

Bexhill News

JANUARY 2023 | ISSUE 07

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EDITOR'S WELCOME



Welcome to the first edition of the year.

I hope you all managed to enjoy the festive season and looking forward to a fresh new year.

Bexhill was absolutely fantastic last month with so much going on for Christmas with the excellent Christmas markets, charity events and we had a stunning flurry of snow which truly marked the start of Christmas. The effort residents went to decorate their homes and raise money for charity at the same time was incredible with some excellent results.

What I love is when snow completely changes the mood of everyone in the flick of a switch. As I walked around town, everyone was smiling, children played in their gardens people simply smiled at each other as we passed in the street - all because it was snowing! It's such a magical thing we don't get to see very often and I hope you agree.

However, there was misery on the roads as some drivers took many hours to go a short distance and then we had more disruption as the snow melted causing flooding. It was certainly a year full of challenges, wasn't it?

So, as we wonder what this country will throw at us next, we start the new year with yet another packed edition full of local news and information.

This month, we welcome Kim Mayo onto the team as a full-time writer. This will allow us to continue to grow this newspaper and deliver you the very latest news.

Also, we have a couple of brand-new, exciting projects which we will be working hard on over the next couple of months which we cannot wait to announce.

Paul Gibson, Group Editor



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RESIDENT FURIOUS AFTER BEING HIT WITH £400 FINE FOR 'FLY-TIPPING'



Sea Road resident Jan Walker (pictured) has always followed the rules when it comes to putting out her recycling bins on alternate Tuesdays.

There had never been a problem... until just before Christmas that is!

Both green recycling bins had been put out as per usual although as they were full, two cardboard boxes, which had been neatly folded, were inserted between the bins for collection.

That was that, she thought but instead, she was in for a rude shock.

With her husband ill in bed and Jan still in her dressing gown, there was a sharp rap at the door. After she answered an enforcement officer, representing Rother District Council, told her in no uncertain terms that she and her husband Peter were being subjected to a £400 fine for "fly-tipping".

Jan said: "I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I mean fly-tipping? Really? It is not as if we had left an old sofa on the pavement and we always take great care when putting out our recycling.

"It just seems to be an easy way to boost the council's coffers. I have heard loads of stories about smokers being followed down our roads by

enforcement officers in the hope they will drop a cigarette butt and can then be fined £150... and now this.

"I was absolutely outraged. I have my husband for support but imagine if it was a pensioner on their own with limited means and something similar had happened. It could have given them a heart attack."

The main issue for many residents since the "zero tolerance" policy was introduced is that there is scant, if any, warning before a hefty fine is issued.

A walk around the town underlines the fact that warning signs stating that anyone dropping litter will be subjected to a fine are conspicuous by their absence.

"We are being treated like criminals," Jan added. "I was told by the officer that I had committed a criminal offence. He had taken his picture of the alleged offence at 8.30am yet by the time he returned less than an hour later the binmen had already taken it all away without complaint.

"However, the packaging we had neatly stashed between our two bins had our address on them and that led to the fine even though we had done nothing wrong.

"From our perspective, it wasn't about the money, it was about the sheer unfairness of it and we appealed against the decision straightaway."

This latest incident follows in the wake of Bexhill News' recent front page about smokers being targeted by the officers Rother District Council employs via a third party.

However, the council denied this was the case and said it was merely part of a general crackdown on littering on Bexhill's streets.

But as Jan was quick to point out: "Nobody in their right mind thinks littering is acceptable, but being punished when you are actually playing by the rules is absolutely ridiculous and also offensive."

Having complained to both the council and its contracted enforcement agency, the £400 fine has now been rescinded.

But Jan added. Not everyone is as feisty as my husband and I. Many will just pay up but we refused to be intimidated and fought back. Fortunately, on this occasion, it paid dividends and justice was served."

When contacted by Bexhill News, the council issued the following statement: "The fixed penalty notice was issued to Mr and Mrs Walker by an officer who was unaware that kerbside collections were taking place.

"As soon as the error was identified, the residents in question were notified that the fixed penalty notice had been cancelled.

"We are working with National Enforcement Solutions to ensure waste collection schedules are checked ahead of fixed penalty notices being issued.

"Enforcement against environmental offences began at the end of August in response to the growing issue of fly-tipping and littering, which is a blight on communities across Rother. We continue to encourage people to dispose of their waste responsibly or face on-the-spot fines."



Steve Hall is a local cartoonist drawing inspiration from Bexhill and the sea. His cards, books and other items can be found in local independents and the Bexhill museum shop. He can be contacted at steve54.hall@gmail.com.

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'PROACTIVE APPROACH NEEDED' TO SAVE OUR TOWN CENTRE'S FUTURE

BY FEATURES EDITOR KIM MAYO

Decisive action must be taken to ensure Bexhill remains a destination of choice for shopping and leisure

Yet another major retailer has confirmed it is leaving Bexhill, adding yet more woes to business prospects in the town.

Leading national clothing retailer M&Co, which has a flagship store in Devonshire Road, has confirmed it has gone into administration, leading to another loss of jobs just before Christmas and yet another major prominent site in the town centre empty once the final sale of existing stock is completed.

The timing could hardly have been worse, with the retail sector in freefall and job losses expected to continue during the first half of 2023.

A leisurely walk around Bexhill comprehensively demonstrates the sad state of affairs at present.

Take Devonshire Road as a prime example as it amply demonstrates the worrying state of play.

The M&Co site is a prime one which will soon be vacant, but it is by no means the only example.

With banks on a mission to drive customers to do all their transactions online, the town has already had to cope with the loss of its Barclays branch, with HSBC soon to follow.

In addition, there is the former Edinburgh Woollen Mill site, also in Devonshire Road, which is falling into disrepair, with no sign of redevelopment at present.

Bearing in mind both the M&Co and Edinburgh Woollen Mill premises are prime sites, along with the Barclays Bank building, it certainly gives the wrong impression to Bexhill visitors.

This is a sad state of affairs which is of considerable concern to Howard Martin, President of Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism.

Mr Martin wants to see a proactive and collective approach to regenerating the town centre with a mix of new retail and leisure facilities being a priority in order to make Bexhill a "go-to"

destination.

"There needs to be a new approach with everyone working together to ensure Bexhill does not become a ghost town," he said.

"There is a real danger it could be without an innovative approach when it comes to attracting new business to the town."

It is not all doom and gloom, according to Mr Martin, but this is not the time to rest on our laurels.

He added: "We have to compete with the likes of Hastings and Eastbourne who are far more proactive in their approach when it comes to attracting new business. Bexhill is a wonderful town to invest in but we need to shout it from the rooftops."

Mr Martin pointed to the success of recent business ventures such as the 1066 Bakery and the Cooden Beach Hotel.

He also believes that sensible planning decisions will encourage rather than discourage major investment from well-established big businesses.

"For a start, our history of discouraging hotel development in the town needs to change," he said. "High-quality boutique hotels on town centre sites such as the former Barclays Bank are the way forward as they will attract visitors to our town."

"There must be offers of substantial fit-out grants to encourage big business to invest in us. We have to come out fighting."

"It needs a task force collective approach to encourage national companies to come in having seen Bexhill as a great place to set up shop."

"We have prime sites sitting empty and that is an absolute tragedy, particularly as hotels and more bars will prove popular and lead to more visitor numbers and, as a result, more revenue for businesses."

"These are very precarious times for our coastal towns and the only solution is positive action on all fronts."

"Our town centre needs to buck the national trend. We do not want to see a proliferation of empty buildings in our town centre and just do everything in our power to avoid that scenario."

Data produced by Ordnance Survey proves the face of our high streets is changing since the Covid pandemic hit businesses hard both locally and nationally.

More and more consumers have been turning to the internet to do their shopping, which has led to a downturn in high street shopping, although some retail sectors continue to buck the trend.

Overall, nationally, there were 9,300 fewer retail outlets in March 2022 when compared to March 2020. The figures were revealed by analysis of 1.5 million records contained in the Ordnance Survey's "points of interest" mapping data, a comprehensive quarterly survey of businesses, facilities and services operating in England, Scotland and Wales.

In Rother, there were 94 eating and drinking businesses in March 2020, while in March 2022 there were three more, an increase of three per cent.

When it comes to retail, in March 2020 there were 146 outlets, while exactly two years later the total had risen by seven, an increase of five per cent.

Overall, the data revealed pubs and bars saw a 20 per cent increase, beauty services a 17 per cent increase and cafes a 14 per cent increase.

But, on the downside, clothes shops saw a five per cent decrease and restaurants a 15 per cent decrease.

In Rother, there was mixed news during the period the data was compiled. The good news is that 17.4 per cent more beauty services opened and 12.5 per cent more supermarkets.

But, the number of fish and chip shops was down by 11.1 per cent as the food industry struggles in certain sectors.

The outlook for 2023 continues to be volatile as the cost of living crisis continues to hit hard. There is more reliance on food banks as many struggle to pay their bills, especially with utility bills continuing to rocket.

There is cause for cautious optimism but no doubt there is a long way to go before economic stability is fully restored.



