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Editor's Comment



DURING these unprecedented times it is disappointing that two of the town's political heavyweights have still not met for talks more than one year on from the general election.

Despite the ongoing pandemic and the recent flooding, Warrington South's Tory MP Andy Carter and Warrington Borough Council's Labour Leader Cllr Russ Bowden, have still not engaged with each other, with both men blaming each other.

I'm not here to point the finger of blame and indeed both men have provided me with evidence suggesting attempts have been made to correspond. But the facts are, at time of press, they have still not had any official dialogue to discuss the many issues facing our town.

This kind of situation is what turns people off politics and certainly doesn't do our town any favours, when Mr Carter is a direct route to Government and possible funding, while Cllr Bowden is in charge at the borough council, which needs as much funding support as possible - especially in light of the much talked about £1.6b of borrowing.

While Mr Carter is urging for better communications to help tackle the COVID-19 crisis, Labour Leader Cllr Bowden says Mr Carter has not responded to his written requests to meet, accusing the Tory MP of "politicising Covid and attacking those at the frontline dealing with it."

Mr Carter says Warrington

Council's effective 'one-party state' is bad for local democracy and will hamper the town's ability to recover from coronavirus.

More than a year after winning Warrington South's Westminster seat back from Labour, Mr Carter says despite asking, he's yet to have a one to one meeting with the Leader of the Council, who instead prefers to write letters criticising central Government but won't sit down and discuss the many pressing issues affecting "our town".

Mr Carter says that to support people during this challenging time, the Conservative government has provided grant support for businesses through Local Authorities to protect people's jobs and incomes, as well as delivering financial assistance to the council to protect key services provided for young people and the elderly.

Despite a 'farfetched' lack of dialogue between his office and elected Labour politicians, Mr Carter says he's built good relationships with 'very professional' Senior Council Officers, in a bid to help move some of the most pressing issues in the Borough forward and has even received messages of support from some Labour Councillors who don't agree with the way decisions are being taken and feel isolated from the ruling

Town Hall leadership.

Meanwhile, Cllr Bowden, who forwarded me two letters which he says have been sent to Mr Carter but received no response, says the MP for Warrington South has never asked him for a meeting and not given him the courtesy of a reply.

He went on to say he didn't engage in "fiddle-faddle and gossip" and was getting on with the very serious job of leading this Council during the Covid-19 crisis, ensuring that vital services can be delivered, supporting local businesses and protecting jobs.

We've already had a situation in this town where a Labour leader and a Labour MP never met for talks and it simply isn't good enough, especially during such unprecedented times, that people elected to serve the people, don't work together for the good of our town.

It is now more important than ever that all political differences are put to one side and everybody works together for the good of Warrington.

We all have different opinions and political beliefs within our own circle of family and friends - but it doesn't stop us working together or helping each other in times of need.

Hopefully, in the coming weeks, I can report on a positive outcome from Mr Carter and Cllr Bowden working together for the good of our town.

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Town rallies following the worst flooding in living memory

As the worst flooding in living memory hit Warrington, firefighters were called out to perform numerous rescue operations, with more than 100 people evacuated from their homes across the borough from Great Sankey to Lymm and various places in between, including 21 people from an independent hospital at Dallam, which was one of the worst areas hit.

Council leader Cllr Russ Bowden said: "We have been dealing with extreme weather and recorded water levels 450mm higher than we have ever recorded before, so despite council officers distributing up to 6000 sandbags and setting up pumps in other locations, there were sadly a number of breached properties and flooded highways.

"I am extremely grateful for the work of our council officers, agencies, blue light services and housing providers for their committed efforts during what has been another challenging week for our town."

Meanwhile, Warrington North MP Charlotte Nichols says she will "fight tooth and nail" to get some of the £5.2 billion proposed government investment in flood defence, spent in Warrington, while Warrington South MP Andy Carter is keen to know what more can be done to prevent further flooding.

Mr Carter, who was out on the ground working with the Council, Environment Agency, Cheshire Police and residents to help get resources where they were needed, said: "Down the line I'm keen to understand what more can be done to protect homes and families in Dallam from this type of flooding, prioritising the clearing of ditches and improving defences."

More than £30m has already been invested in the Warrington area on flood defence works in recent times, most notably along the Mersey on Knutsford Road, with the promise of more to come.

Meanwhile, members of the Warrington business community and various volunteers showed true community spirit helping those in need, with thousands of pounds donated to a crowdfunding page set up by organisers of the Warrington Business Awards.



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St Rocco's Christmas Tree collection raises record-breaking £42,000

THE annual St. Rocco's Hospice Christmas Tree Collection service has raised a record-breaking £42,000!

Thanks to the people of Warrington, the hospice collected 2279 trees and has so far raised a record-breaking £42,000!

Tracy Barnes, Fundraising Relationships Manager at St. Rocco's said: "Christmas Tree Collection is always such a popular event but we've been absolutely blown away with the amount of support we've received this year."

