

Campaigners lose legal challenge over development of zoo site

CAMPAIGNERS have lost their legal challenge against plans to develop the Bristol Zoo Gardens site in Clifton for housing.

The Save Bristol Gardens Alliance said it was disappointed at the Judicial Review decision but would continue to oppose the plans for 196 "truly ugly high rise flats" and was determined to battle on to ensure that the public access to the 12-acre gardens was preserved.

Bristol Zoological Society said it was pleased at the judgement but regretted that the cost of fighting the challenge had led to cuts and redundancies.

The society exchanged sale contracts on the Clifton site with independent housebuilder Acorn Property Group but was unable to complete the deal until the court action was over.

A spokesperson for the campaigners said: "This is of course disappointing news, but not by any means the end of the opposition to this dreadful plan."

"The proposal to destroy the former Clifton Zoo site with truly

Turn to Page 3



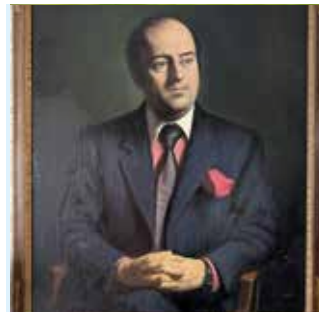
The children's hospital paediatric neuro-oncology team

Hospital's accolade

Bristol Royal Hospital for Children has been named as a Tessa Jowell Centre of Excellence for Children, highlighting the strength of its services for

children with a brain tumour. The honour recognises the hospital as a leading centre in the country.

More details: Page 3



Clifton mourns leading trader

Stephen Grey-Harris, who ran a jewellery business in Princess Victoria Street for more than 50 years, has died, aged 83.

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Record store set to open

Independent record store Longwell Records is moving to the Arcade in Clifton.

PAGE 5

Missing lights mystery solved

Clifton councillors explain why there were no Christmas lights in the Village in 2025.

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February deadline

Our February deadline is January 14. To ensure your news or letter is included, please contact us by this date. Advertisers are also asked to contact us by the same date.

Your views

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



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NEWS

Growing Space given £17,000

AN allotment site which has been running for a year in a car park at Clifton Down is to be extended thanks to a £17,000 grant from Bristol City Council.

Currently 40 raised planter beds for growing flowers and vegetables are installed behind Clifton Down Shopping Centre Clifton Down Community Community Association (CDCA) is behind the project which is known as Clifton Down Growing Space.

"We are thrilled to have been given this grant as it enables us to put in another 100 planter boxes and also install a permanent water supply," said

Merche Clark, a member of the Growing Space team.

"With a growing interest in food cultivation and a significant demand for allotments in Bristol, this project presents an opportunity for people to develop their gardening skills," she said.

The grant comes from the city council's Community Infrastructure levy which is charged on new developments. It is used to fund public facilities which support growth in the city.

The site belongs to the Sovereign Group which has let Clifton Down Growing Space use it.

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NEWS

'Battle to save gardens will go on'

From Page 1

ugly high rise flats, car parking and a service road continues to be almost universally opposed. The proposed destruction of heritage trees, gardens and biodiversity would simply not be allowed if the planning application was being made today, as the rules on biodiversity net gain and emitted carbon have tightened since the application was first made."

The campaigners fear that the promised public access to the site will be lost after a few years and the gardens will become a gated private development.

"This would be a tragic end to 200 years of beauty, heritage and history and is why our opposition will continue.

"We may have lost the day, but together we will save the Gardens."

Save Bristol Gardens Alliance raised £23,000 via crowdfunding to apply for the Judicial Review against the zoo and Bristol City Council, challenging the lawfulness of three aspects of a planning officer's report to councillors who granted permission in June 2024 in spite of public opposition.

The judge found in favour of the zoo and the council on all three grounds.

Bristol Zoological Society's

chief executive, Dr Justin Morris, said he was pleased with the decision.

"We have always been confident in our plans for Bristol Zoo Gardens, which would see the gardens accessible for free and bring much-needed housing to Bristol.

"However, we cannot state clearly enough, the impact and financial toll of these legal challenges and campaigns. In recent years we have faced a concerted campaign by individuals who have purposefully delayed the sale of Bristol Zoo Gardens, preventing us from accessing the proceeds and harming our charity and work.

"Responding to the campaigners' lawyers has cost our charity more than £300,000 – vital funds which could have been spent on conservation and education. As a result, this year we have had to cut costs dramatically and make roles redundant."

He said the court battle and delays had meant some plans to develop the new Bristol Zoo Project at Cribbs Causeway had been affected.

The zoo, which had been in Clifton since 1883, shut in 2022, with most animals moving to the

new site. Some, including the gorillas, remain in Clifton until new accommodation is ready.

Dr Guy said: "We took the difficult decision to close Bristol Zoo Gardens as the Clifton site does not work as a modern conservation zoo. We believe zoos need to change, which is why we want to build a new zoo at Bristol Zoo Project, which is much larger, to provide excellent animal welfare in larger natural habitats. We want to focus on conservation and the threatened animals that most need our help."

He added: "We hope the judgment brings an end to the campaign and allows our charity to make best use of its funds. Further attempts by campaigners in Clifton to delay the sale of the old zoo will prevent any further development of Bristol Zoo Project and continue to reduce our ability to invest in conservation."

Brain tumour work hailed

BRISTOL Children's Hospital is one of four UK paediatric neuro-oncology centres to be named as a Tessa Jowell Centre of Excellence for Children.

The accolade highlights the strength of its services for children with a brain tumour.

The hospital, part of University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Trust, has been working towards the award for the past 18 months.

Dr Rachel Cox said: "As a paediatric oncologist supporting children and their families living with and after a brain tumour diagnosis, I am delighted that our team have been recognised."

Fiona Jones, UHBW divisional director said: "We are incredibly proud to have achieved centre of excellence status for the Paediatric Neuro-oncology Service."

Book makes its debut

THE first book to be published by the Bristol School of Writing has been launched.

Seventeen writers have had their work selected for publication in the 176-page anthology entitled Life and Death, although 60 writers have been involved so far with the Writing School.

