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What am I?

1 “I am an odd number.
Take away a letter and
I become even.
What number am I?”

2 “I have a neck but
no head, two arms
but no hands.
What am I?”



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HEARING AID ADVICE

WAX

Are some people more prone to making wax than others?

The answer is 'yes'. Genetics, diet, shape and size of ear canal can all lead to wax build up. Some wax in the ear is no issue. Wax is anti bacterial and acts as a safety buffer between the ear canal and eardrum. However as we age the wax tends to stick more, impacted large amounts of wax can lead to hearing loss, tinnitus, balance issues and a general 'off' feeling

HEARING AIDS AND WAX

Can wax get in to and break a hearing aid?

Wax ingress into hearing aids can cause issues. Most hearing aids will have a 'wax trap' which is a little filter at the end of the hearing aid which will catch the wax and prevent it entering and breaking the hearing aid. These filters are easy to replace (and free of charge with us) and the user can usually do this themselves

HEARING AID REPAIRS

On this subject do hearing aids need repairs?

They can from time to time, especially if not maintained fully. Minor repairs that we can carry out ourselves are free for the life of the hearing aids (as is all our aftercare). Most hearing aids come with a 4-5 year warranty which would cover any other manufacturer repairs.

A.I

Artificial Intelligence is all the rage at present, is this relevant to hearing aids?

Yes, it certainly is! A.I. in hearing aids performs two main functions: Firstly to extrapolate speech from background noise by using the random harmonics of speech to tell it apart from the more patterned harmonic of background noise

Secondly to self learn over time the environments the user frequents and to automatically adopt any consistent manual changes the user makes to the aid. All in all A.I. is improving the clarity and performance of hearing aids.

**With Anthony Berg,
Hearing Aid Audiologist and Director
The Congleton Hearing Centre Ltd**

Talking tax

The new financial year starts on 6 April, bringing a host of changes to rules covering the money we earn and spend. Here's what you need to know.

Dividends and savings

There's a shake-up for many forms of income, such as dividends and savings interest. The rate you pay, and any tax-free allowance, depends on which income tax bracket you're in.

For basic-rate taxpayers, the new rates are 10.75% on dividends (up from 8.75%) and 22% for savings (up from 20%). For the higher rate, it's 35.75% for dividends (up from 33.75%) and 42% for savings (up from 40%). For the additional rate bracket, the dividend rate is unchanged at 39.35%, with the savings rate rising from 45% to 47%.

Property income

Income from property will now come under a separate category rather than being treated as ordinary income. This new category covers any income from land and buildings, including parking spaces and caravan rentals. The rates will initially match those for savings income. The governments of Wales and Scotland will have the power to set their own rates for property income.

Landlords may need to watch out for the Making Tax Digital rules. These will apply to anyone with revenues of more than £50,000 per year from self-employment and/or property income, such as rent. Those who qualify will need to report their revenue quarterly rather than annually and must use approved third-party software to prepare and file tax returns and accounts. The threshold will drop to £30,000 in 2027 and £20,000 in 2028.

Working from home

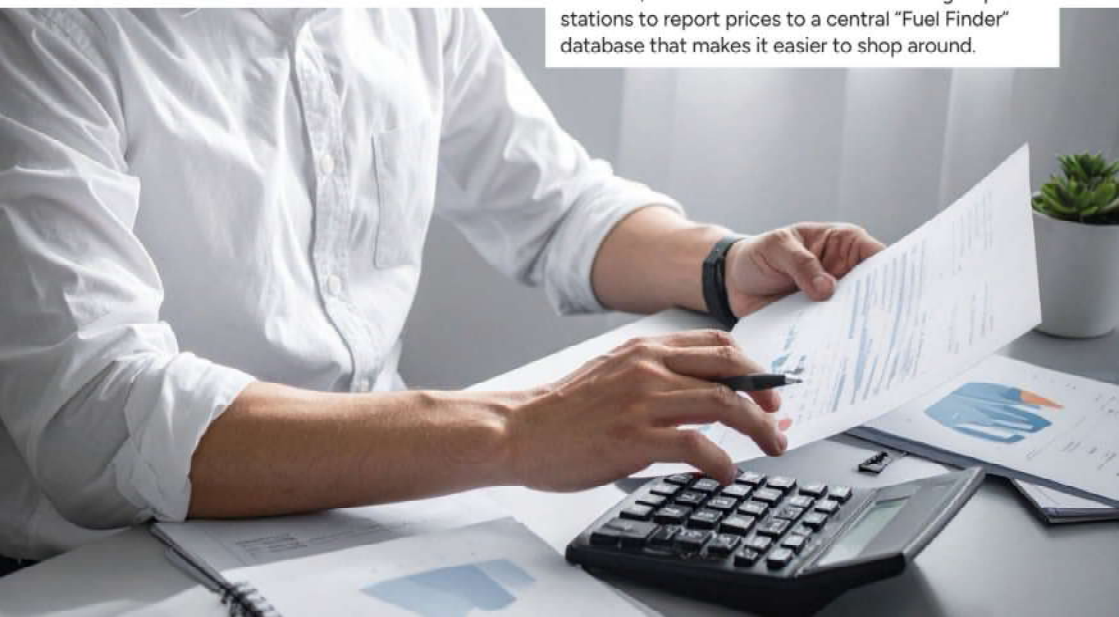
There's one big change to income tax for workers, affecting employees who are required to work from home. At the moment, if employers choose to cover costs such as heating or internet subscriptions, the payment is tax-free. If employers don't pay, the worker can get tax relief (meaning their taxable income is reduced) either by giving receipts to HMRC to show the actual costs or by claiming a fixed rate of £6 per week.

