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ISSUE 298

OCTOBER 2024 FREE EVERY MONTH

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Picture: John Hopkins

## Magic of Mela!

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# Editor's Comment



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**IT would appear that some people who use social media or web forums as an outlet don't understand the power of positivity, preferring to put a negative spin at every opportunity.**

Having been at the forefront of online news for the past 25 years, I've been on the receiving end of a fair bit of criticism when promoting our town in a positive light.

Our guest columnist John Laverick from Warrington & Co touches on a similar issue this month on Page 7.

It is easy to criticise and we see it all the time in politics. When the Tories last came into power 14 years ago they spent their first years in power blaming the outgoing Labour Government for the financial crisis and now we have gone full-circle and seeing exactly the same blame game in reverse.

But even away from politics members of the public love to get on their soap boxes and have a rant, especially when it involves promoting the many positives of our town.

Whether it be the award-winning Warrington Market, the local bus company and its new electric fleet or even a local chip shop achieving incredible viewing figures on Tik Tok, there is always someone from the nasty brigade willing to have a go from their keyboard.

I'm all for holding people to account for what goes on in our town, but there are right ways and wrong ways to do it. Being

outright insulting, nasty and on some occasions, racist is just not to be tolerated.

We now have a zero-tolerance policy on this kind of behaviour and I would hope other media would also adopt a similar stance.

Anyone over-stepping the bounds of decency is now automatically blocked from seeing our free news source on social media.

Meanwhile here at Warrington Worldwide, as we have been doing for the past 25 years, we will continue to provide a free balanced news service to the best of our ability and promoting our town in a positive light at every opportunity.

If you don't like it, don't read it and if you can't comment in a civilised way you will simply lose the ability to benefit from our free news service.

In the meantime, you can now use the QR code on this page to take you directly to our website which will endeavour to give you the local news free of charge, to the best of our ability, reporting on the good, the bad and sometimes ugly in a balanced way as possible.

Meanwhile congratulations to Deputy Mayor Cllr Mo Hussain and the team from Warrington Mela for another outstanding multi-cultural event.

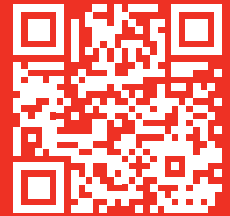
Battling against the elements, the event still managed to pull in large crowds who enjoyed a wide variety of entertainment.

This is an excellent event, which is one of many activities now taking place in and around the town centre on an annual basis.

Our town's Cultural Quarter is certainly something to be proud of and there is now plenty to attract visitors, with diverse restaurants and drinking establishments, alongside the Parr Hall, which continues to provide wide-ranging entertainment.

**Deadline for the November issue is October 15**

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# Grey skies and rain fail to dampen spirits at Warrington Mela

**A VIBRANT pink elephant brought colour to Warrington town centre at the annual Mela as relentless grey clouds and showers failed to spoil the enthusiasm of crowds who flocked there.**

Performers were delighted by drummers and street theatre outside and stalls offering food of Asian heritage.

Mela is traditionally a South Asian Festival but this year the scope was extended to include communities from Eastern Europe, for example.

It's the 12th year that the popular festival has been running in Warrington and this year's events were held at the Parr Hall and Palmyra Square, in the heart of the Cultural Quarter, with associated activities in Time Square too.

The event was funded by a £22,376 grant from Arts Council England to support it.

Funding was also boosted from Warrington Borough Council's

Community Investment Fund, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and the county Police and Crime Commissioner, Dan Price.

Warrington Worldwide headed to Bank Park, where performers on podia dressed in winged outfits and dancers from Eastern Europe in white, green and red traditional costumes performing in the Parr Hall.

An elaborate dance performance inside the theatre involved a person in a large pink elephant costume with a dancer proved a big hit.

Brightly coloured handkerchiefs were handed out to the audience to wave and participate.

Families huddled beneath umbrellas watching the performers as street artists blew giant bubbles

By Helen Bennicke

into the air, chased by small children, some of whom had their faces painted.

There were food stalls and dancers of African heritage in beautiful gold-trimmed costumes.

Suddenly a large puppet donkey on a truck emerged into Palmyra Square to delight the crowds with a mysterious performance involving

a golden butterfly and other characters.

The atmosphere among the crowds was exceptionally warm and good-natured and it made me proud of Warrington.

It's an inclusive place which makes everyone feel welcome and long should it continue.



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# United Utilities widen range of roles for graduates and apprentices

**WARRINGTON-based water company, United Utilities has widened the range of roles it's offering graduates and apprentices as it welcomes its latest cohort.**

In September, 125 new starters joined the company to take up roles ranging from scientist, project controller and data analyst to mechanical and electrical engineer, customer service advisor and apprentice assistant town planner – a new role introduced this year. More new graduate roles are planned for the 2025 intake.

This year's group – made up of 48 graduates and 77 apprentices – are guaranteed permanent employment at the company when they finish their schemes.

Apprentices at United Utilities earn while they learn, studying Apprenticeship Standards which are endorsed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and the Department for Education, while also gaining hands-on experience. Apprenticeship schemes vary from 18 months to six years for degree apprenticeships in subjects such as engineering, quantity surveying, town planning, science and labs and run in conjunction with universities including MMU, Liverpool John Moore's, Sheffield Hallam, Salford and Harper Adams.

Apprentice precision maintenance engineer, 29-year-old Jack Cleworth said: "I'm excited to get hands-on experience and get to know the

people I'll be working with in my new role."

