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magazine

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# St Rocco's Hospice finds its first 'Face'!

St Rocco's Hospice has launched its #100Faces campaign for 2020 – and the local charity has already found their first and second and third faces!

All next year and helping lead the campaign, Lifestyle Editor Gary Skentelbery will quite literally be the face of St Rocco's Hospice – on their Wall of Fame, across their advertising and online.

Gary said: "It is an absolute honour to have been chosen as the face to lead this campaign and already a number of friends have already joined me and signed up for this great cause. Now I would urge others to follow suit and kick start the new year in style by joining this campaign."

Each of the charity's 100 Faces will pledge to raise £1000 over a 12 month period, to help fund the vital work the hospice does for people with life-limiting illnesses in Warrington.

So do you think you have what it takes to be a Face?

How you raise the money is entirely up to you – but St Rocco's will be behind you every step of the way.

They'll be helping with fundraising tips, motivational moments, meet ups and all the information you need to kickstart your challenge.

But they won't stop there – they will keep in touch all year, finding out how you're getting on and shouting about your fundraising to all their followers.

At the end of the year, they'll celebrate your achievements in style, with awards for the best (and most inventive) fundraisers.

So do YOU have what it takes to join our #100Faces?

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**Gary Skentelbery**

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# Welcome to **lifestyle**



As we approach the season of Goodwill and a New Year I would urge all those involved in local and national politics to take a deep breath and look at the behaviour of those around you - especially the armies of keyboard warriors out there.

Having reported on local politics for nearly 40 years the divisions in local politics and politics in general seem to be getting wider and wider – and the divisions caused by Brexit aren't making things any easier. Certainly gone are the days when rival Cllrs used to clash and then meet up afterwards for a friendly get together over a glass of beer or wine or something softer.

Any political differences were soon forgotten and people got on with the job of representing the areas they served.

“Career politicians” were few and far between and the vast majority of locally elected Cllrs wanted to represent their areas. I am not saying those in the corridors of power still don't want to get on with the tasks they are elected to carry out – but there has certainly been a big change in political

behaviour in recent times and I can understand why some would find it “toxic.”

As an independent Cllr myself I think it is important for locally elected Cllrs to rise above politics and focus on the task in hand by representing their constituents. So on that note Merry Christmas and let's hope we can look forward to a less toxic New Year! But I am not holding my breath!

*Shelly's*

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 Printed by TwentyFourSeven





## Nature fighting back:

# Maldives reefs showing resilience in

Biosphere Expeditions, the Marine Conservation Society, Reef Check Maldives and local Maldives environmental group Save the Beach Maldives have just returned from a 250 km expedition around the central Maldives, the ninth annual survey of its kind since 2010.

They found, against expectations, that corals are showing some resilience, adaptability and even recovery from climate change effects

Reefs the world over are dying from rising sea temperatures, ocean acidification, pollution and overexploitation. The situation is much the same in the Maldives, as previous Biosphere Expeditions surveys and a very recent scientific paper have shown.

So the expedition scientist (and co-author of the recent paper) Dr. Jean-Luc Solandt this year expected more dead and dying reefs. But what he and his team of citizen scientists found instead are signs of hope and recovery. Dr. Solandt: “We were devastated in 2016 when a global warming event killed off large swathes of the reefs. The reefs showed little recovery in 2017 and 2018, and we expected more bad news in 2019. However, this year we saw many baby (<1 year) and young corals (1-3 years), as well as different species of corals growing vigorously at sites that we expected to be dead or dying. It was surprising and encouraging to see a greater diversity of corals ‘pushing through’ from the dead layer below. It seems nature is fighting back with a coral diversity explosion. We have seen resilience (of corals that are resistant to bleaching), adaptability (some reefs have other species coming through) and recovery (baby corals are almost everywhere) this year”, concludes Solandt.

“It’s not all plain sailing, though;”, adds Solandt, “many reefs are still very badly affected and some have died altogether. And another temperature spike would kill many of the new corals we’ve seen. Also, some small corals that had settled on the reef in the last year, which we thought were resistant to bleaching, were now bleached, but the larger ones seem OK. Finally, the background temperature is still ‘hot’ at the bleaching threshold of 30 degrees Celsius in very shallow water.”

The recent change in government in the Maldives is another cause for some optimism. Hussein Zahir, head of LaMer, one of the expedition’s local



partner organisations, notes that the government has indicated that it “understands the close link between oceans, climate change and the wellbeing of communities. This is a good start, as is the establishment of a National Research Institute that includes environment, health and social issues – a sort of think-tank and an infrastructure for science-based knowledge and understanding of the issue. And apparently the income from the Green Tax that has been levied on the tourism sector, will now be spent exclusively on the environment”.

