

"I am determined to make access to healthcare faster, simpler, and fairer. Better access to HRT will improve the lives of millions and gives women the freedom to take control of their symptoms.

"This is a huge milestone and shows how successful our Women's Health Strategy is in delivering the outcomes women want and deserve."

Minister for Women's Health Strategy Maria Caulfield said:

"Every woman is different and so it's essential we make sure all women can access the right medication that works for them.

"Many women often need to try a few different types of HRT to get the right medication that works for them. By reducing the price of HRT to under £20 for a year's supply, we've made it more equitable for women to go on living their normal lives.

"Our Women's Health Strategy continues to deliver on what women want."

Women experiencing the menopause will also benefit from the establishment of women's health hubs in local health areas across the country.

As a result of the government investment of £25 million, women's health hubs will improve women's access to care, improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities. The government aims to establish at least one women's health hub in every local area this year, enabling better access and quality of care in services for menstrual problems, contraception, pelvic pain, menopause care and more.

Professor Dame Lesley Regan, the Women's Health Ambassador for England said:

"When we created this Strategy, we made it clear it would improve women's health outcomes. 500,000 women accessing affordable HRT is a clear, tangible result of just that.

"Menopause is an inevitable stage of every woman's life, so receiving second rate care for a predictable problem is not acceptable.

"The HRT PPC is a fantastic way of giving more women access to

treatment and our women's health hubs will provide women experiencing severe menopause symptoms advice from a healthcare professional."

NHS England will continue its work to improve menopause care by piloting new guidance for nurses, GPs, and other staff to better recognise and treat menopause symptoms, with integrated care systems (or primary care teams) in the Midlands region.

Michael Brodie, Chief Executive of the NHS Business Services Authority, which is responsible for delivering this service, said:

"This significant milestone highlights the crucial role this service provides for patients who rely on HRT, allowing them access to their medication at a reduced cost."

Menopause can impact on all areas of a women's life. The government has appointed Helen Tomlinson as the government's first Menopause Employment Champion, and have awarded grant funding to charities across England to help employers make changes to their workplace to support women's reproductive health, which includes menopause.

How to use the PPC

There are a few different ways to get the HRT PPC:

- online on the NHSBSA website: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/hrt-ppc
- in person at some pharmacies
- if you're deaf or hard of hearing, you can use the textphone (or minicom) to contact the NHSBSA using the text relay service. Dial 18001 then the relevant phone number.
- the NHSBSA also offers a telephone translation service and can provide documents in large print or Braille on request

Patients can call 0300 330 2089 for help and support.

To use your HRT PPC, ask your prescriber for your HRT items on a separate prescription to any other medicines you are prescribed (one prescription per item). This is to ensure the prescription can be processed correctly at the pharmacy.

Take your prescriptions and HRT PPC to a pharmacy and use it as many times as you need over 12 months.

Before getting the HRT PPC:

- check that you're not already eligible for free NHS prescriptions using the eligibility checker on the NHSBSA website
- check that your medicine is covered by the HRT PPC - see the list of eligible HRT medication
- check whether a 3 or 12-month general PPC is more suitable for you - it covers all NHS prescriptions, not just HRT items, and may be more cost-effective if you are prescribed other medicines as well as HRT

The HRT PPC will be valid for 12 months and there is no limit on the number of times the certificate is used before it expires. You do not need to get it on 1 April - get it just before your next prescription to maximise your use of it over the year.

Use NHS 111 To Get The Help You Need

The NHS is encouraging people to get the help they need by using the NHS 111 service.

Winter is the busiest period for the NHS, with increases in the number of people needing help across all services. Across Humber and North Yorkshire, accident and emergency departments in the region's hospitals have been extremely busy.

Using services wisely can help to reduce pressure on the NHS and may help patients to be treated sooner than attending local hospital emergency departments, allowing medical staff to focus on treating those people who need it most.

In order for staff to prioritise care for those who are sickest and most vulnerable, the NHS is urging people who need urgent medical help to use NHS 111 via phone, the NHS App or online.

Highly trained advisors at NHS 111 will assess and direct people to the most appropriate local service, including urgent treatment centres, GP practices, and consultations with a pharmacist. If needed, staff can also arrange a call back from a nurse, doctor or paramedic.

In serious or life-threatening emergencies, people should still use 999 or A&E as normal.

Dr Nigel Wells, NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board's (ICB) Executive Director of Clinical and Professional, said: "NHS 111 is an easy and convenient way to get urgent help for a wide range of health problems from the comfort of your own home.

"Using the NHS 111 service could save you a trip to A&E. It is estimated that up to two-fifths of A&E attendances are avoidable or could be better treated elsewhere.

"People should still call 999 or go to A&E in an emergency – when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk.

"But if you need urgent medical help and aren't sure where to go to get the help you need, use NHS 111."

The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can call, go online or use the NHS App to get:

- directed to the right health care service in your area; or
- a call back from a nurse, doctor or paramedic; or
- advice on self-care

The 111 phone service can help with the same problems as 111 online. Call 111 if you cannot use the online service because you: need help for a child under 5; or

Have complex problems caused by an existing medical condition

People who need help in another language can call 111 and ask for an interpreter, British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact 111 using the NHS 111 BSL interpreter service by visiting 111.nhs.uk, and text relay users can call 18001 111.

For more information, visit www.nhs.uk/111.

USE NHS 111 FOR NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAL ADVICE

NHS 111 and the 111 online service are available 24/7. Trained medical professionals can provide guidance on the most appropriate medical care.