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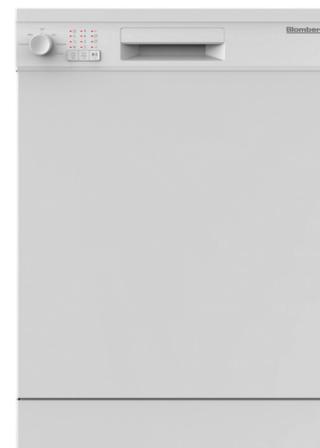


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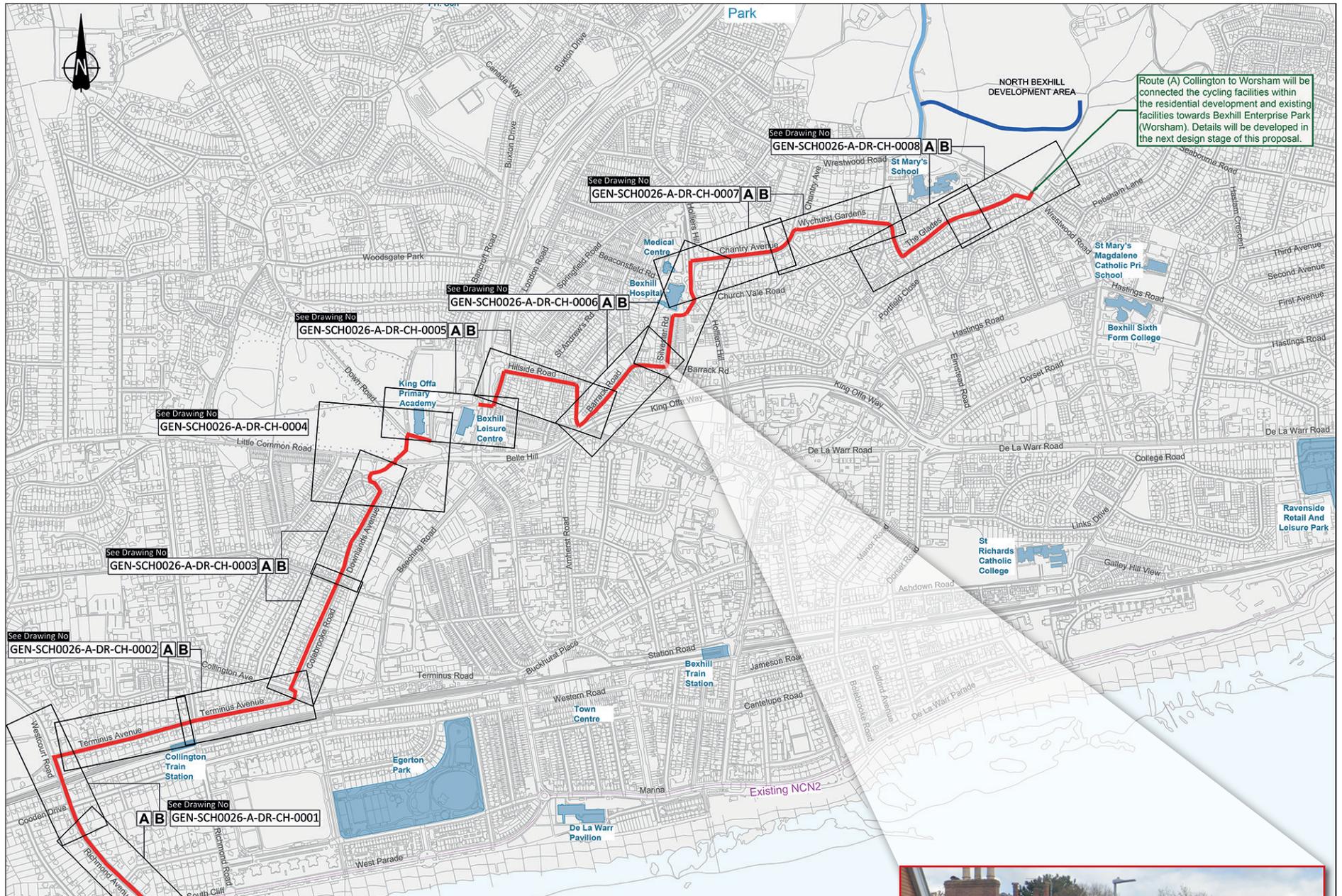


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DEBATE RAGES OVER FEASIBILITY OF PROPOSED NEW CYCLE ROUTE



BY FEATURES EDITOR KIM MAYO

A proposed new cycle and pedestrian route between Collington and Bexhill Enterprise Park has moved a step closer after a meeting of East Sussex County Council, but no final decision has yet been made.

At the most recent meeting of the council on November 21, Councillor Claire Dowling, lead member for transport and environment, agreed to move forward with the plans which will now go to a detailed design stage, potentially leading to its construction this year.

The full route would include Richmond Avenue, Terminus Avenue, Cranbrook Road, Downlands Avenue, Hillside Road, Barrack Road, Chantry Avenue, Silvester Road, Wychurst Gardens, The Glades and Wrestwood Road.

But opinion is still divided over its feasibility.

When the council sent out questionnaires, responses were disappointingly low although of those who did voice an opinion at the time 42 per cent supported the scheme with 58 per cent opposed.

The proposal has been made after the route was identified as one of the principle ones in East Sussex with a shared space for cyclists and pedestrians envisaged.

It is part of the council's aim to

support an integrated infrastructure catering for walkers, cyclists and bus use while at the same time encouraging less reliance on cars to secure a brighter environmental future.

The proposal is being funded by the Local Growth Fund, secured via the South East Local Enterprises Partnership.

When first mooted, a feasibility study was carried out to identify the most appropriate route with on-road facilities favoured to enable cyclists to travel safely in either direction.

Safe crossing points for cyclists and pedestrians would also be introduced along the route.

One significant bone of contention, however, is the proposed introduction of double yellow lines at certain key points, with one local resident particularly outraged.

Don Payne, who lives in Barrack Road, said: "There will be nowhere to park. It is bad enough as it is and it would get even worse.

"Because parking is at a premium it is very dangerous. There is no logic to these proposals. As it is I can hardly ever park near my house. It just seems to be an ongoing war against motorists.

"Drivers have to pay road tax yet cyclists don't. It is not very fair, is it?"

"I want to stress that I am not against cyclists. I cycle myself. But the system needs to be fair rather than prejudiced against motorists.



"The council needs to stop pushing people because things are bad enough as it is. They have already nearly killed the town off. What we need is a common sense approach."

When the yellow lines are put in place it means the loss of 51 parking spaces with another 18 being sacrificed due to the introduction of a controlled crossing in Wrestwood Road.

Nevertheless, the council states that the loss of parking spaces would equate to just seven per cent of parking spaces being lost along the proposed four kilometre route.

The success of cycle lanes across Sussex has been vigorously debated with some which were originally installed having already been removed as in some cases chaos ensued.

But with cycling becoming increasingly popular as an alternative and "green" mode of transport for work and leisure purposes, it seems the debate will rage on for some time to come.



THE FUTURE OF THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF SUSSEX SPARKS PLENTY OF DEBATE AMONG OUR READERS

Bexhill News asked readers whether the Duke and Duchess of Sussex should be stripped of their titles by King Charles after their “bombshell” Netflix series, but it seems the six-part show failed to make much of an impression.

Admittedly, the allegations made by Harry and Meghan during the programmes regarding the King and the Prince of Wales will no doubt have caused a stir among members of the Royal inner circle, there has been no official response from the Palace, presumably in the hope the storm will abate.

But, just as the furore appeared to be dying down ahead of the launch of Prince Harry’s forthcoming autobiography entitled “Spare”, it all kicked off again when journalist and broadcaster Jeremy Clarkson wrote that Meghan should be “dragged naked through the streets”, provoking a furious response from the couple, who appear unwilling to stay out of the limelight despite saying all they wanted was to have their privacy respected by the media.

It appears that will not be the case at any point in the near future.

Maureen Smith posted on our Facebook page: “I think they should give up their titles with the exception of him remaining Prince Harry. That is his by birthright.

“The other titles were given to him because he was a member of the Royal Family. He isn’t anymore so the titles should go.”

Jenni Carter added: “I haven’t watched the Netflix documentaries and nor will I. For two people who chose to stay private away from the rest of the world, they have done nothing but put themselves in the spotlight ever since, which seems very hypocritical.”

Many chose not to watch the programmes at all with Sheila Allen-Rodgers saying: “Not interested. I had better things to do.”



Those sentiments were echoed by Hazel Time, who added: “Just not interested” while Nicola Millez said: “I have not watched it and nor am I going to.”

However, there was some support for the couple despite the criticism they received from many observers.

Bexhill town councillor Viv Taylor said: “I think they have been subjected to appalling vilification by the press.

“They may not be everyone’s perfect prince or princess but royal families throughout the ages are riven by feuds. That is what they do.

“The appetite to see them brought down I find rather sick, especially after the death of Princess Diana.”

Vivienne Gibbs was fairly sanguine with her response. She said: “They didn’t inflict anything on us. We all have the choice to decide whether to watch it or not. I simply chose not to.”

Meanwhile, Gwen Whiteman wrote: “I am not in the slightest bit interested.”

Since Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II bestowed the titles on the couple, they found themselves in the firing line for only visiting the county once since their marriage in Windsor before they relocated to California where it appears they will be living for the foreseeable future.

There is also considerable speculation as to whether they will attend King Charles’s Coronation later in 2023 although there has been no announcement about their plans or whether they will even be invited.

It will be the first time a British Monarch has been crowned in more than 70 years. For now, though, it seems we will only be provided with all of the answers in the fullness of time.



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DRIVERS ARRESTED AT BEXHILL DRINK AND DRUG DRIVE CRACKDOWN



EDITOR, PAUL GIBSON GETS INVITED ON A CHRISTMAS DRINK AND DRUG DRIVING CRACKDOWN TO FIND THOSE CAUSING FATAL ACCIDENTS ON OUR ROADS...