One of the outstanding sites regularly visited by the annual Biosphere Expeditions surveys called ‘Rasdhoon Madivaru’, has also recently been declared a Marine Protected Area. It is both resilient to the worst bleaching effects, and harbours large megafauna such as sharks, manta rays, turtles and Napoleon wrasse. “Our

# a face of climate change

expeditions have highlighted this site for the past nine years, as being of extraordinary biodiversity value”, says Solandt.

Dr. Matthias Hammer, Executive Director of Biosphere Expeditions believes that “all those involved in the last nine years of expeditions – from professional to citizen scientists to local and international partners - can be very proud about the in-depth understanding and description of bleaching patterns we have reached and that we have been involved in the designation of an MPA. This is yet another feather in our cap of achievements through citizen science and community-based conservation, and an important stepping stone for tackling the adverse

effects of climate change in the Maldives. It shows how ordinary people and grassroots action can make a difference”.

Further surveys will be carried out by Save the Beach Maldives and Reef Check Maldives. These local organisations, the latter created by graduates of the Biosphere Expeditions placement programme, will “also train more local divers to survey their own reefs in the future, and set up more community-based reef conservation efforts”, according to Hassan ‘Beybe’ Ahmed, a placement programme graduate who runs Save the Beach Maldives and Reef Check Maldives. The Biosphere Expeditions annual survey will return to the Maldives in August next year.



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*Advertising Feature: Robert Dyas*

# A Smart Home 'Guide for Dummies'

While the words 'smart home' provoked little more than bewilderment from the average layman a decade or so ago, it's now very much mainstream. Our flatmates, friends or children start talking to Google in the middle of conversations, or ask it to turn their lights off when they're in bed – heck, they even ask Alexa for advice.

These smart home devices are edging seamlessly into our lives and becoming items that increasing numbers of us use day in, day out, without even a second thought.

So fast is the uptake of these intelligent products, the smart home market value in the UK is forecast to be worth a whopping £5.63 billion – up from £1.89 billion in 2014. And when it comes to how many homes feature these devices, this is forecast to increase from 24.9% in 2019 to 43.5 by 2023\*.

Yet despite the creeping ubiquity of smart home technology, there are still plenty of us who feel like we've been left in the dark ages of the humble manual radio. Even – dare we say it – operating the lights with a switch.

If you'd place yourself in the not-so-tech-savvy category, fear not: along with their extensive range, leading high street retailer Robert Dyas has some handy advice for you. Their smart home buyer and expert, Andrew Georgiou, has answered ten common questions, so you can live in the smart home era less confused and more clued up.

## 1. What is meant by a 'smart home'?

### Why is it such a fast-growing area?

A smart home is a property that features one or more smart devices which can be monitored and controlled remotely via your smartphone or other smart device. You make commands on your smart device either manually or via voice control (think Google Assistant). For example, you could ask your Google speaker to turn the lights on, or see and talk to visitors at your door instantly with the Ring Video Doorbell 2.

It's a fast-growing area for two reasons: It's highly convenient as it can make everyday life so much easier and, as technology is advancing, it's becoming more accessible.

## 2. What are the benefits?

There are many benefits to smart technology, depending on the product you choose to purchase. The main ones are:

**Convenience:** You can control your lighting, heating and other elements of your home right from your smartphone.

**Security:** You can be confident that your family and property are safe as you can see what's going on live at any time and be alerted if something happens.

**Money and energy-saving:** Smart products can save you money on bills by helping you reduce the amount of energy you use. Some examples are Hive heating devices which let you control your thermostat remotely, Philips Hue smart bulbs with which you can control your lighting, and the TP-Link Energy Monitoring Smart Plug that lets you keep an eye on how much energy you're using.

## 3. Where should I start? Do I need to start with a voice-activated personal assistant system?

Most people will start with something small like a smart plug or a smart light bulb, both available from TP-Link and TCP. This helps them understand the benefits of smart products, and more devices can be added and connected up from there.

A great way to start would be to get a smart speaker (pictured above), such as a Google speaker (from



£49), as then you can follow it up with products that are compatible. (Some devices may only be compatible with Amazon Alexa for example. Often they're compatible with multiple systems.)

#### 4. How do I know if a particular smart home product is compatible with Google or Amazon Alexa?

Sometimes it's on the box of the product you're about to buy. If it isn't, you'll need to go to either a good retailer's website or the website of the brand that created the product. Compatibility is key and Robert Dyas makes it easy for homeowners to find the devices that suit their needs.