The graduate scheme lasts for three years and graduates take part in a tailored programme to provide them with the business and technical knowledge required to become future leaders. This includes first-class training and support alongside an in-depth understanding of their chosen area and the chance to make a tangible contribution to live projects that are benefiting the entire region.

Graduate project manager, Oluwaseun Ayegbusi, 23, added: "I'm looking forward to learning new things and moving forward in my career at United Utilities!"

United Utilities' senior education lead, Jacqueline Kawczak said: "It's vital for our business that we have a pipeline of talent supporting the skills growth required to deliver our five-year business plan.

"This year, we've introduced a new level 7 master's degree in Town Planning and increased our intake of graduates on our engineering schemes in each of our key business areas bio, waste and water.

"We're broadening the range of graduate and apprenticeship schemes we now offer and will continue to do so for next year's intake."

United Utilities currently has around 300 apprentices and graduates training with the company. Applications for next year's graduate positions will open later this month and apprenticeship positions will open in January. Details on all the roles, as well as other career opportunities at United Utilities, will be available at: [www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/careers/](http://www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/careers/)



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# Local firm celebrating 25 years gives back to local communities

**Warrington based X-Press Legal Services is marking its 25th anniversary by donating £25,000 to various charities, organisations and projects across the UK.**

Lynne Lister, Managing Director of X-Press Legal Services – the largest independent provider of property searches and reports for conveyancers – wanted the fund to support as many charities and good causes in as many areas as possible and decided that the best way was through their franchise network of 28 locally owned offices.

Each of their owners absolutely loved the idea and there have already been various donations, as well as involvement in a number

of local projects such as musical instruments for a primary school, kit for a youth football team, food for a pet sanctuary and a donation to a cancer charity, with much more to come.

Lynne Lister explained, "We are delighted to be celebrating 25 years of X-Press Legal Services and have enjoyed every minute. We have always given to charities and organisations, but this year as part of celebrating our quarter-century, we were thinking big. Our £25,000 charity campaign is our opportunity to help even more causes across the UK."

"Our franchisees have really got behind the campaign in their local areas. With some doing extra fundraising activities, as well as supporting various local projects and they have been giving throughout the year. We can't wait to see what our final figure is at the end of the year."

Franchising has been a key factor in the growth of the X-Press Group, providing opportunities for franchisees to build successful businesses. Having the local knowledge and the quality of service

really sets the business apart. As they look back on 25 extraordinary years, they are also excited about the future and the innovative ideas they have for their next 25 years.

X-Press Legal Services continues to set the benchmark for quality, reliability, and expertise and is proud of its commitment to building long standing relationships with its

clients and the wider community. Its team provides a wraparound service including residential & commercial searches, pre & post completion services, cyber security, and compliance products.

To find out more about X-Press Legal Services, please visit <https://xpresslegal.co.uk>. Or call 01925 393333



Lynne Lister



## Congratulations Warrington Worldwide

25 years as part of the local community, sharing news, updates and information.

X-Press Legal Services, also celebrating 25 years in business, is the largest independent property search network across England & Wales and a trusted, friendly partner to legal practices since 1998. We have an in-depth knowledge of the local area and we provide a wrap-around service including residential & commercial searches, pre & post completion services, cyber security, compliance products and much more.



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# Thank you for making Warrington a better place

by John Laverick - Warrington & Co

I very often in this column, amidst the other ramblings, talk about some of the larger and headline grabbing projects that we undertake. The big stuff - Time Square and Bank Quay Gateway and Bus Depots and things like that. And that is all well and good but to be honest the majority of what the Council and many other organisations in Warrington do (irrespective of Warrington & Co) goes by with very little fanfare or acknowledgement.

It seems that people, some people that is, take delight in pointing out failure as a chance to appease

whatever demons they think exist in the world. But generally, the failings are few and far between

## Wellbeing company Raiys takes another leap forward



WARRINGTON-based wellbeing company Raiys has taken another leap forward for its growth strategy with the acquisition of content streaming service Ashia.

The deal enables Raiys, which currently provides online and in-person support to over 750,000 employees in companies and organisations across the UK, to further enhance its wellbeing content, technology platform and management intelligence capabilities.

Raiys supports clients with health and wellbeing services such as a dedicated app, wellbeing audits, behavioural change programmes, health screening, workshops, neurodiversity assessments, mental health training, one-to-one coaching and 24/7 access to specialist counselling.

Onsite support is provided by specialist clinicians including doctors, nurses, health and fitness experts, counsellors and nutritionists.

The company's digital and face-to-face services are designed to deliver improved health and performance and increase employee engagement, and to build resilience and emotional strength to help people face stress and life challenges.

The Ashia service is Raiys' second acquisition following its swoop in early 2023 for The Healthy Employee, which works with employers to improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of their people through targeted programmes, including workshops, webinars and roadshows.

and represent a small element of what is achieved and successful. We all make mistakes and we all have successes, we should be held to account for both, rather than the subject of anger by people who don't really ever take time to think about who may be on the receiving end of their ire. There is always someone on the end of what they say, they may not realise that, but nothing happens without a person making it happen. So perhaps a gentle thought before salving their own conscience, for the person on the end of criticism would be a better way to go.

The Council and many other organisations within Warrington do many things that go unnoticed and unrewarded but are remarkable for the impact on individuals; adults, children, people who need temporary accommodation, people who just need a bit of help, people who just enjoy an event in the town centre of Victoria park or wherever. These are not things that win awards or get headlines but are incredibly valuable in making Warrington a better place to live

I was going to start trying to list



John Laverick  
01925 442 243

[www.warringtonandco.com](http://www.warringtonandco.com)

examples of these but to be honest I would probably fill several pages in this magazine with the people and organisations that are trying to make Warrington a better place to live. The amount of effort, paid and unpaid that goes into making Warrington a good place to live with good social cohesion is quite remarkable.