Over the course of my journalism career, I've spent many shifts with Sussex Police either out in the traffic cars chasing bad people or standing on the roadside near Christmas checking for those over the limit.

Thankfully, very rarely, these roadside checks result in many arrests as a majority of drivers decide to leave their cars at home if they've had a festive tipple.

I looked forward to joining officers from the Sussex Police Roads Policing team just before Christmas in a routine stop-check exercise in Bexhill. My first surprise was when I was summoned to meet the team on 'Cooden Sea Road', the exact location was not given, so I only assumed it would be close to the Little Common Roundabout to ensure the most drivers are stopped as possible.

I was wrong. Officers were instructed to set up outside Cooden Beach Train Station as they wanted to show the public these checks can spring up at any location, at any time around this time of year. We expected a quiet night as the checks started at 9pm on a cold Thursday evening.

Again, I was wrong. Within sixty minutes of setting up, two drivers had been locked up for exceeding drink/drug limits. One man was taken away in cuffs after giving a saliva sample at the roadside which showed positive for cannabis.

Just a few minutes later, a middle-aged woman admitted she had

drunk a beer about '20 minutes ago' which resulted in the officer asking for a roadside breath test. She blew 47mg when the legal limit is 35mg. The woman was put in the back of a Police vehicle and taken to Hastings Police station for further testing.

This signalled the end of the check that evening as each prisoner is accompanied by two officers so we called it a night. In a way, I was delighted two drivers were taken off the road that night and will face whatever punishment is handed to them by the courts, but it made me realise how many people are actually using our roads every day and night over the safe limits.

Just in one hour, a few Christmases were ruined, but it could have been a lot worse if they had caused an accident due to their intoxication.

Sergeant Chris Ambrose told Bexhill News: "We've sadly seen a large number of people being arrested for drink and drug driving offences - more than we would like. Obviously, we'd like to be doing these checks and not be catching anyone, and just spreading the word. But, sadly, as you've seen tonight, we've had two people arrested on what is a particularly quiet road in Sussex."

He added: "It feels to me like figures are slightly higher up than it was last year - not so much for the drink driving, but certainly much more for the drug driving side this year."

The message is simple this new year - it's just not worth getting

behind the wheel if you've had anything to drink or taken any drugs - there's far too much at stake.

In just the first three weeks of Operation Limit last month, more than 140 motorists were arrested. Meanwhile officers carried out nearly 1,700 vehicle checks and conducted 676 breath tests and 118 DrugWipe tests at stop sites across the county.

Being intoxicated through either alcohol or drugs is one of the "fatal five" factors in why people are killed or seriously injured on our roads.

The other factors are driving at excess speed, not wearing a seatbelt, being distracted such as by using a mobile phone, and careless or inconsiderate driving.

The consequences of drink or drug-driving can include a minimum 12 month ban, unlimited fine, possible prison sentence, criminal record, which could affect your current and future employment, an increase in your car insurance and you could also kill or seriously injure yourself or someone else

The Sergeant concluded: "There is no more of a destructive offence for me than drink/driving on the road. It contributes to a significant number of serious and fatal collisions, and it causes upset and devastation wherever it goes. My advice is if you're going to use drugs recreationally, or you're going to drink, then please leave the car at home."





A school's close association with Bexhill Rotary Club has once again paid handsome dividends with a wonderful and lasting addition to its facilities.

The Rotary Club has a long and fruitful relationship with the Offa Primary Academy and has collaborated on a number of different projects, including helping to improve the pupils' reading skills.

However, the Year 6 pupils at the school then decided they wanted to provide something they could be remembered by before they moved on to Year 7.

After consulting with each other, they came up with the idea of a "friendship bench" as they wanted something that could be used on a daily basis.

A number of events, including a cake sale, were held to raise

the necessary funds. In total, £600 was raised, although sadly this was still £120 short of the total they needed to turn their dream into reality.

However, help was at hand as the Rotary Club stepped in to make up the shortfall.

Fran Meader, one of the teachers at the school, is delighted with the help provided by the Rotary Club.

She said: "Knowing that Vernon Findlay had been coming into our school working with the children to build kit cars and his ties with Bexhill Rotary Club, I contacted him to see if the club could help in any way.

"He turned up the very next day with a £120 donation from the club and the children, as you can imagine, we're absolutely delighted.

"The bench arrived at the beginning of November and we are all extremely grateful for the help and support the club has given to make this possible.

"We think the inscription on the bench is very apt in these uncertain times.

"It reads: 'Friends make you laugh a little louder and smile a little brighter'."

Meanwhile, Bexhill Rotary Club, which is involved in so much good work in the community, is on the lookout for new members to bolster its ranks.

If you want to join an enthusiastic, busy and fun-loving club, email the Honorary Secretary Stephen White at stephenandlaura98@yahoo.co.uk for further details.



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READERS' LETTERS

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DEMANDS FOR DEMENTIA CARE PLAN

To the Editor, Dementia is the UK's biggest killer, and one of the greatest health challenges facing society. Earlier this year the UK Government announced a 'visionary' 10-year Plan for Dementia, aiming to increase diagnosis and support people with their health and care needs.

This announcement provided hope for the 900,000 living with dementia in the UK. The Government promised to publish the plan by the end of 2022 but we are still waiting, and my patience is wearing thin.

With a change in Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, not once, not twice, but three times since July, progress on the 10-Year Plan for Dementia has stalled. And now, 19 times over, the Government have responded to questioning, stating "further information will be available in due course".

While I am thrilled by the recent positive drug trial results, they give hope for the future, but for those living in the now, this lack of clear direction from the Government is costing them time and hope.

Dementia is long overdue a plan, and people affected by dementia are long overdue the respect and consideration they deserve. But without delivering on their commitments, the Government are making a clear statement; dementia is not their priority.

Publishing a plan to improve the lives of people affected by dementia is so important to me because the government have broken promises, time to take action, why can't we have a sensible government and not a load of jumped-up old school boys who are not even street wise?

The Government must publish the 10-year Plan for Dementia now and help people in this area affected by dementia live more fulfilled and less fearful lives.

Dementia doesn't wait for due course – we need a #PlanD now.
John

POPPY FUNDRAISING SUCCESS

As Chairman of the Royal British Legion Bexhill branch I am very proud to announce that we raised the amazing sum of £27,332.20 this year. I would like to thank the Veterans, the Army Cadet Force, Ninfield Scouts, 9th Bexhill Scouts and 1st Sidley Brownies.

Thanks also go to all the shops who had boxes, all the people who gave up their time to deliver the boxes, all the people who stood collecting and anyone else who helped.

We could not do it without the help of these willing people and I would like them to know how much their input is appreciated.

Graham Hall, Chairman
Royal British Legion Bexhill Branch



VOTING DISAPPOINTMENT CONTINUED

I think it is everyone's duty to vote, especially for women who fought and

suffered so hard to get the vote.

Voting therefore should be compulsory and a proportional voting system would provide a more balanced outcome.

I am not a conservative supporter but I have always found Huw Merriman conscientious, sensible and helpful and I wish him luck with the thankless task as a Railways Minister.

Russell Dufton, Bexhill.

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EXPERTS REVEAL HOW TO PROTECT YOUR HOME THIS WINTER

FORTY PERCENT OF BRITS ARE 'CAUGHT OUT' BY WINTER DUE TO A LACK OF PREPARATION, ACCORDING TO A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE MET OFFICE...

Over a third of the population is likely to be unprepared for worsening weather this winter, furthermore, over 25% have dealt with power cuts, and 19% experienced a broken boiler over the winter months, according to the survey.

Unfortunately for us Brits, January and February are renowned for being the 'wetter months', but there are some steps you can and should take now to protect your home and health from the winter elements.

Insurance experts A-Plan Insurance take you through their top tips on protecting your home this winter, and ensuring you don't have to splash the cash on potential repairs.

If you haven't done so yet, service your boiler. December to January is the busiest time for boiler repair callouts according to British Gas, who are called out for around 45,000 visits in Christmas week alone.

In addition, homeowners should bleed radiators and wrap pipes in insulation, seal loose-fitting letterboxes, draughty chimneys and keyholes, shut doors in rooms you aren't using to keep the heat in, or cold out.

Consider thermal blinds or lining underneath your curtains to keep that extra bit of heat in the home.

Half of heat loss in a home is via uninsulated walls and attic, while 10% is due to no flooring insulation, so fill and seal, and use rugs.

Did you know that 'escape of water' damage is one of the most common claims an insurer will see? The average claim for burst pipe damage is between £6,500 and £7,500, according to the

Association of British Insurers.

Although water damage is usually covered by your buildings insurance, the disruption is better avoided in the first place. While 'escape of water' can happen at any time of the year, winter poses the additional threat of the Big Freeze.

Generally, pipes that are exposed to outdoor temperatures and pipes that run along exterior walls with minimal lagging tend to freeze more easily.

To avoid this happening, residents should lag pipes and water tanks in unheated interior areas, such as loft spaces and garages, consider wrapping vulnerable pipes in electric heat tape for extra lagging, ensure there are no cracks or gaps around the pipes that enter your home and fill any you find.

If you find your pipes frozen, turn your water off at the main stopcock straight away. Check to see if any pipes have burst. If not, either wait for them to warm up or thaw them with a hairdryer on the lowest setting, hot water bottles or a towel soaked in hot water starting at the end nearest the tap.