#### 5. What are the key areas that the smart home serves?

There are four main areas:

**Lighting:** With smart lighting you can turn your lights on and off remotely, dim them and even change the colour to create atmosphere if you have a colour-changing bulb. A range of brands offer different technologies and prices.

**Security:** This includes smart cameras, doorbells, security lights, CCTV and alarms, and locks. With cameras and CCTV you can monitor your home while you're away; smart doorbells allow you to talk to and see who's at your door from your smart device; smart lights enable you to turn them on/off when you're out to make your home look occupied; and with smart locks

you can open your door via your smartphone and let in visitors without having to give them a key.

**Power:** Smart plugs and sockets make up this area. You never need to worry again about leaving your straighteners or other appliances on as you can control them via your smart device. You can also schedule your appliances to turn on and off. With Lightwave you can even lock your sockets for family safety.

**Energy:** This area consists of thermostats and plugs. With these you can control the temperature of your thermostat and see how much energy a device that's connected to a smart plug is using, and control it accordingly.



#### 6. How can I save money on my heating bills?

You can turn the heating on and off when you need to from wherever you are, which means you're never heating an empty home. You can also reduce the temperature via the app at any time.

#### 7. How can my security benefit from a smart home device?

You can monitor your home when you're not there, answer the door or set off a siren. The Ring Doorbell, floodlights and cameras can work together to watch over and light up your house to ensure intruders are kept away. Alternatively, you can use a smart CCTV, alarm or lock systems like the ones we sell from Yale.

#### 8. Do you have to be a geek to get things to work?

Not at all, the best smart products are the easiest to use.

#### 9. My home has a very weak internet service. Could this be a problem?

This can be a problem for some products that require a good signal, but you can use signal boosters or WiFi extenders – such as the BT 11ac 1200 Wi-Fi Extender (£39.99, reduced from £49.99) or BT WHole Home Wi-Fi System (£169.99, online only) – to reduce the impact. Alternatively, you could move to a better provider.

#### 10. Is it very expensive to set up?

It can seem expensive but when heating systems can reduce bills by switching off when you don't need them on, and smart plugs monitor your energy consumption to help you save money, they can definitely be worth the initial investment. Other devices may not offer the same long-term savings but when you can better protect your family and enjoy greater convenience and peace of mind, what you spend upfront may save you in multiple other ways.

**About Robert Dyas:** *From the innovative to the everyday, you'll find everything you need for your home and garden, from cleaning solutions and kitchen essentials to the latest DIY gadgets and gardening must-haves – all at great prices.*

*Robert Dyas founded the company in 1872, and it was bought by entrepreneur Theo Paphitis in 2012. Theo is one of the UK's most high-profile businessmen with an empire spanning retail, property and finance.*




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# Britain's hazel dormouse population

## New report reveals Britain's hazel dormouse population has declined

Loss of quality woodland habitat is a major factor and woodland management is critical to halting the decline of this charismatic species.

A new report published by People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) has revealed that Britain's population of hazel dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) has declined by 51% since the millennium, decreasing on average by 3.8% per year.

The State of Britain's Dormice 2019 report underlines the importance of providing the right habitat for dormice, and maintaining such habitats via correct woodland management practices, is the key to bringing this endangered species back from the brink.

In Britain, dormice – known for their endearing appearance with soft caramel fur, furry tail and big black eyes – are threatened and are considered to be vulnerable to extinction. In fact, hazel dormice are already extinct from 17 counties in England. The areas where they are still known to exist are almost all entirely south of a line between Shropshire and Suffolk.

Ian White, Dormouse & Training Officer at PTES, explains: "The decline in dormouse numbers is due to the loss and fragmentation of their natural woodland and hedgerow habitats, as well as climate change. In particular, it's the loss of habitat quality that's of real concern. Sympathetic woodland management is essential for the recovery of dormice. Whether woodlands are managed for timber or public access, shrubby areas should be created beneath the tree canopy. These provide dormice, and many other species with areas to nest and feed in while also being able to access the mature trees. It is this variety of woodland habitats required to help dormice survive."

Hazel dormice are arboreal mammals who prefer structurally diverse habitats – they use tree holes to nest in, dense woodland understory to raise their young and feed in, and hedgerows and bramble banks to disperse through. Critically, the way in which woodlands are managed has changed – with traditional management practices such as coppicing, glade creation and small-scale

tree felling (which once created mosaic habits) becoming less common, and as a result many of the woodlands we see today simply aren't suitable for dormice. These factors, combined with unseasonable or extreme weather (which can affect survival over the winter and impact on their ability to raise young), can be detrimental to dormice survival.