So, what's my point. I don't think I really have one other than to say thank you to all of those people who are just trying to do the right things, to make Warrington better and help make the big stuff, actually work. Because without you the 'big stuff' doesn't work.

So I think nice and simple this month - thank you (you know who you are).



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# Urgent action and difficult budget decisions

By Helen Bennicke

**DEBT hit Warrington Borough Council could be facing a £29 million overspend by the end of the financial year, devastating forecasts reveal.**

The authority's quarter one budget monitoring projection was thrashed out as the September Cabinet meeting heard it could be facing a huge projected overspend by the end of the financial year.

Cabinet minister for corporate finance, Cllr Denis Matthews (right) said in February 2024 when the council approved the £194.29m budget it had to make huge savings by the financial year end in March 2025.

And the council had been required to achieve millions of pounds of savings already in its budget set against a background of increasing social care demand.

"This funding pressure with increasing demand is the same for councils across the country," he said. "The Local Government Association has multiple cases of pressure on councils, costing billions of extra funding."

He said rising inflation, increased energy costs and demand on social services had put many councils "on the brink of section 114 notices."

This means councils are effectively bankrupt.

Cllr Matthews said the BBC had found that the average deficit for councils in 2025/6 was likely to be £33m.

Warrington Borough Council had taken measures to address

"historical robust" financial pressure and "mitigate overspending very successfully in the past", he added.

He said they had "identified where savings can be achieved" with "rigorous financial management."

In total, the forecasted overspend is £28.985m, Cllr Matthews said.

Last year, the overspend was £12.6m. He said the position was reflective of the "national issues with adult and children's social care and homelessness. To be crystal clear, the council financial programme is not contributing to the position and it had helped manage the pressure.

"The £23m profit (from the council's investments) had helped support essential services and without that our financial position would have been significantly worse."

He said "This has not yet happened and it is an early estimate of our current trajectory."

Cllr Matthews said it was "an early warning of issues on the horizon that need to be addressed."

He pointed out that if the council had opted to dip into its reserves to plug the gap "it would leave £54.515m which would greatly weaken the council's resilience."

He admitted "urgent action is now required to address the overspend" and "clearly difficult budget decisions" will be made."

In order to address the issues, a

monthly budget meeting will be held with Cabinet members and senior leadership at the authority.

The financial position will be reviewed "on a weekly basis", he added.

Among measures will be a "deep dive" to review costs. A programme of redundancies will be offered across the authority in collaboration with trade unions.

"A longer-term consultation will be required with a transformation programme in order to deliver effective services." He explained by acting in a "clear and transparent way" they can reassure residents who rely on essential services.

He went on to outline how national finances were left in a "shocking position by 14 years of Tory mismanagement."

He called for long term reform so councils can build resilience and manage the pressure on local government.

Labour leader Cllr Hans Mundry emphasised the overspend is a forecast. "It is through 14 years of neglect that puts us in this situation," he said, referring to the outgoing Tory government. "We need to take action now to make sure the deficit doesn't become a reality," he added.

He criticised former Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, for failing to deliver on promises he made in 2019 on social care.

Cllr Hitesh Patel said: "We don't come in as councillors to cut services."

He admitted previous concerns about borrowing "shedloads of



money" because without the income from the investment, the authority would "have to do something much more drastic."

He said Warrington has one of the lowest council tax rates in the region.

Cllr Mundry said the investments had generated "over £100m for the people of Warrington."

In January 2024, independent research from Grant Thornton suggested 40% of councils could face "financial failure" over the next five years. The Local Government Association also stated their belief that due to a funding gap of £6.2 billion, one in five authorities may need to issue a section 114 notice – effectively declaring themselves "bankrupt" – this financial year or next due to a lack of funding.

Equally, out of the 20 councils in the region, Warrington is the second most poorly funded place per home, receiving £360 per home, compared to the regional average of £829 per home.



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## Chambers Fletcher Solicitors

# Divorce Column

By Peter Wilkinson  
Divorce Lawyer at Chambers Fletcher Solicitors

### Understanding Spousal Maintenance

Spousal maintenance is a form of financial provision made by one spouse or former spouse to the other as part of divorce. It is separate from and therefore can be in addition to child maintenance / support. It is typically paid every month and may be payable for a set length of time or for 'joint lives', i.e. until one party dies.

Most divorcing couples prefer to have a clean break and so without any future financial commitments to the other, and the court is obliged to consider a clean break in every case, but sometimes the particular circumstances of a case are such that either a clean break is not suitable or just not achievable.

There are a number of reported cases which have shaped the principles governing spousal maintenance but unlike child support there is no fixed formula to follow. Instead, the court has a wide discretion and will consider a number of factors such as income and earning capacity, financial needs and obligations, standard of living, ages and length of marriage. As part of the assessment both parties must prepare present and future budgets setting out their reasonable monthly income needs.

Spousal maintenance can be ordered in various forms, including: (1) as an interim payment payable pending a final financial order being made; (2) on a term basis and so for a set period until a specified date or event; (3) on a joint lives basis and so until one party dies. But if the recipient remarries then the maintenance will automatically end and there are many other changes in circumstances which could give rise to the need to review and perhaps vary the order - which could be either upwards or downwards.

Spousal maintenance is a complex area of family law and as always there is no proper substitute for taking advice specific to your particular case as every family's circumstances are different.