From April 2026, there's no tax relief available. The only way to get the money back is by the employer choosing to reimburse the worker; this will remain tax-free.

Travelling

Two separate changes are on the way for fuel duty. In principle, the duty automatically rises by the rate of inflation every year, but this rise has been frozen since 2011. Separately, the level was "temporarily" cut by 5p in 2022.

The current plan is to reverse the 5p cut from September 2026, then go back to an annual inflation-based increase from April 2027. To soften the blow, the Government will start forcing all petrol stations to report prices to a central "Fuel Finder" database that makes it easier to shop around.





SANCTUARY TAX & TRUST SERVICES LTD

As the cost-of-living spirals and more of our children struggle to get a footing on the property ladder it is now more important than ever to plan our family's inheritance. The team at Sanctuary Tax & Trust explain how many families find themselves victims of avoidable losses and why simply writing a will does not guarantee our family will inherit as we wish.

For the vast majority of people, we spend all our lives working to build up wealth, through property, savings and pensions we look at providing financial security for our families and when our final day arrives, we hope these assets will pass to the people we care about the most, partners, children, relatives and friends. Traditionally, people have chosen wills to document their wishes and while writing a will is important, it does not provide any protection for the assets within it.

Considerations when planning Inheritance

Care Fees – As we live longer the likelihood of needing care becomes greater and under the government's changes to the social care act should the need for care arise, we could see our asset taken down to just £23,250. The new assessment process will see everybody with property and saving over a combined value of £100,000 being required to pay for their care.

Relationship Failure – When passing assets purely through a will we see many leaving their assets to their children but not giving consideration to what would happen if one of their children was to divorce. This can lead to a child seeing half of their inheritance in the hands of an ex-partner and in the event of early bereavement this can lead to grandchildren being disinherited.

Inheritance Tax – The current IHT framework can be complex and unknowingly people can leave their children and even grandchildren with an Inheritance tax issue.

Probate – The cost of probate has risen dramatically over the last few years, and it can be a lengthy and drawn-out process. On average, with a will, probate will typically take 6 – 12 months to complete, without a will it could take up to 2 years.

Its Never the Wrong Time To Do The Right Thing – While people appreciate that inheritance planning is important many will delay seeking the correct advice. By putting off today what we can do tomorrow we run the risk of running out of time or, in the event of an illness, seeing our options being dramatically reduced.

Why Sanctuary Tax & Trust Services?

With over 20 years of experience in Estate and Inheritance planning we have helped families in the area protect their assets and plan their inheritance in the most cost-effective way. While the individual family's circumstance may vary, the one constant is that each family aims to provide the maximum amount of inheritance possible without the stress of complexed legal jargon.