The book was launched at the Folk House, Park Street, on December 8 with readings and discussions with writers.

"Our first anthology includes short stories, memoir, reportage and poetry" said Justin Lyle, founding editor.

"Each piece of writing is followed by a brief appreciation, or literary analysis, exploring how the piece works and what it means, so the book functions as a learning resource for writers seeking to develop their craft.

"The collection is both a pleasure and a learning experience about the craft of writing. Every writer who submits their work also receives written feedback.

"Our aim is to make an exciting contribution to the literary and cultural life of the South West by creating publications and events for writers and readers to come together, on the page and in person.

"We are growing our network all the time, and would love to hear from writers" said Justin Lyle.

The Writing School is now inviting subdivisions for its second collection of articles on the theme of Fear. <https://thebristolschoolofwriting.co.uk/submissions/>

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Bristol Family saves money on their energy bills

The retrofit project on Matt's 4-bedroom, 1930s house included external wall insulation, a heat pump unit and solar panel installation, with huge savings both during and after the process.

Noticing significant heat loss at home, Matt used a Retrofit West Voucher to save 70% on a home assessment that revealed an uninsulated exterior wall. Following the assessment, the family installed external wall insulation, and immediately felt the benefits - a warmer home and a 20% reduction in energy bills.

The next step was installing a heat pump unit with assistance from a £7500 Boiler Upgrade Scheme grant, followed by fitting 11 solar panels and a battery for maximum energy efficiency. Thanks to a smart energy tariff, the family even made £220 over



3 summer months by exporting stored electricity from their solar panels back to the grid.

Now, with a more sustainable, energy-efficient and consistently warm home, Matt is also noticing huge savings thanks to their retrofit journey.

"The Retrofit West home assessment voucher is an amazing service. We're surprised more people don't know about it! The measures we've put

in place just work - the house feels comfortable with consistent heat, and the grant we secured towards the work was a massive help. The subsequent savings have also been great, considering what we made through selling our solar-produced electricity, we've only spent around £100 on energy bills between January and October this year!" Matt, Bristol

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NEWS

Tributes paid to Clifton jewellery expert

ONE of the best-known businessmen in Clifton Village, Stephen Grey-Harris, has died aged 83.

Mr Grey-Harris ran his jewellery business from the same shop in Princess Victoria Street for more than 50 years. Before forming Grey-Harris and Company in 1968 he worked for other jewellers.

He built up a wealth of expertise both with antique and modern jewellery and silver.

For many years Mr Grey-Harris was a member of the British Antique Dealers Association. He was regarded as one of the principal antique dealers in the West Country.

He advised many organisations, including The Society of Merchant Venturers, Bristol University and various



Stephen Grey-Harris

military regiments about their historic silverware and jewellery as well as valuing it for them.

Mr Grey-Harris was well-known for the many exhibitions he staged in his Victorian-style premises. One of the exhibitions was in aid of Bristol Eye

Hospital.

Paying tribute, Stephen Bullimore, proprietor of Instep Shoes in Princess Victoria Street, said: "We all admired Stephen so much. He was such an important part of Clifton Village. It is worth mentioning his tireless contribution to Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society (CHIS).

"He served on the committee for more than a decade and hosted meetings at his home in Beaufort Road.

"As a business owner, his unique flair and his incredible knowledge within his trade will be so sadly missed by all."

Stephen Grey-Harris, who was a member of the Clifton Club, died at home.

He is survived by his wife Barbara.



The jewellery and antiques business in Princess Victoria Street

Record store moving into Arcade

A TREASURED independent local record store is to make its new home in Clifton.

Longwell Records is moving from Keynsham to the former Jo's Tea shop in Clifton Arcade sometime next month.

Owner Iain Aitchison was inspired to make the move by his friend Vince John, who runs the iLOVEART gallery above the shop that Longwell Records will occupy.

Iain recently met up with Fatboy Slim during the gallery's launch. The DJ signed copies of his albums for sale, with all profits donated to Keynsham Foodbank.

Iain said of Clifton Arcade: "It's a beautiful setting, lots of people around, and quite arty, so lots of other like-minded shops."

Many customers have told Iain of their shock and sadness at the decision to move, but the shop in Keynsham's Temple Street has struggled financially in recent times and needs more customers to survive.

He said: "It's heartbreaking

but that's the reality of a small business, especially a niche business like this."

Iain hopes to continue in-store events, such as band performances and comedy nights, in Clifton, subject to landlord approval.

Notable gigs in the Keynsham store have included Razorlight, Billy Nomates (her debut), Amber Run, and Mike Peters of The Alarm, who died last year.

Longwell Records specialises in vinyl, whose tangibility and artwork offer a unique way of experiencing music, Iain says.

"People like the fact they can pick up a record, put it on the turntable and listen to it, and think 'yeah, I own that'."

"And records go through generations. They go through families, friendships, break-ups and new beginnings."

With its crackles, pops, and slight blemishes, vinyl isn't for everyone, Iain admits, but many others see these imperfections as part of the joy of collecting and a "beautiful experience."

Famous supporters of Longwell Records include comedian and vinyl enthusiast Stephen Merchant, from Hanham, who cast Iain as a pub landlord in his BBC TV series *The Outlaws*.

Southmead-born Iain lived in various parts of Bristol before he and his family settled in Longwell Green, which gave his business its name.

He set up Longwell Records online in 2015 after a long career as an NHS drug and alcohol worker, and opened the Keynsham shop the following year.

He loves all types of music, especially reggae and two-tone, and his favourite band are Massive Attack. But if he had to choose one desert island disc, it would be a bootleg of Radiohead performing at Glastonbury in 1997.

"I was there that year and it is such a beautiful atmospheric album. I don't know how it sounds so good."

Longwell Records will occupy the Clifton Arcade premises previously occupied by Jo's Tea. The opening date had not been decided as the Voice went to press.

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NEWS

Dancers make sure principal's silver anniversary is celebrated in style

FROM the tiniest pupils as adorable clowns, elves and reindeer to the lyrical 'waves' of the adult class, all were part of something memorable as Bristol Ballet Centre (BBC) put on quite a show to celebrate 25 years of its principal, Alexandra Sherman, heading the school in Westbury-on-Trym.