But, despite this, there are some areas where dormice numbers are increasing. At 96 of 336 sites (29%) analysed for this report, populations were 'stable' or 'increasing'. Also, at 28 of these sites (8% of the total) the average annual increase was 5% or more per year. But, elsewhere, there is still lots of work to do.

PTES is working hard to ensure that dormice can thrive once again in our countryside and manages the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme (NDMP) – the longest-running small terrestrial mammal monitoring programme in the world. Since it began in 1990 hundreds of volunteers across England and Wales have collected over 120,000 records, providing a significant data set which indicates how dormouse populations are faring. It's these data that have been used in the State of Britain's Dormice 2019 report.

In addition, over the last 26 years, PTES has managed 30 reintroductions at 24 sites, releasing almost 1000 captive-bred dormice to create new populations or improve genetic diversity at existing ones. These reintroductions play an important role in the long-term conservation of the species, returning dormice to 12 counties in England where they have been lost.

PTES also provides training and guidance for woodland managers, encouraging them to adopt appropriate land management practices. PTES' Managing Small Woodlands for Dormice can be downloaded here.

PTES is working to improve their understanding of dormouse ecology and to improve the problem of habitat fragmentation. The conservation charity is funding research into hibernation when dormice can be very vulnerable; PTES has recently launched the Great British Hedgerow Survey, whereby farmers and landowners are being



# ion in decline!

by over 50% since 2000

asked to assess the condition of their hedgerows and PTES are working with the ecological consultancy Animex to create dormouse bridges to improve accessibility between habitats.

Ian concludes: “Although the State of Britain’s 2019 report shows a severe decline has taken place over the last 18 years, the good news is that in some areas dormice are doing well. We can help bring this species back if we alter the way

we manage our landscape. By providing enough of the right habitat, which is well-connected and managed correctly, dormice, as well as a huge amount of other wildlife, can thrive once again across the country.”

To read the full report, and to find out more about PTES’ ongoing dormouse conservation work please visit: [www.ptes.org/dormice](http://www.ptes.org/dormice)



A hazel dormouse. *Credit Angyalosi Beata/Shutterstock.*



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Interview with star of Saturday afternoons and Saturday evenings

# Chris Kamara

on release of 'Here's to Christmas'

## *How did the album come about?*

Adam Greenup from Silva Screen Records approached my agent and said he'd heard me singing on 'All Together Now' and would I like to do a Christmas album with a swing band and record some tracks. I thought it was a mickey take to begin with, I thought I'd go to Silva Screen Records and Ant & Dec were going to be hiding (I'd worked on Takeaway before) and I would be given all these silly things to do and I'd be caught out. I was very wary of it, my agent Simon was saying "no, no its legit, I've checked them out", but they get these legit people to go along with it. I got there and met Adam and they sent me downstairs to sing along to a song and Adam said "you're a better singer than I even thought you were and we'd like to do a Christmas album, I will get you a stand alone single that's never been heard before written for you and we'll see how that goes". Richard wrote Here's to Christmas and its absolutely amazing, and I'm like "are you sure? with such a top quality song are you sure you want me to sing it?" He said yeah we definitely do and thankfully everything turned out ok.

## *Did you have fun choosing the track listing?*

We recorded loads and loads of songs, Hark the Herald Angels Sing, In the Deep Mid Winter, Silent Night. I didn't have the choice on the final songs, but Richie Scott who knows how to put a swing album together got rid of those songs, they're more hymns than swing songs.

## *How did it feel to be working with such skilled musicians on your debut album, was it intimidating or reassuring?*

I did the recording at Angel Studios in London and on my way there I kept thinking how would these people perceive me, and I'm not a nervous person but I know they work at the Royal Albert Hall with the best singers in the world and how would they take to me? They were absolutely first class, they were brilliant. When you perceive something, you think they're all going to be upper class, out of your league and if they were, they never let on as they were just normal people who were doing an extraordinary job and made me feel comfortable from the off which was great and I was able to sing with them.

## *You've got a lot of famous friends, have you played any songs to them and got feedback?*

You know I haven't been able to play it to any famous colleagues because we didn't want it to get out, we didn't want anyone to put it on social media. Once the launch is on The One Show, then I will let people hear it. But one special person has heard it, Gary Barlow, absolutely loves it and has given us a line for the TV ads, giving it a really big hit, to have someone of that quality do that is just amazing.