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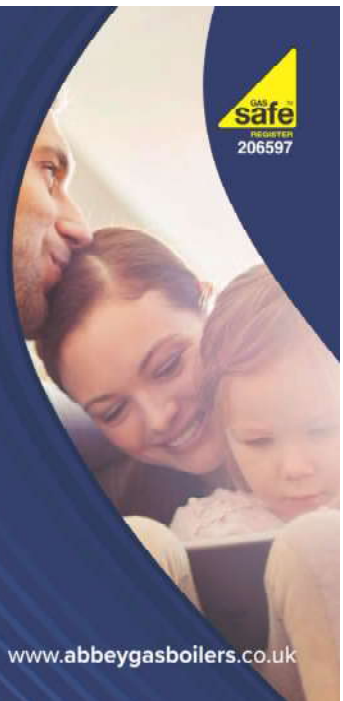
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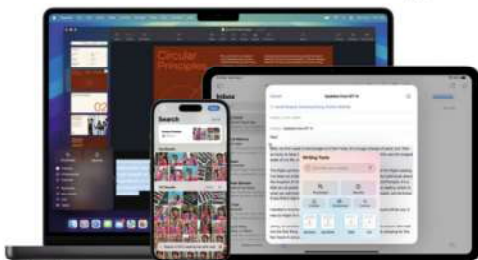
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SIRI'S GETTING SERIOUS

Apple's virtual assistant should become smarter – thanks to Google.

Siri, Apple's personal digital assistant on iPhones and other devices, has fallen far behind the rest of the AI pack – so much so that many of the AI features Apple promised to deliver two years ago still aren't here. That should change in 2026 with a little help from Google, because Apple has signed a deal to integrate Google's highly rated Gemini AI assistant into its AI software. That should mean an iPhone, iPad or Mac that you can talk to like a person, with the ability to understand more complex requests and questions.



ENDURANCE TEST

Want a telly that'll last? Look for OLED.

If you're looking to buy the most reliable kind of television, choose an OLED. That's the conclusion of a three-year stress test by TV experts Rtings.com, who ran 100 TVs for over 18,000 hours apiece to see which ones would fail first. The most common failures were in backlit LED TVs, whose heat generation shortened the lives of their LED lighting; OLEDs lasted longer because they light up in different ways and don't need a backlight.

That doesn't mean you should worry about your current TV, though: the tests found that TVs of all types were generally reliable for the equivalent of ten years of daily viewing.



SOUND IDEAS

Let's hear it for the latest stylish speakers.

There's a new trend in home audio: speakers that look stylish as well as sound good. IKEA's Solkskydd speakers look like home furnishings and its titchy Kallsup speakers resemble LEGO – and one audio firm, Eversolo, has made speakers designed specifically to fit into the spaces of an IKEA Kallax shelving unit.

Big brands such as Cambridge Audio are embracing deep greens and bright oranges in their latest speaker designs, while Bluetooth speakers come in an ever-growing selection of shapes, colours and, in some cases, lighting options too.



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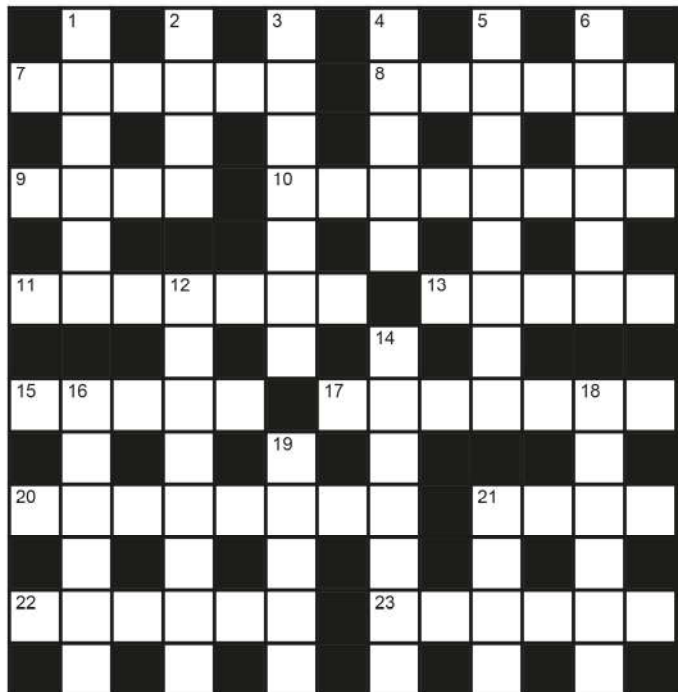
Quick crossword

Across

- 7 Buff up (6)
- 8 Equality (6)
- 9 Throw (4)
- 10 Used by trains (8)
- 11 Tangled (7)
- 13 Dizzy (5)
- 15 Frighten (5)
- 17 Laughed (7)
- 20 Fuel (8)
- 21 Applaud (4)
- 22 Light wind (6)
- 23 Hug (6)

Down

- 1 Pillar (6)
- 2 Cash register (4)
- 3 Agitated (7)
- 4 Ruin (5)
- 5 Fighting (8)
- 6 Remained (6)
- 12 Revenue (8)
- 14 Without sound (7)
- 16 Seats (6)
- 18 Authorise (6)
- 19 Repaired (5)
- 21 Surrender (4)



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BYD ATTO 2



BYD's smallest SUV has gained a plug-in hybrid variant. Cameron Richards has been driving it to see what it's like.

