

NEWS KIDS CAN TRUST

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR*



First News

2.6M READERS*

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HOW GREEN TECH CAN BOOST BUSINESS AND OUR QUALITY OF LIFE

NEWS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT
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HOPPY COPPER!

ONCE UPON A CRIME, A POLICE FORCE CLAIMED THAT ONE OF ITS OFFICERS HAD BEEN TURNED INTO A FROG!

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IRAN PROTESTS SPREAD AROUND THE WORLD

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HISTORIC CUP DEFEAT FOR CRYSTAL PALACE

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HAVE YOU HEARD?

Snappy stories to get you talking!

TEEN HELPS HOVE'S HOMELESS

Fifteen-year-old Scarlett Chapman is on a mission to help Brighton and Hove tackle homelessness by turning unused plots of land into homes for struggling families, with the first proposed site to be set up soon. Since she was eight, Scarlett has been busking to raise money for homeless people and has even set up her own charity called Mission: HOME to help families stuck in temporary accommodation.

THEY SAID THAT!

“Having a home gives children stability and a sense of belonging.”

Scarlett Chapman



A FLIPPING GOOD DEAL?

A bluefin tuna has fetched a record price of £2.4m at a Tokyo fish market's first auction of 2026. The 243kg fish was bought by the 'Tuna King', Kiyoshi Kimura, who believes that the first tuna of the year brings good luck for the rest of the year. Kimura also bought other record-breaking tunas in 2012, 2013 and 2019.

ONE IN FOUR KIDS UNABLE TO READ WELL



Would you find it helpful to have an adult read to you? This year is the National Year of Reading, but research has found that one in eight children aged 5-8 don't own a book. The Bookmark Reading Charity is asking for volunteers to dedicate an hour of their time to read to children, after finding that one in four children leave primary school unable to read well.



BIG SCHOOL REBUILD

A Nepalese school that was damaged in earthquakes in 2015 and 2021 has now been rebuilt with the help of a charity from the Isle of Man. Shree Jaya Devi Secondary School teaches around 120 students in Lamjung, one of Nepal's most remote regions in the Himalayas. The Pahar Trust Nepal charity has previously helped to build schools and health centres in Nepal, as well as kitting out libraries.



THE NEW LEGO BLOCK THAT PLAYS BACK

LEGO says it's changing the game with new SMART bricks that will let kids interact with their builds in a brand-new way. SMART bricks, tags and minifigures have technology in them that can respond to play with different sounds and behaviours. Fans will be able to get their hands on the first SMART Star Wars sets from 1 March.



IRON AGE DISCOVERY

A team of archaeologists working on a building site in Norfolk have made a musical discovery from the Iron Age. They believe that the battle trumpet, called a carnyx, would have been used by Celtic armies in war to intimidate their enemies. Only three carnyces have been found in the UK, with this new discovery being the most complete one so far.

SHOULD LYNXES RETURN?

Do you think the lynx should return to the Scottish Highlands? The big cats used to live in the UK until they became extinct here over 1,000 years ago. Now, a partnership called Lynx to Scotland is about to start asking thousands of people across Scotland how they feel about bringing lynx back. However, the Scottish government said that it has no plans to reintroduce the species. What do you think?



OYSTERS FOR ULSTER

In Northern Ireland, Ulster Wildlife is bringing the European oyster to coastlines once again, after the species was almost wiped out in the region 100 years ago. The charity will be putting the oysters in Belfast Lough to establish a new population. The oysters aren't safe to be eaten, but they will help to improve the poor water quality in the lough.

WE'RE ALL TALKING ABOUT... POKÉ FOSSIL FUN



An exhibition showing off the 'fossils' of different Pokémon has reached its last stop at the Mie Prefectural Museum in Tsu, Japan. This cute exhibit is said to be a unique learning experience where fans can explore the world of Pokémon in a new way with the help of Excavator Pikachu. It makes its return to the USA in spring, so fingers crossed it comes to the UK soon!



DRONE BLOOD DELIVERY

Drones are being trialled in south Wales to help blood banks deliver to places further away. A blood bank is somewhere that stores donated blood so that patients who need it can get the correct type. The drones for the Dragon's Heart project will have their own special landing pads so they can take off vertically. The director of the Welsh Blood Service, Alan Prosser, said that the project will "improve outcomes for patients across the country."



We post daily news throughout the week on the **First News app**. Here's one from the past few days...