If you find a burst pipe, turn your water off at the main stopcock and open all the taps to drain the system. Switch off central heating and any other water heating installations. Contact your insurance service for advice, including arranging for professional repairs and how to go about making a claim on your home insurance.

We hope your home doesn't flood this winter but it's good to know what to do should the worst happen. It is estimated that 1 in 6 properties in the UK are at risk of flooding.

Here's an important piece of advice from the makers of this

report. You'll need to call your insurance company before you begin any clean-up operation following storm damage, and they'll advise on what to do next, including whether you're able to make a claim. It is important to speak to your insurer prior to clean up due to the potential biohazards involved.

To add to the issue, many homes are woefully underinsured, which is now also exacerbated by the significant rise in building materials, from timber prices increasing by 23% in just one month to a 10% - 15% rise in other materials. This could mean that the costs to repair this year, could be even higher so it's worth checking your cover is up to date.

You will need home, or 'contents' insurance for your personal possessions, while buildings insurance will cover your home in the event of a storm damaging your roof or causing a leak which damages your home.

From burst pipes to storm flooding, if an event causes damage to your furniture, electrical goods and so on, you can claim for this via your contents insurance, however, you will need to check how much you are covered for.

It can be very difficult to obtain insurance for a property that has been flooded before, and you will not be covered for this under a standard buildings and contents policy.

The research was carried out by A-Plan Insurance, which has more than 100 high street branches nationwide. The company, established in the 1960s, provides a personalised service to more than 600,000 clients.

A-plan
insurance
// a howden company

What to do following storm damage



Check in on vulnerable neighbours and relatives.



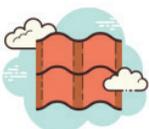
Contact your home, motor or commercial insurer.



Do not attempt cleanup prior to speaking to your insurer.



Never touch falling electrical or telephone cables.



Remain aware of loosened, falling roof tiles.



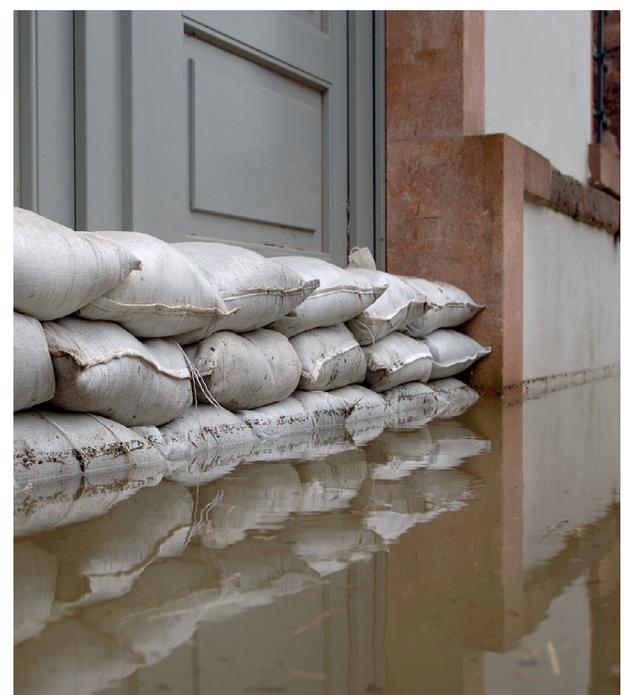
Inspect the damage only when it is safe to do so.



List and photograph all damage.



Obtain receipts for any emergency repairs.



COME ON ADMIT IT, MODERN TELEVISION IS COMPLETE RUBBISH

OPINION BY
FEATURES EDITOR, KIM MAYO



Do you recall the days when television over the festive period was a cornucopia of delights and listening to the Christmas chart rundown was a notable highlight?

Well, I do. Morecambe and Wise for starters in the Seventies and then the joy of the Only Fools and Horses specials in the Eighties and early Nineties. They were invariably an absolute delight.

But no more. Television over Christmas was, to put it mildly, a damp squib, a bit like a present on the big day which turns out to be a huge disappointment. Nevertheless, you still had to put on a brave face and pretend to great aunt Hilda that it was the best gift you had ever received.

Sometimes less is more if you get my drift. Receiving a present you have hankered for all year lifts the spirits, but getting loads of guff you don't need has the opposite effect.

The same applies to television and radio. We have never had more channels and stations to choose from but although the choice is virtually endless, the quality of the programming becomes worse with each passing year.

Prior to the festivities, I bought a copy of the Radio Times, pen poised to ring the programmes on the schedules that I was interested in watching. Guess what? There were none with the exception of King Charles making his first address to the nation on the big day itself.

How many quiz shows do we need? How many reality shows?



How many films being shown for the umpteenth time?

Look, Love Actually has its mildly amusing and poignant moments, but viewing it once is enough surely?

Ditto Bond films. I love them all but have no need to see any of them ever again. It is like accidentally bumping into an ex-girlfriend and realising that after all these years she drives you mad and you made the right decision to split up in the first place. In other words, it is a scenario that is best avoided if at all possible.

Memories are a good thing, reality often is not.

One of the "highlights" of the festive programming was apparently something called Mrs Brown's Boys. I had never seen it before so tuned in and I am still having nightmares. Has there ever been a less funny "comedy" on TV? No.

"What next," I wondered. "What about the radio?"

I haven't listened to Radio One for 40 years but thought let's try and be hip and down with the kids and investigate what they are

listening to these days.

Never in all my life have my ears been assaulted with such rubbish. Is it an age thing? Well, clearly yes but I have loved music all my life. However, what was emanating from the speakers was anything but.

Therefore I approached Christmas Day with considerable trepidation. How to fill the hours between lunch and evening while enjoying a few glasses of wine as I settled down on the sofa.

I had a book to hand but fancied watching something on the gogglebox.

Then it struck me. My brother had kindly bought me a whizz-bang blue-ray DVD player and I had also acquired Peter Jackson's Get Back documentary about The Beatles recording their Let it Be album.

I'm a bit of a sucker for a good documentary. Watching a David Attenborough programme is both educational and entertaining. Beats Love Island any day of the week.

I have loved The Beatles ever since I was given their Greatest Hits 1967-1970 "blue album" for my 12th birthday. Now that was a present to cherish and I have it to this very day.

So, how did Mr Jackson's three-disc opus measure up?

I loved it and it made Christmas Day go with a bang. There the Fab Four were, still creating brilliant music despite their differences and proving that genius is a rare yet wonderful thing.

It is four hours long but culminates with the band playing live for the very last time on the roof of the Apple offices in Savile Row before a police officer brought proceedings to a premature close.

Just a matter of months later it was the end of The Beatles too as internal bickering tore the group apart.

However, their legacy lives on and they helped me enjoy Christmas even if the television channels did not.

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First Friday every month. St. Augustine's Church Hall, Bexhill

We provide a social atmosphere for blind and partially sighted people including the opportunity to meet and make new friends. We can provide transport to St Augustine's and the afternoon includes refreshments, entertainment and a raffle and we also arrange lunch outings. If you are interested in joining please contact Christine on 01323 482407 or East Sussex Vision Support Head Office on 01323 832252.

LITTLE COMMON COMMUNITY GROUP EVENTS

The Wheatsheaf, Little Common.

Join us for our monthly quiz night on 11th January at 7pm at the Wheatsheaf. Also, come along to our village litter pick on Sunday 15th January at 11am, followed by a village weed pick at 12pm. Meet at the Wheatsheaf. The Little Commoners are looking forward to supporting and meeting as many residents as possible and can be contacted via thelittlecommoners@gmail.com or on Facebook @TheLittleCommoners.

BEXHILL AFTER DARK LIGHT FESTIVAL

Bexhill Seafont. Saturday 28th January 2023 - 4.30 - 8.00pm

Bexhill After Dark is a free light art festival in Bexhill, this year focusing on the seafont. Please note this year's event will be smaller than 2022. However, it will still include a high-

quality illuminated programme.

COFFEE MORNING & TABLE TOP SALE

St. Barnabas Church, 10am-12 noon.

The next Coffee Morning and Table Top Sale at St Barnabas Church, on the corner of Sea Road and Cantelupe Road in Bexhill will be on Saturday 28th January 2023, 10am until noon. Coffee, Tea and Cake, with a Book Stall and Bric-a-brac.

BEXHILL STAMP & POSTCARD CLUB

Wednesday 4th January, 11am-1pm, Wheatsheaf Inn, Little Common and Wednesday 25th January, 7.30pm-9pm, St. Augustin's Church Hall.

Informal get-together on the first Wednesday of each month at the Wheatsheaf Pub, Little Common. Next is on Wednesday 4th January.

Next Club meeting starts at 7.30pm on Wednesday 25th January 2023 at St. Augustin's Church Hall, Cooden Drive, Bexhill, TN39 3AZ.

MESSY CHURCH

Freedom Church, Claremont Road, Bexhill.

Saturday 21st January, 15:30-17:30. All age creative service with crafts, activities and sensory play. Everyone can get to enjoy making crafts, learning about Jesus, who loves us, and enjoying a meal together and what's more, it's free! You don't need to believe to belong, come and join us where everyone is welcome. There will be refreshments, discussions, a variety of activities and a hot meal together.

BEXHILL CURRY CLUB

Shiplu Tandoori, Bexhill. Thursday 19th January at 18:00

Bexhill Curry Club provides the opportunity once every two months for like minded professionals to meet up for a curry and a beer.