For advice and assistance regarding divorce and related matters please get in touch - we have a lot of experience advising, guiding and supporting clients in this area of law.

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# Playful and imaginative family show heading for Parr Hall

**A PLAYFUL and imaginative family show based on books by Tom Fletcher will be roaring to life at Warrington's Parr Hall next year.**

Leaping from page to stage, There's a Monster in your Show has been adapted from the McFly star, The Voice UK judge and children's author's beloved Who's In Your Book? series.

It will be making its debut as a new interactive musical show next year, including two Warrington dates on Saturday and Sunday April 26 and 27.

The high energy 50-minute adventure has been designed for young children and has been described by the creators as the perfect introduction to live theatre for little ones.

It tells the story of a group of performers who are preparing to start their show, but quickly discover they are not alone on stage.

Little Monster wants to be part of the fun too! With an invitation to his friends, Dragon, Alien and Unicorn to join him, you can expect comedy and chaos as they help to create a magical show, learning about the joy of books and friendship along the way.

Over the past decade, Tom Fletcher has become one of the UK's most popular children's authors.

His books have been translated into 38 languages and to date he has sold more than five million copies of his books in the UK alone.

He said: "I'm so excited to see There's a Monster In Your Book come to life on stage! The whole journey is incredibly exciting and I can't wait to get to rehearsals to meet the puppets."

"Theatre is such an important way to introduce children to the arts and There's a Monster In Your Show is the perfect first theatre trip for pre-schoolers and their families. I'm so looking forward to seeing their reactions first-hand."

The show has been adapted by Zoe Bourn (Thomas & Friends, Fireman Sam, Mr Men Little Miss) who is a keen advocate of children's literacy and the accessibility of story books.

And it is being brought to the stage by MEI Theatrical, the team behind the likes of Twirlywoos Live, Sarah & Duck and The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show.

For more details visit [parrhall.culturewarrington.org/whats-on/theres-a-monster-in-your-show/](http://parrhall.culturewarrington.org/whats-on/theres-a-monster-in-your-show/) or call Box Office on 01925 442345.



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The background of the entire image is a dense, repeating pattern of various tropical leaves. The leaves are in shades of dark green and forest green, with some showing characteristic holes (like Monstera) and others being fern-like or broad-leafed. The lighting is slightly darker in the center, creating a sense of depth.

The  
Roo

at Th

3rd 10

The background of the entire image is a dense, repeating pattern of various tropical leaves. The leaves are in shades of dark green and forest green, with some showing prominent veins and others having characteristic holes (like Monstera). The overall effect is a lush, jungle-like texture.

ftop.

the Grand

October

# Six of the best things people love about Warrington

**LOCAL journalist Helen Bennicke takes a look at six of the best things people love about Warrington from the town's Golden Gates to the Statue of Oliver Cromwell outside the old Academy.**

## The Pink Eye Island

It's distinctive, painted the colour of hospital corridor walls and on first glance can appear to be a little ugly. What it lacks in traditional artistic value, the mural makes up for in terms of a distinctive landmark.

Ask any Warringtonian for

Years back, someone was caught scraping the gold off the gates, thinking mistakenly that they had a financial value which could earn them some illicit cash. They were wrong.

But how did the gates get to Warrington? They were made for the



directions and if they're heading into the town centre or Sankey near the A57, you can guarantee the Pink Island will feature in the mix. And if you are local, you will know exactly where they mean.

More than a quarter of a century after the giant eye, with a heavy eyelid and one single tear plopping down appeared on the former mill building, it does beg the question: 'Why?' The once pale pink has faded somewhat recently.

The mystery of why someone first started daubing the mysterious eye and why it stayed has intrigued many. Banksy isn't exactly shaking in his boots over its artistic merit, but it has a value that makes its staying power more tangible than mere graffiti.

Artist Anthony Turk, who lived in Westbrook, spontaneously began painting it one Warrington Walking Day in 1999. In previous interviews, he explained he'd been motivated to paint an aquatic mural, but it morphed into a pink eye.

And for me, it summarises Warrington. Bold, brave and unique.

## The Golden Gates in front of the Town Hall

I was walking through the town centre on a rare sunny day in August this year and the Golden Gates in front of the Grade I Listed Warrington Town Hall looked at their finest. The sunlight was bouncing off its golden structure and the sky was cloudless and blue. People stopped to take their pictures taken by the gates.



Great Exhibition 162 years ago and they were supposed to go to Norfolk for the then Queen, Victoria, at the estate in Sandringham.

The gates never made it as they were sited at the exhibition in front of the statue of Oliver Cromwell – who notoriously wanted to overthrow the monarchy hundreds of years ago. So, they were rejected by the royal courtiers and stayed in Warrington.

They were unveiled on Warrington Walking Day in 1895 when a golden key ceremoniously unlocked the gates. The gilded gates have mesmerised visitors to the town – and many residents – ever since.

## St Elphin's Church spire

Visible for miles around, the church spire at Grade II-listed St Elphin's in Howley is an instantly recognisable Warrington landmark. The spire – which is England's eighth largest – is visible from high up in Hill Cliffe and it looms on the horizon as you approach the town centre from the A57 or via Howley.

The traditional historic black and white Ring O'Bells pub next to the church adds to its charm with the cobbled courtyard in front – the perfect backdrop for weddings and christenings.

It may appear to be older than it is, but St Elphin's spire was only constructed in 1867, by architects Frederick Francis and Horace Francis. The spire rises 86 metres above ground level.



Churchgoers were saddened earlier this year, when the current vicar, the Rev Jane Steventon, died peacefully in July.