The president's hot wheels

TRUMP'S OLD FERRARI UP FOR AUCTION

FANCY owning a rare car that used to belong to US President Donald Trump? Well, you'll need to have a spare \$1 million (£745,000) lying around...

The speedy red Ferrari F430 F1 sports car with the number plate DJT (Donald John Trump) is up for auction in Florida, USA.

It was bought brand-new by Mr Trump in 2007 but has only logged 9,506 miles, which isn't much at all for an 18-year-old car.

Mecum Auctions estimates that the Ferrari will fetch between \$750,000 and \$1 million at the sale, which is set to happen on 17 January.

Anyone with a home or school subscription can access the **First News app**. Just use your **Web ID** or **First News Education ID** and you're away!

● **MARTIN LUTHER KING JR DAY**
19 JANUARY 2026

MLK Day remembers American civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr, who protested against racism and discrimination in the USA, but was assassinated in 1968 in Memphis.





52%

More than half of the teachers the BBC spoke to say that vaping is a problem in their school.

TEACHERS' VAPE BATTLE

TEACHERS in England are asking the government to help them keep vapes out of schools.

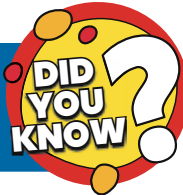
In a new BBC survey of about 7,000 secondary school teachers, a third said that their school has put extra staff on patrol in playgrounds to stop pupils vaping, while a fifth have seen their school use valuable funds to install expensive vape detectors. Other measures include moving outdoor shelters and cutting down hedges to remove hiding places that pupils might use to vape.

A plea for help

However, teachers say they feel "alone" in the battle against vaping. They say they need clearer guidance on how to tackle it, and want the government to fund programmes to teach pupils about the dangers of vaping.

The NHS says that vapes are harmful and should only be used by adults who are trying to stop smoking, but it's no secret to teachers that lots of children use them.

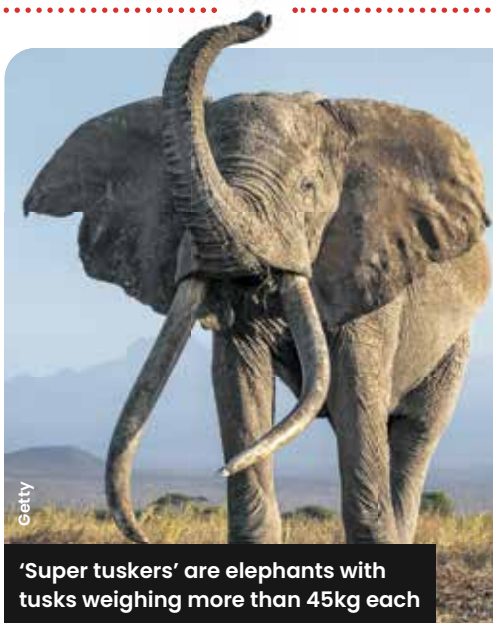
THE World Health Organization says that children are nine times more likely to vape than adults.



One 15-year-old pupil at St Lawrence Academy in Scunthorpe told the BBC that she has up to 500 puffs on her vape every day. She said: "I saw a lot of other people doing it and just wanted to try it myself... then I didn't know how to stop and I carried on."

Her headteacher, Dan Ellerby, said: "It's really difficult [for schools] to tackle it alone and you need that support from parents, families and local community, to ensure that students understand the potential impact of vaping."

The Department for Education told the BBC that it's taking "urgent action" to combat vaping in schools, including teaching kids about the risks under changes to the school curriculum that will arrive in September.



Tributes to Craig the elephant

CAMPAIGNERS say the fact that a famous elephant in Kenya lived until the age of 54 proves that animal conservation is working.

Craig (left), a 'super tusker' elephant, died of natural causes earlier this month, on 3 January. Together, his pair of huge tusks weighed nearly 100kg, but the dedicated work of wildlife groups protected him from ivory poachers.

"Beyond his extraordinary tusks, Craig was deeply loved for his remarkably calm nature... and a symbol of what successful conservation looks like," said the Kenya Wildlife Service.

The number of elephants in Kenya is said to have grown from 36,280 in 2021 to 42,072 in 2025.

'Super tuskers' are elephants with tusks weighing more than 45kg each

US pulls out of 66 global organisations

DONALD Trump has ordered the USA to leave 66 international organisations "as soon as possible", and stop funding them.