Two sell-out performances at Trinity Academy's theatre saw students of all ages showcase their skills in ballet, tap and modern dance, with numbers including tributes to The Greatest Showman and Disney shows, contemporary fire, wind and earth dances and a festive celebration. Irish tap, Spanish tango and Italian tarantella took the audience around the world, while little ones hopped and skipped with smiles as bright as the lights, often supported by older pupils to guide into place anyone a little overwhelmed by the occasion.

The final performance ended with a film montage of parents, friends, colleagues and pupils past and present recalling their memories of BBC and thanking Alex for her dedication and nurturing of the school for the last quarter of a century.



Bristol Ballet School dancers strike a pose

Asked how she felt about reaching this milestone, Alex Sherman – who was herself a pupil of the school under its original owner, Lorna Martin, before training at the Royal Ballet School – described: "Taking over the school that

Lorna founded in 1983 has been one of the greatest privileges of my career. Every day, I hope I've made her proud and continued to grow the school in a way that honours her vision."

She explained how she took over the school "armed with a

big dream, a small studio and the firm hope that people would actually continue to turn up to class" and thankfully they have done so for 25 years.

Having had to cancel the show marking her 20th anniversary due to a certain global pandemic, Alex was determined to celebrate the humour, resilience and vitality of the school community for her 'silver' anniversary. She paid tribute to her "fantastic teaching team for their creativity, artistry and tireless hard work", but most of all thanked her dancers, past and present, saying of them: "whether they've taken one class or trained for years, they are the heartbeat of BBC and watching them grow in confidence, technique and artistry has been one of the great joys of my life."

Many young people will recall fond memories of their own classes with Miss Sherman at Bristol Ballet Centre (which have inspired several former pupils to train at top vocational schools) and will no doubt join Alex in toasting "here's to the next chapter". The show will go on.....

Rosie Watson

Stirring festive memories

IT'S all over for another year – but photos like this conjure up memories of the magic of the festive season.

It's from the annual Christmas Fair, at St John's Primary School which was a brilliant afternoon filled with stalls, treats, and plenty of seasonal cheer. Despite the dreadful weather, families turned out in force, and the school was buzzing.

Children enjoyed a range of activities across the school, from the Secrets Room and Toy Tombola to Tin Can Alley, raffle prizes and a very mischievous "Splat the Elf"! There was a fantastic singalong, led by the Singing Club, as well as delicious hot food and mulled wine on offer too, to help warm everyone up! Santa's Grotto was a big hit too, capturing the spirit of the season.



NEWS

Henleaze Christmas Festival proves a dazzling success in the moonlight

THE Henleaze Christmas Festival once again attracted huge crowds who enjoyed the variety of stalls, entertainment and late-night shopping.

Festival co-ordinator Jane Emery said: "It is always wonderful to see how many of the local community turn out to enjoy the evening. It makes all the hard work to put on the event worthwhile."

Stalls and shops, many remarking on the "great vibes", reported good business as festival-goers took the chance to get ahead with their Christmas shopping. There were ten new stallholders this year including children's bead jewellery and upcycled/recycled handbags. Shops offering tasty hot treats outside their premises did a brisk trade.

There was a long queue of young hopefuls waiting for a chat with Father Christmas in his Grotto in Cardigan Road where the ever-popular children's entertainment was also sited.

Entertainment, both in the Bradbury Hall and the Outside Arena in Waterford Road, attracted the crowds. Local schools were much in evidence – choirs from Henleaze Infants and Juniors plus St Ursula's E-Act Academy, and a String Group Wind Band and handbell ringers from Red Maids Junior High School. And there were more young entertainers from the Dance Inspirations dance school.

Musical entertainment also came from a variety of choirs from barbershop with Bristol A Cappella, rock from the Bristol Rock Choir, shanty from Storm Force 10, popular music from the Mosaic Singers and Bristol



Choral entertainment adds to the atmosphere as, top, people of all aged throng the streets for some festive fun

Cantorion, and choral from the Henleaze Choral Society.

There was more dancing with demonstrations from two local Scottish Dancing groups and Mevans Dance who run

weekly sessions and performance workshops. The Salvation Army were on hand bringing their own special Christmas spirit with their brass band.

"We are hugely grateful to

all the performers who give their services free. It is such an important part of the evening," Jane Emery said.

Steve Yabsley of Radio Bristol was MC for the evening. Both Trinity-Henleaze URC and St Peter's opened for the evening with craft work for young visitors featured.

The three charities supported this year by the festival's prize draw were: EveryFAMILY who provide help for families with children under five, The Family Centre (Deaf Children) and Vision Care for Homeless People.

Work will soon begin on planning next year's festival. "There's a lot to organise and much to do," said Jane Emery.

Anyone who would like to join the team of volunteers is asked to contact Jane by email at: janeemery1951@gmail.com



Santa's ready to receive visitors

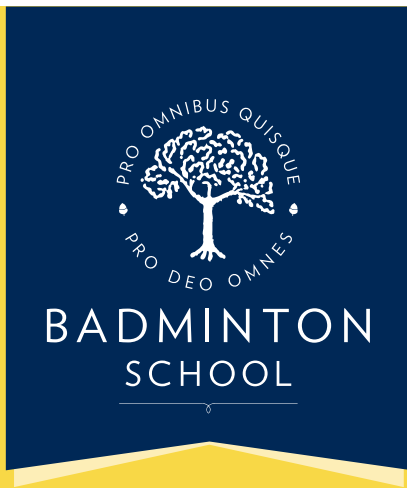


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SPORT

Victory over Dings boosts Clifton

CLIFTON'S successful four match unbeaten run was brought to an end in early December on a windswept afternoon at Cribbs Causeway by a combination of their unusual high number of unenforced errors and a lively Tonbridge Juddians team from Kent.

The highlights of the winning run were the defeat of the then league leaders Rosslyn Park and perhaps more importantly a fine victory over local rivals Dings Crusaders to secure the local Bristol bragging rights. The points pushed Clifton into a mid table position in their first season for thirty years playing at this level.