What is it?

Chinese electric vehicle firm BYD is now offering hybrids and plug-in hybrids. The Atto 2 is its smallest SUV and the new, more affordable plug-in hybrid variant (PHEV), the Atto 2 DM-i, comes equipped with an efficient 1.5-litre petrol engine mated to an electric motor and 18kWh battery pack.

What's new?

This second powertrain option offers ultra-low running costs and electric car-like credentials. All models come with loads of standard equipment, while a few tweaks make it more engaging to drive.

What's under the bonnet?

The Atto 2 DM-i produces a total of 209bhp and 300Nm of torque, and can hit 60mph in 7.3 seconds. BYD claims this variant does 56 miles on electric power alone. It uses the firm's 'Battery Blade' technology.

What's it like to drive?

The Atto 2 in electric guise felt unpolished in some areas. The steering is still numb. Around town, the petrol engine is refined and quiet, but it begins to scream under hard acceleration. The ride is smoother, while all the controls are nice and light. However, it tends to lean in the corners.

How does it look?

With its curved front end, this PHEV model looks identical to the electric car apart from some subtle tweaks, such as different alloy wheel designs and a lower radiator grille.

What's it like inside?

The Atto 2's dashboard and door panels feel plush to the touch. Abundant storage includes a large cut-out under the centre console, a deep compartment beneath the centre armrest and wide door bins. Our test car even comes with a 50-watt wireless smartphone charger. There's lots of rear head- and legroom too. However, the lack of physical buttons makes it difficult to operate functions on the move.

The Atto 2 DM-i offers 425 litres of boot space, 1,335 litres with the rear seats down.

What's the spec like?

There are just two trim levels. Prices are yet to be confirmed, but it's anticipated they will kick off at £25,000, rising to £28,000 for the top-of-the-line model.

The entry-level Active comes with metallic paint, 16-inch alloy wheels, LED headlights, rear parking sensors, adaptive cruise control and a 12.8-inch infotainment screen. We're driving the flagship Boost, which boasts 17-inch alloy wheels, a 360-degree camera, electrically adjustable heated front seats, a panoramic sunroof and rear privacy glass.

Verdict

Adding a plug-in hybrid powertrain to the Atto 2 range is a smart move, as it really does make this SUV better. If prices are accurate, the Atto 2 DM-i will represent extraordinary value for money when it comes to Britain next year.

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Salmon and herb traybake



Light, vibrant and bursting with flavour, this fantastic midweek one-pot meal can be on the table within 30 minutes.

Serves 2

Preparation time 15 minutes

Cooking time 15 minutes

Ingredients

- 50g butter, at room temperature
- 15g fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped
- 250g asparagus, woody ends trimmed
- 2 salmon fillets
- A handful of fresh radishes, trimmed and halved
- 1 slice of lemon, cut in half
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 courgette
- 100g fresh peas
- 2 tbsp Opies Capers, drained
- A few sprigs each of fresh dill and mint

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C, fan 180°C, gas mark 6. Using a fork, mash the butter until soft, then add the parsley and season well. Roll the herby butter in greaseproof paper to create a small sausage shape and freeze for 15 minutes. (Alternatively, prepare ahead of time and keep in the fridge until solid.)
2. Place the asparagus into a large roasting tray and top with the salmon fillets before scattering the radish around the sides. Top each fillet with a lemon slice.
3. Remove the herb butter from the freezer and cut into four rounds, then divide between the salmon. Season well, cover with foil and bake in the preheated oven for 10 minutes.
4. Using a peeler, slice the courgette into thin ribbons.
5. After 10 minutes in the oven, remove the tin and baste the salmon with the melted butter, then add the courgette ribbons and peas to the tin and return to the oven for a further 5 minutes.
6. Remove from the oven and scatter over the capers, fresh dill and mint and serve immediately.