"Thank you to everybody who

registered and made a donation, it's because of you we have had our most successful year ever and we will be able to continue our care. Our volunteers on the day have been superstars and we're so grateful for all their hard work, especially on a cold January morning."

The hospice needs to raise £4.2 million per year in order to maintain providing high-quality palliative care to the people of our community

who need them most. The Covid-19 pandemic meant that this funding has taken a huge hit due to the cancellation of many fundraising events.

The success of the 2021 Christmas Tree Collection now means the hospice is able to start the new year of fundraising with a bang!

St. Rocco's would also like to extend a huge thank you to the following local businesses who

volunteered on the day: Bmec, Quickline Couriers, Omega Access North, BT Skip Hire, Sandstone Supplies, Bagnalls, Warrington Borough Council, SP Energy Networks, Partridge Lakes Fishery, Birchwood Community High School, Lymm Rugby Club, McDonalds Winwick Road, Vacant Property Specialists, Warrington Electrical Supplies, KD Building Renovations, Reddish Farm and HMS.



Charlotte Nichols MP Warrington North

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Promoted by Charlotte Nichols at Orford Jubilee Neighbourhood Hub, Jubilee Way, Orford, Warrington, WA2 8HE.

Walking footballers donate food worth over £1,200 to Foodbank

JUST before Christmas members of the Warrington-based Enjoy Football CIC donated food for Warrington Foodbank at their walking football winter special.

The total weight was 687kg which would have a retail value of approx £1202.25.

They would like to thank everyone involved for the "amazing" support.



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warrington.gov.uk/TestAndTrace



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Digital PR and SEO agency No Brainer appoints FTSE 250 SEO expert in new role

WARRINGTON based Digital PR, content and SEO agency, No Brainer, has announced the appointment of former SEO lead at FTSE 250 company HomeServe as its first Head of SEO and Insights.

Laura Rudd joins from home repairs and improvements giant HomeServe to lead the agency's search engine optimisation (SEO) support for clients, as well as

helping shape data-led campaigns for the Warrington-headquartered agency.

Laura brings more than two decades of experience in agency,

in-house and consultancy roles, having spent almost three years at HomeServe where she oversaw year-on-year growth in organic search and traffic.

Now, she's tasked with developing No Brainer's range of paid, owned, shared and earned services as it eyes further growth across the North West and the UK.

Laura said: "We have big ambitions to strengthen our SEO offer as an agency and ensure it is complementary to the traditional and digital PR, content and social media services we're already famous for. We have a clear plan to deliver more digital-first strategies for new and existing clients that demonstrate outstanding ROI.

"We're already working with clients to show how impactful SEO and PR can be when they work together, and how we can use data to shape strategies that allow brands to connect with their audiences in a way they haven't before.

"Having worked with No Brainer before as a client, I know all about their track record for amazing and creative campaigns, and I look forward to playing my part in the journey ahead."

No Brainer managing director Gary Jenkins added: "Laura joining the team is a landmark appointment for the agency and comes at a time when proving your worth in PR, content and SEO is more important than ever.

"Data and insights are at the heart of everything we do as an agency so Laura's appointment will help us enhance that across our range of services from digital PR to content marketing and social."

"Last year, we worked hard to achieve the AMEC international certificate in measurement and evaluation – the gold standard in measurement for our industry – and have ensured those best practices flow through the agency. Now, with Laura with us, we're ready to take No Brainer to the next level."

No Brainer was awarded Medium Consultancy of the Year at the PRCA Dare Northern Awards in 2020, as well as being named as one of the top 20 PR agencies in the north-west by North West Business Insider, and one of the top 50 PR agencies in the north by Prolific North.

For more information about No Brainer and its team, visit <https://www.nobrainagency.co.uk>



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New year is time for new optimism!

by John Laverick - Warrington & Co

Writing this on Blue Monday, supposedly the most depressing day of the year, seems somewhat of a contradiction; Brexit is delivered, we have a vaccine, the days are getting longer and, and, and, I am still no clearer on where that leaves us and indeed just how far down the tunnel the light is. So maybe the creators of Blue Monday had a point albeit a self-fulfilling one.

But that is no way to start a New Year.

The New Year is a time for

optimism and setting plans and challenges and Spring is supposed to be a time of growth and new life and

Warrington cements its "Top Ten" high street position

WARRINGTON has again defied the national trend and demonstrated a continued, strong performance of its high street and local economy despite the pandemic, according to the latest figures from Centre for Cities.

The positive performance of Warrington's town centre in December has seen the town nestled in the top 10 for both comparative footfall and spend across towns and cities in the country.

Findings from Centre for Cities show that in the month of December, compared to the last week of November, high street spend increased by 72 per cent meaning that Warrington has one of the top-performing high streets in the country.