The organisations work on a range of different topics, from protecting the climate and nature to equality and human rights. President Trump's order, signed last week, said that the groups were working against "the interests of the United States".

In pulling out, the USA will be the only country in the world that isn't part of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The organisation is seen as essential for international

negotiations to tackle the climate crisis.

David Widawsky, from the World Resources Institute, called the decision to exit the UNFCCC a "blunder that gives away American advantage for nothing in return". He said: "American communities and businesses will lose economic ground as other countries capture the jobs, wealth and trade created by the booming clean-energy economy."

Mr Trump says that climate change is a "hoax", and wants the US to keep on using fossil fuels, which are known to damage the planet and create deadly pollution.



First News says...



Ian Eddy, acting editor

IT'S not really a huge surprise that schools are struggling to beat vaping (left).

Tobacco kills up to half of its users and the industry has a history of breaking the law by targeting its deadly products to children, as well as smuggling, making false claims and denying scientific facts.

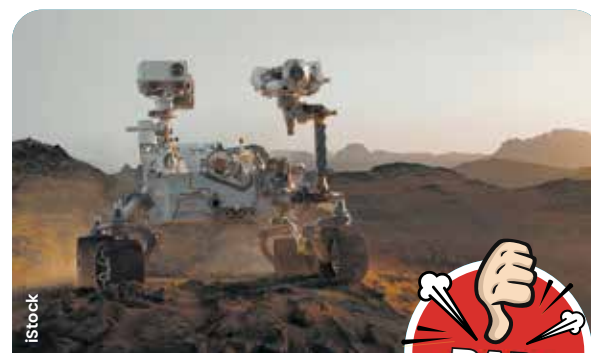
Most of you no doubt want to fit in at school and look cool, but experts say that vapes have "long-term consequences for brain development" in children and also "generate toxic substances, some of which are known to cause cancer and some that increase the risk of heart and lung disorders." That's a pretty steep price to pay, and you could be paying it off for the rest of your life.



Roboroak

Chore-dodgers

CHINESE tech company Roboroak has launched the Saros Rover, a robot vacuum cleaner with legs that allow it to walk, hop over obstacles and even climb steps so that it can clean staircases. It doesn't have a release date yet, though – so for now, you'll still have to work for your pocket money!



istock

Science

NASA has had to give up trying to collect rocks from Mars and transport them back to Earth. Its Perseverance rover, which was launched to Mars in 2020, has already collected some samples, but the cost of getting them back to Earth has become too expensive.



CHECK OUT OUR WEEKLY QUIZ!

Test yourself on this week's news with the **First News** quiz, included with every subscription. Play it with your family, friends or by yourself. Read this week's issue to get all the answers right!

Ask a grown-up/bill-payer for your **WEB ID** to use the app.





SAVE THAT SPIDER!

(and these guys, too...)



THE fate of a spider that dazzles with colour could hinge on human efforts to protect it this year.

The Indian rainbow tarantula, also known (confusingly) as the psychedelic earth tiger, is one of ten animals and plants on the 2026 'species to watch' list.

Put together each year by nature protection charity Fauna & Flora, the list highlights ten extraordinary but endangered species, and what steps wildlife teams around the world are taking to rescue them from the threat of extinction.

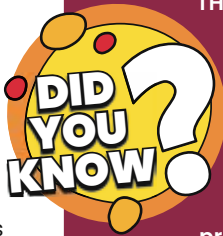
Spiders, snakes and scaly things

Indian rainbow tarantulas only exist in tropical forests in Kerala, India. They're threatened by two things – habitat loss and the illegal pet trade. However, a female-led group of spider experts is trying to secure their survival by raising awareness and getting the local community on board with helping to protect them.

The species in this year's list are also put at risk by climate change, hunting and simply being misunderstood. It includes the Saint Lucia fer de lance, a highly venomous snake, the

cao vit gibbon, the world's second-rarest primate, and the Temminck's pangolin, which is killed for its meat and scales. There's also the European eel, the blackchin guitarfish, the Utila spiny-tailed iguana, the saker falcon, the clouded leopard and central Asian wild tulips.

Fauna & Flora boss Kristian Teleki said: "Every plant and animal plays a unique and essential role in sustaining life on Earth... we can no longer afford to delay action to protect and restore our planet's natural wonders."