Opies Capers (120g) are available from most major supermarkets. For more recipe inspiration using the Opies range of products or to buy online, visit www.bennettopie.com.

Phil Baddeley

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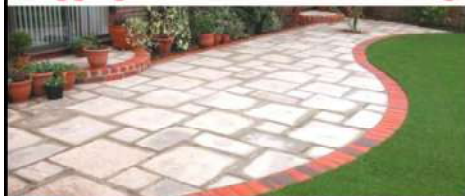
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Chris Shemilt's Money Corner

Trust Matters

Many of us have personal experience of, or know someone who has had difficulties with a family member or friend who loses their ability to make decisions for themselves. Of course, the likelihood of this potential scenario statistically grows as we get older.

As a separate (but connected) issue, we accumulate and grow our assets over years. There comes a time however, when you might ask the question "how do I pass my assets to loved ones in the most tax-efficient and timely manner"?

These are separate but connected issues, with children from former relationships adding to the complexity. So how do you plan ahead to ensure that your assets are distributed in the way which suits you?

Fortunately, there are relatively simple steps you can take during your lifetime to pre-empt future difficulties. Although simple, the solutions can be challenging from a technical point of view, which is why it's wise to take professional advice. It is essential to get this type of planning absolutely correct as it's quite easy to make the situation worse!

Setting up a Trust

You can create a Trust (an independent legal entity) that takes legal ownership of whatever assets are appropriate to place within the Trust. You nominate Trustees (which might include yourself and your spouse/partner) to take care of the assets. You also nominate beneficiaries of the Trust. Trustees can also be beneficiaries.

What's in it for you?

There are very many potential advantages to creating a Trust now, including:

Avoiding probate - the legal process of administering and distributing an estate can be very long and laborious.

Sideways disinheritance – many and varied complications due to divorce or remarriage can be avoided.

Ill health or mental incapacity – The Trustees can manage the assets without the need for a court-appointed guardian

Privacy - Trusts are not subject to public record.

Control - You can not only set specific conditions on how and when beneficiaries access funds, but also dictate what is to happen if care fees are needed in the future

Maximise the inheritance you leave to your loved ones – No explanation needed here!

You already have a Will?

A Will takes effect only after you die; a lifetime Trust can operate during your life and after death

This article is produced in association with Estate Planning Solutions, a full member of the Society of Trust and Estate Planners (STEP) and the Institute of Professional Willwriters (IPW).



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Raspberry crème brûlée

We've given a classic crème brûlée an indulgent twist by adding fresh raspberries before topping it with a creamy vanilla custard and crunchy caramelised topping.



Serves 6

Preparation time 25-30 minutes

Cooking time 35-40 minutes

Ingredients

- 200g fresh raspberries, plus 6 for decoration
- 500ml double cream
- 1 vanilla pod
- 6 Fairburn's British Blue egg yolks
- 100g caster sugar, plus extra for the caramel topping
- 6 fresh mint leaves
- Icing sugar, for dusting

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 150°C, fan 130°C, gas mark 2.
2. Put six ovenproof ramekins in a baking tin and divide the raspberries equally between them.
3. Pour the cream into a small heavy-based pan. Slit the vanilla pod in half lengthways, scrape out the seeds, and put the pod and the seeds into the pan with the cream. Bring to the boil over a medium-low heat.
4. Meanwhile, put the egg yolks and caster sugar into a medium-sized heatproof bowl and beat them together until pale and fluffy. When the cream begins to boil, remove the vanilla pod and then pour the cream onto the yolk and sugar mix, stirring constantly to mix.
5. Divide the mixture between the six ramekins and pour cold water into the tin until it comes two-thirds of the way up the ramekins. Bake in the preheated oven for about 35-40 minutes until the custard is set – it should only wobble slightly in the middle when shaken. Cool and then chill until cold.
6. When you are ready to serve, sprinkle one level teaspoon of caster sugar evenly over the top of each cold crème brûlée. Caramelize the sugar using a chef's blowtorch or place under a very hot grill – if using a grill, you will need to put them back in the fridge for half an hour before serving to cool down again.
7. Top each ramekin with a fresh raspberry and a mint leaf, and dust lightly with icing sugar.

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Beautiful boundaries

By Caroline Knight

Anticipation is sprouting in the garden. The scene from the window changes every day as plants burst into bud. Blossom is already billowing and bulbs are bringing colour back into our lives. You will see daffodils, hyacinths, fritillaries, lily of the valley, Camassia and even bluebells later in the month.