This signifies comparatively strong performance for the North West of the country, with Warrington sitting alongside Liverpool, Birkenhead and Wigan in the top 10.

Warrington Borough Council's cabinet member for economic development and innovation, Cllr Tom Jennings, said: "A successful high street is key to a strong economy, and I'm pleased to see that Warrington continues to bounce back to such a degree that it again finds itself as one

of the highest-performing places in the country.

"The findings by Centre for Cities, alongside the fact that we have paid 93 per cent of more than 1,200 applications for Local Government Restrictions Grants, is a clear indicator for me that Warrington will be able to weather the worst of the pandemic, despite its immense challenges.

Warrington Market – which was recently named the Cheshire's "Market of the Year" – has played a major part in the success, remaining open for essential shopping throughout the lockdowns and restrictions.

Robert Leicester, trader at Warrington Fruit & Veg in the market, said: "The past 10 months have been extremely difficult for all businesses. Considering the circumstances, the new market, with its clean, open space, has been a huge success.

"The opening of the market has provided real support to small businesses, without which many would have struggled to survive.

"With the continued support of local people, Warrington's high street has a lot of potential for the future."



iSupply Group launches iSupply Engineering

WARRINGTON based iSupply Group, a leading recruitment company in the UK, has further strengthened its service offering and recruitment expertise by launching an Engineering Division.

This new division will specialise in providing permanent and contract workforce solutions to a multitude of sectors including, but not limited to: Manufacturing and Production, Industrial Automation, Power Transmission and Distribution, Power Generation, and Test, Inspection and Certification (TICs) companies throughout the UK.

iSupply Engineering will be headed up by accomplished engineering recruiter and businessman John-Paul Elliott, and iSupply Group Co-founder Andrew Hibbert who together have over 50 years' combined recruitment experience. The duo, who worked together 20 years ago have already successfully collaborated on a recent project supplying both engineering and industrial staff to support one of the UK's leading manufacturers of safety-critical PPE to front-line NHS workers as they fight the battle against Coronavirus in the UK. This recent recruitment drive and partnership has created 100's of job opportunities in the North West area.

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John Laverick

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despite the obvious numbing effects of lockdown and the potentially devastating effects of Covid I think we have some significant growth to look forward to in Warrington.

The new Centre Park Link will open in this Spring period and despite some disruption caused, I am sure this will make a significant impact on the amount of congestion at Bridgefoot and Chester Road. Relieving this congestion will enable Wilson Patten Street and Bridgefoot to fully develop and should bring positive effects in air quality and permeability to people on foot and bikes.

A renewed interest in residential development in the Town Centre is clearly welcome as we change the nature and use of our town centre, but it is clear that new homes for people need to be delivered in a manner that not only gives quality accommodation, but following recent events, the need to be able to generate and sustain communities of people with access to green space is more pointed than ever and good guidance is needed to achieve this.

Last month I touched on the funding awards that Warrington has received for the introduction of a number of projects which as a combined programme seek to establish hubs within the Town that

focus on health & wellbeing, digital enterprise, culture and active travel. All of these will be needed if we are to develop a town centre that is capable of supporting communities on a sustainable footing. It is also hoped that latest round of business grants will help to sustain businesses and when combined with the Journey First and Kickstart programmes should set a platform for recovery as we emerge from the wintery blues into an optimistic spring?

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BAS new showroom at Cyclehouse is officially open

BAS are thrilled to announce that their showroom at Cyclehouse in Warrington is now officially open.

Their new venture, in partnership with Thule and Cyclehouse, will see one of the largest showrooms of Thule products in the North West, displaying a wide range of cycle carriers/bike racks, roof top boxes, towbars, winter sports carriers, water sports carriers and a large choice of leisure accessories. BAS also provide a towbar fitting service both at their workshop in Warrington and mobile throughout much of the North West.

Thule have been established since 1942 and their products are of the highest quality, making them leaders in their field throughout the world. BAS have been supplying and fitting Thule products for many years and now seemed the perfect time for them to take it to the next level, by opening their very own showroom of products. Speaking on the new venture, Bill Bradley, Owner and MD of BAS said "During the last year we have seen a huge increase in the interest in outdoor sports and pursuits, in particular cycling, so it seemed the perfect time to partner with Cyclehouse. With 'staycations' very much on the rise due to the pandemic, people are choosing to go on UK breaks, where they can take their bikes/sports equipment with them, rather than a holiday abroad. Our showroom provides everything you need in one place to be able to do this."

Products will be available to purchase from their showroom at Cyclehouse and they will also be available to purchase via their website. For further information on the full range of products available you can visit <https://basnw.co.uk/product-category/bike-racks-leisure/> or alternatively you can contact the BAS office on 01925 640730 and one of their team will be more than happy to help.