BEXHILL TUESDAY CLUB FOR THE BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED

Every Tuesday afternoon, St. Marks Church, Little Common.

Are you feeling isolated and want to make new friends? Then come and join in with lunches, cream teas, quizzes and entertainment. We can even pick you up and take you home. Call Jane on 01424 729323.

BEXHILL HEALTH WALKS

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. 11am, free to attend. Free, friendly, regular walks, just an hour, no need to book, just turn up. Monday: Sidley, meet outside the New Inn. Wednesdays: Bexhill Freedom Leisure Centre, 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month from outside Bexhill Leisure Pool, Ravenside. Fridays: Bexhill Seafont, meet outside De La Warr Pavilion.

BEXHILL CHESS CLUB

Centenary House, 21 Holliers Hill (near Bexhill Hospital), TN40 2DH.

The club meets Tuesday afternoons from 1-4pm, Sunday afternoons from 1-4pm. Beginners welcome, coaching given, refreshments provided. For further information phone Mr Sharp on 01424 715753.

LOCAL CAUSE BENEFITS FROM BONFIRE NIGHT COLLECTIONS



A Bexhill charity has received a cash boost thanks to money donated by residents and sponsors of the Hailsham Bonfire night.

A cheque was presented on behalf of the Bonfire Society at its annual charity presentation held at the Crown Hotel in Hailsham last month.

Warming Up The Homeless received £329 to assist with its work throughout East Sussex in assisting the homeless by giving them supplies, clothes and warm meals.

A huge £59,000 has been raised by Bonfire Societies collectively across the county following this year's events. The annual Sussex Bonfire Societies end of year carol service was held at The Holy Cross Church in Uckfield just before Christmas where the total raised was announced to the members and dignitaries in attendance.

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MEN'S SHED LAUNCHES TO COMBAT LONELINESS IN BEXHILL

BY GROUP EDITOR PAUL GIBSON

Bexhill will have its very own 'Men's Shed' this month which is aimed at giving anyone with practical skills, suffering from loneliness or who want to generally socialise with like-minded enthusiasts, a place to go.

Men's Sheds are similar to garden sheds – a place to pursue practical interests at leisure, to practice skills and enjoy making and mending. The difference is that garden sheds and their activities are often solitary in nature - Men's Sheds are the opposite. They're about social connections and friendship building, sharing skills and knowledge and a lot of laughter.

Bexhill Men's Shed is being established in a fully equipped carpentry workshop and will be open two days each week following its official opening later this month in London Road behind HFS.

Although labelled sheds, they often aren't sheds at all. They can be empty offices, portakabins, warehouses, garages and in at least one case, a disused mortuary. Many Sheds get involved in community projects too – restoring village features, help maintain parks and green spaces and building things for schools, libraries and individuals in need.

Bexhill Men's Shed is a project set up with funding from Rother Voluntary Action (RVA) to bring people together. Men, women, who have experiences to share, skills to share an opportunity to repair items, make items and more importantly talk amongst themselves, make new friends and keep themselves fit and happy.

An article published in the launch edition of Bexhill News about RVA receiving funding to support local initiatives triggered one of the curators to contact them who then managed to find the location which was an old workshop for local college students. Funding was secured and in just a few months, the shed is almost ready for opening.

Bexhill Men's Shed Treasurer, Mark Legg said: "We came to realise there were many people in Bexhill who had been stuck indoors for coming up to three years and we realise those people need an opportunity to come out to occupy themselves to make new friends. Many have lost partners and lost the reason to get out and socialise. So this shed is going to help people do that."

"Our Chairman Derek, reached out on social media with an idea

that he would invite people to his home to share the facilities that he had, as he had loneliness in his life. Once I, and some other people had responded to that, we realised that we could formalise that idea. We then came to know about RVA who has helped us get some funding and put a bid together and find premises. This space, which was already set up for this kind of work with benches and tools, and other facilities means that we can hit the ground running."

Chairman Derek Merkl said: "Men's Shed started in Australia, where there was a need for retired people to get together and do things. Ladies have lots of opportunities with women's institutes, fitness classes, dance classes and knitting circles, but men don't do



any of those things. They tend to sit at home doing nothing."

"There are now 600 Men's Sheds all over the country. We have 150 in the progress of being set up at the moment all over the country to add to the 600 that exist, so it's going to be a well-known concept all over the country. Doctors see at least five people a day, who have nothing wrong with them, other than the fact that they're lonely, they become depressed, they become lethargic and they think they have problems when actually, all they need is to get out and meet people and do things."

He added: "The National Health Service recognise there is a need for occupation for men who are of retirement age and we've been talking to social prescribers, the people that work for the National

Health, do social prescribing and they're desperate to send people here. We've spoken to Help the Aged, we've talked to Bexhill Care in the Community, we've talked to all sorts of people and they all expressed interest in making it happen."

Funding was approved for the project from the Rother Voluntary Action (RVA) which is aimed at supporting local individuals, community groups, charities and social enterprises to fulfil their potential through central funding.

Alice Davey, Team Lead at RVA helped the creators of the Men's Shed to submit their proposal and even found the warehouse for the shed as it's located next to the RVA's offices in London Road.

She told Bexhill News: "It works on the concept of ABCD. So, Asset Based Community Development, which is about growing the community together, as opposed to an individual doing something for someone. So, the concept of the Men's Shed is absolutely an idea that is based on ABCD and absolutely perfect for the 'Making It Happen' project."

She added: "It's been an absolute pleasure working with the committee and the team behind Men's Shed. I'm really excited to see how it will look going forward and how it will grow - I can already see with the wider community, everyone wants to be on board."

Treasurer, Mark Legg concluded when asked what 'shedders' can expect when visiting, he said: "They can expect a welcome, they can expect a kettle that's always on, they can expect tea, coffee, milk and sugar, welcoming friendly people with skills that they want to share."

Anyone who would like to get involved and visit after the launch event on 17th January can email info@bexhillmensshed.org.uk, or just turn up any Tuesday and Wednesday between 10am and 4pm or call Mark on 07508 260524.





IT'S A TREE-MENDOUS EFFORT TO GIVE OUR TOWN MORE GREEN AND PLEASANT SPACES

A major initiative is in full swing to make Bexhill more “green” by planting trees throughout the town.

Trees for Cities is working in tandem with East Sussex County Council and Rother District Council to plant new urban trees across Bexhill over the course of the next year.

The new trees will be planted in parks and roadside verges around the area in a continuing effort to improve coastal towns across East Sussex.

An additional 225 trees will be planted on grass verges across the district over the course of the winter months and early spring.

In Bexhill itself, 26 trees of varying species will be planted. The new trees have been specially chosen to survive the seaside conditions and are aimed at improving the allure of Bexhill as a popular destination.

The initiative also aims to reinstate trees which have been lost for various reasons in recent years.

Planting began in October and the first phase of the project continues through to the end of this month, plus there is an opportunity for local residents to get involved and help with the planting.

The Urban Tree Challenge Fund has provided match-funding for the street tree project and only certain streets are eligible for new trees being installed.

As well as physical considerations such as available space, other factors which have been taken into account include the character of each area, accessibility for pedestrians and sight lines for drivers.



In addition, the positioning of streetlights and underground cables also has to be taken into consideration.

The species of trees being planted on Bexhill streets have been very carefully selected, taking into account the conditions prevalent in a coastal town.

First up, the field maple which is tolerant to both salt spray and coastal winds, which makes it ideal for Bexhill.

The resistant elm is also being introduced. It is perfect for coastal environments and 12 of them are being planted in Bexhill.

Then there is the common beech, which has no problem thriving in shady areas such as verges on our streets.

Finally, the London Plane, which is a popular choice for urban tree planting with four being introduced to the town, where they are expected to thrive.

Bexhill's canopy cover is at present 12.8 per cent, which is 2.2 per cent below the 15 per cent minimum cover for coastal locations and this needs to be rectified, hence the initiative.

The tree planting campaign, entitled Forgotten Places, Greening

Coastal Towns and Cities aims to increase tree canopy cover in areas like Bexhill so more people can benefit from urban trees.

Urban trees bring many benefits to the region's towns and cities by releasing oxygen, keeping the air clean and mitigating the effects already being felt by climate change.

They create shade, shelter and habitats for wildlife and create beautiful, tranquil spaces for everyone to enjoy and benefit from.

It has also been confirmed that there will be a community tree planting event taking place at Bexhill Down on January 18.

The planting plans were drawn up after consultation with local residents and groups, including Bexhill Friends of the Down.

With the help of volunteers, 38 trees will be planted on the Down.

The streets where trees either have or will be planted in Rother is as follows: Calgary Road (4); Chestnut Walk (5); College Road (12); Cranston Avenue (1); David Close grass area (7); Holmesdale Road (3); Jubilee Road (6); Kewhurst Avenue (17); Knebworth Road (10); Millwood Road (5); Mount Idol View (15); Old Manor Close (11); Paton Road (9); Pebsham Lane (28); Plemont Gardens (12); Primrose Hill (9); Ridgewood Gardens (7); Seabourne Road (24); St David's Avenue (2); St Lawrence Road (3); St Peter's Crescent (1); Summerhill Road (14); Sutherland Avenue (1); The Gorseway (2); Warwick Road (14); Willow Drive (6).

Volunteers can join the tree planting scheme by visiting the Trees for Cities website at treesforcities.org.