THERE is hope for these species. Fauna & Flora's 2025 list included **Antillean manatees**, but now, its partners in Honduras, Fundación Cuero y Salado, have set up a community-led response network that rushes out to rescue them when they're injured. An action plan to save the species is being rolled out, too. It's proof that our actions can make a difference.

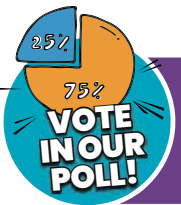
Experts say tracking devices can harm kids

DEVICES that help parents to track their kids' live location can damage childhood development, experts warn.

For parents, using smartphone apps or devices like Apple AirTags to see where their child is can be reassuring. However, a group of 74 health professionals, including doctors and psychologists, have signed a letter by campaign group Generation Focus urging grown-ups to stop and think about the effect that it's having on their kids.

They argue that it prevents children from learning independent, real-life skills, such as problem-solving and knowing what to do in an emergency without a phone. They also say that it's harmful to kids' mental health and resilience.

The letter says: "When we track our children, we are telling them that the world is unsafe." However, Lauren Antonoff, chief executive of tracking app Life360, disagrees. She told *The Times*: "For many families, [tracking] actually expands what kids can do on their own."



What do you think? Is parents tracking their child's location a good thing?

Vote at first.news/polls

Minecraft crowned 2025's top film

THE highest-grossing film in the UK and Ireland in 2025 was... A Minecraft Movie!

That means it made more money than any other film from ticket sales at cinemas. The videogame-inspired adventure, starring Jack Black (pictured left) and featuring the viral

Chicken Jockey song, made a sizzling £56.88 million!

Movie stats for the past year, released by analysts Comscore, reveal that cinemas across the UK and Ireland enjoyed their best year since the Covid pandemic. Together, they made £1.07 billion – the highest total since 2019.

In total, 1,092 films were released – slightly fewer than the 1,124 that were released in 2024.

Audiences la-la-la-lava'd A Minecraft Movie

Have you ever tried mackerel?



BRITISH FISH DISH WISH

"Eat local!" say researchers

DINERS in the UK should let the likes of salmon, cod and tuna off the hook and eat more local fish, like sardines and anchovies, a new report says.

Britain is an island surrounded by sea, so we're not exactly stuck for places to find fish. However, research from the University of East Anglia (UEA) says that over four-fifths of the seafood we eat is actually caught in other countries' waters.

At the same time, says lead researcher Dr Silvia Ferrini, "much of the fish caught in local seas is exported, instead of ending up on British dinner tables." The result is more pollution as seafood is shipped around the globe.

The UEA's study also found that a quarter of Brits have never tried anchovies, a quarter have never tried herring, and about one in eight of us have never tried sardines. Over two-fifths of us are willing to try new fish in our diet, but younger adults eat far less seafood than older generations, pointing at a possible decline in seafood consumption in the future.

A school lunch shake-up?

Dr Ferrini said: "One practical solution is introducing British fish into school meals, helping children develop healthy habits early and giving families the confidence to diversify their diets."

"The message is clear: sardines and anchovies aren't just good for you, they could help secure the future of Britain's seafood."



A beach on the Firth of Forth

HUMAN-MADE materials could make up as much as half of some Scottish beaches, research suggests.

A University of Glasgow study of six beaches along the Firth of Forth found that bricks, concrete, glass and industrial waste is getting mixed up with sand, with human waste materials making up almost 50% of the sediment at Granton, near Edinburgh.

Scientists think that climate change is a factor, with stronger and more frequent storms causing more material to get washed up onto the seaside.

**London, UK**

A RALLY is held in support of the people of Iran after weeks of anti-government protests in the Middle Eastern country. Hundreds of people in Iran have reportedly been killed by security forces during the protests, which began over soaring costs for food and other essentials. People are now calling for an end to the rule of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. As *First News* went to press, US President Donald Trump said the US was considering “very strong options” to step in. The Iranian foreign minister warned that the country would respond if attacked by the US. You can read the latest on this story on the *First News* app, which any home or school subscribers can access with their Web ID or *First News* Education ID.

**Berlin, Germany**

A MEMBER of the Berliner Seehunde (Berlin Seals) ice swimming club takes a frosty dip in the Orankesee lake.

Harcourt, Australia

A BURNT car remains after bushfires tears through southeast Australia. A state of emergency was declared in the state of Victoria and hundreds of homes have been destroyed. It's feared that the fires could burn for weeks due to the hot and dry conditions.