Mission accomplished! Now time for a new fund-raising challenge

AFTER helping launch St Rocco's Hospice's 100 faces fund-raising campaign [warrington-worldwide](http://warrington-worldwide.co.uk) Editor Gary Skentelbery completed his challenge to raise £1,000 during 2020.

The task of raising £1,000 throughout the year seemed a fairly straightforward task – but then COVID struck and all fund-raising plans for all charities were thrown into chaos.

Gary explained: As the year progressed it became more and more difficult to think of a way to raise funds as I had been planning to do it as part of my weekly Warrington Park Runs – but these ended at the end of March.

"With all plans thrown up in the air the year-end was suddenly fast approaching when I hit upon the idea of running 100k in the month of December – a distance

I had never achieved before after embarking on the Couch to 5k programme just a few years ago.

"Doing the 10k as part of the English Half marathon event in September 2018 had been my only other significant running achievement, along with the weekly Warrington Park Runs.

"Being extremely proud to have been chosen as Face No 1 for St Rocco's #100Faces campaign whereby we were all tasked to raise £1,000 each for the charity during 2020, I had planned to be taking part in regular 5k Park Runs throughout the year to keep myself fit while also trying my best to inspire others to lead fit and healthy lifestyles – but the COVID-19 pandemic put paid to that, followed by some health issues of my own.

"Now having completed the challenge and raising over £1,200 for St Rocco's I would like to thank everyone for their support, not just the financial support for a great cause, but the words of

encouragement on my journey.

"Doing this challenge throughout December helped me keep focus and has been a huge boost for my own mental health – so I would recommend anyone who is struggling to look at setting yourself a challenge.

"Whether it be running, walking, cycling, sponsored diet or whatever little challenge you feel capable of completing – it will help you – and possibly a local charity as well.

"Once again thank you to everyone who has supported me on this journey. Three years ago I couldn't walk up Bridge Street without being out of breath – now I have managed 100k in a month and while I have a few aches and pains I am ready for my next challenge which will be to complete the equivalent of 30 half marathons (660K) in 2021 in aid of Warrington Disability Partnership who are celebrating their 30th anniversary this year."



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Consultation underway on “exciting plans” to expand Bridgewater High School

CONSULTATION is underway on “exciting plans” to expand Bridgewater High School so that it can meet the anticipated increase in the number of students in the south of the town.

Following careful scrutiny and planning, Warrington Borough Council has identified the need to increase the number of secondary places following the significant level of new housing developments in the area.

Principal Tim Long says the “exciting plans,” which will involve significant capital investment, are “a fantastic opportunity for the school” as it also allows the school to:

- transform teaching and learning facilities across both sites
- redistribute numbers more evenly across the two school sites
- provide a solution to the growing pressure on school places

Mr Long added: “However, we also want to make sure that as part of any expansion we keep all our stakeholders fully informed, giving them the appropriate opportunities to consult and feedback their views.”

“For the sake of clarity, this consultation document addresses the increase in the Published Admission Number from 300 to 360 starting with Year 7 in 2023. The consultation over the Building Application is a separate process.

The School has been asked by the Local Authority to increase its Published Admission Number (PAN) from 300 to 360, commencing in 2023 and starting with Year 7.

Because this is considered to be a “significant expansion” the school must consult in line with guidance from the Department for Education.

In order to accommodate an increase in numbers, we must also build additional capacity. We must also consult over this through a separate Building Application process.”

The reason for the available investment for Bridgewater High School is that it has been identified as central to several housing developments in the local area and therefore is named as the school that will benefit from the funding in the S106 housing developer contribution for education places.

The Local Authority will be liaising closely with Bridgewater High School as it develops the site and expands the school roll to ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

The High School is a large, 11-16 co-educational, secondary school operating across two separate sites in Appleton, Warrington. The School converted to an academy in December 2014 and is part of The Challenge Academy Trust (TCAT) which comprises nine schools and a Sixth Form College all based in the wider Warrington area.

Bridgewater High School would usually admit 300 pupils into the

Year 7 cohort each year. Due to exceptional demand and appeals, the school now has more than 300 pupils in all Year groups. Due to significant housing developments creating the need for additional places, as well as the current basic need for more pupil places as evidenced by applications over the past 3 years, the proposal is to expand permanently the school’s Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 300 to 360. This would start in September 2023 with initial growth in Year 7 only.

A planning application has been submitted to expand the school which will also involve “sprucing up” parts of the existing school and also creating a health and wellbeing garden that will create an inviting and welcoming entrance.

The chosen contractors will be

“experts” having worked on similar projects and the works will be carried out so as to cause as least disruption as possible during term times.

Works impacting on existing buildings would only take place during school holidays.

For full details on the project and to take part in the consultations visit <https://bridgewaterhigh.org/expansion-project-consultation/>





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From our leisure facilities including state-of-the-art gyms, swimming pools, tennis courts and sports pitches, a wide range of library resources, to our Lifestyles support programmes and our community outreach activities - we can help you and your families make positive changes this year whatever your age or interests.