However, garden boundaries are often ignored. Although basic fences might provide security and privacy, they're rarely pretty and can create the effect of a cage. This is particularly noticeable if the garden is fairly small or bare of plants. But boundaries can become integral to the attractiveness and style of the outdoor space.

If your property already has a perfectly good fence, the trick is to disguise it, unless it's a design feature in itself. Shrubs and climbers are the key. Your garden will feel bigger as it's not so obvious where it ends. Just one fence panel can have the potential to offer up to four square metres of green space, so count up your own panels and you will see the exciting possibilities.

TOP CLIMBERS FOR FENCES

Clematis

Clematis is hard to beat when it comes to flowering potential. The evergreen *Clematis armandii* 'Apple Blossom' is beautiful in early spring, as is *Clematis* 'Frankie', a cultivar with blue flowers which blooms in April and May. Many of the *C. montana* (Himalayan) varieties flower in May and June.

Clematis viticella, including 'Polish Spirit' and 'Etoile Violette', wait until mid to late summer to reveal their beauty. There are winter-flowering *Clematis* too, including those from the *C. cirrhosa* group such as 'Wisley Cream', 'Freckles', and 'Jingle Bells'.

Take care to give these plants what they need. Many *Clematis* like full or partial sun.

Honeysuckle

There are many climbing *Lonicera* varieties from which to choose. It's important to consider the vigour of the plant, as some honeysuckles grow to heights of around 12 metres, which will probably be too much for your fence. The flowers also have a delectable aroma, particularly varieties such as *Lonicera* 'Heaven Scent' and L. 'Sweet Sue'.

Ivy

Ivy is an evergreen climber that provides huge benefits for wildlife. Some varieties have variegated leaves, bringing colour and interest to a vertical surface all year round.

Passion flower

Passiflora is a great choice for a sunny, sheltered fence. One of the most reliable is *Passiflora caerulea*, with large white flowers and contrasting central filaments. It can quickly cover fences and should flower from July to September.



Passion flowers are unmistakable



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FINANCE AVAILABLE

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We are specialists in loft ladders and hatches for easy and safe access to your loft. We also provide boarding, lighting and insulation solutions. This 'Spring Clean' time we can help you turn your lost space into really useful loft space.



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- No waiting around. We arrive on time, every time
- Lifetime Guarantee
- Reliable, local company working in your home
- Extra confidence because we are accredited by Which? Trusted Traders
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Door Hanging

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or supply and fit for you

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flooring specialist, please call

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YOU MIGHT NEED ME ONE DAY

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SATURDAY 16 MAY, 10AM – 12PM

OAKHANGER CHURCH & COMMUNITY CENTRE, Butterton Lane

**Bring your plant and swap for another, or buy what you want -
ALL PLANTS ONLY £1 & £2!!**

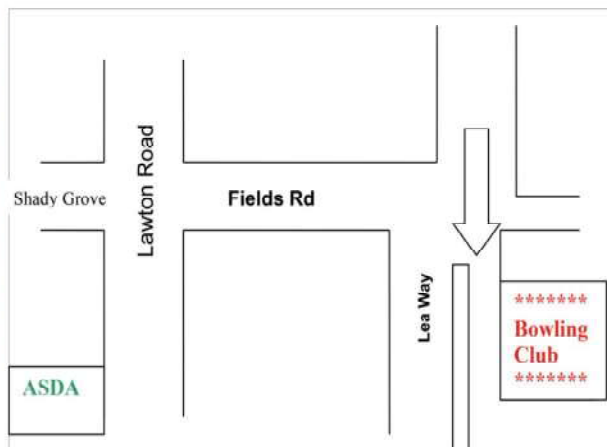
Plus handmade crafts by local artisans including:

Gardeners Accessories

Jewellery and more!

Refreshments available; free parking onsite





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Good Exercise

COME and JOIN US

Great Company

and ENJOY

**many wonderful games of
CROWN GREEN BOWLS**

Meet new Friends

Open Day Sunday 19th April 2026

Come and Join Us from 10.30

Green available to members 7 days a week during the season.

Indoor Bowls played in Club House during winter months.

Pleasure bowling only. More details: Phone 07479 652703;

alsagerbrc@gmail.com. or alsagerbowlingclub-fieldsroad.co.uk





ALSAGER ANIMALS IN NEED



2

CC REG No. 519969 www.alsager-animals.net

Please support your local Animal Rescue

Next Coffee Morning 11th April 2026. 9.30 - 11.30 a.m.