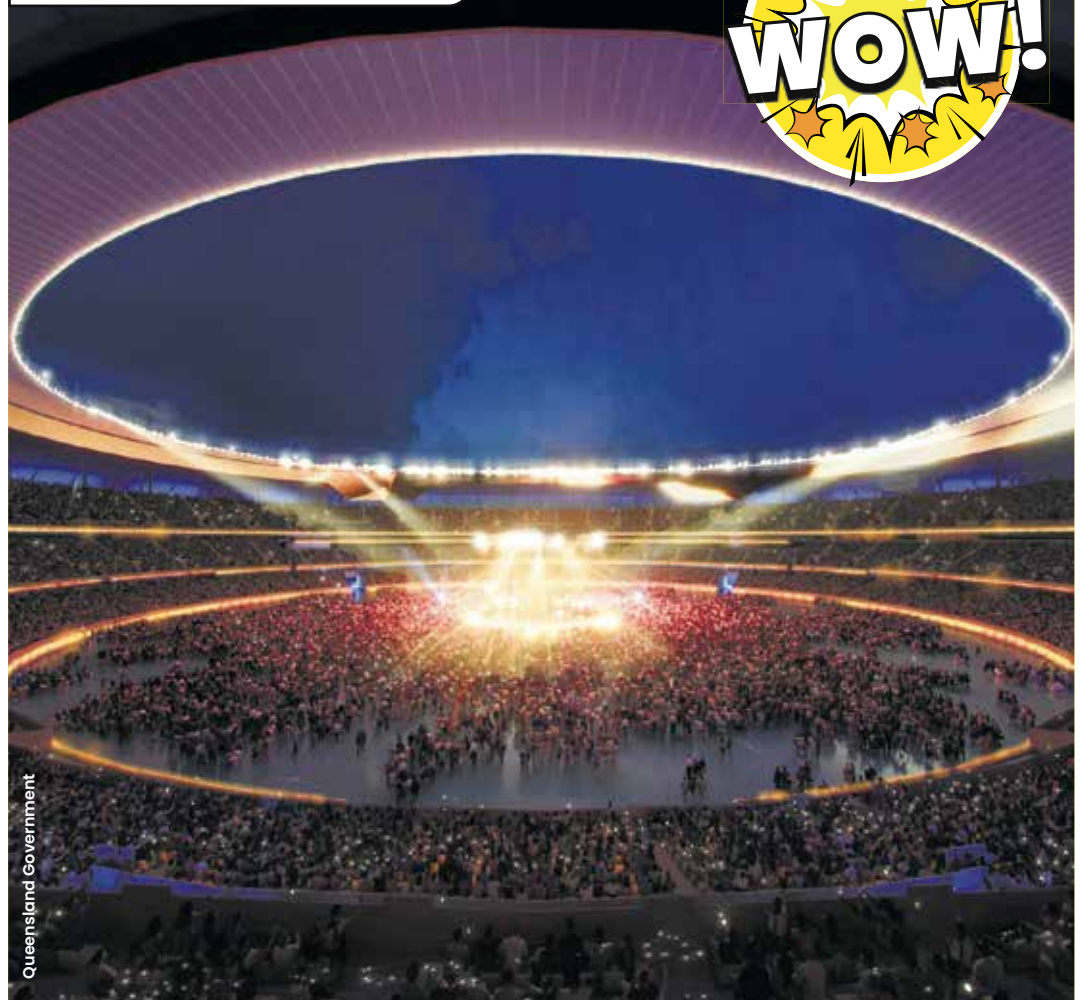
Edinburgh, UK



RZSS

A GENTOO penguin plays in the snow at Edinburgh Zoo.

Brisbane, Australia



Queensland Government

AN artist's impression of a huge new stadium set to be built in Brisbane, the host city for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The 63,000-capacity stadium would host the opening and closing ceremonies as well as the athletics. It will also be able to showcase a wide range of other sports and entertainment events and will cost around AU\$3.5 billion (£1.7 billion) to build.



Caracas, Venezuela



Getty

A MAN rides a motorcycle in Caracas, Venezuela's capital. The country's president, Nicolás Maduro, was captured there by US special forces troops earlier this month. The US has accused Mr Maduro of leading a huge crime ring, and took him and his wife away during a huge raid. The Venezuelan government has said that 100 people, including civilians, died during the raid.