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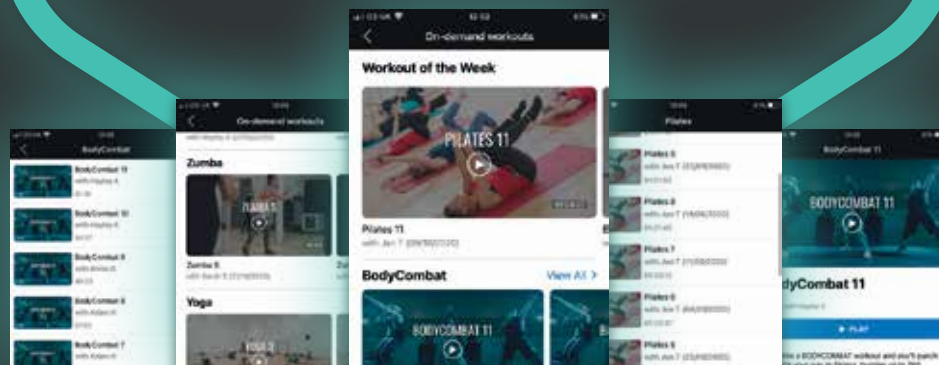
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In 2012, ICC Solutions was delighted to become double winners of the Queen's Awards for Enterprise in the Innovation and International Trade categories. This was quickly followed by another Queen's Award for International Trade in 2016 and Innovation in 2017.

Wendy and David have also been recognised for their achievements individually, with David becoming a Deputy Lieutenant for Cheshire and also recognised as Outstanding Cheshire and Warrington Business Leader in 2018. Both are Northern Powerhouse Export Champions and, in addition, they were delighted to be recognised for their contribution to international trade and the UK economy when they were both awarded with an O.B.E. in the Queen's 2020 New Year Honours List.

After 25 years of success, the company is looking forward to celebrating the achievement in 2021, although with the fast paced, ever-changing payment industry, there's no such thing as a day off, and ICC Solutions is looking forward to the next challenge, and hopefully the next award!

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At last! January has been ...and gone!

By Nigel Garner

A long, dark, cold month that starts with hope and good intentions but usually ends up being a month we are all glad to see the back of. Cold mornings, dark nights, rain, wind, abandoned resolutions, blue Monday, floods, then lockdown 3!! I bet you feel better already?



Last January, the UK finance houses set out their plans for the year; sales targets, lending criteria, risk strategy, target industry sectors; and then came Covid-19 with its own much bigger and demanding agenda.

Suddenly, lending slowed down as business's reviewed their own position; customers' started to require payment holidays and reduce repayments. The impact being that finance house lending (sales) significantly slowed and their revenues (customer repayments) hugely reduced. Now, I'm not saying "pity the poor little bankers", but the lending industry quickly had to re-think its plans and strategies and adapt to customer demand amid uncontrollable circumstances.

And it did.

Since the lockdown began in March of last year UK finance houses have continued to support UK business with the introduction of government backed CBILS & BBL and a wealth of lending initiatives. Leasing and HP, Secured & un-secured loans, VAT & CT loans, Asset finance & Re-finance, Invoice finance. All valuable commercial funding products that bring vital finance to your business to enable growth, provide capital and steady cashflow.

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There is no doubt that the UK finance industry has had to "weather the storm" that was 2020. Still, onwards and upwards, February starts to show new shoots, lighter mornings and a chance to put your "big coat" away for another year.



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Time to take next steps to make Warrington Carbon Neutral by 2030



ONE year on from Warrington's first Young Peoples Climate Conference it is now time to take the next steps in the bid to make the town carbon neutral by 2030.

Warrington Youth Voice held the first Climate Conference in Warrington at the beginning of 2020 in February, and since then they have worked very hard to reduce the impacts of climate change.

Ranging from litter picking and awareness-raising through social media posts, to being involved in sustainable energy policy and influencing Warrington Borough Council's Climate Emergency Commission, Warrington's official Youth Voice organisation has been taking many steps to ensure a green and clean future.

The Conference, which was attended by more than 10 schools, asked young people in attendance to commit to one thing each they would do to reduce their carbon footprint and brought ideas for how their school could become more environmentally friendly.

Schools such as Birchwood Community High School & College had been working throughout the year before the conference, with more work since, to create a more environmentally friendly school with their "fabulous" ECO team. However, this is just one "brilliant" example of the great work going on across the community and other schools in Warrington.

Warrington's Chief Youth Officer Louis Groarke says a year has now passed and it's time to take the next steps, with a Climate Emergency Youth Forum which feeds directly into the WBC Climate Emergency Commission.