KEEP A WELL-STOCKED MEDICINE CABINET AT HOME

You can tackle many common winter illnesses and ailments without needing to visit a GP by maintaining a well-stocked medicine cabinet at home. Over-the-counter remedies like paracetamol, ibuprofen and anti-diarrhoea tablets can prove beneficial, as well as getting plenty of rest if you are unwell.

USE LOCAL PHARMACIES

They are the go-to for minor health concerns. Pharmacy staff can provide clinical advice for minor health conditions common

over the winter period such as coughs, colds, sore throats, tummy trouble and aches and pains. People can check with their local community pharmacy for specific opening hours using the NHS Find a Pharmacy service.

VISIT YOUR LOCAL PHARMACY IF YOU RUN OUT OF YOUR PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE

If you run out of medicine outside of your GP surgery's normal opening hours and need some urgently, there are a few ways to get an emergency supply quickly, even if you're away from home. There's more information about how pharmacies can help on the NHS website.

LOOK OUT FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS

The winter months can have an impact on mental health due to colder weather and shorter days. Even short bursts of exposure to sunlight can enhance mental well-being. Remember, older neighbours and relatives may be more vulnerable during winter and may require extra support. Regular check-ins and assistance can contribute to their overall wellbeing.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

In cases of serious or life-threatening illnesses or injuries, patients should immediately call 999 for an ambulance or proceed to their nearest emergency department.

SEARCH LOCAL WEBSITES FOR SUPPORT

If you're looking for information on common childhood illnesses, including advice on what 'red-flag' signs to look out for, where to seek help if required and how long your child's symptoms are likely to last, visit www.hnyhealthiertogether.nhs.uk. Alternatively, www.letsgetbetter.co.uk can help you 'choose well' if you're unsure where to go for help.

Doctor Explains;

Image for illustration purposes only

The Difference In Types Of Cough

Seasonal coughs affect many people throughout the autumn and winter months, with those most vulnerable encouraged to take extra precautions to prevent disease, such as annual flu jabs and routine Covid vaccinations.

Although the average cough lasts around 18 days it can be difficult to determine whether your cough is in fact, 'just a cough', or if there is a further, potentially serious cause that needs reviewing by a medical professional.

Dr Malathy Munisamy, a Clinical Research Physician involved in respiratory research at MAC Clinical Research, said "if your cough lasts three weeks or more, you should book a visit to see your GP.

"Standard coughs, which are often 'harmless', settle on their own within a couple of weeks. A cough is simply the body's natural response to any irritations within the airways. Coughs can be categorised into 3 groups; acute, subacute, and chronic."

Dr Munisamy explains the difference in types of cough.

ACUTE COUGHS

Post-nasal drip symptoms include:

- Dry or tickly cough, usually presenting white mucus
- Feeling of mucus dripping down the throat
- Can cause the throat to feel sore and swollen

The cause of a post-nasal drip is usually down to allergies and the mucus caused by them.

To treat it:

A steroid-based nasal spray can ease inflammation in the nose to reduce the mucus.

COLDS AND FLU

Symptoms include:

- Sore throat with a cough that sometimes produces yellow phlegm
- Headaches
- Muscle aches
- Sneezing
- Increased temperature/fever

Colds and flu are caused by viruses spread through droplets in the air from people coughing and sneezing. This means they are contagious and if you're near someone with either of these, you are susceptible to falling ill also. The viruses cause the membranes within the nose and throat to become inflamed, which in turn causes coughing and sneezing.

To treat it:

As this cough is caused by a virus, rest, hydration, paracetamol, ibuprofen or cold relief medication are usually effective treatments. If you are taking antibiotics for viruses, these will not work and could lead to bacterial antibiotic resistance.

SUB-ACUTE COUGHS

Chest Infections symptoms include:

- A chesty cough
- Wheezing, shortness of breath and chest pain
- High temperature, aching muscles, fatigue and headaches
- Lots of dark yellow or green mucus

Chest infections are usually caused by a virus, such as bronchitis.

To treat it:

Chest infections can either be viral or bacterial, both are treated with different medications. Either antiviral medication or an antibiotic can be prescribed alongside the usual advice of rest, paracetamol, and hydration.

COVID

Symptoms include:

- A new continuous cough, which means you cough a lot for more than an hour or have three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours
- A high temperature
- A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- Shortness of breath and/or a sore throat
- Tiredness, runny nose, diarrhoea

Most of us will know that it is caused by a virus called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which emerged in 2019.

To treat it:

While there are vaccinations against developing severe symptoms of Covid, treatment is mostly the same as when you have a cold or flu; staying hydrated, getting lots of sleep, and paracetamol for when you feel uncomfortable.

If you are categorised as 'vulnerable', ensure you are up to date with your Covid vaccination to avoid severe symptoms.

PNEUMONIA

Symptoms include:

- A wet cough, sometimes with foul-smelling green or yellow mucus
- Shortness of breath, chest pain, and a wheezing noise when you breathe
- A high temperature
- Aches and pains and feeling very tired
- Loss of appetite

Pneumonia is usually caused by a bacterial or viral infection, much the same as a chest infection, but the infection and its symptoms are much more severe.

To treat it:

Hydration and medication, such as antibiotics or antivirals, is recommended, but if you are at risk of serious illness, (for instance, if you are over 65), have cardiovascular disease, a lung condition, or if it is your baby or child that has pneumonia, you may need to go to hospital to receive further treatment and oxygen.