YOUR GUIDE TO BEING PLANT-BASED IN BEXHILL THIS VEGANUARY



BY SAM COLEMAN

Since its conception in 2014, 'Veganuary' has grown to be an incredibly popular movement, with many people giving up meat, dairy and other animal products for the 31 days of January, and possibly beyond.

There are lots of reasons to try the plant-based lifestyle, not just the ethical ones. Ditching meat and dairy is one of the quickest ways to reduce your carbon footprint because of the amount of land, water, grain and transport used in animal agriculture.

It can also be seen as a good way to shed the Christmas pounds. Although for vegans, the lifestyle is more than just a diet and with the explosion of vegan 'junk food' in recent years, you can certainly live a lifestyle as unhealthy as any other if you choose.

Veganism is more than just what you eat as well. From leather-free shoes to cruelty-free make up, the goal of the ethical vegan is to avoid directly contributing to the cruelty, harm or exploitation of animals. This includes less obvious things like honey, eggs, wool, insects and the animal products used in food production, like the fish stomachs sometimes used for filtration in winemaking.

It can be quite eye-opening to find out how often animal parts are used in ways we might not think about.

Once you might have only expected to find vegan food in the boojie backstreets of Brighton, but in recent years it has become so big that even here, in the quaint Edwardian streets of Bexhill, there are many vegans amongst us and as such, the local shops and eateries have responded to demand. Even the supermarkets now all have sizeable vegan ranges that makes plant-based shopping as simple as it could be.

Whether you're going fully vegan or just cutting down, here are some of the places in Bexhill to try eating vegan this Veganuary.

Lets start with coffee, cakes and cafes. Most local cafes now do alternative milks (I recommend oat milk) and some even have cakes and main dishes to try. In town, there are places like Strive Café, Cactus Moon, Cinnamon Café and Wickham Bistro, four firm favourites amongst local vegans. If you're on the go, Chucky's Baristro in the train station do a lovely vegan coffee and in Sidley, both the Corner Café and Earls Mercantile have vegan options, with Earls often hosting special vegan nights. All the bakeries in town usually have vegan options as well.

If you're after something more substantial, most of the local Italian restaurants offer vegan pizzas – including the big pizza delivery chains. Other restaurants like Burger Shack and pubs like the Rose and Crown, Conquerors March and Wetherspoons all offer vegan alternatives on their menu too. Even McDonalds now has the 'McPlant'.

Given veganism's origins trace back to cuisines from the African and Asian continents, you'll also find that many of the local Thai, Chinese, Indian, South African and Afro-fusion restaurants will



offer vegan options. Two personal favourites are Ghurka Kitchen, a Nepalese restaurant with clearly labelled vegan options, and Thai Brasserie in Little Common which does a vegan Pad Thai.

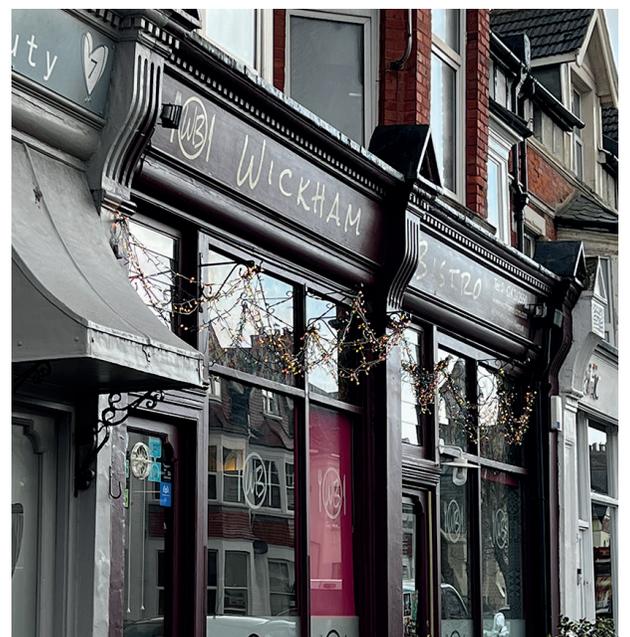
If you're cooking from home, all the big supermarkets do a vegan range – especially during Veganuary – so look out for 'plant-based' and 'free from' wherever you shop. You can also get lots of stuff online from vegan stores like 'GreenBay' and 'Vegan Supermarket'.

Ultimately, veganism isn't about being perfect. Every vegan makes mistakes now and then, and you will too at first. But vegan or not, maybe consider the ethical and environmental effects of what you consume and if there are alternatives out there that you try and you like the taste of, making a little switch here and there could go a long way.

If you are feeling overwhelmed with the change, there are some useful online tools to help you navigate the vegan world. Barnivore.com is a great place to check whether an alcoholic drink is vegan, happycow.net is like google maps for vegan food places and there are social media groups like 'Bexhill Vegans' on Facebook where you'll be able to pick up lots of tips and advice.

If you want to know more about 'veganuary', you can check out more handy online resources at www.veganuary.com

Photos: Top Right: The Wickham Bistro on Wickham Avenue. Below Right: Tasty Earls Mercantile's vegan breakfast. Below: Cactus Moon Coffee Shop on Western Road, Bexhill.



SHOW WAS A PERFECT COMBINATION OF MUSIC AND REVELATIONS



Left to right: Oliver Cherer, Miki Berenyi & Moose

BY KIM MAYO

Most musicians have plenty of good tales to tell, but Miki Berenyi stands head and shoulders above many of her contemporaries when it comes to transcribing their back stories into highly readable prose.

Miki arrived at the De La Warr Pavilion to promote her highly-acclaimed autobiography, *Fingers Crossed*, rated by many critics as the music book of the year, and quite rightly so.

Miki first sprung to prominence during the Britpop era as a founding member of the band Lush. However, the intimate evening wasn't just about the music as she has quite a story to tell.

Hungary and settled in the UK where he established himself as a sports journalist.

One of his assignments was to cover the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, where he met Yasuko, a glamorous model and actress. They fell in love, got married and established themselves in the whirl of London's social scene.

Was it a union made in heaven? No is the short answer despite the arrival of little Miki.

Chain-smoking Ivan was an inveterate womaniser who saw himself as a modern day Casanova and as time wore on it was clear that his union with Yasuko was doomed to failure.

First up though Miki, accompanied by Oliver Cherer and the wonderfully monikered Moose, performed a swift blast through some old Lush favourites including *Covert*, *For Love*, *Scarlet* and *Kiss Chase* before she settled down in the De La Warr foyer for an informal interview with James Endeacott, our host for the evening.

She certainly makes for a charming interviewee, fielding James's questions expertly and not afraid to elaborate on some of the darker periods in her life.

Her upbringing in London was anything but conventional.

Miki's father, Ivan, had fled Hungary and settled in the UK where he established himself as a sports journalist.

Moving between two households, her mum embarked on a new relationship while her dad used his dark good looks to maximum effect by seducing as many women as was possible.

To make matters worse Miki, a shy and introverted child, also had to deal with Ivan's mother who subjected her to terrible verbal and physical abuse.

However, they say what doesn't break you makes you stronger and that has certainly proved to be the case for Miki. In many ways music became her saviour and one imagines continues to be so.

Having formed in 1987, Lush were drawing to a close as a band when Britpop was at its height and the Oasis versus Blur "battle" was hyped to the max and dominating the tabloid front pages.

On the one hand there were numerous pictures of a glowering Liam Gallagher, on the other Damon Albarn's pretty boy looks vying for similar attention.

It was a weird time, the mid-Nineties, but Lush had still made their mark, albeit in a far more understated way.

Aside from its brutal honesty, what makes *Fingers Crossed* so special amid the sea of dross normally found at this time of year in bookshops, mainly consisting of ghost-written biographies about Z-list Lover Islanders and so-called "social influencers" is its searing honesty.

To paraphrase Frank Sinatra... "Regrets, she may have a few" but this beautifully-written account of an extraordinary life certainly won't be one of them.

Never mind music autobiography of the year; this is one of the autobiographies of the year. Yes, it is that good and a read to be treasured.

There are extremely limited signed copies of *Fingers Crossed* available from Music's Not Dead at the De La Warr.

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IS BEXHILL READY FOR 2023?



New Year is a time for reflection. A pause when we can look back at the past twelve months and consider how we can best move forwards in the upcoming year.

Bexhill Chamber welcomes 2023 with new energy and commitment to our community. It is hard to believe that a year ago Bexhill had absolutely no high-speed fibre connectivity. Now, thanks to our Chamber digital task force, Bexhill has millions of pounds of investment in fibre infrastructure from multiple companies all vying for position. It is with real pride that we say that it's thanks to Chamber members that Bexhill is benefitting from the highest density and most competitive fibre networks in the area.

Our success with fibre is indicative of how Bexhill Chamber members are leading on business growth and job creation across many sectors.

Especially as the challenges of the economic crisis combined with tax increases across all four tiers of Government locally seem to be actively deterring rather than supporting investment.

We face sewage washing up on our beaches, dysfunctional planning policies, no substantial Government funding, the cancellation of hotel and leisure developments, rapid housing growth with no infrastructure and leading employers haemorrhaging employees.

However, Bexhill remains resilient and we are fighting back to make 2023 the year we finally win the battle for Bexhill and halt the rapid decline into becoming yet another derelict coastal ghost town.

Three key factors appear to be driving growth among our members other than their own hard work and entrepreneurial guts. The Relais Cooden Beach under Grace Leo has already changed the hospitality landscape and generated an international profile.