The main objectives of the Climate Emergency Youth Forum are to:

- Create a youth action plan that is aligned with the Climate Emergency Commissions plans
- Support a network for schools/colleges ECO Councils and to empower them to take action
- Promote community-based action on climate change and to encourage young people to get involved
- Provide feedback to the Climate Emergency Commission
- Consult with the Climate Emergency Commission

Warrington Youth Voice will be running the Climate Emergency Youth Forum for the council, and will be responsible for ensuring its effective delivery. You can find more information about the Climate

Emergency by visiting www.warringtonyouthvoice.org/climate-youth-forum.

Louis, formally Chief Executive at Warrington Youth Voice and Deputy Chair of the Climate Emergency Commission for the Council said: "As the person who hosted the Greener Schools Conference/Youth Climate Conference in February 2020, I was very happy to know progress has been made as a result of it and knowing this has empowered myself and my team to do more, we want to create a better town which is ready for the future however this needs to be a community effort. Young people have a part to play but so do the adults. We need to take the situation that we face with Climate Change as an emergency because that's exactly what it is. It's only by taking actions locally we will help to reduce the impact of climate change and by doing this we are supporting our environment in its job to sustain life."

"The aim to get Warrington to net 0 by 2030 is only going to be achieved if all groups of society work together and young people are a part of this, I'd urge any young person who wants to get involved in our new Climate Youth Forum to do so by visiting our website and emailing us. It is also very important to note that COVID-19 has had an influence on how we travel and the carbon emission we produce, this, of course, has helped our environment but we still have a long way to go, especially with reduced recycling and masks being littered and getting into our ecosystem, harming water, animals and birds".

"The youth climate conference which I personally managed had a great deal of support behind it, from climate scientists such as Dr Markus Swann and Cllr Dr David Ellis who is also the Chair of the council's Climate Emergency Commission presenting to those young people in attendance, we also had senior local officials who took part in a Q & A session with the students."

"The event was very successful and it achieved its intended purpose despite only being arranged within the same 2 weeks from when I had the idea."

For more details on Warrington Youth Voice visit www.warringtonyouthvoice.org

Hospital receives first new state-of-the-art OPTOS machine

WARRINGTON Hospital is the first in the country to buy a new state-of-the-art OPTOS machine which will revolutionise the way patients with serious eye conditions, including diabetic retinopathy, are managed.

The Ophthalmic team at Warrington and Halton NHS Foundation Trust is delighted to receive the new diagnostic machine, worth over £200,000. It will primarily be used to monitor patients with diabetic eye disease, but there are many other ophthalmic conditions it will be used to detect.

Diabetic retinopathy – a complication of diabetes where blood vessels in the eye are damaged – does not tend to cause any symptoms in the early stages, but without prompt treatment can cause permanent blindness. Screening can detect problems before it affects vision, and OPTOS allows this scan to be undertaken quickly and easily, and with minimal time spent in

hospital – something essential during COVID and one of the driving forces behind purchasing the machine.

The prevalence of diabetes-related eye disease is 40% in the diabetic population and it is estimated that the number of people with diabetes will rise to 4 million in UK by 2025 – this, together with increasing life expectancy, poses daunting prospects on the current diabetic eye service. It is vitally important these patients are monitored.

The Optos Silverstone Advanced is a wide field fundus camera that captures images of the central, mid-peripheral and far peripheral retina. The images captured are wider than an ophthalmologist could see with a detailed face to face examination.



ANDY CARTER MP

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Barclays provide £100k boost for Warrington Youth Club

WARRINGTON Youth Club has received a £100k boost from Barclays to support the meaningful work they are doing to support young people and families across Warrington impacted by the pandemic.

In April, Barclays announced a £100m Community Aid Package to support charities that are helping people and communities most impacted by COVID-19. Alongside a colleague-matched fundraising initiative and the £10m pledged through their 100x100 Programme, Barclays is donating funds to charity partners across the UK, Americas, Asia and Europe to ensure help reaches those who need it most.

In the UK these partners include those who are meeting the immediate needs of low-income families, those facing financial hardship, isolated elderly people, NHS staff and key workers.

Warrington Youth Club is delighted to be one of Barclays' UK charity partners, chosen for the meaningful work they are doing to support local children, young people, and families across Warrington, whose lives have been adversely affected during the pandemic. The funding will be used to sustain vital projects including Mentoring and Emotional Wellbeing Support for disadvantaged children; delivery of essential food and care packages to vulnerable families, and digital 'Youth Zone @ Home' content to keep young people engaged while face-to-face youth work is disrupted.

Nigel Higgins, Barclays Chairman, said: "COVID-19 has created an unprecedented social and economic impact in the UK, with many experiencing greater hardship due to the crisis. Incredible charities have been playing a vital role in the UK's response to the pandemic, ensuring urgent help reaches those most in need of support. As a

bank we have been doing all we can for our customers, clients and colleagues, and we hope that by partnering with Warrington Youth Club and many other charities across the UK, collectively we can ensure that as many people as possible in the communities in which we live and work are supported through this crisis."