## Statue of Oliver Cromwell

In front of the old Academy building at the end of Bridge Street, the statue was once a target for Warrington rugby fans who would put a matchday pie in his hand as they passed. Now thousands of motorists pass it every day at Bridge Foot as they wait for the traffic lights to change, watched over by an effigy of a man who wanted to overthrow the monarchy.

Like the Golden Gates, it was sculpted in 1862 for the Great Exhibition. It is one of only four statues in England commemorating Cromwell. Made out of iron, Cromwell is standing on a plinth with a sword and Bible.

Councillor Frederick Monks presented it to Warrington in 1899 which marked the 300th anniversary of Cromwell's birth.

At the time there was opposition to the statue from the local Irish community in the town.

At the other side of the town centre is Cromwell's cottage on Church Street, which has been the Cottage curry house for many years. A plaque outside the black framed building marks Cromwell's stay there in August 1648.

He had joined the Parliamentary Army six years earlier during the first civil war.

The juxtaposition of the statue of Cromwell behind the Golden Gates at the International Exhibition meant both works ended up in Warrington. The statue is brassy in appearance and is a reminder of Cromwell's links with the town – almost 400 years on.

## Cantilever Bridge at sunset

There are some great places high above the town to glimpse a view of the setting sun on a summer's day. Hill Cliffe is one such place. And so is the Cantilever Bridge.

It offers splendid views of the Manchester Ship Canal and the greenery sounding the Cheshire countryside, along with the swing bridges of Stockton Heath and Walton in the distance in one direction.

In the other direction, Latchford locks and the swing bridge are in the far distance. You can watch the tallest ships passing beneath you without being disturbed by the swing bridges going off. Popular with walkers, runners and cyclists as a stop off point, it helps motorists avoid

the traffic chaos as it is always open.

Warrington certainly doesn't lack bridges. Its rusting swing bridges are a cause for much controversy as Manchester Ship Canal owners Peel Holdings promise to maintain them.

Some residents claim they are an eyesore. But high above the rusting swing bridges, the Cantilever Bridge offers splendid views of Warrington from a different angle.

When the sun does set on a cloudless summer evening turning the sky a rich pink and orange, it's worth watching it from the Cantilever.



## IKEA

When it first opened its doors, just off the M62 in 1987, it was the first Swedish modular furniture of its kind in the whole country.

The company had only been founded in 1953 as a mail order catalogue business and was in its infancy when Warrington was chosen as the UK's first location with a huge blue and yellow monolith of a superstore.

In the early years, you could hear Birmingham and Yorkshire accents as people had travelled far and wide to get their hands on budget and trendy furniture.

So popular was the concept, that when the first staff members arrived early in the morning on the opening day in October 1987, the car park was already teeming with customers eager to get inside.

Some had even camped outside as they were lured by the chance to be one of the first 50 customers to have a sofa for £25. Thousands of people visited the store on the first day and it has remained popular ever since.

The company has stores dotted around the UK from Edinburgh to London and Milton Keynes in between, but the pioneer of the minimalist interior was here in Warrington.

# Chip shop attracts customers from across North West as Tik Tok post goes viral with 3million viewings

A Warrington chip shop is now attracting customers from all over the North West after a Tik Tok post went viral with more than three million viewings!

Osman Gulam, known locally as Ozzy, has been running the Greenwood Fryery on Marsh House Lane for more than 20 years and is now a daily Tik Tokker after his post on how to cook fish and chips went viral, attracting millions of viewers from around the world.

With each video starting with the words "Hello I am Osman Gulam," his posts are proving so popular they are now bringing in customers from far and wide including Salford, Liverpool and Nantwich, as well as his loyal regular customers.

It has provided a major boost for Osman, who is a published author, with his book Climbing Mountains telling the story of how he arrived in Warrington from his native Turkey.



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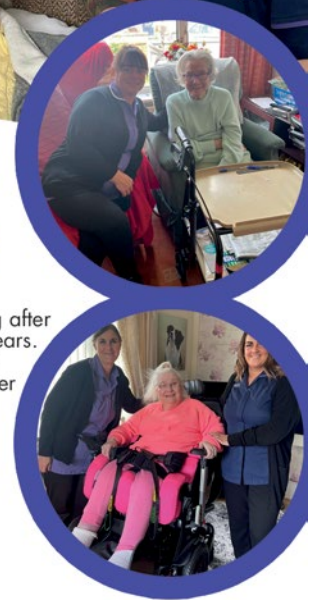


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# Evelyn Street Primary Academy and Nursery "Outstanding" in all areas



## EVELYN Street Primary Academy and Nursery is "outstanding" in all areas following a recent Ofsted inspection.

It is described as an exceptional school where pupils make the best possible start to their education. This stems from the high levels of ambition that the school has for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are taught the importance of resilience. They embody this through the way in which they approach their learning. Many pupils, including those with SEND, achieve extremely well across the curriculum.

Pupils meet the school's high expectations of behaviour with ease. They treat one another with genuine care, respect and understanding. Children begin to learn the importance of these qualities from the moment that they join the early years. Pupils behave impeccably and learning is rarely interrupted.

Pupils respect that the school regularly seeks their views on how the school could be even better. For example, reading ambassadors help to choose the new books that enrich the school library. Pupils appreciate the way in which the school listens to and acts on their views. This helps them to feel valued and happy at school.

Pupils are highly enthusiastic about the broad range of clubs that they have access to. These include robotics, animation and coding. The school ensures that many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, benefit from these clubs. This supports pupils to develop their talents and interests.