DINGS CRUSADERS 24 - 35 CLIFTON

Clifton produced one of their most complete performances of the season to beat Dings Crusaders 35-24,

Derbies against Dings are never gentle affairs, and this one began at full throttle. The hosts grabbed the early initiative after just three minutes when a loose, skidding



Harry Hone touches down for Clifton

ball bounced perfectly for Stanley to touch down. Clifton, though, showed no panic. Straight from the restart they settled, built phases, and struck back with real authority. Brad Talbot thundered onto a short ball, cutting clean through the line to score under the posts, and James McKinney levelled things with the conversion.

Ding's maul earned them a penalty try moments later, but Clifton were beginning to enjoy

themselves. On 17 minutes, the catch-and-drive unit delivered the perfect counterpunch as Freddie Myatt controlled the surge to score. The next 20 minutes were a fierce contest of territory and discipline. Clifton's reward came on 37 minutes when Andersen finished a patient, multi-phase attack to give the visitors a 21-12 lead.

Dings kept the scoreboard tight with another maul try from

Bennett on the stroke of half-time, setting up a tense second half at 21-17.

Clifton were twice held up over the line, but the pressure eventually broke the dam. Andersen dotted down his second on 54 minutes stretching the lead to 28-17.

The game's outstanding attacking moment arrived on 72 minutes when Will Owen sliced straight through the Dings midfield to race in for Clifton's fifth try — the lavender-and-black faithful behind the posts erupting as McKinney added his fifth straight conversion to complete a fine win.

During January Clifton will seek to further consolidate their standing in National League One with their distinctive brand of attacking rugby
10 January Rotherham away
17 January Sedgely Park home 1500
24 January Sale away
31 January Leeds home 1500

Roger Opie

Have your say on sports pitches

USERS are being invited to give their views on Bristol's draft Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), a key document designed to protect playing pitch spaces and improve provision for the future.

The draft focuses primarily on the four main pitch sports—football, rugby, cricket, and hockey—while also considering lesser played sports. The council says the strategy sets out an evidence-based approach to planning, protecting, and enhancing pitch provision across the city. It aims to ensure that Bristol has the right combination of pitches and facilities to meet the needs of a growing population, both now and in the years ahead.

If approved, the strategy aims to help improve access to sport, support community wellbeing, and strengthen the city's ability to attract investment and funding.

Playing pitches are vital

spaces for sport and physical activity, supporting health, inclusion, and community life. However, Bristol faces significant challenges in meeting current and future demand.

The draft strategy identifies that the city does not have a surplus of playing fields and that all existing sites should be protected wherever possible. Where protection is not feasible, any changes must comply with Sport England's strict exceptions policy, ensuring that the loss of a pitch is only permitted under exceptional circumstances.

The strategy has been developed using Sport England's nationally recognised methodology and overseen by a steering group including Sport England, national governing bodies for sport, and representatives from public health, planning, and parks services. It provides a framework for protecting and improving



facilities in the most cost-effective way, ensuring pitches are flexible spaces that can serve multiple sports and age groups. Collaboration between sports is highlighted as essential to making the best use of limited space.

The strategy also sets out city-wide priorities and sport-specific recommendations, supported

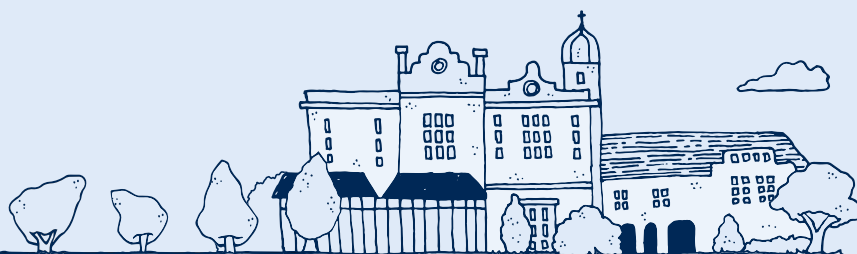
by a Strategic Priorities Action Plan. This plan identifies the actions likely to have the greatest impact during the first phase of implementation, with a more detailed plan to follow once the strategy is adopted.

The consultation will run until midnight on 26 January. To take part and view the draft, visit the council website.



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■ FROM BRISTOL CENTRAL'S MP

Going backwards on warm homes

IN November's Autumn Budget, this Labour government had the opportunity to do something huge. Rachel Reeves could have taken bold action to invest in our economy and improve life for everyone by taxing extreme wealth fairly. Instead, she paped over the cracks with half-measures that won't help us in the long-term.

Take the scandal of high energy bills. Ahead of the Budget, I called on the Chancellor to lower bills by moving so-called 'policy costs' off household energy bills and pay for them through general taxation instead. These 'policy costs' pay for things like home insulation for low income households, which is a good thing. The trouble is that putting the costs on energy bills means those same low income households struggle to pay the bills. Putting it on general taxation would be fairer because it adjusts according to what you can afford. Reeves did take some of the money off bills – but she's

paying for it not by taxing wealth fairly, but by moving funding earmarked to pay for other homes across the country to be properly insulated. The result? A 25% cut in funding for warm homes.

We know making our homes easier to heat is the number one way to lower bills and keep them low. Right now, far too much of what people pay for their heating is literally going out of the window, because their homes aren't built to stay warm.

Since 2013, the ECO scheme has helped to address this problem, insulating homes owned or rented by lower-income households. But now Reeves has taken the axe to that scheme.

The government is promising a new Warm Homes Plan – but we don't know when this will come or if the funding will make up for what's been lost. It's been predicted by experts that this gap in funding could mean over 200,000 households on low incomes missing out on lower bills.

It's also a huge blow to jobs across the country. Experts are warning cancelling ECO without having a new scheme in place to replace it will lead to the loss of 10,000 skilled jobs and could cause some businesses to fold.

The Chancellor's approach is completely backwards – cutting long-term support for insulation programmes may result in short-term savings, but it leaves people colder and poorer in future, and it makes hitting our climate goals harder.