High-speed fibre availability is now an essential utility for



businesses that acts as a lure to the area. The war in Ukraine is creating demand for our hidden regional defence industry that underpins consumer buoyancy. Our Chamber's provably successful responsive approach is now attracting inquiries from high-level investors in sports, leisure and hospitality who recognise the potential of Bexhill to become a beacon of coastal regeneration success.

The impact of this can already be seen on our high street with the recent successful opening of a new 1066 Bakery cafe, retail investments like Maybugs and substantial local investment in the Bexhill Lounge bar on Devonshire Road. Tellingly, the expansion of Maltbys estate agents, who specialise in both commercial and

residential markets, is also a clear indicator of vibrant underlying economic activity.

But, we still face challenges. The empty bank sites in our town will need local authorities to embrace rather than reject the requirements of national level developers if they are not to become run down eyesores. We need visionary high quality "shovel ready" halo capital projects that will attract Government funding.

We need a commitment from politicians to put investment in jobs and growth above waving political statements around as we approach the local elections in May. Without a doubt, Bexhill Chamber is ready for 2023 – but is Bexhill?

Howard Martin - President.

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RECOGNITION AT VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Rother Voluntary Action closed the year with its annual event last month.

The RVA Celebration of Volunteering & AGM was a great success. Once again, they were able to honour the amazing work

of local community volunteers as the AGM included the annual RVA Volunteer Awards Ceremony.

Presentations were made by the High Sheriff of East Sussex, Mrs Jane King.



Beverley Combes from Strandliners



Ruth Fraiss and Valeriya Dvoveyk from Bexhill Ukraine Hub



Stephen Lucas from Heart of Sidley



Ticehurst Youth Group



Joanna Birdsey from Burwash Ukraine Hub



Joanna from Owlets



Nick Thorpe - Rye Bay U10



Heart of Sidley



Homecall Volunteers Visitors



Jerry Steeples from Rother Seniors



Cliff Willard from Friends of Combe Valley



Daniel Randall-Nason from Mind Charity Shop



Footbridge Project



Caroline Aherne from Bexhill Dementia Action Alliance



Bexhill Skate Park Volunteers



Ron Wood from De La Warr Volunteer Team

BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL UPDATE



NEW COUNCILLOR!

The Town Council is pleased to welcome Jimmy Stanger as the new representative for Pebsham Ward. Jimmy was voted by members as the council's preferred candidate during a public co-option item at the November Full Council meeting. Welcome Jimmy! If you

would like to contact any of the councillors, please visit our website for more details www.bexhilltowncouncil.gov.uk

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES UPDATE

At the time of reading this, the Town Council may have come to a decision about the transfer of maintenance of the public toilets in Bexhill from Rother District Council. The Asset Transfer Committee are meeting on 4th January 2023 to review their findings and make a recommendation to Full Council on 11th January 2023. The town council has been concerned about the potential loss of these facilities due to budget constraints on Rother District Council. If the decision is taken for the Town Council to manage Bexhill's 14 WC sites, a strategic refurbishment plan will be agreed at a future meeting.

NEW PREMISES UPDATE



You may have noticed the new signage installation is underway at our new premises, 35 Western Road. We are finalising the health and safety plans and expect to be open to the public very soon. We will be opening a customer service desk a few days per week to start with, where residents can visit and let us know what we can do to help. We will advertise future councillor 'drop-in' sessions and any other useful activities on our website and social media pages. Just search for 'Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council'

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The council has been busy pulling together the strategic plans for the next five years. The Climate and Nature Action Plan has been adopted by full council, and the overarching five-year strategic plan is due for consideration in January. Our five-year strategy sets out our vision and how we will make

Bexhill a better place to live, work and visit.

We will work on behalf of our residents and businesses to improve economic development, well-being, and our natural environment.

The council's vision is to be a Town Council that:

- demonstrates ambition, aspiration, and imagination
- gives Bexhill a clear and unique identity as a town
- acts as a voice for Bexhill, both locally and in the wider community
- is an advocate for residents in matters of public interest
- works in partnership with the community
- celebrates, supports and facilitates all aspects of Bexhill life
- enhances and empowers the people

We know how important it is to have a positive impact on the community.

Year one has been mainly us getting all the foundations in place that a new Town Council needs to run effectively and lawfully. Year 2 and onwards will be all about improving the appearance of the town, tackling accessibility issues, and looking at how we can make roads and pavements safer for everyone.

JANUARY MEETINGS

Wednesday 4th January Asset Transfer Committee

Wednesday 11th January Planning Committee and Full Council. Check our website for venues and times.

GRANT FUNDING

The town council is pleased to have concluded its second round of grant funding for this financial year. Projects that we have been able to contribute to include:

£500 towards expanding the Bexhill Breathers breathing exercise sessions to Little Common, £500 to cover costs of youth kit and training equipment at Bexhill United Ladies Football Club, £1000 towards the next Bexhill After Dark event arranged by 18 Hours, £500 for 1066 Kids to entertain youngsters at the Pebsham Community Centre in February half term, £500 for Community Supporters to expand the women's mental health group to Sidley, £500 for Bexhill and Rother Homeless Unity Group (HUG) to help their members with the costs of fuel bills and associated hardship issues £1000 towards a new mini bus for the Golden Marigold Club.



WARM SPACES TO GO IN BEXHILL

Whilst we are keen to open our premises to the public we are not quite equipped to offer a warm space until some further development work is done inside. In the meantime, would like to draw residents' attention to the warm spaces that are available in Bexhill

BEULAH BAPTIST CHURCH- BUCKHURST ROAD, BEXHILL

Thursdays 4pm- 6.30pm opens on 5th January 2023
St John's Centre -Victoria Hall, Victoria Road Bexhill
Cafe Church Sunday morning 10.30am and Wednesday morning at 10.30am. If you would like to know more, please phone 07780 008135

THE PELHAM- HOLLIERS HILL, BEXHILL

Monday to Friday 9.30am- 2.30pm- Open from 4th January 2023

FREEDOM CHURCH- CLAREMONT ROAD SIDLEY

The Market Place Café every Tuesday 10am -12pm.

ST MARK'S CHURCH- GREEN LANE, LITTLE COMMON

The Arc Coffee lounge for coffee and a chat on Tuesday and Thursday from 10am-12pm

LIVING WORLD CHURCH- HOMESDALE ROAD, BEXHILL

Provide warm clothing and food parcels at the Farmer's Market in town on a Friday once a month. Next stall is on the Friday 6th January.

If you are in need of support during these difficult times, please contact the Citizen's Advice Bureau for assistance on 01424 869356.

A NEW YEAR, A FOND LOOK BACK TO 2022

**BY CLLR DOUG OLIVER,
LEADER OF ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL**



And, just like that, it's over for another year. I hope everyone enjoyed a happy and healthy Christmas and spent some quality time with family and friends.

As we head towards a new year, I find myself thinking back to 2022 - the challenges we have faced and the achievements we have been able to celebrate over the past 12 months.

This year has seen the launch of our Community Lottery, which has raised almost £20,000 of vital funds for local good causes, our wonderful Egerton Park in Bexhill has won the Green Flag Award for the 10th year in a row and, in the spring, we celebrated the official opening of the amazing Bexhill BMX and Skate Park.

The park is a welcome addition to Sidley Recreation Ground and has already proved extremely popular with people of all ages and abilities.

This could not have been achieved without the hard work of our officers and local councillors and the support from the Heart of Sidley, Sport England and British Cycling, as well as BMX Club and others, including Hastings Round Table and the Safer Rother Partnership.

It really shows how much we can achieve when we work together.

As a local authority, our funding is limited and there is

always so much more that we want to do to help our district, residents and businesses thrive.

Working in partnership is one way we can achieve more, and our work with Beam - an award-winning social enterprise, to help homeless people rebuild their lives is a good example of this.

In November we announced that we had joined forces with the crowdfunding platform to help people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to find stable employment, accommodation, and financial security.

This is on top of the work we are already doing to tackle homelessness including supporting residents at risk of homelessness to stay in their accommodation through the Discretionary Housing Benefit. We have been able to help 204 residents in the past year alone, which is amazing.

Our district is a beautiful place to live and work, with an outstanding coastline, breath-taking countryside and lots of wonderful towns and villages in between, and we continue to do everything we can do to protect and improve it.

I'd like to pay tribute to the hard work and determination of our councillors and officers this year, who have worked tirelessly to look after our district, ensure residents can access the vital services and that help is available to those most in need.

In May we go to the polls to elect our representatives for the next four years and I would encourage anyone who cares about their communities and the district to consider putting themselves forward.



I look forward to hearing fresh ideas about how we can continue to support Rother, it's economy and its residents.

And that just leaves me to wish you all a healthy and prosperous 2023 and hope that we can all work together to make next year an even bigger success. Happy New Year.