CHRONIC COUGHS

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath and a persistent cough
- Wheezing and chest tightness
- Fatigue and frequent respiratory infections
- Increased amounts of mucus, commonly coloured brown

COPD is a term given to a group of lung conditions including bronchitis and emphysema. Prolonged or long-term exposure to damaging irritants, such as smoking, dust, chemicals, and fumes are the primary cause of COPD.

To treat it:

There is currently no cure for this progressive illness, but there are lifestyle changes which can help ease symptoms and aim to prolong life expectancy. These include stopping smoking, bronchodilators, inhaled corticosteroids, pulmonary rehabilitation, and oxygen therapy. Speak to your doctor or GP about the options available.

Health Leaders Urge More People To Get Vaccinated Against Measles As Cases Rise



Health leaders in York and North Yorkshire say they are concerned that not enough people are vaccinated against measles – and are urging people to come forward.

The Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) jab, is delivered in two doses, the first given at 12 months, and the second at about three years and four months, before children start school.

However, around one in 10 children in the area remain at risk because they have not had both doses of the vaccine at aged five. This means that in the average reception class there will be three children who are not fully vaccinated.

There are also concerns that rates of vaccination in York and North Yorkshire are significantly lower among gypsy and traveller communities, recent migrants and university students.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) – alarmed at the spread of measles in the Midlands, which has seen hundreds of cases – says further outbreaks of the disease will spread to other towns and cities unless there is urgent action to increase MMR vaccination uptake.

Peter Roderick, Director of Public Health at City of York Council, said: "Children who get measles can be very poorly and some will suffer life changing complications. The best way for parents to protect their children from measles is the MMR vaccine.

"I'd also recommend that students coming to universities in our area should check their vaccination status with their GP. Two doses of the MMR vaccine give lifelong protection and it's never too late to catch up."

Louise Wallace, Director of Public Health at North Yorkshire Council, added: "Measles spreads very easily among those who are unvaccinated, especially in nurseries and schools. It can be a very unpleasant illness and, in some children, can be very serious, leading to hospitalisation and tragically even death in rare cases.

"People in certain at-risk groups including babies and young children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immunity, are at increased risk of complications from measles."

More than 99 per cent of people who have two doses of the MMR vaccine will be protected against measles and rubella.

The vaccine also provides protection against mumps, which can be very painful with complications including inflammation of the ovaries and testicles, and in rare cases, the pancreas. Although mumps protection is slightly lower, cases in vaccinated people are much less severe, highlighting the importance of the MMR vaccination.

Jack Lewis, consultant in public health with the Humber and North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership, said: "While we would strongly urge parents to make arrangements for their child to be vaccinated, it's worth emphasising the MMR vaccine isn't just for children. It is important at any age, particularly if you have a weakened immune system or long-term health condition.

"So if you or your child are not fully vaccinated, please make an appointment with your GP practice to catch up on any missing vaccinations."

NICE Updates...

More People At Risk Of Severe COVID-19 To Benefit From Wider Roll Out Of Antiviral Paxlovid

1.4 million more people will be eligible for the antiviral Paxlovid (also called nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir and made by Pfizer) if they test positive for COVID-19 following final draft NICE guidance published today (11 January 2024).

NICE already recommends Paxlovid for an estimated 3.9 million people who do not need supplemental oxygen for COVID-19 and who have an increased risk for progression to severe COVID-19. This includes people with certain cancers, people who have had haematological stem cell transplant or who have a haematological disease and people with liver or kidney disease.

Following a partial review NICE has published updated final draft guidance which increases the number of people eligible to access Paxlovid to an estimated 5.3 million.

This means that within 3 months of NICE publishing final guidance, the following groups will also have access to Paxlovid if they test positive for Covid 19:

- People aged 85 years and over.
- People with end-stage heart failure who have a long-term ventricular assistance device.
- People on the organ transplant waiting list.
- People aged 70 years and over, or who have a BMI of 35 kg/m² or more, diabetes or heart failure, and are resident in a care home, or are already hospitalised

Paxlovid is an antiviral medicine, given as 2 separate tablets to people within 5 days of getting COVID-19 symptoms. It works by stopping the virus from growing and spreading in the body.

It's 2 separate medicines, nirmatrelvir and ritonavir. Nirmatrelvir stops the virus from growing and spreading, and ritonavir helps nirmatrelvir from being broken down in the body while it is working.

People eligible for COVID-19 treatments can get free lateral flow tests from participating pharmacies and should take a test as soon as they have symptoms, even if mild. If positive, people should call their GP surgery, NHS 111 or hospital specialist as soon as possible.

Helen Knight, director of medicines evaluation said: "Our review of the evidence on the use of Paxlovid has found it offers value for

money for a wider group of patients. This is good news for people who may contract COVID-19 in the coming months and will help alleviate pressure on the health service.

NICE is focused on getting the best care to patients while ensuring the NHS can continue to deliver maximum value to the taxpayer.

"Although we are no longer in a pandemic, COVID-19 is still circulating and we are pleased that more people at risk of severe disease can benefit from Paxlovid."

25,000 People To Benefit After New Daily Pill For Ulcerative Colitis

NICE have published final draft guidance recommending a new one-a-day pill as an option for treating ulcerative colitis.

Etrasimod (also known as Velsipity and made by Pfizer) is recommended for people aged over 16 with moderately to severely active ulcerative colitis who have had an inadequate response, lost response or were intolerant to either conventional therapy or biological treatment.

Just over 25,000 people in England would be eligible to receive the treatment, which was evaluated using a simplified, cost comparison technology appraisal. As a result, this final draft guidance was available up to eight weeks faster than would have been the case under standard process.