David McNicholl, Chief Exec of Warrington Youth Club, said: "We are thrilled that Barclays have chosen to support Warrington Youth Club and in turn to support some of

the most vulnerable people in our community. The pandemic, which continues to cause extreme levels of concern and uncertainty has greatly affected the lives of many thousands of children and young people from across the borough. With the support of Barclays, we have been able to reach out to families and provide a broad range of support and we will continue to do so throughout the coming year. We would like to say a massive thank you to everyone from Barclays."



NHS

Warrington
Clinical Commissioning Group

Coronavirus vaccination programme

The NHS is continuing the rollout of the community vaccination programme in Warrington.

Vaccinations are being administered to those most at risk, in line with national guidance.

You will be contacted to book an appointment when it is your turn.

For more information about the programme, including frequently asked questions, visit

haltonwarringtonccg.nhs.uk/covidvaccine

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Ryland's skipper running length of country for charity

by Garry Clarke

WITH football activities on hold for a while, Warrington Rylands 1906 captain Gary Kenny needed another challenge, so on New Year's Day he set out running the distance between Land's End and John O'Groats to raise money for charity.

Completing the distance is an arduous task for any endurance athlete, with many challengers given 12 months to complete the task, but Kenny and his running partner David Bowden, are making things even harder for themselves by aiming to complete the 874 miles in just five months.

This equates to a 10km run every day for 137 days before finishing off with a full marathon run to complete the distance.

The pair are raising funds for mental health charity MIND and Ronald McDonald House.

Not actually being able to run from point to point due to the national lockdown, instead of waiting until they could have done the run conventionally, Kenny felt now was the right time to do the challenge virtually.

"Just before Christmas I found out that a close friend had been silently suffering from mental health issues. It makes you realise just how important charities like Mind are. I have seen what these charities can

do for people and how they can literally save lives," said Kenny.

Acknowledging how tough the challenge will be he said "It will be tough, it is pretty daunting and grueling but just knowing that we are raising money for two amazing causes that alone will keep us going".

To find out more information about Kenny's challenge and to sponsor him, visit his Justgiving page - <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/gkletogog>



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C A R P E D I E M

Financially yours

By David Watkinson

Tax Returns and Assistance during Covid

When you read this the deadline for the submission of 2020 self assessment tax returns will have passed.

The current environment remains extremely difficult for businesses and, in fact, are in many ways getting worse. The economy remains in lockdown due to the Coronavirus, and this will in all probability remain the case for a number of months. In addition, many businesses continue to face uncertainties following the exit of the UK from the EU trading block, despite the platitudes of the government. And if this was not enough, many businesses were impacted by the recent floods experienced in Mid-Cheshire.

HM Revenue and Customs ("HMRC"), despite repeated requests and submissions from many professional bodies, including the Institute of Chartered Accountants, and business associations, have consistently refused to extend the filing deadline. Therefore, if you have failed to submit your return by 31st January then you will be automatically charged a penalty of £100. However, there is some relief in that HMRC have confirmed that if an appeal is lodged against any penalty on the grounds that the delay is due to Coronavirus affecting either the taxpayer or their agent then they will accept that as a reasonable excuse and cancel the penalty.

We are currently writing this column some eight days before the deadline and are working hard at ensuring all Returns are submitted in a final form before that deadline,

and we are confident that where we have received the necessary information from clients, we will achieve this. However, like most businesses, we have been affected by Coronavirus, with people working remotely wherever possible for the past eight months, meaning that it may be more difficult for clients to get their information to us. In these few instances, we have decided as a practice not to rely on any statements from HMRC that penalties will be forgiven. Instead, we have decided that a Return will be submitted, wherever possible, for all clients, even if it is a provisional Return using estimated figures, with the additional difficulties caused by Coronavirus being given on the Return as the reason.

So where are we currently up to?

One of the major developments in the past month or so is the Supreme Court rulings, following appeals from the Financial Conduct Authority and various insurance companies against rulings in lower courts, that in many or most cases insurance companies must pay-out on claims brought under the policies due to Coronavirus.

We are accountants and not solicitors, and so are not qualified to advise in specific cases. However, it would seem that the claims fall into four main types:

- Losses due to disease
- Losses due to prevention of access
- Losses due to a combination of the above
- Losses compared to expected trends

If your claim falls into one of the above then you should find yourself covered. Our advice would be to contact your insurer in the first place. If you do not receive a positive response and wish to pursue it further then you seek legal advice.

Financially, there are a number of developments which you should be aware of.

Following the delay to the Autumn Budget we are expecting a budget in March. Following the extensive support that has been handed out to clients and individuals since the first period of lockdown it is expected that we may see some initial clawback of the cost of this support. Obviously, we cannot say what will be appear in the budget, but there are three areas which are often quoted as being areas that the government may look at:

1. Capital Gains Tax. Many commentators feel that there will be an increase in the rates of Capital Gains Tax and/or a reduction in reliefs available. Therefore, it may be advisable to ensure that any gains are made in the current tax year if possible.
2. Stamp Duty. Many commentators give this as a potential area that may be looked at.
3. Pension Relief. This has been an area that people have expected some reduction in the tax allowances for a number of years.