## *Can you pull in one of those friends for a future collaboration?*

I don't know, it would be nice. I've got one thing left on the bucket list and that's to sing with Elton John, so he's my hero and if that were to happen then my world would be complete.

## *Do you envisage yourself in a Christmas chart battle this year with anyone?*

To be honest I just think good luck to them, its not a battle between us, its whether the public like your songs or not, its all down to them. The one thing I do know is that 21 years ago the last Christmas no1 by a solo artist was Mistletoe and Wine by Cliff Richards, the only other no1 that's been a Christmas song is Band Aid Do They Know Its Christmas and that was twice no1, so wouldn't it be nice as Christmas gets bigger and bigger every year to have a Christmas song at no1 and Here's To Christmas is a proper Christmas song. We couldn't have gotten anymore Christmas clichés into that song, but it works.

## *Any live plans for this record?*

Yes there is, we will be doing live stuff between now and Christmas and if the album takes off we will move into a different sphere next year and keep on recording. If it's a flop and people aren't interested then at least we had a go and thanks to everyone for listening, we take all comments, good and bad!

## *What was the reaction from your family when you told them about the record deal?*

My two boys, Ben & Jack are fine, they are amazing they just get on with anything... "What are you up to next dad?" they have a little smile between each other and laugh about it, but its

my wife who is the one that worries whenever I take myself out of my comfort zone, whether I'm putting myself up for ridicule, so she is very very cautious, but you need someone like that to keep your feet on the ground and not get carried away with it, so hopefully I'll be able to look at her in the face when its no1 at Christmas and say I told you so, but she might look at me and say I told you so!

***What was her reaction when she heard the songs?***

I didn't get much of a reaction to be honest, my kids were like "Wow sounds great dad", but I didn't get much of a reaction from her, that's nothing new, like I said, she likes to keep my feet on the ground.

***How is Christmas in the Kamara household?***

We all have Christmas dinner round here on the day, all the family about 16 of us. Some of the family will go home, friends will come round in the evening, we have an open door policy and if they want to play a few games and stuff like that, great.

***Your birthday is also on Christmas Day, how do you feel about that?***

Well it never did me any harm, but since I've had kids and all that, Christmas day is all about them, its not really about birthdays on that particular day so I haven't really bothered about my birthday too much, but this year it will be my birthday if Here's To Christmas gets to no1, it will be all my birthdays rolled into one!

***Footballer, pundit, television presenter and now singer, what next?***

Well I've done a bit of acting, I was in Emmerdale, I think the movies haven't come to me yet; the reality shows have but not the movies, so maybe one day.



## 'Here's to Christmas'

### Track listing

Here's To Christmas  
Let It Snow!  
Rudolph The Red Nose  
Reindeer  
Santa Baby  
Santa Clause Is Coming To  
Town  
Jingle Bells  
Have Yourself A Very Merry  
Christmas  
Frosty The Snowman  
Walking In A Winter  
Wonderland  
It's Beginning To Look A Lot  
Like Christmas

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# Schoolboy artist wins first-ever People's Choice award

A young artist has won public acclaim at this year's Warrington Contemporary Arts Festival after bagging the first ever People's Choice award.

Joe Malley, aged 16, a student at Bridgewater High School, Appleton won the inaugural People's Choice award.

The prestigious Judges' Choice award – selected by a panel of independent experts and representatives of Culture Warrington – was also announced and went to John McLeod, who submitted two pieces Penmaen Returns 1 and Penmaen Returns 2.

He picked up a £1,000 prize and his own solo exhibition next year.

Artists from across the North West submitted entries in the regional contemporary arts competition and the awards were announced at a special evening at Warrington Museum and Art Gallery.

Joe's entry was a futuristic piece, London 2067.

He said: "I'm a bit surprised really, and very happy. The standard of art on display is really so good, so I would never have expected it. My mum and sister both entered the competition, so I decided to enter as well. I was working on this for school but decided I would enter it into this year's competition instead."

Joe is hoping to progress his artistic studies as he continues with his education.

He said: "I'm looking at colleges at the moment and mainly looking at ones that have really good art departments."

Meanwhile Mr McLeod, of Warrington, said he felt honoured as a local artist, to find his work among other pieces of such high quality.

He said: "Each year always seems to raise the bar that little bit higher so just to be fitting in is really special."

"I've been coming to have a look for about five years or so now and this is the third time I've entered. I just think it's a great opportunity as it's completely open – anyone can enter."