Ulcerative colitis is a long-term disease where the colon and rectum become inflamed resulting in ulcers, bleeding and pus. It can cause recurring diarrhoea, arthritis and osteoporosis.

The treatment helps reduce inflammation in the colon by helping to control the level of immune cells in the blood.

It is estimated that around 300,000 people across the UK have been diagnosed with ulcerative colitis.

The condition can develop at any age but is most often diagnosed in people between 15 and 25 years old.

Clinical trial evidence shows that etrasimod is more effective than placebo for treating moderately to severely active ulcerative colitis. Indirect comparisons suggest that it is likely to work better than adalimumab (an immunotherapy treatment) and may be similarly effective to other usual treatments for moderately to severely active ulcerative colitis.

The recommendation is subject to the treatment being licenced by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

The company has a confidential commercial arrangement in place which makes etrasimod available to the NHS with a discount.

300 People To Benefit From New Treatment For Advanced Breast Cancer

Around 300 people are set to benefit following NICE's recommendation of talazoparib for treating a type of locally advanced or metastatic breast cancer in final draft guidance.

The recommendation reverses NICE's earlier draft decision not to recommend talazoparib for adults with BRCA 1 or 2 mutated HER2-negative locally advanced or metastatic breast cancer after prior chemotherapy. It follows the offer of an increased discount to the price of talazoparib, also called Talzenna, by the company (Pfizer).

Once the draft guidance becomes final this month it will mean NICE will have made positive recommendations in all 20 of its completed appraisals of breast cancer treatments since 2016.

Talazoparib would be used instead of chemotherapy.

Currently there are no targeted treatments for this type of advanced breast cancer available in the NHS and alternative treatment options are limited.

Helen Knight, director of medicines evaluation at NICE, said: "This announcement addresses a significant need by giving people with these types of cancer access to an additional treatment. And because talazoparib is taken as a once-daily tablet it means it's much more convenient for people who would otherwise need to go into hospital for intravenous chemotherapy.

"Although some uncertainty in the clinical evidence remains, when considering the impact of advanced breast cancer and its effect on quality and length of life, the improved discount from the company means we can now recommend talazoparib for use in the NHS."

Current treatments for this type of cancer include chemotherapy (mainly taxanes) and best supportive care.

Evidence from a clinical trial showed that talazoparib increases how long people live without their cancer getting worse compared with chemotherapy. The trial did not show any difference in how long people live.

Talazoparib is a type of treatment called a PARP inhibitor which works by shrinking or slowing the growth of certain types of cancer cells.

Healthy Heart Tip: Reducing Sugar Intake



Heart Research UK Healthy Heart Tip, written by the Health Promotion and Education Team at Heart Research UK

Reducing our intake of sugar can have a beneficial impact on our heart health and reduce our risk of heart diseases. Many of us will be surrounded by sugary temptations and in this week's healthy tip, we give you some helpful ideas to reduce your consumption.



MAKE YOUR OWN DESSERTS

A family get-together wouldn't be complete without a sweet treat or dessert to enjoy after your meal. While buying cake or biscuits from a shop is easy, if we make it at home ourselves, we can reduce the sugar content. Many recipes work just as well and taste just as good with half the recommended sugar, simply reduce the amount you add to the mixture. Alternatively, find low-sugar or sugar-free recipes that use fruit such as bananas for sweetness.

JAZZ UP FRUIT

Fruit can make the perfect tasty treat and will offer you some extra fibre which contributes to heart health. A simple fruit skewer drizzled in a little chocolate looks great on a platter and can be enjoyed by everyone as a healthier, sweet option.



WATCH OUT FOR HIDDEN SUGARS

Added sugar is sneaky, and can crop up in foods we don't even realise they are in. When trying to reduce your intake, a great first place to start is to check the labels of food products you regularly eat and swap them for lower sugar versions. Common culprits are yoghurts, breakfast cereals, cereal bars, soft drinks (even if they look healthy), condiments and sauces. Try lower sugar alternatives by swapping any foods you regularly consume that contain more than 5g of sugar per 100g.

New Dementia-Friendly Ambulances Introduced In Yorkshire



■ L-R: Lesley Butterworth, Lindsay Bent and Laura Williams

The region's ambulance service has introduced new vehicles for both 999 and non-emergency Patient Transport Service (PTS) with features to improve the experience of patients with dementia.

The improvements to the vehicles will create a calmer environment for someone who is living with dementia, and help to put them at ease. This includes printed blinds, which feature a landscape of the countryside for a sense of comfort and familiarity, and improved contrasting on the seats, floor and steps for better visibility.

There are 13 dementia-friendly vehicles for 999 now in service, with a further 21 in the commissioning process and an additional 91 vehicles to be delivered before the end of the financial year (31 March 2024). 60 PTS vehicles are also currently in build.

Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) had the opportunity to demonstrate its new vehicles as part of a research project taking place in Australia, to show how the needs of patients with dementia

can be met. In November 2023, YAS hosted a visit from Lindsay Bent, Intensive Care Paramedic with Ambulance Victoria in Australia, who received a prestigious Churchill Fellowship to research dementia-friendly ambulances. As part of his research, he has visited a number of NHS ambulance services in the UK to understand the work that has been done in the sector to improve the experiences of people living with dementia.

Lesley Butterworth, Head of Nursing and Patient Experience at Yorkshire Ambulance Service, said: "Following some challenges along the way, we are pleased to have taken delivery of some of our new dementia-friendly vehicles. The printed blinds make the passenger area seem less clinical, and they give a point of focus and conversation for someone who is living with dementia and may be distressed in this environment. The new contrasting on the seats, floor and steps of the vehicles also makes the edges more easily identifiable for patients. These simple additions to our vehicles will have a positive impact on patient experience."