The worst part is, there are so many other choices this government could have taken. Like a wealth tax on the super rich, to rebuild our public services and make our country fit for the future.

I will keep fighting for this government to make fairer choices – so the people of Bristol don't keep paying the price of its failure to tax wealth fairly.

As we head towards the end of the year, I'd like to wish everyone celebrating a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. I



Carla Denyer
writes for
the Voice

look forward to continuing to work hard for you in 2026.

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

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NEWS

'Culture is not a luxury - it's our lifeblood'

MORE than 1,100 arts and culture champions have signed a strongly worded open letter to the city council opposing huge cuts to creative groups.

Leaders from Aardman, Watershed, Bristol Beacon, Bristol Old Vic, Arnolfini, and the city's Balloon Fiesta are among those urging the authority to abandon plans in its budget to gut all £635,000 from its Cultural Investment Programme (CIP) by 2029.

It has emerged that ideas to identify replacement funding to plug the gap would generate only £225,000 annually after five years – a third of the current pot of grants.

A report to councillors in December said the money would come from developer contributions, called strategic Community Infrastructure Levy, a new philanthropic fund and a membership scheme to generate grassroots support.

The open letter said: "We are writing collectively as organisations and individuals across Bristol's cultural sector to express our deep concern about the proposed closure of the Cultural Investment Programme in the council's draft 2026/27 budget.

"Bristol trades on its cultural reputation, yet after years of chronic underinvestment, the ecology that sustains the city's creative life is beginning to break down.



Equity members protest at City Hall

"The council's own research shows that the cultural sector generated £892.9million in economic impact in 2023/24."

The letter said the crisis could not have hit at a worse time.

"There are no easy solutions, but it is time for the council to face reality: cultural support cannot be cut indefinitely without severe social and economic consequences.

"Culture is not a luxury – it is the lifeblood of Bristol, and it is time the city invested in it accordingly."

The local authority's own research found that every £1 it invests leverages £88 from arts organisations and that the cultural sector reached almost 11 million people in 2023/24, delivering £122.4m in social value through health, education and community building.

In an open letter reply, council leader Cllr Tony Dyer (Green, Southville) and Bristol One City Culture Board co-chair Cllr Ani Townsend (Green, Central) said they shared the signatories' passion for the arts and creative economies.

They said: "The financial situation facing our council – and local authorities across the country – is stark.

"Rising demand and costs for the services people rely on, combined with continued real-terms cuts in central government funding, mean we must consider every non-statutory budget carefully to meet our legal duty to set a balanced budget.

"This is not a choice we make lightly.

"No decision has been taken on the future of the Cultural Investment Programme, and the proposals remain subject to many rounds of review until all councillors vote on the budget at February's full council meeting.

"We deferred these proposals last year to give us time to develop a cultural strategy and explore alternative, sustainable funding models. That work continues at pace."

Performing arts union Equity and other campaigners is urging the council to drop the plans.

By Adam Postans, Local Democracy Reporting Service



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FROM YOUR COUNCILLORS

News from Clifton councillors
Paula O'Rourke (Independent)
and Jerome Thomas (Green)



Challenge to Zoo site planning approval concludes

The recent Judicial Review (JR) brought by the Save Clifton Zoo campaigners against Bristol City Council's planning decision has now concluded, with the judge dismissing all three grounds of challenge. In earlier columns, we had anticipated this outcome, as the grounds were on very technical and minor matters. As part of the ruling, the campaign group was directed to pay the capped maximum of £10,000 in costs.

While the campaigners will cover their own legal bill, the wider costs to the Zoo and to Bristol City Council—ultimately borne by taxpayers—have been considerably higher.

Justin Morris, CEO of the Zoological Society, explained the impact: "Responding to the campaigners' lawyers has cost our charity more than £300,000 – vital funds which could have been spent on conservation and education. This money could have paid for 35,000 disadvantaged children to visit the zoo for free as part of our Access to Nature Programme, or funded six years of our field conservation work in Bristol and the West of England. As a result, this year we have had to cut costs dramatically and make roles

redundant."

Bristol City Council has not yet confirmed its own total legal costs, though defending JR claims typically requires significant staff time across both legal and planning teams.

The ability for citizens to challenge decisions through Judicial Review is an important part of democratic accountability. However, it is equally important that such actions are taken with a realistic prospect of success, given the financial and operational pressures these challenges place on public and charitable bodies.

Jerome notes the continuing significant concerns about the Zoo's choice of developer, Acorn Property Group, to whom the Zoo have sold the site. The company and its associated companies have a history of failed developments and unpaid creditors. Given this track record, further progress on the site, now that planning permission has been granted, may not be plain sailing!

Hotwells and Cathedral Primary Schools update

In previous updates we have shared the news that the proposed amalgamation of Hotwells and Cathedral Primary schools has been rejected by the Department for Education (DfE). However the challenge of too many school places for not enough primary school age children remains and Jerome has been liaising with the schools, the local community and the DfE to help work out the best long term sustainable solution. We are still awaiting the notes of the DfE meeting where the decision not to amalgamate was taken, and these notes will reflect the nature of the discussion and the considerations when the DfE

took the decision. The DfE has invited further engagement from the local community and has committed 'to ensure the best possible outcome that works for all parties, and particularly including the families and children of the School Communities.'

Why there were no Christmas lights in Clifton in 2025

During the redevelopment of Princess Victoria Street, we emphasised the importance of creating a space that feels welcoming and enjoyable, particularly during the festive season. We were therefore pleased to secure £5,000 from Bristol City Council, which was passed to the Clifton BID to provide Christmas lights along the street.

Paula worked closely with the BID team to coordinate the lighting design, installation and the permissions required—from businesses, highways, and had listed building consent agreed. Most permissions were secured, but unfortunately, approval could not be obtained from property owners for the installation of small anchor bolts on a couple of buildings. Without these, the lighting design couldn't be safely or effectively delivered, and we reluctantly had to abandon plans for 2025.

We know many residents were disappointed, and we share that feeling. We want to reassure everyone that work has already begun to resolve the outstanding issues. Our aim is clear: to have Clifton's Christmas lights up and sparkling for 2026.