Roger Jeffery, producer for Culture Warrington – the charity that runs Warrington Contemporary Arts Festival, Warrington Museum and Art Gallery, Pyramid and Parr Hall – was once again hugely impressed with this year's entries.

He said: "The 2019 competition has welcomed some really high-quality entries and – as ever – we were really impressed by the overall standard."

"Both John and Joe are very worthy winners who have submitted really fantastic pieces. We're also always delighted to welcome entries from younger artists, such as Joe, and hope to see even more in the future."

The event also saw the official launch of Let's Get Stuck in Traffic! – the debut solo exhibition of last year's winner Marie Jones.

She said: "I'm very excited and proud to share my inaugural solo show with everyone! It's such a great opportunity to exhibit in such a lovely space and to work with the Museum and Art Gallery team who are really open to trying new things."

Joe Malley



# New head and neck cancers support group

A new support group for people diagnosed and living with head and neck related cancers has been launched in the Warrington.

Heads2gether is a newly formed support group launched by retired police officer Dave Betts QPM who was diagnosed with neck cancer in 1980 with a life expectancy of just six months.

Now nearly 40 years on he wants to help others and has teamed up with Dave Thompson, Chief Executive of Warrington Disability Partnership, who has suffered a similar cancer, benefiting from improved treatments.

Dave Betts said :”My cancer journey began in 1980 when I was diagnosed with a malignant Parotid Gland tumour on the right side of my neck. The prognosis was poor and my expected lifespan was six months. I was a young police officer in Warrington.

“The surgery involved the removal of the gland, the tumour and the severing of the facial nerve. This followed by intensive radiotherapy which has throughout my life caused serious issues related to radionecrosis.

”I am so fortunate to have survived through the excellent treatment from the NHS and care and support from my wife Glen. I was also fortunate to have enjoyed a successful working career. There has though always been a void relating to the support from other areas to help along the journey.

Should anyone wish to know any more about Dave’s personal journey please come along to a meeting email [davejbetts@gmail.com](mailto:davejbetts@gmail.com)

The group’s next meeting is scheduled to take place at Warrington Disability Partnership’s Centre for Independent Living on Beaufort Street on Thursday Jan 9 at 2.30pm.

“Creating this new body of work has allowed me to make connections with different communities in Warrington which, since moving here last year, has been such a wonderful experience.”

Marie also curated the third exhibition under the spotlight, Ride Your Pony No.03.

This exhibition features the work of 26 artists from around the world, who were each assigned a letter of the alphabet to use as a starting point for their work, while also taking inspiration from the Museum and Art Gallery’s Cabinet of Curiosities.

The presentations followed on from two weeks of outstanding events as part of the Festival.

Taking centre stage was Luke Jerram’s magnificent Museum of the Moon, which attracted more than 8,500 people to a series of public viewings and associated events, including Warrington’s first ever Light Night.

Over the course of two weeks, families across Warrington flocked to Parr Hall to take part in a range of fantastic events, from silent discos and movie screenings to yoga, gong spas and an art battle.

**John McLeod**





# Pupils in England a step closer to free period products

Government plans to offer free period products in more than 20,000 schools in England have been confirmed ahead of the national roll-out of the scheme.

There is only now a matter of weeks until pupils in England will have free access to period products.

Earlier this year, the Department for Education (DfE) pledged to provide free period products at all schools and colleges in England in a bid to create period equality. After a competitive tender, the contract for the supply of the free products has been awarded with a roll-out date of January. This means that from the new year, every school girl in England will have access to free period products.

The contract has been officially awarded to phs Direct, part of washroom and hygiene provider phs Group. It has also been confirmed that the product offering will include environmentally-friendly pads and reusable products such as reusable pads.

Preparations are now underway for the implementation and, as part of this, the Department for Education will publish guidance later this year to make clear how schools and colleges can get access to the products.

Children and Families Minister Michelle Donelan said: "Every young person should be able to access help when they need it. That's why we are making free period products available in all schools and colleges, so no young person has their education disrupted by a lack of access to period products. We will be publishing guidance later this year to help schools and colleges offer these products free of charge to those who need it, free from the fear of stigma or shame."

David Taylor-Smith, CEO of phs Group, said: "From our independent research, we know young people believe access to period products to be a real issue. We firmly believe period products are a necessity, not a luxury, and this is why access to free products at school and college for all pupils is a significant achievement. This initiative isn't just about what is perceived to be 'poverty'.

Offering access to free products to every pupil creates period equality and stops both periods and access issues getting in the way of a young person's education."