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M WAREHOUSE TO LET



**London Road,
Bexhill on Sea** **£1,375 PCM**

- Roller shutter door
- Industrial unit
- Seperate double garage
- Two offices
- Gated off-road parking
- Kitchen & toilet facilities



**Victoria Road,
Bexhill on Sea** **£600 PCM**

- Close to town centre
- Newly decorated
- Excellent transport links
- Space & power for several workstations
- Kitchen
- Shower & toilet facilities

M CAFE/RETAIL TO LET



**Cooden Sea Road,
Little Common** **£900 PCM**

- Popular village location
- Prominent position
- Versatile space
- 24 Cover (plus outdoor seating)
- Kitchen with extractor fitted
- Car park at rear



**Parkhurst Road,
Bexhill on Sea** **£10,000 PA**

- Town centre location
- Spacious front office
- Fully fitted kitchen
- Modern bathroom facilities
- Large storage room
- Two private offices

M B&B FOR SALE



**Albany Road,
Bexhill on Sea** **£550,000**

- Freehold
- Business opportunity
- 5x Guest rooms
- Private GF Accommodation & Garden
- Close to Seafront & De La Warr
- Town Centre location



**Bexhill Road,
St Leonards on Sea** **£850 PCM**

- Ground floor flat
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COODEN DRIVE, BEXHILL-ON-SEA - £700,000

As you drive West along Cooden Drive you will find this lovely five-bedroom detached house which is set back from the road, with a tandem garage and gardens. Inside this spacious home there are two reception rooms, a large conservatory, two bathrooms (1 en-Suite), Good sized kitchen and lots of character that give this property its homely feeling.



GRANGE ROAD, BEXHILL-ON-SEA - £575,000

Nestled in a small close of interesting properties is Cloverlea a three bedroom detached bungalow with a double garage and an excellent Pine chalet workshop and mower room. This lovely property has had a new kitchen, new bathroom and a new boiler and fitted plantation blinds to the windows on the front of the property. The hub of the bungalow is the large lounge/ dining room and the excellent kitchen fitted with Neff cooking appliances.



OCKLYNGE CLOSE, BEXHILL-ON-SEA - £550,000

This home, located in a cul-de-sac, is double glazed throughout, has gas central heating, modern kitchen, modern bathroom, large conservatory, 2 spacious double bedrooms and comes with a single garage, and good size garden to the rear.



LITTLE COMMON ROAD, BEXHILL - £475,000

A "Larkin" built home, inside you have a lounge and separate dining room, and the kitchen/breakfast room on the ground floor, then upstairs, you have 3 bedrooms, and the family shower room. The home is double glazed and comes with gardens to the front and rear.



TOWER ROAD, HASTINGS - £139,950

Are you looking for something in Bohemia then we have this one-bedroom flat with garden to offer you. It's chain free and could suit a first-time buyer or an investor. It's well positioned for the shops in nearby in Hastings Town Centre.

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ALBANY ROAD, BEXHILL-ON-SEA - £795.00 PCM

This spacious 2-bedroom first floor flat that is conveniently situated close to Bexhill town centre, train station and seafront promenade is now available. This really is a fantastic opportunity to rent a property in a prime location with all local amenities within walking distance.



DALMORE COURT - £1,100.00 PCM

If you are looking for a home that has the convenience of being right in the town, has a lift service and has been recently modernised and decorated, then this could well be the home for you.

**WISHING EVERYONE
A VERY HAPPY
NEW YEAR**

2023

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GROVE COURT, BEXHILL-ON-SEA - £900.00 PCM

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WARTLING DRIVE, BEXHILL - £1,300.00 PCM

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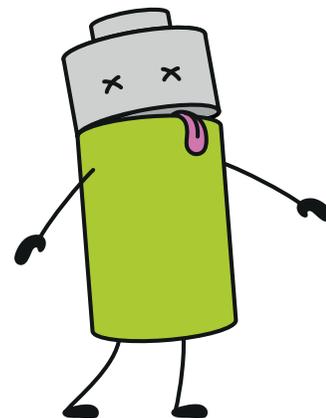
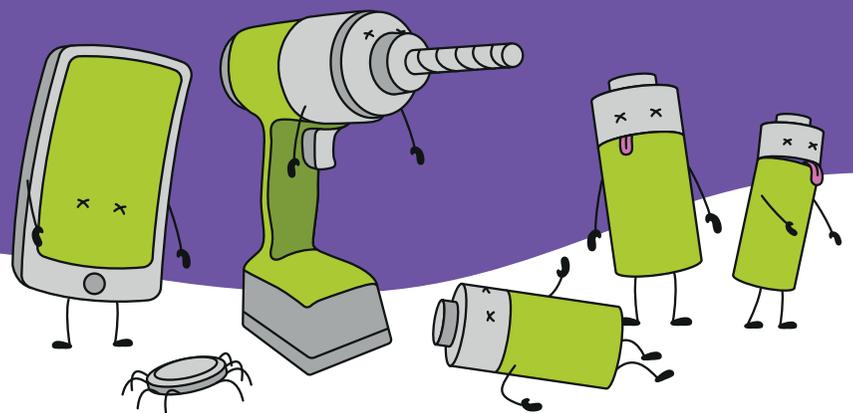
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FIRST-TIME BUYERS REDUCE ENERGY USE & GOING OUT FOR DEPOSIT



A new study from the UK's biggest property website Rightmove reveals what aspiring first-time buyers are most likely to be cutting back on, to be able to continue saving for their deposit.

Despite affordability concerns, would-be first-time buyers are making lifestyle changes to be able to save more of their income towards a deposit on a first home.

Reducing spending on going out (72%), using less gas and electricity at home (55%), spending less on holidays (49%), cutting the amount they spend on a food shop (48%) and cancelling subscription services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime (35%) are the most common ways first-time buyers are cutting back to save

more towards a deposit.

Further emphasising the importance of saving as much as possible, only 16% of aspiring first-time buyers said all or part of their deposit would be raised by getting a loan or a gift from friends and family.

The study found that on average, it is taking a first-time buyer five years to save up their deposit. Meanwhile, the average monthly mortgage payment for a new first-time buyer taking out a two-year fixed mortgage at 90% Loan-to-Value (LTV) is now £1,324, 41% higher than the average monthly rental payment of £940 following mortgage interest rate rises.

The average monthly mortgage payment for new first-time buyers taking out a 75% LTV mortgage is £1,082, which is 15% higher than the equivalent average monthly rental payment, highlighting the difference in monthly payments for those that can afford to save up a bigger deposit.

The first-time buyer study also looked at what is most important to first-time buyers when purchasing their first home. A three-bedroom semi-detached house is the most popular property type that first-time buyers are hoping to buy outside of London, while London first-time buyers have their sights set on a two-bedroom flat.

Though first-time buyers and more experienced buyers value similar features in a home, first-time buyers placed more emphasis on energy costs, a spare room and space to work from home. Experienced buyers prioritised a garden more than first-time buyers, as well as a parking space and garage.

Demand in the first-time buyer sector is down 26% compared to the frenetic market of last year. However, this also means that despite the many economic challenges, first-time buyer demand is still three-quarters of last year's level in what was an exceptional market.

First-time buyer demand is still 4% higher than 2019, before two and a half years of a market frenzy.

Tim Bannister, Rightmove's property expert comments: "The sudden nature of mortgage interest rate increases has meant that first-time buyers have had to very quickly reassess their position. For example, those who already had a mortgage offer in place are trying to rush through their purchase to keep their lower rate. Many of those who had not yet secured an offer and found that the monthly repayments they would pay on a mortgage were a lot more expensive than planned, either had to budget for the extra costs, look for a cheaper property and borrow less, or pause their plans altogether.

"Despite the many significant challenges facing first-time buyers at the moment, the fact that demand in the sector is still above the last normal market of 2019 shows that there are many motivated first-time buyers right now who are still determined to get onto the ladder. For those without their deposit saved yet, the results of our first-time buyer study indicate that buying a first home remains very important to people. They are not being put off saving due to the current economic climate, and instead are making decisions in order to save as much as they can towards a deposit."

WHY THE HIGHEST OFFER FOR YOUR AREA HOME ISN'T ALWAYS THE BEST

BY PATRICK STAPLETON - REDWELL ESTATES

So you're selling your home. You're looking for the highest price and crossing your fingers for a smooth sale. But is the greatest offer always the best choice?

Well, we wouldn't be writing this if the answer was yes. Unfortunately, the biggest offer won't always be the best and there are many reasons why.

It's not about selling your home for less than it's worth, but it is about looking at the bigger picture. Is the buyer with the highest offer ready to buy? Can they move quickly enough to meet your timescale?

Remember, the highest offer means absolutely nothing if the sale falls through.

In this quick read, we look at reasons why the highest offer isn't always the best, and why you should analyse all offers before making a decision.

Is the offer subject to mortgage funding?

Your highest bidder might be keen, but do they have the money to buy your property? If they don't yet have their mortgage sorted out, you might be in for a nasty shock. Possible scenarios include no mortgage offer at all, not qualifying for the loan amount they need, having their mortgage application rejected or down valuing your property.

Where does that leave you? Well, nowhere. By chasing the biggest number, you may have overlooked someone with a mortgage in principle ready to get the sale going. Worse still, you may have had a lower offer from a cash buyer (the property equivalent of a pink unicorn) which would have made the whole sales process faster.

Is the offer subject to sale?

This basically means the buyer won't buy your home until they sell their own. Welcome to the dreaded property chain. The buyer might be offering you the highest price, but it means nothing if they can't sell their own property.

Timing

There are lots of issues when it comes to timing. For example: maybe the buyer is in such a hurry to move that you can't meet their time expectations, perhaps their mortgage in principle is coming to an end and they need to speed things up. Or, what if you've found your dream property but the buyer wants to take things slowly, putting you at risk of losing your next home?

How to analyse offers

Quite simply, you need to communicate with your agent. They'll have an outline of each buyer's situation so you can make an informed decision rather than being swayed by £ signs.

Ask your agent questions such as: Are they a first-time buyer? Are they in a chain? Are they a cash buyer? Does the buyer have any contingencies?

Understanding who your buyer is and how fast/slow they can move forward is invaluable and no one will know more than your selling agent.

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