What we'll be working for in 2026

Here are some of the priorities we'll be pursuing on your behalf in the coming year:

- Progress on the Clifton Down development site: now that we have identified two of the directors, we will be seeking clarity on the future of the site.
- Second phase of the 'alternative waste collection' scheme: this would remove black bins from the streets for those living above shops.
- A flexible policy on using parking bays for outdoor trade: limited removal of bays—only for tables and chairs—could offer valuable support to local independent cafés and restaurants.
- Reducing the speed limit on Hotwells Road to 20mph to improve safety.
- Securing a solution for the Mardyke Steps, which continue to deteriorate amid uncertainty over responsibility for repairs.
- Getting the Christchurch Green and Zoo bus stops reinstated.
- And of course, delivering Christmas lights for 2026!

Happy New Year to you all. We are both looking forward to continuing our service in 2026 and feel confident that we can work jointly for Clifton, even though we are not so politically aligned anymore,

Paula and Jerome

Contact us

Jerome Thomas: cllr.jerome.thomas@bristol.gov.uk
 Paula O'Rourke: cllr.paula.orourke@bristol.gov.uk



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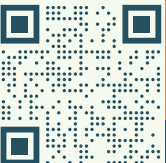


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FROM YOUR COUNCILLORS

News from Green Party Clifton Down councillors George Calascione and Serena Ralston



A VERY Happy New year - we're looking forward to continuing to represent you and work hard for you in 2026.

Update on Whiteladies Road flood works

The new expected finish date for the much-needed Whiteladies Road Flood Alleviation project is now the end of February. After we asked for an update, the team told us that they had uncovered some unexpected ground conditions with drainage and BT utilities. This means they are now having to rethink aspects of the original design. The team is unable to be absolutely certain about access at the moment but will do their best.

Anyone who remembers how badly this section of Whiteladies Road between Tyndall's Park Road and Queens Road flooded whenever it rained heavily will agree the project is worth the wait.

The works are upgrading the drainage network and capacity in the area and lifting and resurfacing the pavement. The project will also deliver improved, segregated cycleways, responding to what people asked for during the public consultation in summer 2022.

Ideas for improving our community?

Along with other councillors on area committees, we are starting to gather ideas for neighbourhood improvements using money from development.

The nine area committees make decisions on how local funds are spent to support improvements in their areas. As Clifton Down councillors, we sit on Area 3 committee along with councillors from Clifton, Cotham and Hotwells & Harbourside.

As part of the planning process, a developer often has to give money to the council to pay for improvements in the area where their development is happening. This is usually through a planning charge called the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) but is sometimes through a planning obligation called a Section 106 agreement.

In Bristol, some of the CIL and S106 money received is allocated to the area committees for spending decisions.

If you have ideas for improvements, please get in touch with us and look out for community workshops in February. Initial ideas need to be submitted by March 23. You can find out more on the Bristol City Council webpage **Decision making in your area**. There is also a link on the webpage to a very handy, short video which explains the process.

Funding projects: Clifton Down Growing Space and Redland Library

For the 2024-2025 round of CIL funding, we were delighted to support the Clifton Down Growing Space and Friends of Redland Library in their bids. In November Area 3 committee agreed unanimously to support the bids, following several stages of applications process. For the Clifton Down Growing Space, the new funding will pay for more raised beds and the installation of permanent watering facilities at the project which is located at a disused car park.

For the Friends of Redland Library, the money will pay for new chairs, and a shed in

which to put them, so more people can enjoy the group's very popular events.

Apsley Road traffic calming

On behalf of residents, we are pushing for action on this important scheme to tackle speeding on Apsley Road. In the summer, we ensured that the residents' group had the opportunity to give initial feedback to the contractor and project team. We have now had confirmation that the funding is in place – residents successfully bid for CIL funding a few years ago – and that public consultation should take place early this year. Subject to the outcomes of the consultation, the contractors will then work on the detailed design for the scheme.

Buses on Alma Road

Some of you have told us about inconsiderate bus driving on Alma Road on the new bus routes. We've asked officers to raise this with the bus company and will report back.

Your bin day over New Year

Waste and recycling collections pause on Christmas Day (25 December), Boxing Day (26 December) and New Year's Day (1 January), so your bin day will change for a few weeks. Bristol Waste's crews will work three Saturdays to catch up over the festive period, so your bin day will be back to normal as soon as possible. Check online to see when your temporary bin day will be, and for information on old Christmas tree disposal (from kerbside Bristol Waste collections to alternatives such as the St Peter's Hospice charity donation collection). Festive Need To Knows - Bristol Waste Company.

Councillor surgeries

We hold regular surgeries on the first Friday of the month from midday to 1.30 at Redland Library on Whiteladies Road. Come and speak to us about any local issues. There is no surgery on 2nd January.

Serena Ralston: cllr.serena.ralston@bristol.gov.uk
George Calascione: cllr.george.calascione@bristol.gov.uk

BOOK REVIEW

Everything Is Tuberculosis: The History and Persistence of Our Deadliest Infection by John Green

JOHN Green was visiting Lakka Hospital in Sierra Leone when he met Henry, a friendly young boy keen to show him round. "That's my son's name," he told the boy. He assumed that this Henry was a similar age to his son, nine years old, and was the child of a patient, doctor or nurse. In fact, Henry himself was a patient. And he was seventeen. His young appearance was due to the emaciation caused by tuberculosis, a disease Green (as many of us do) associated with poets and the past.

In 2023, tuberculosis killed 1.25 million people. It is not a thing

of the past. Yet it is preventable, treatable and curable. No one need die of tuberculosis today. The fact that they do, Green argues, is a decision.

Meeting Henry sent the author on an extensive research project which expanded to encompass the history of pretty much everything. In geography, history, fashion and culture, tuberculosis has played a part. Green writes about its place in the popularisation of the cowboy hat, for example, and its role in the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand leading to the First World War. He explores the romanticisation of the illness and the stigma it holds today. And he explains the history of medical developments in fighting

tuberculosis, laying out the facts clearly with the effect of sweeping the reader up in his righteous rage that it still harms anyone at all. The cures, he repeatedly shows, are where the cases are not. It is poverty and racism that result in people not getting the treatment that they need.