SCOTLAND

World Cup bank holiday plan

Scotland could get an extra bank holiday in June to celebrate the men's football team reaching the World Cup for the first time since 1998. First Minister John Swinney has proposed Monday 15 June be made a national bank holiday, the day after Scotland's opening match against Haiti in Boston, USA. He said qualifying was a historic moment and the holiday would allow people, businesses and communities to celebrate together. The Scottish government says the move would also help promote tourism and showcase Scotland on the world stage.



Scotland reached the World Cup in spectacular fashion

EDINBURGH

Edwardian glamour comes to town

A new exhibition exploring the stylish world of the Edwardians will open this spring. The Edwardians: Age of Elegance will showcase more than 150 items, including a never-before-seen portrait of Queen Mary and a mini rock crystal sleigh. The exhibition looks at the lives of King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, and King George V and Queen Mary, through fashion, travel and art. More than half the objects will be shown in Scotland for the first time. It runs at The King's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse, from 24 April to 6 December.



Queen Alexandra

MERTHYR TYDFIL

UK's longest ski slope approved

Plans to build the UK's longest ski slope have been approved. The Rhydycar West project will include a 400m (1,312ft) indoor ski slope and tropical water park. Council leaders called it a "game changer" for the town. The site, on former mining land, faced concerns over its size, location and environmental impact, but the Welsh government chose not to step in. The project was first proposed in 2017 but has now been given the green light. It will overtake the Snow Centre in Manchester, which currently has the biggest indoor slope in the UK at 180m (590ft).