The executive headteacher of the school is Louise Smith and the school is part of the Warrington Primary Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Louise Smith, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alastair Brown.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Evelyn Street Primary Academy and Nursery under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Evelyn Street Community Primary School to be outstanding, before it opened as Evelyn Street Primary Academy and Nursery as a result of conversion to academy status.

The report says that from the early years, through to Year 6, the school's curriculum is meticulously set out. It identifies the important knowledge that pupils should learn. The school strives to ensure that the curriculum evolves and responds to

the changing needs of the pupils. The curriculum is highly ambitious for pupils, including those with SEND. Staff capably adapt access to the curriculum for pupils with SEND, so that they learn well alongside their classmates.

At all levels of leadership within the school and the trust, many members of staff are specialists in their field. This expertise is used to ensure that staff receive high-quality training, which enables them to teach the curriculum with considerable skill. Moreover, this specialist training also helps staff to swiftly identify any additional needs that pupils may have. The school puts in place well-considered support to help these pupils overcome any barriers to learning.

Teachers promptly identify and address any gaps in pupils' knowledge. They expertly craft learning activities that deepen pupils' knowledge and help them to connect their learning across different subjects. This begins in the early years, where many staff are experts in educating young children, including two-year-olds. By the end of Year 6, pupils, including those with SEND, have a deep body of knowledge that stands them in excellent stead for secondary school.

Reading is woven through the school's curriculum. Pupils regularly encounter a rich variety of texts and technical language in different subjects. This helps them to clearly communicate their views and opinions. Older pupils understand that being well-read is a gateway to new ideas and learning about the lives of others.

Pupils' journey to becoming avid readers begins in the early years and key stage 1. Staff teach the phonics programme with accuracy and consistency. Pupils quickly learn the sounds that letters represent. Focused support is put in place promptly for any pupils who need it. Young pupils make a superb start to reading and many are fluent readers by the end of key stage 1.

Children in the early years are very well behaved. They follow established routines and learn cooperatively alongside one another. Across the school, pupils display excellent manners. Pupils have fantastic attendance at school. The school's systems and procedures around attendance are highly effective. Any attendance concerns are swiftly picked up and addressed at an early stage.

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# Stalemate continues in ongoing row over town's rusty swing bridges

By Helen Bennicke

**STALEMATE** continues in the ongoing dispute over proposals to carry out much-needed repairs to Warrington's rusting swing bridges over the Manchester Ship Canal.

When approaches were made for an update more than two years after the works were promised another war of words has erupted between Peel Ports – who own the infrastructure and are responsible for the upkeep of the bridges – and Warrington Borough Council.

The swing bridges span the Manchester Ship Canal at Chester Road, Walton, Knutsford Road, Latchford and London Road, Stockton Heath.

The row centres on a long-running dispute over closing the highways in order to carry out work at the bridge on London Road.

And it seems neither side is prepared to budge.

Leader of Warrington Borough Council, Cllr Hans Mundry, said: "The bridge has not had any investment for many years, and the uncertainty regarding these works is very unhelpful for local residents and businesses.

"We are fully committed to discussing plans for these much-needed refurbishment works, but we remain resolute that the costs should be covered by Peel Ports and not local people.

"We urge Peel to engage with us

and the people of Warrington, so that a way forward can be worked out."

He said the initial plans that were presented by Peel Ports to refurbish Stockton Heath swing bridge would have been hugely disruptive.

"We can't support plans that may cause a significant amount of disruption, without there being appropriate contingency plans put in place.

"To that end, we would require a financial commitment from Peel to underwrite the cost of such plans, given the level of disruption the bridge maintenance is likely to cause.

"Peel have so far failed to provide this commitment."

He pointed out that Stockton Heath swing bridge is "owned by Peel Ports, and is theirs to oversee and maintain."

He added: "We have been clear from the start that the full costs of the project including mitigation measures should come from them.

"We are disappointed that, up to now, Peel have not committed to underwriting the costs associated with providing mitigation against the most severe impacts of the



plans."

But a spokesperson for Peel Ports who own the Manchester Ship Canal, said: "We share the frustration of residents and road users, and we remain committed to the renovation of Warrington's Swing Bridges.

They said: "this significant project requires a collective effort and cooperation on all sides, and MSCC has been prepared to fund the £8m project.

"However, these efforts have been severely hampered by Warrington Borough Council's rejection of our Temporary Traffic Regulation Order – which is essential to ensure contractors can safely carry out necessary works – and its failure to fund elements of the mitigation costs, for which responsibility firmly lies with the council.

"To allow us to move forward, we urge the council to re-engage to find a solution that will work for all involved."

The spokesperson explained the bridges "remain safe and fully operational for users and routine maintenance will continue as normal."

A major investment in Stockton Heath's swing bridge was announced two-and-a-half years ago.

The project would have seen it shut for nine months to allow work to be completed.

Warrington Borough Council refused the Manchester Ship Canal Company's application to shut the road.

And the two sides have been at stalemate ever since despite attempts to find a solution.

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# Social care hero shines at national awards

**SUPPORTING older people to live independently is more than just a job for Warrington community social care worker Julie Hooper.**

Julie's dedication to her customers has seen her attain national recognition for her role in reducing social isolation for older people locally.

With one of her Belong at Home customers diagnosed with dementia and aphasia – difficulty in the ability to communicate – Julie's client had become increasingly isolated from others, eventually becoming fearful going out on her own. Her seclusion was further impacted by Covid-19, with lockdowns leading to friends inevitably drifting away.

By adopting a compassionate and personalised approach for all

those whom she supports, Julie was able to rebuild her customer's life, helping her regain her confidence by facilitating opportunities to create new social connections.