The move to supply free period products to schools in England follows similar directives elsewhere in the UK. In April, the Welsh Government announced a £2.3m Period Dignity Grant for Schools to provide free of charge products via local authorities. And last year, the Scottish Government implemented a directive for educational establishments to offer free period products, boosted by an additional £4m of funding to expand the scheme in January.

Bryn Bach Primary School, in Tredegar, already supplies free period products to pupils as part of a period equity scheme introduced by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

Head teacher Luisa Munro-Morris said: "The rights of the child underpin our school vision, and consequently we want to ensure all our young people are treated with dignity and respect. The period equity initiative supports us to achieve this vision, as giving our pupils access to period products enables them to manage menstruation without experiencing any shame or stigma."

For more information visit <https://www.phs.co.uk>. You can also follow @phsGroup on Twitter and phs Group on LinkedIn

## Article provided by PHS Group

*phs Group is a hygiene services provider within the UK, Ireland and Spain.*

*The team of over 3,000 expert personnel provides washroom, floorcare, healthcare and a range of specialist services to over 120,000 customers ranging from large single sites, to multi-national restaurant chains, healthcare establishments and small owner occupied shops.*

# FDR Law go one better with latest Legal 500 ranking

*Members of FDR Law's Real Estate and Private Client teams celebrate their success.*



Following last year's success when FDR Law became the first Warrington based law firm to achieve a ranking in the prestigious Legal 500, the firm achieved the double this year with listings for both its Real Estate and Private Client teams. The Legal 500 rankings are the leading guide to law firms and solicitors across the UK and only recommend firms following a thorough, independent process.

Highlights for the Real Estate team included representing Network Space on the sale of 25 sites across the North West in a deal worth £93m, advising United Utilities Property Service on the disposal of a substantial area of land in Swinton for residential development, and acting for a client on the negotiation and completion of a property and asset management agreement for a national portfolio of industrial and commercial sites. The Legal 500 researchers summarised as follows:

"FDR Law is regularly engaged by commercial and residential developers, retail and leisure operators, corporate occupiers, and investors. It also acts for public sector clients and is experienced in education sector property mandates. Its experience includes strategic partnering and site assembly work, acquisitions and disposals, asset management, development and forward funding work. Team head

Stephen Woodall acts for public and private sector clients; Charles Agar is experienced in private sector property development instructions; and John King handles contentious matters."

The Private Client team were equally delighted to be recommended and listed in the personal tax, trusts and probate category in the first year they have entered the awards. With feedback from clients including "A trusted, reliable and dedicated law firm" and "FDR's client service has been impeccable and their level of knowledge and expertise is of the highest quality" the Legal 500 researchers summarised the Private Client team as:

"The team at FDR Law possesses 'impressive knowledge, efficiency and integrity', handling the full range of matters covering will drafting, estate administration, complex trusts, powers of attorney, Court of Protection, IHT planning and succession planning. Head of Team Ian Sydenham 'exhibits the highest standard of client service and care', and regularly advises the firm's highest value clients and estates.

All at FDR Law are proud to have been recognised for their work in these areas, and holding off competition from regional, national and international law firms. Warrington can also be proud that our professional services firms can compete with the very best from outside the region."

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# Happiest workplace in the UK announced

A company that provides staff with mental health first aid, stress awareness and healthy eating advice has been crowned Britain's Happiest Workplace.

Medvivo, based in Chippenham, won the title at the National Happiness Awards, held in London. The telehealth service provider has put the happiness of its employees at the core of its business.

Staff there are also encouraged to raise money for charity and last Christmas the company provided food parcels and goodies for its service users.

The Happiest Team accolade went to NEL Consulting, where meetings are streamed live and recorded for colleagues who are unable to attend, and where expertise is shared via Lunch and Learn events. The Happiest Employee was O2's Hattie Jones, who bosses described as 'a mentor to peers in her team and an outstanding performer'.

Winners in the education categories of the awards were: Happiest Child, Freya Watson; Happiest Primary School, Longwood Primary Academy and Nursery; Happiest Secondary School, Highfurlong School; Happiest School Employee, John Bryant Arthur Bugler Primary School.

The National Happiness Awards honour happiness in business and education and are judged by an independent panel of experts. They are backed by learning and development company Laughology. They have developed a reputation as the nation's brightest and boldest award scheme. Around 250 organisations and individuals entered this year.

National Happiness Awards founder and Laughology CEO Stephanie Davies said: "The National Happiness Awards are the Oscars of the wellbeing world and the people and places we honour are real heroes who make a huge difference to lives. We had some amazing finalists and it is truly encouraging to see so many organisations, leaders and individuals taking happiness seriously. At a time when there is so much uncertainty in the country, it has been refreshing to see so much positivity."