Alsager Civic Centre - Admission 50p

We help with stray & abandoned cats & dogs and find their forever homes. We also provide a rehoming from home service.



Alsager Community Support

Donate and Support us

We're a charity and like any charity, we have everyday costs that aren't covered by grants. There is a lot of behind the scene costs, Rent, Utility bills, DBS checks for volunteers are to name but a few, that all add up.

Become a Supporter by:

- A one off donation
- Becoming a regular donor
- Becoming a volunteer



QR code icons for various devices.

Scan the QR code to make a one off donation or visit www.alsagercommunitysupport.org.uk

Contact us call 01270 876605 Volunteering@alsagercommunitysupport.org.uk

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ALL MUSIC WELCOME

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Ian Riddle piano
Hannah Ruth McDonald soprano
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City Choir**

Bard & Broadway

Shearing | Bernstein | Rodgers | Diemer



Reg Charity No. 257932

SATURDAY, MAY 09
7.30 PM
St Andrew's Church, Westlands

Tickets: £15, Students £7.50 (under 16s FREE)
Tickets available from A Major Music, via our website:
ceramiccitychoir.org.uk and on 07854 639854 or 07842 410270

Alsager Library

Opening Hours

Monday 10am to 5pm
Tuesday 10am to 6pm
Wednesday 10am to 5pm
Thursday **CLOSED**
Friday 10am to 5pm
Saturday 9am to 1pm

Easter Opening Hours

Thursday 2nd April **CLOSED**
Good Friday **CLOSED**
Saturday 9am to 1pm
Monday 6th April **CLOSED**

PRE SCHOOL

RHYME TIME
MONDAY 11AM

*

MINI BUILDERS
WEDNESDAY 11AM

*

STORIES AND SONGS
FRIDAY 11AM

*

BABY BOUNCE
FRIDAY 2PM

*

FAMILY STORIES AND
SONGS
SATURDAY 4TH APRIL
11AM

CHILDREN'S

LEGO CLUB
MONDAY 3:30PM

*

CRAFTERNOON
WEDNESDAY 3:30PM

*

GAMES CLUB
FRIDAY 3:30PM

FREE, NO NEED TO BOOK

TAKE A LOOK AT OUR
FACEBOOK/
WEB PAGE
FOR FUTURE EVENTS

ADULT

COLOUR AND CHAT
MONDAY 2PM TO 4PM

*

2ND TUESDAY MURDER
CLUB
THRILLER BOOK GROUP
TUESDAY 14TH APRIL

2:30PM

*

CRAFTY NATTER
TUESDAY 14TH & 28TH
APRIL
2PM - 4PM

*

COFFEE MORNING
EVERY WEDNESDAY
10AM TO 12PM

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What Am I

1.Seven 2. A Shirt

Across: 7 Polish, 8 Parity, 9 Hurl, 10 Railways, 11 Knotted, 13 Giddy, 15 Scare, 17 Giggled, 20 Gasoline, 21 Clap, 22 Breeze, 23 Cuddle.

Down: 1 Column, 2 Till, 3 Churned, 4 Spoil, 5 Brawling, 6 Stayed, 12 Turnover, 14 Silence, 16 Chairs, 18 Enable, 19 Fixed, 21 Cede.

WHO HAS TIME FOR CLEANING?



WE DO!



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Specialist Deep Cleaning
End of Tenancy with Carpets & Oven,
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MaidInCheshire - Cleaning Service

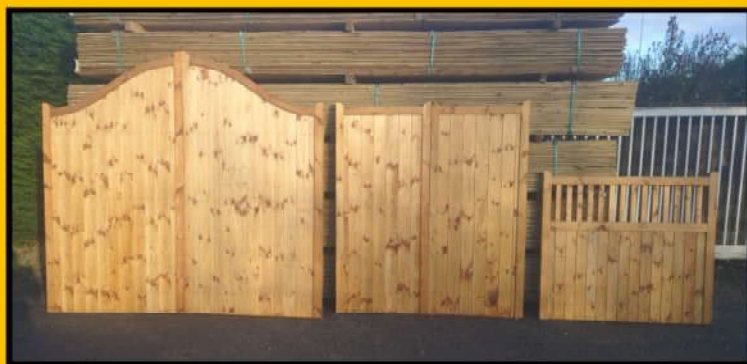


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