Building a trusting relationship through sharing lunches together and taking trips to the local supermarket to assist with shopping, Julie worked diligently to slowly integrate her client into the Belong Warrington village community. By taking advantage of its varied experiences programme, she accompanied her to enjoy activities in line with her interests, such as its musical therapy sessions

with national charity, Nordoff and Robbins.

As time passed, Julie's client eventually felt confident to choose to move into the village's onsite apartments, enabling her to continue to live with a degree of independence, with the support of her new friend on her doorstep. Now, she enjoys everything life has to offer, having been helped to overcome the isolation that had previously dominated her life.

Much to Julie's delight, her incredible work was recognised at this year's Stars of Social Care Awards where she received high commendation in the Reducing

Social Isolation category for her unwavering dedication.

The judges were full of praise, noting: "Julie was able to break down barriers and change people's perceptions through building an unbreakable trust with her client, who now has the confidence to communicate with new people and is able to live without fear."

Describing Julie as a 'true angel' the client's family said: "She [Julie] has increased Mum's confidence so that she can socialise independently. You feel like part of our family. Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do for Mum. As Mum says: 'friend'."



**Charlotte Nichols MP**  
Warrington North

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# War drum beat recalls the Battle of Winwick



Pictures: John Hopkins

The sound of a war drum beat rolled across the Winwick fields and into St Oswald's Parish church as it did over three hundred and fifty years ago when the Battle of Winwick took place between a Scottish army and the English Parliamentarian forces led by Oliver Cromwell on land three miles north of Warrington.

The drum beat set the atmosphere for the Winwick Church's Open Heritage Weekend event when 400 visitors enjoyed a re-enactment event by the Battle of Winwick Society which shed new light on the lives of the soldiers involved and told how a historic church was turned from a place of sanctuary into a prison.

Members of the Battle of Winwick Society dressed as Scottish soldiers in period costume turned the church history back to a time when 1,500 soldiers were imprisoned in the church and 1,000 troops lay dead in the nearby fields. They were the men of the Scottish army "the engagers" who met an overwhelming defeat by Cromwell's parliamentary troops in the Battle of Winwick fought on 19 August 1648.

Weapons on display included muskets, pikes and an array of swords plus clothing of the day for both men and women. A food table contained oats, biscuits and fruit, the soldiers' staple diet.

Reverend Martin Cox, priest in charge of St Oswald's Church, welcomed visitors to Saturday's open day and said the battle was a fascinating part of the church's iconic history. It was important that the battle was recognised for its national significance as one which effectively ended the Civil war.

Paul Wright, the Society chairman, described the battle when Cromwell's new, model army who had pursued the Scots from their first defeat at Preston, finally confronted them at Winwick. He said that it was probably local people who had advised the Cromwell forces on the best route in the area on which to take a stand to give them the best advantage.

He said: "We formed the Society

in 2003 as we thought it important that the Battle was recognised as in the past little was known about it. We have now had it officially registered by Historic England and it is the best preserved site of the Civil war in that era. We will be working toward getting a monument and information boards erected there. The aftermath of the Battle had an enormous effect on both Winwick and Warrington. Warrington only had a population of 1,000 people at that time and the town was swamped with many thousands of Scottish prisoners, Cromwell's forces and thousands of horses. The constables of that period were tasked with organising workers to remove the bodies of the dead killed in battle, the provision of food supplies and providing care for the wounded. St Oswald's Church by the battle ground was taken over by Cromwell's troops and used for some months as both a prison, a base and a shelter for the sick and wounded."

He added: "Lancashire was left in a terrible state after the Battles of Preston and Winwick. Towns and villages had been pillaged and ravaged by soldiers seeking food and money. Parliament set up a committee to investigate the outcome and aid was given to the county. As for the Scottish prisoners, most were allowed home but those who had been leaders in the fighting were shipped to Barbados and Italy for seven years of work servitude."

At St Oswald's Sunday morning service, Reverend Pat Gray led the congregation in remembrance of all those who had died in the battle and spoke of the suffering endured by those who had sought sanctuary at the church only for it to become a prison.





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# Community Interest Company launches a book club

**COMMUNITY** Interest company Helping Hands Changing Lives, Warrington has launched a book club.

Fifteen new members turned up at the first meeting at St Benedict's Club, in Rhodes Street, Orford and paid £5 – which included a free drink.

They had a good chat, getting to know each other, and talking about their favourite authors and genres.

The plan is for the group to meeting regularly and choose a book to read and discuss.

First book chosen was "The Family Man" by Kimberly Chambers and the group will regroup on Wednesday October 2 at 7pm to discuss the book.

Organisers were delighted with the turn-out for the first meeting but hope to attract more members over the coming months.

The group can be contacted at [carol@helphandsoph.co.uk](mailto:carol@helphandsoph.co.uk)



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## Potential Pension Reforms: Changes to Tax Relief for high earners on the horizon?

The Chancellor may introduce changes in the upcoming Budget that could limit tax relief on pension contributions for high earners and reduce the tax-free lump sum.

Currently, the UK's pension tax system generally allows for tax-free contributions and growth, with tax applied upon withdrawal. However, some tax relief is already reclaimed through annual allowances.

Several think tanks have suggested reforming income tax relief to a single flat rate of 25% or 30%. In 2022-23, tax relief on pension contributions was valued at an estimated £66 billion. However, HMRC's figures indicate a slightly lower net cost of £48.7 billion, factoring in tax on pension withdrawals and other charges.