The awards are sponsored by Simply Better Events.

Awards judge and Chief Customer Officer from Twinkl, Leon Smith, said: "Individuals and businesses do things each day to make people

happy and it's something that we should take more time to celebrate. I hope people will be inspired by all the incredible winners and nominees to recognise someone who makes them happy and give them a big thank you too."

## Happiest child in the UK

Freya Watson, from Hedon near Hull, won the title at the National Happiness Awards, held in London. She amazed her carers and specialist teachers at the unit where she was treated with her positivity and sense of humour, despite the challenges she faced.

Freya suffered a stroke and seizure caused by a burst aneurysm in September this year. Specialists at Leeds Children's Hospital where she was treated had never seen the condition in a child. She had major surgery before beginning the long road to recovery and has worked hard and laughed during lessons on the brain injury unit where she was treated. She was described by her specialist teacher as 'truly the most inspiring pupil I have ever worked with over my ten years of teaching'.

## Full list of winners:

### Happiest Workplace

Medvivo, Chippenham - Winner

### Happiest Employee

Hattie Jones, London - O2 - Winner

### Happiest team

NEL Healthcare Consulting, London - Winner

### Happiest Primary School

Longwood Primary Academy and Nursery, Harlow - Winner

### Happiest Secondary School

Highfurlong School, Blackpool - Winner

### Happiest School Employee

John Bryant - Arthur Bugler Primary School, Stanford-le-Hope - Winner

### Happiest Child

Freya Watson, Hull - Winner



# Shelly's Christmas Chocolate Orange Bread and Butter Pudding

by *Michele Butterworth*

Shelly's Restaurant, Bold Street, Warrington

If you are not a fan of traditional Christmas pudding check out this yummy alternative recipe created by Michele.

## Ingredients:

4 slices bread  
3 Brioche buns  
50g sultanas  
1 Orange  
2 tablespoons marmalade  
100g dark chocolate  
3 large eggs  
300ml cream (double or single)  
Icing sugar

## Method:

Butter the bread and buns and cut up.

Place in 10 inch oven proof dish.

Sprinkle sultanas on top of bread.

Zest and juice the orange and mix together with two tablespoons of marmalade. Spread on top of the breads.

Break up the dark chocolate and place evenly on top of breads.

Beat the eggs with the cream and pour over breads, then pat down so all soaked with egg mixture. Cover with cling film and chill in fridge overnight.

Take a deep roasting tin and place bread mixture in middle.

Remove cling film and pour boiling water around and cover 3/4 sides of oven proof dish with bread mixture in. (Bain Marie)

Place in a moderate oven low down for about 40 minutes until set.

Sprinkle with icing sugar and serve with ice cream.

*Very yummy and a brilliant alternative to Christmas Pudding. This will be an easy to clean dish as guests will eat every last morsel of it!*

Happy Christmas

*Shelly xxxxx*



## *Coming to the UK and Ireland, February and March 2020*

*The Blast Off Tour presents very special guest*

# EVE

The rapper and Hollywood actress comes armed with hits including 'Let Me Blow Ya Mind', 'Who's That Girl?', 'Tambourine' and many more.

**Joining an all-star in-upt including Nelly, Salt n Pepa, Shaggy, Mya, Blue Cantrell and more, with special host Fatman Scoop**

KISSTORY presents The Blast Off! Tour have revealed the Grammy Award winning US star Eve will join the all-star line up of the inaugural 2020 arena tour as a very special guest.

Eve has enjoyed a whirlwind career of success which has led to multiple awards and also featuring as VH1's '50 Greatest Hip Hop Artists'.

Eve joins the huge line which includes live performances from top US artists Nelly, Salt N Pepa, Shaggy, Mya and Blu Cantrell as well as appearances from UK garage stars So Solid members Lisa Maffia and MC Romeo, scene pioneer MC DT and the British duos Oxide & Neutrino, DJ Luck & MC Neat and Sweet Female Attitude. They're all hosted by the American hype man and hip-hop personality Fatman Scoop.

This is the first time a tour of this format has been done in the UK and will be coming to Cardiff, Nottingham, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Glasgow, Liverpool, London and Birmingham throughout March, while kicking off in Dublin on February 28th. Tickets are on-sale now.



### **Blastoff! 2020 Tour Dates**

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#### **MARCH**

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3rd Motorpoint Arena  
5th Leeds, First Direct Arena  
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