New Drug Offered To York Patients In First Worldwide Clinical Study

York doctors have achieved a global first by participating in a clinical study helping patients with a rare condition.

Researchers working at York and Scarborough Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust were the first to recruit a patient for the global research study named AvacoStar.

Patients are now able to take Avacopan which is given to patients with a disease called ANCA-associated Vasculitis (AAV). AAV is a type of inflammation of the small blood vessels, most often affecting the kidneys and the lungs. Patients will be proposed to enrol in the study which has been supported by the NIHR Clinical Research Network (CRN).

Dr Keith McCullough, a Nephrologist from York and Scarborough Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, said: "We are pleased to be able to offer our patients in York the opportunity to participate in this important international, observational study. It will assess the real-world impact of a newly available tablet treatment for vasculitis, which is a rare auto-immune condition.

"The condition can significantly impact long-term health and existing effective treatments can carry a significant burden of side effects and health complications. International collaboration has been crucial in creating large, good quality studies to provide an evidence base for the best treatment strategies for this condition."

Reflecting on the achievement, Marthe Ludtmann, Commercial Research Manager for the York and Scarborough Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, explained: "We are delighted that Dr McCullough and the Research and Development team have recruited the first global participant to the AvacoStar study. It showcases the excellence of our team and demonstrates how reactive and responsive we are as a trial site to commercial companies."

York patient Mary Steel explained that taking part in the AvacoStar trial was an easy decision. Mary has been diagnosed with the condition affecting her kidneys since 2021.

"If it helps me to improve my condition and it helps others in the future then I want to be able to do that, improve and get better and help others," she said.

Siobhan Sutton, Renal Research Nurse at York and Scarborough Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, explained without Mary's help the delivery of research within renal medicine would not have been achieved.

"We were delighted to recruit the first global participant to this study; however, this wouldn't have been possible without the engagement and enthusiasm of our patients.

"It was a pleasure to meet with Mary and hear how passionately she feels about taking part in research. Being able to spend time with all our patients, to hear their stories and understand why taking part in research is important to them, is extremely rewarding," she said.

Professor Alistair Hall, Clinical Director, from The National Institute for Health and Care Research of Yorkshire and Humber (CRN), explained: "Patients with diseases that are termed 'rare' are nonetheless confronted with major challenges and concerns, that can include the absence of new treatment availability and the absence of opportunities to take part in research that might have a life-changing impact for them and others.

"As the first participant in a multinational study, Mary is acting as a leader for others who will subsequently join and so she should be rightly honoured and thanked. Health research is entirely dependent on such kindness. I therefore extend my gratitude on behalf of the Yorkshire and Humber Clinical Research Network, while also applauding the role of the York team in this valuable endeavour."

Age UK North Yorkshire & Darlington Announces Major Expansion Of Dementia Care Facilities



Age UK North Yorkshire & Darlington has announced a 70 per cent capacity increase of its dementia care services, a move that underscores its commitment to enhancing the quality of life for individuals living with dementia.

This expansion, which will mean that an additional 26 people will be able to use its services, includes the recruitment of two additional staff members, highlighting the charity's dedication to providing exceptional care and support.

The existing dementia care facility provides day care for up to 14 older people living with dementia and Alzheimer's disease, offering a space where individuals can enjoy socialising, crafts, games, and exercise in a safe and stimulating environment. It also provides valuable respite for the partners and other family members of those living with the progressive condition.

The improvements, which will cost an estimated £15,000 from donations and grants and supported by voluntary work, also involve investment in the design and décor of the facility. There will also be advanced security features, including sophisticated security entry keypads and a vestibule at the facility's main entrance. These improvements are designed to create a more comfortable and safe environment for residents, fostering a sense of wellbeing and security.

This strategic development coincides with an organisational change following the departure of CEO Helen Hunter, who is leaving to take up a new role in another part of the country. Ms Hunter has been a dynamic force in the charity since early 2020 and her leadership was instrumental in navigating the charity through the pandemic and in launching several key services, including Meals at Home.

Interim CEO Kevin Cooper, who will be overseeing the upgrades to the dementia care facility, praised Ms Hunter's leadership and her unwavering commitment to the welfare of older people in the region.

Mr Cooper said: "Helen's leadership has been exemplary, especially in these challenging times. Her contributions have left an indelible mark on the charity and the community. The charity is deeply grateful for her service and we wish her all the best in her future role."

Expressing her gratitude, Helen Hunter reflected on her time with Age UK North Yorkshire & Darlington: "Leading this charity has been an extraordinary journey. I am incredibly proud of our collective achievements in supporting older people to live well and independently.

"The dedication and compassion of our team, including our army of volunteers, and community have been truly inspirational. Although I am looking forward to a new role in Lincolnshire, I am confident that the charity will have a positive future going forward; of which expansion of the dementia care facilities is a central part."

Helen added: "The planned investment in dementia care facilities by the charity is a testament to its ongoing commitment to providing outstanding care and support for older individuals, particularly those living with dementia."

Age UK North Yorkshire and Darlington provides a range of services and activities to help older people in the region stay connected, informed, and independent. These include information and advice, home support and social groups. For more information, please visit Age UK North Yorkshire & Darlington's website or call 01325 362 832.