This amount is substantial—nearly three times the capital gains tax

collected in the same period. Critics argue that more than half of this tax relief benefits higher and additional rate taxpayers, raising concerns over fairness.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) recently explored the impact of capping tax relief at 30%. Despite the substantial sums involved, the IFS estimated this change would increase tax revenue by only £2.7 billion. The Pensions Policy Institute provided a more modest estimate, suggesting a possible increase of just £1.5 billion.

The IFS also notes that such a cap would shift the tax burden onto the top 20% of earners. However, HMRC cautions that these figures do not reflect the actual tax yield from changing pension tax rules, as such changes could significantly alter taxpayer behaviour.

Despite modelling this commonly discussed reform, the IFS did not endorse it. One major challenge is addressing how employer contributions to defined benefit schemes would be taxed. Half of all upfront income tax relief currently goes to these schemes, making it crucial, but complex, to get this right.

Limiting tax relief on pension contributions may seem like a straightforward solution, but in reality, its benefits are limited and its implementation is complicated. The IFS points out that the current pension tax system is generous but also includes elements that are arbitrary, wasteful, or unfair. However, they suggest there are other tools available to achieve redistribution.

While the government has valid reasons to encourage saving for



Thomas Coyne and Stuart Barr

retirement, the vast scale of pension wealth means poorly targeted tax policies can be costly.

In the upcoming October Budget, the Chancellor may consider a range of pension reforms that could generate more revenue than simply limiting tax relief. Potential options include reducing the tax-free lump sum, currently set at 25% of the pension pot, applying inheritance tax to pension pots upon death, and reforming national insurance on pension contributions—a move that has some support from the IFS and other think tanks.

By addressing these areas, the government may seek to balance the need for encouraging retirement savings with the goal of ensuring a fairer distribution of tax benefits.

## HMRC urging parents to update NI records for Child Benefit claims

HMRC is calling on parents who claimed child benefit before 2000 to review their eligibility for boosting their state pension.

Parents in this group, particularly women nearing or at pension age, may not qualify for the full state pension unless they address gaps in their National Insurance (NI) records.

Between 1978 and 2000, Home

Responsibilities Protection (HRP) was credited to NI records of child benefit claimants to safeguard their pension rights, reducing the required qualifying years for the full basic pension. HRP was replaced by NI credits in 2010. However, those who claimed child benefit before May 2000 and did not provide their NI number might not have had HRP applied, potentially affecting their pension.

HMRC advises that a missing HRP entry doesn't automatically result in an incorrect pension calculation but raises the likelihood, especially if claimants took time off work to care for children.

In collaboration with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HMRC is actively identifying those impacted and encouraging them to submit an HRP claim to correct

their records. To date, HMRC has contacted 257,000 pensioners and is now reaching out to those under pension age.

Eligible parents can check and claim on gov.uk in around 15 minutes or by post using form CF411. The National Insurance Helpline is also available for assistance at 0300 200 3500

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Please note that these ideas are intended to inform rather than advise and you should always obtain professional advice before taking any action.

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# Exciting young full-back signs first team deal

**EXCITING** teenage full-back Cai Taylor-Wray says he is "over the moon" after signing his first professional first-team contract with Warrington Wolves.

The 18-year-old has penned a three-year contract until the end of the 2027 season with an additional club option for a further 12 months.

The electric full-back has made his first senior appearances this season and scored his first try with a sensational solo run in last month's win over Castleford Tigers.

Taylor-Wray has been a key figure in the Reserves and Academy sides this year with 17 tries in as many appearances.

He is an England Academy international who came off the bench to score two quickfire tries against France at The Halliwell Jones Stadium in July.

He is sponsored by Kestrel Liner Agencies. Thank you to Squadbuilder for their continued support of youth development.

Cai Taylor-Wray said: "I'm over the moon. I've been here since I was 14 and it's always been my main focus to play Super League and get a professional contract.

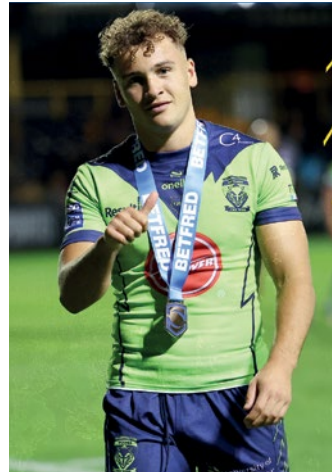
"Sam [Burgess] has been great with me. He's encouraging and has shown he's got confidence in me. I want to repay that now.

"I just want to keep doing my job now, show my ability and enjoy

playing my rugby."

Warrington Wolves Head Coach Sam Burgess added: "Cai is a gifted and exciting young player with a big future ahead of him at this club. His attitude is spot on and he's shown his abilities when given his opportunity in recent weeks.

"The challenge now is for him to stay focused, work hard, and keep pushing himself to grow his game."



## Warrington Town manager resigns after F.A Cup exit



WARRINGTON Town manager Mark Beesley has resigned following the club's FA Cup exit.

In a statement the club announced it had accepted his resignation which comes after eight years at the club.

Beesley was the manager that led the Yellow to the highest ever league position the town has ever seen, 12th in National League North last season, following promotion the previous year.

However, they have only won three of their last 17 games, dating back to last season.

The statement said: "Warrington Town can confirm it has accepted the resignation of Mark Beesley from his role as manager.

"Following discussions his eight-year run as part of the club's management team has come to an end.

"During his tenure, the club has grown with average attendances climbing from 547 in his first season to almost 1,200 last term.

"Everyone at the club would like to thank Mark for his contribution and wish he and his family all the best for the future."

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Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's office.

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