With regard to the Covid assistance:

1. The fourth period of the Self Employed Income Support



Margaret Black and David Watkinson

Grant ("SEISS") covers the period from 1st February to 30th April. Applications for the third grant covering the three months to 31st January are now closed. The details of the fourth SEISS grant, and the exact qualifying conditions, had not been confirmed at the date of writing, but the third grant covered 80% of average trading profits up to a maximum of £7500.

2. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ("JRS") continues at present up to the end of April. This covers 80% of the wages of "furloughed" employees up to a maximum of £2,500. The grant does not cover employer contributions for National Insurance or Pensions,
3. The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme ("CBILS") and the Business Bounce Back Loan ("BBL") both continue to be open to new applications. There have been no changes to the qualifying conditions. The BBL is for smaller businesses and is available for loans up to £50,000. The CBILS scheme is for larger loans in excess of £50,000. Both are administered by a number of banks and other lenders, including Funding Circle, and applications should be made directly to the relevant lender. Most have simple on-line application forms.

WatkinsonBlack have considerable experience in all areas of taxation and business services, including the provision of a very cost-effective payroll bureau service. If you want to arrange a no-obligation initial meeting on any business matter then please contact us. 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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Australian superstar wanting to add value and experience to Warrington



By James Gordon

SUPERSTAR signing Greg Inglis hopes his experience can help Warrington Wolves finally clinch that elusive Super League title.

Inglis, 33, arrived in the UK on a one-year deal, but hasn't played since retiring while at South Sydney Rabbitohs back in April 2019 due to ongoing injury concerns.

He said: "The staff here at Warrington have welcomed me with open arms. I just wish it was a bit warmer!"

"It is what it is and it is an ever-changing environment that we are living in right across the world but after getting over the jet lag, we have been finding our bearings a little bit but we have just been going to training and back home to the little area where we live so it has been comforting."

Inglis will become one of the most decorated Australian players to play in Super League, having won 39 caps for the Kangaroos and played 32 times for Queensland in State of Origin.

He has played 265 games in the NRL for Souths and Melbourne Storm, winning three NRL titles and the 2010 World Club Challenge.

His versatility has also been a theme throughout his career, and he has won individual gongs in three different positions – full-back, centre and stand-off, as well as winning the Golden Boot as the best player in the world in 2009.

He added: "I just want to come here, put my best foot forward and

add value to the team.

"I'm looking forward to working as a team. Team always comes first in my mind."

"Once you get everyone working on the same page, the better you are going to be as a squad and everything else is a snowball effect and it just rolls on from that."

"I've come in just to give my experience and help the others with my experience but I am just really looking forward to playing alongside these guys and this team for the season and fingers crossed we will get there at the end."

Inglis is expected to slot in to the Wolves team at centre, with Anthony Gelling having departed in the off-season.

But he has warned it may take him a few weeks to get up to speed – although an expected delay to the start of the Super League season, currently slated for March 11, may well work in his favour.

He said: "I'm just asking fans and supporters to be patient because I won't be at my best for five or six rounds and that's just me being completely honest. It's just getting K's (kilometres) and getting used to week in week out footy again."

"It's not just about the weekends but what goes on between there like performing at training so you can perform better on the weekends."



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Where are they now? Amazing Alumni

Last year at Warrington & Vale Royal College we celebrated a record number of Level 3 students progressing to their first choice university. We caught up with former superstar students Hannah Ruddle and Jade Ginger to hear how they are adjusting to life at university.



Hannah
Ruddle

Level 3 Health & Social Care student Hannah Ruddle, who completed her course with us last year, has since progressed onto Liverpool Hope University to study Social Work.

Hannah says that, following an appointment with the college's Careers Team, she realised that she wanted to make a real difference and decided that Social Work was her dream career. Hannah feels that her Health & Social Care course helped prepare her for life at university, saying, "The work I've previously done in college such as communication and psychology has enabled me to complete work in university."

Following her degree, Hannah intends to undertake an MA in Social Work and become a social worker for the homeless.



Jade
Ginger

Level 3 Childcare student Jade Ginger completed her course with us last year and is now at Edge Hill University studying Early Years Education with QTS.

Jade chose this pathway as she aims to become an early years teacher and decided that going to university would provide her with the best opportunity to achieve her goal.

Throughout her time at Warrington & Vale Royal College, Jade undertook placements in a range of childcare settings, which equipped her with valuable practical experience. Jade believes that her college course helped her prepare for university, saying, "My college course definitely supports my university course, as it is a preview of what teaching is like through placement, and the assignments set are like a practice run."

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