QUIZTIME

WELCOME TO OUR QUIZ PAGE

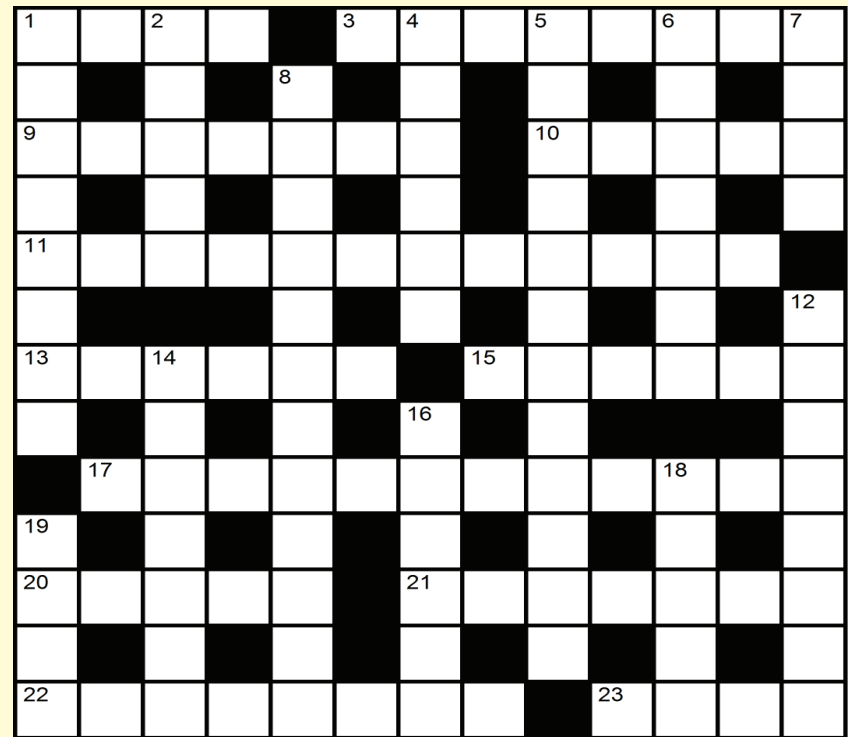
Every month we give you new and hopefully challenging puzzles for your enjoyment.

Make sure to pick up next month's issue for all this month's answers & solutions.

Wordsearch

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| O P P U Q O A C P Z Q K R D M S G | CANDLE LIGHT |
| N O M D J E Q I J A J U N I D E H | CHOCOLATES |
| B Z I G U A C E J V S N T I L T S | CUPID |
| H G V H K Z G N A G D S I H P A X | FLOWERS |
| J E K R O S E L A D P M I E J L D | HEART |
| V U W E U S E S Z M P E S O I O L | LOVE |
| I O C D I N T C I P O Q I U N C A | PASSION |
| Q L Z S T E H B Q Q A R A T J O S | PINK |
| T H G I L E L D N A C B Y R N H O | POEM |
| B B N O S F Z D I P U C E A X C P | PROPOSAL |
| U E I N G R H Y R P S Z Q E W H O | ROMANC |
| S V C F R O E X F D Z M L H M H R | ROSE |
| E X W C O Z M W K F T Z B E P D P | SWEETHEART |
| R V C K B T Y T O Q U Q O L R Z J | VALENTINES |
| E X O L V T N S H L N P J R Q Q J | VIOLETS |
| D U W L A Q T D F S F U J N G S I | |
| N D Z S W E E T H E A R T L D S T | |

Crossword



Clues:

Across

- 1 Compassion
- 3 Ideas
- 9 Serfhood
- 10 Innocent
- 11 Accomplishments
- 13 Rejoices
- 15 Classic sports car
- 17 Decrepit people (6,6)
- 20 Critical
- 21 Loose (2,5)
- 22 Alone
- 23 Be against

Down

- 1 Aisles
- 2 Garbage
- 4 Air constituent
- 5 Despicable
- 6 Cutting
- 7 Grasps
- 8 The transport of people to a new region after disaster
- 12 Expectations
- 14 Strange
- 16 Damage
- 18 Algarroba
- 19 Small islands

HOW MUCH INFO HAVE YOU RETAINED?

Can you answer these questions about articles in this edition?

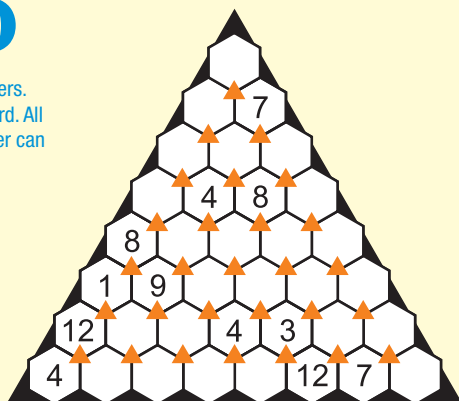
- 1 - How much is Drax Power Station projected to save the UK by offsetting carbon emissions?
- 2 - Which live show will open its doors at the National Exhibition Centre (NEC), Birmingham from 16th-24th November 2024?
- 3 - Caity Baser is one of the UK's fastest-rising, unique and in-demand pop acts of today, how many UK shows is she playing as part of her 'Still Learning' tour?
- 4 - How many women have benefited from cheaper hormone replacement therapy?



WIN A MOTHER'S DAY CARD & MUG FROM THE GREAT YORKSHIRE SHOP - P29

Subaddo 3D

Each orange triangle connects a set of three numbers. Two numbers must add or subtract to equal the third. All numbers must be between 1 and 12 and no number can be repeated in a horizontal row or diagonal row.