Throughout, we follow Henry and his years of illness so that the incomprehensible millions suffering and dying from tuberculosis become fathomable through the story of one charismatic young man. This is deeply effective. What begins as a fascinating history becomes a powerful call to treat everyone with love and compassion.

Lizzie Moss, Heron Books

FRIENDS OF BISHOPSTON LIBRARY

We are delighted to welcome back Dr Sam Morgan for two Women's Health events in the New Year.

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

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

Both events are free. Book by via Eventbrite.

WHAT'S ON

Tuesday 20th January

APOSTLE ROOM, The Cathedral Church of Saints Peter and Paul, Pembroke Rd at 7.30pm for 8.00pm, "CHIS Talk Title: Basque Oak and Portuguese Wine: Unlocking the secrets of a 15th century merchant ship in Newport, Wales"

Various dates

WANT TO LEARN TO NORDIC WALK? Our Beginner Workshops are run by friendly, professional instructors, are full of chat and laughter, and you'll get an effective total-body workout. Meeting on Clifton Down 3rd Jan, 7th Jan, 10th Jan, 21st Jan & 24th Jan. Visit www.bristolnordicwalking.co.uk or call Ros on 0788685213.

Various dates

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

BLAISE COMMUNITY GARDEN, behind Blaise Museum BS10 7QS open Wednesday and Saturday 10 to 2, interesting walled kitchen garden, free to enter, new volunteers needed & welcomed, plants always available. Event: Winter Market and Cafe on 15th November Open 9.45- 3 pm.

Sun 15 Feb

MASSIVE SOUND – FAURÉ'S REQUIEM WORKSHOP AT BRISTOL BEACON A Singing Celebration of the Britton Organ 9am - 4.30pm & concert performance 6pm - 7pm. £28.00 - £72.80 Incl. booking fee. Join a choir of 350 voices, to unleash the mighty power of Bristol Beacon's newly-refurbished Britton Organ and sing Fauré's Requiem, plus other organ-choral masterpieces. No experience needed - just bring your passion! We'll rehearse, then close with a relaxed concert alongside professional soloists in Beacon Hall. Find out more and book at bristolbeacon.org/whats-on/massive-sound-workshop

Various dates

LA SCALA DELI HENLEAZE

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

JANUARY

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

FEBRUARY

13th & 14th Valentines Day
26th- Piedimonte
27th -Winter Reds
28th - Wine & Dine Dinner Party - 5 regional courses paired to 6 wines - Lombardia

MARCH

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

APRIL dates online

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07533732035. www.yogabristol.com

WEST OF ENGLAND BRIDGE CLUB based at RAFA Club, 38 Eastfield, Henleaze. Five sessions every week, catering for different standards. Thursday afternoon is Improvers. Monday and Friday afternoon is for more capable players; this is an EBU recognised session. You may come alone to any afternoon session; a partner will be found. The evening sessions are on Wednesdays and Fridays, and are open to pairs. www.woebridgeclub.co.uk or contact Secretary, Chris Frew, on 0117 962 5281.

Monday

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

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

WESTBURY AND CLIFTON AREA

DISCUSSION GROUP meet at Westbury on Trym Baptist Church every Monday 9.45am to challenge ourselves with topical debate on what's happening in the world. If you would like to help to solve some of today's challenging issues with good company, tea and biscuits - contact James Ball 01454 415165 or Ian Viney 0117 9501628.

THE CORNER CLUB. Banish Loneliness! We offer a warm welcome to Seniors looking for fun and friendship. Morning coffee and biscuits, a freshly cooked 2 course lunch, varied afternoon entertainment and tea and cake await you. All for £6. Managed by a non-denominational Charity we meet from 10am to 2.30pm in the Apostle Room at Clifton Cathedral BS8 3BX. Contact Helen on 07717405673. Transport Available. New Volunteers and Volunteer Drivers would be most welcome. We'd love to meet you.

WESTBURY ON TRYM WOMEN'S INSTITUTE meets on the third Monday of the month in the Westbury Village Hall, Eastfield Road, BS9 4AG, from 2-4 pm. Interesting speakers, crafts, lunch club, skittles and outings. Our lively, friendly and inclusive group welcomes visitors. Call Sascha on 07961619806 or Traci on 07766073917

Tuesday

WESTBURY PARK WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

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

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

MEET UP TO MEDITATE

Free Class Every Tuesday 7.30 pm-8.30 pm
Starting 14th Jan 2025 At 80 Queens Rd
Bristol Email: info@meettuptomeditate.co.uk

BRISTOL BRANCH OF THE KNITTING AND CROCHET GUILD

meet on the third Tuesday of the month, 10am-12pm, usually in the function room at the Boston Tea Party on Whiteladies Road. Free to attend, all welcome (members and non-members). We cater for beginners through to experienced makers. Email BristolKCG@gmail.com for more info.

Wednesday

HENLEAZE CHORAL SOCIETY We are a thriving, non- audition choir performing mainly classical repertoire. Rehearsals take place at Henleaze Bowling Club, Grange Court Road on Wednesdays 7.30-9.00pm New members welcome. Go to www.henleazechoralsociety.org.uk.

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

Breaking news! new Opera Club for Bristol.

After the sad demise of WNO Friends Branch, the new Bristol Opera Club has appeared on the scene. The focus will be on DVD showings of superb performances with world class singers, introduced by popular speakers. We're also delighted to include occasional talks by leading musicologists. Further dates planned are all on Wednesdays: 18th February; 18th March; 15th April; 20th May; 17th June 2026. Programme details for the October and November meetings will follow shortly. Please share this information with your friends. All are warmly welcomed. Apostle Room, Clifton Cathedral, 6.30 for 7.00. Entrance £8.00. Parking Bar. Details: borkmail@gmail.com 01275 848526

WHAT'S ON

BLAISE COMMUNITY GARDEN, behind Blaise Museum, open Wednesday and Saturday 10-2. Originally a walled kitchen garden. Free to enter. We're looking for volunteers. Our Café (+ homemade cakes) open 10-2, 18 March and 8 April.