January edition answers

- How Much Info Have You Retained answers;
- 1. 26 - 28th January
- 2. The Mysterines
- 3. The RAC
- 4. Jack Russells

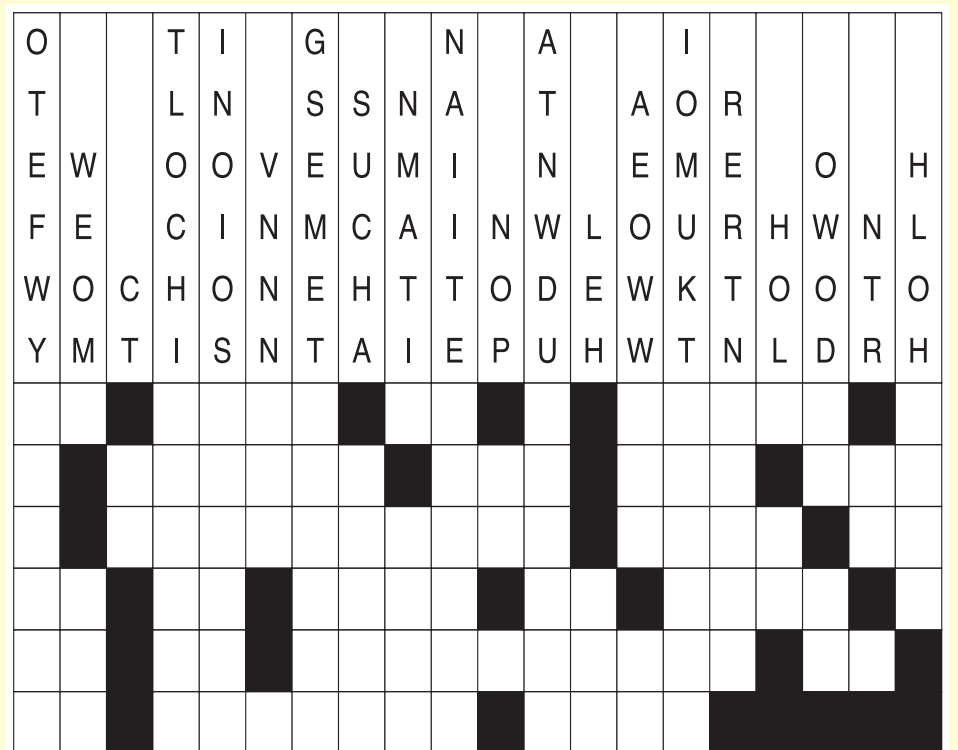


Drop Quote Answer;

How absurd men are! They never use the liberties they have, they demand those they do not have. They have freedom of thought, they demand freedom of speech

Drop Quotes

Drop Quotes are similar to cryptograms, in that the goal is for the solver to uncover a hidden quote. A black-and-white crossword-style grid is set up for each quote, with a number of letters "hovering" above each column. Your task is to "drop" each of those letters into the appropriate square in each column, until the entire quote is revealed. All punctuation (commas, periods, dashes, etc.) has been removed. Good luck!



COMPETITIONS

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To enter go to page 28 and answer the 'How much info have you retained' questions then;

Simply send your answers, along with your contact details including tel number to competitions@yorkshirereporter.co.uk

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JANUARY EDITION COMPETITION WINNERS

The Great Yorkshire Shop competition - Chris Shelley

Martin Kemp tickets - Mr R Rambridge

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Monthly Horoscopes By Russell Grant

ARIES March 21st - April 20th

A generous friend or relative will offer to lend you money on the 1st and this will allow you to travel, study or take some time off work. If you're applying for a job, a former employer you got on well with will give you a glowing reference. A meeting or interview on the 5th will transform your life. You have accomplished a lot already which is why you're happy to take on new challenges in connection with work, education and travel. The New Moon on the 9th brings an opportunity for you to enjoy, accept or apply for something you have always longed for. The 20th will see you reassessing your friendships and deciding on the company you really want to keep while the Full Moon on the 24th brings results of a job or financial application that will be meaningful to you.

TAURUS April 21st - May 21st

Do anything that allows you to expand your horizons as February begins. Learning new skills will make it easier for you to outshine your professional rivals. Follow a desire to enhance your education on the 5th. Set small goals and visualise yourself making gradual steps towards achieving them. An opportunity to break new ground in a creative field will take you by surprise on the 9th. At last you have an outlet for your talent. The New Moon will present you with an engrossing project that's likely to take up a lot of your time. If you're thinking about upgrading your mobile, computer or technical equipment, wait until the 16th and you will get a good deal. You won't lack for things to do on the 24th. You will want to tackle tasks that get your interest immediately; the Full Moon prompting you to plunge into projects with energy and enthusiasm.

GEMINI May 22nd - June 21st

You're more aware than ever of your psychic powers. That's why, on the 1st, you will not let appearances deceive you. If you sense someone isn't being honest with you, trust your intuition. Again on the 2nd, tune out of conversations and tune into the atmosphere around you. This will give you a better sense of what is really going on. If you encounter an obstacle on the 7th, whether this holds up a journey, delays a meeting or prevents you from moving forward with a special project, be patient. Changes suggested could be surprisingly successful. The New Moon on the 9th will bring an invitation to take a long distance trip or a chance to work or live overseas. This is something you will be putting serious thought into. If your daily commute has been a big cause of stress, the Full Moon on the 24th will bring a better arrangement for you to work from home.