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

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

GOLDEN HILL WI Meets the first Wednesday of every month. 1-3pm. Golden Hill Sports Ground, Wimbledon Rd, BS6 7YA. A vibrant, lively new afternoon WI in BS6. We have an exciting and varied programme to offer. For more information contact Pam Scull at goldenhillwi@gmail.com.

CLIFTON WOMENS INSTITUTE We are a friendly bunch who meet on the last Wednesday of the month at Alma Church, Alma Road, Clifton BS8 2HG, from 7.30pm. Anyone interested in coming to a meeting as a visitor is most welcome (£5). Visit our blog cliftonwi.blogspot.com for forthcoming events. For info about us contact thecliftonwi@gmail.com

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

[westburyparksc.org](http://www.westburyparksc.org)

SPIRITUAL HEALING Spiritual Healing is available from 2pm to 3.30pm by the accredited healing team at Westbury Park Spiritualist Church, Cairns Road BS6 7TH. Just turn up or visit www.westburyparksc.org

Thursday

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

FRIENDS TOGETHER DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CAFE

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

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

HEALING FOR WELLBEING - NEW TIME 5.00 PM TO 6.15 PM Feel more relaxed, peaceful, calmer. Drop in sessions (no need to book) with trained practitioners. Venue: Redland Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road, BS6 6JE. All welcome - donation basis. For more information, visit <http://www.facebook.com/BristolHealingGroup> or <https://www.thehealingtrust.org.uk/healing/healing-centre> or phone Selina 0117 9466434.

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

Friday

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

BRISTOL SPANISH CIRCLE. We meet every month from September to June, usually on the last Friday of the month, at St Peter's Church Hall in Henleaze. For more info, see <https://www.spanishcirclebristol.com/>.

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

Saturday

SEA MILLS REPAIR CAFE offers sewing, woodwork, general, electrical and cycle repairs at the Methodist Church, Sea Mills Square, from 10am-12pm, every second Sat (except August). This is a voluntary service run by experienced

Fly me to the moon!

BRISTOL'S Royal West of England Academy launches a major exhibition this month.

Cosmos: the Art of Observing Space, opens on January 24 and runs until April 19.

The exhibition explores humanity's enduring fascination with the cosmos through a blend of historic artefacts and contemporary artworks. Cosmos brings together works by artists including Yinka Shonibare, Christopher LeBrun and Wolfgang Tillmans alongside pieces by established and emerging artists. Visitors will experience artistic responses to Space through painting, sculpture, photography, installation, and digital media.

Curated by Ione Parkin RWA, it also features rare treasures from the archives of the Royal Astronomical Society, National Maritime Museum and other collections. Highlights include historical drawings of the moon, celestial globes, a historic meteorite, and intricate star maps, showcasing the interconnection between art and science in our quest to understand the universe.

The exhibition catalogue features a foreword by Professor Chris Lintott, astrophysicist, author, and co-presenter of Sky at Night. Additional essays by leading contributors, including Sian Prosser, Librarian and Archivist at the Royal Astronomical Society, and Professor Amaury Triaud, University of Birmingham, further enrich the context. The catalogue will be available for purchase throughout the exhibition.

Dr Prosser said: "We are delighted to be partnering with The Royal West of England Academy for what promises to be an awe-inspiring exhibition."

"From historical star maps to sketches of the Moon, the many artefacts on display offer us a glimpse into how astronomers of the past observed the night sky, while also showcasing just how powerful the universe can be in capturing humanity's imagination."

Dr Kathryn Johnson, RWA head of exhibitions, adds, "The exhibition is a brilliant and spectacular fusion of art and science. And although we can't claim any inside NASA knowledge, we're excited to be launching it in the same year as the planned Artemis II mission to Moon!"



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PROPERTY OF THE MONTH

Henbury £800,000

Rose Bank is a beautiful Georgian Grade II listed semi-detached house of considerable character in Henbury village, offered for sale with no onward chain. Set in attractive gardens of approximately a quarter of an acre, with converted stables and coach house, the house offers the opportunity to create a wonderful, forever, family home. EPC D



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BOOK REVIEW

We have always lived in the castle

By Shirley Jackson

THE narrator of this novel is 18 year old Merricot Blackwood who lives with her older sister Constance and their Uncle Julian in the Blackwood family home on the outskirts of a village. They live an calm and ordered but socially isolated existence, with Constance and Julian confined to the house and garden, and only Merricat venturing out to the village on Fridays and Tuesdays to get food from the local shops. The sisters carry the prejudices of their aristocratic upbringing, having nothing but contempt for the villagers who they regard as drab and unpleasant and resentful that the Blackwoods have always had plenty of money to pay for whatever they wanted.

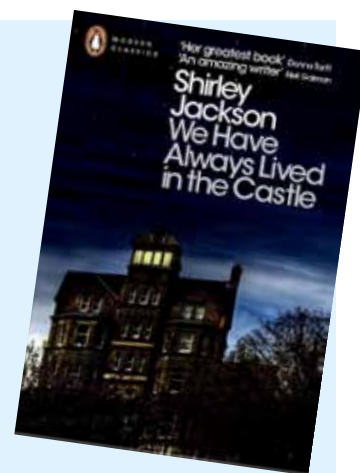
We discover that six years previously, several family members of the family were murdered by arsenic poisoning. Constance who was then 22, was tried and acquitted for lack of sufficient evidence. She claimed that she had brought the arsenic to kill the rats in the house.

The sisters' quiet life, is rudely interrupted by the unexpected arrival of their boorish cousin Charles who makes romantic overtures to Constance, determined to become the master of the household and to gain access to their deceased fathers money. Merricot resolves to do everything in her power to protect her remaining family, including the secret which she shares with Constance, bonding them together.

This is a highly addictive black comedy, providing a enjoyable satire of small town rural America and a beautifully drawn relationship between the two sisters as they seek to protect their idyllic life from the outside world.

For this book and many more, please come and visit your local library, where you are guaranteed a warm and friendly welcome.

Review by Bob Deacon of Bishopston Library



Clifton Library opening hours

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