CANCER June 22nd - July 23rd

Be honest in business and finance on the 1st. Someone will greatly exaggerate the success of a project they want you to get involved in. Let caution be your guide. Listen to logic on the 2nd and no one will get away with misleading or deceiving you as they are trying to do. A serious legal commitment will be made on the 9th when the New Moon will bring agreement in matters that have been causing a lot of argument. When was the last time you did something purely for your own pleasure? Let it be the 16th. Whatever fun activity you choose, your partner and family will be squarely behind you. The Full Moon on the 24th will require you to set aside some time to respond to emails, letters and phone calls. Choose your words carefully so there can be no confusion or misunderstandings.

LEO July 24th - August 23rd

Dreams you once had but gave up on or wishes you put to one side and never followed up will come to your mind on the 2nd. Life choices may have taken you in a different direction but things can change. The 5th will bring a chance for you to start working toward a cherished goal. If you let this pass by without acting on it, you will only have yourself to blame. Whether it means going back to school, adopting a spiritual practice or developing a creative skill, these are all goals worthy of your time. The New Moon on the 9th is time for you and a partner to have a serious discussion about your joint future. Traffic jams and transport delays will slow your progress on the 16th. Be sensible and allow yourself extra time to get to your destination. The Full Moon on the 24th will bring some extra money your way.

VIRGO August 24th - Sept 23rd

The 1st is the time to focus on the best ways to turn ideas into reality and to enjoy the feeling of satisfaction that this brings. There is a sense of a new maturity being reached in more than one area of your life. The New Moon will open doors on the 9th that were locked to you in the past. Go with a strong desire to be active and you can and will make things happen. If you are travelling on the 16th, check your mobile is fully charged before leaving. That way you can notify anyone who is expecting you if you are delayed. Venturing into the unknown on the 21st will be stimulating and you could find yourself developing an interest in subjects that never held your attention before. Put in some overtime on the Full Moon on the 24th if you could do with some extra money.

LIBRA Sept 24th - Oct 23rd

Remember when you believed anything was possible? On the 2nd, you will realise that deep down, you still believe this. If you can dream it you can achieve it. Dreams on the 3rd are reminding you of the wonderful things you still want to do with your life and this will stir you into action on the 8th. It is time to allow your passion to take you where you want to go. The New Moon on the 9th will breathe new life into a creative effort. Don't be surprised when you are asked to display your art locally. Overcoming obstacles on the 17th will boost your confidence and give you a new sense of personal power. The Full Moon on the 24th reminds you of the long road you have already travelled and encourages you to make good use of the knowledge, experience and gifts you have acquired along the way.

SCORPIO Oct 24th - Nov 22nd

You will be quietly determined to get results on the 1st. Patience and courage, combined with your inner strength will be all you need. Proving you are capable of a difficult assignment will be easier than you think on the 5th. People will be relieved to have you take control and they will follow your lead. A sudden change of fortune on the 8th will be met with a mixed response. You are happy for this chance to move forward but in doing so you may have to leave an old friend behind. The New Moon on the 9th will bring changes on the domestic front. A happy family life is critical to your sense of security. Spending time with relatives on the 16th will give you a lot of pleasure. It will be reassuring to get some positive feedback for your recent accomplishments. The Full Moon on the 24th will bring the end of a frustrating work problem.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 23rd - Dec 21st

You have something special to celebrate on the 1st. Someone in a position of authority will do you a favour that could change your life. Don't put it down to luck. It is your past hard work that has brought you to this present situation. People are impressed by your skills and are willing to pay handsomely for them. An offer made on the 7th will be too good to refuse. The long term prospects of a new business enterprise look exceedingly good. The New Moon on the 9th will bring written confirmation of a verbal agreement made earlier. Steer clear of a friend who is always getting themselves into trouble on the 16th. Being seen with them could damage your reputation. You may have enjoyed each other's company in the past but that particular chapter is over now. You will accept this on the 24th when the Full Moon reveals what they have been getting up to.

CAPRICORN Dec 22nd - Jan 20th

Before making an important decision on the 1st you will be taking a look at all sides of the issue. That's why when you make your mind up, you will be confident you are making the right choice. It might appear as if you are looking before you leap on the 2nd but people won't realise all the thought that has gone into these actions, previously. A little extra money will come your way on the 9th. The New Moon prompts you to put this into a savings account and you will eventually build quite a big nest egg. The Full Moon on the 24th will get you thinking about the possibility of travelling to an exotic location with your family. A holiday booking gives you something to look forward to even if you are making this for some time in advance.

AQUARIUS Jan 21st - Feb 19th

New horizons will open up for you on the 9th when the New Moon encourages you to strike out in a different direction. You're not afraid to make changes if these are necessary to bring improvements into your life. By being adventurous and taking up a challenge, you will reach heights you never knew existed. Moving to a new area, learning a foreign language and earning a degree are among the possibilities. Aspects of your life that are in need of change will undergo a transformation on the 16th. Although this will cause some disruption it will be a blessing in disguise. It will not take long for a versatile person like you to adapt to new situations. The Full Moon on the 24th marks the end of a legal matter. The settlement will be in your favour.

PISCES Feb 20th - March 20th

The 2nd is your time to shine. Take a different approach, try something new and experiment with fresh ideas. This will stir your inner magic and enable you to reach goals you never expected to be fulfilled. Make practical use of your skills on the 5th. With a little effort you will create something beautiful that draws attention to your unique talents. Trust your instincts on the 9th when the New Moon heightens your intuition. This day will be in some way very meaningful for you. Some people will greet changes being suggested on the 16th with excitement but the whole idea leaves you cold. If you aren't happy with a situation, cut ties immediately. Arrange it so you and a partner are doing favourite things on the 24th when the Full Moon reminds you how good you can be together. Joint activities, as the month ends, will benefit you in a number of ways.



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