The slope could look like this

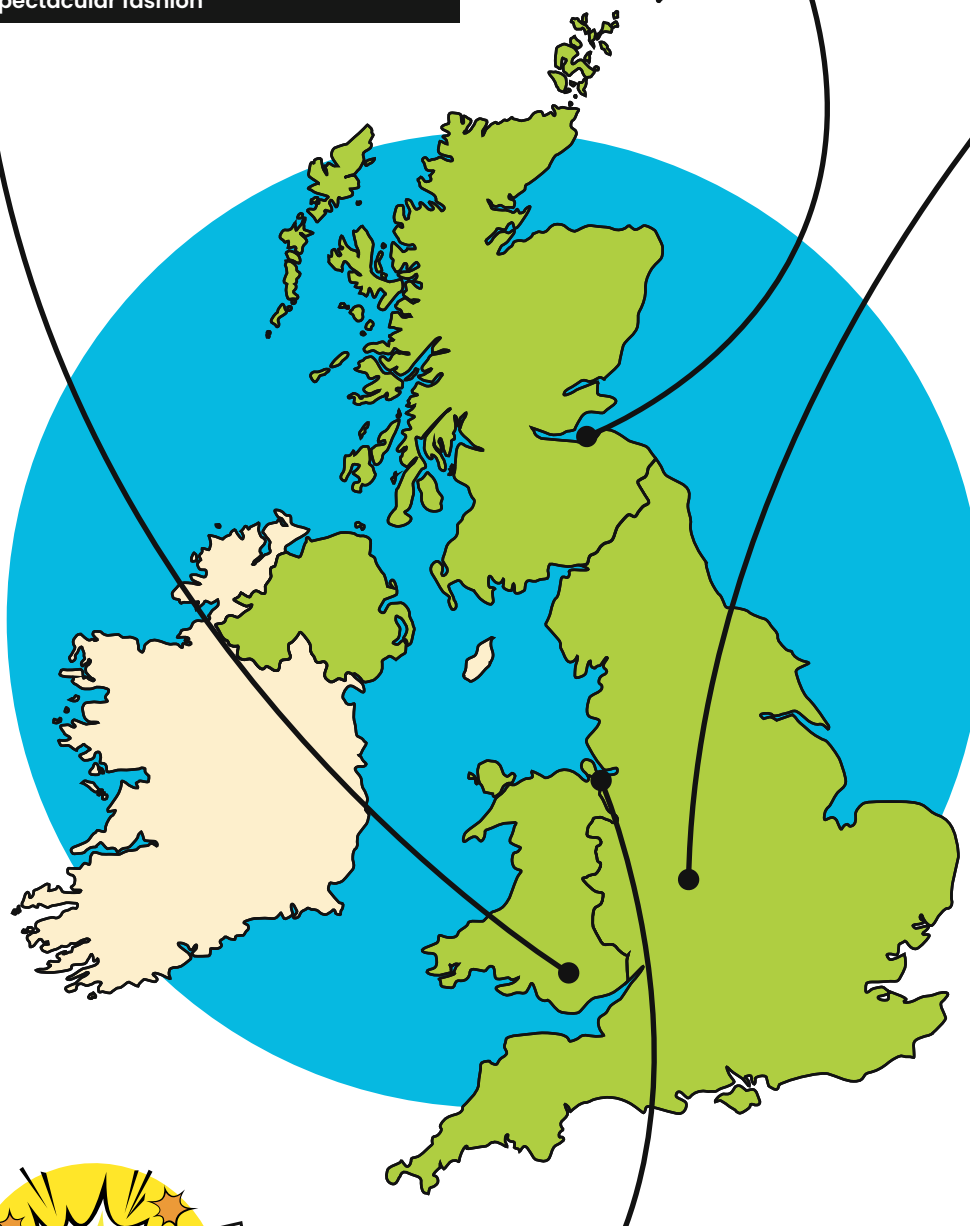
BIRMINGHAM

One year of bin strikes

A year after Birmingham bin workers staged their first strike (refusing to work), unions say there is still no end in sight to the long-running dispute. The bin workers have been on strike because they say planned job changes could cut their pay by up to £8,000 a year. They want a fair deal before returning to work. The workers are supported by Unite, a trade union. A union is a group that helps workers speak up together about pay, jobs and conditions. The strikes began in January 2025 and led to rubbish piling up on streets. The council says that normal rubbish collections are still happening, but that recycling has stopped for now. Unite says the strikes will continue until the workers feel they are being treated fairly. The council says it plans to restart recycling and bring in a new food waste service this summer.



Piles of rubbish have blocked streets



CHESTER

Record year for zoo

Chester Zoo has set a new visitor record after welcoming more than 2.1 million people in 2025, the highest total since it opened in 1931. The zoo said that 2,136,224 visitors passed through its gates, which beat the previous record set in 2019.

Zoo bosses thanked supporters, saying ticket sales help fund conservation work worldwide. Highlights included the opening of Heart of Africa, the UK's largest zoo habitat, and a new on-site hotel. The zoo also celebrated rare animal births, including a snow leopard cub and Socorro dove chicks, helping protect these endangered species.



The Heart of Africa



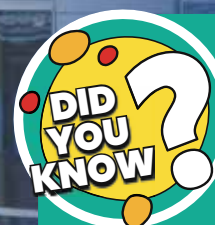
All pics: iStock

An example of how neighbourhoods can be more pleasant is Vauban in Freiburg, Germany (main pic and inset), sometimes called 'the greenest town in Europe'. Around two thirds of residents don't have cars, and many of the homes produce more energy than they use

GREEN GROWTH

THERE'S a lot of doom and gloom around the subject of climate change, but we recently spoke to one man who's got a lot of hope that we can fight it, and that taking action will be good for both business and people.

Lord Nicholas Stern is one of the world's leading experts on the economics of climate change, and recently released a book saying that taking climate action is the "growth story of the 21st century". He told us why that is.

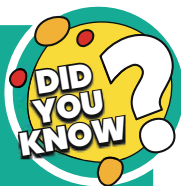


LORD Stern is the Chairman of the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics, and a former chief economist at the World Bank. His 2006 review of the economics of climate change was one of the first warnings that delaying climate action would cost more in the long run, and had a huge impact.

Hi Nick! You say in your book that it'll be difficult to fight climate change, but you still have hope. Why is that?

If we don't start to act, it could make parts of the world become so hot that it will be almost impossible to live there. You could get sea-level rise that makes parts of the coast uninhabitable. All these things could happen, and they're even quite likely if we don't do the things we should do. And that's the bad news! The good news is there are so many things we *can* do. We can limit the greenhouse gases that are given off by burning fossil fuels and cutting down trees. We can bring emissions down actually quite quickly, and can create a much better world to live in. Imagine cities where it's so much easier to move around and to breathe. Places where the public transport is much better. Imagine if we waste much less than before, which means that we have less in the rubbish dumps, which emit methane. And it's the younger generation whose future is at risk who should be insisting that we do more, and not just say: "You made a big mess, clear it up." Which you should say, but not just that! You should say: "Look, here are ways, here's how we can do it."

SOME opponents of climate action claim that it will cost too much and make economies suffer, but Nick says that "well-designed climate action can promote both growth and poverty reduction, while the failure to take climate action hits poor people the hardest and earliest."



When you wrote your original review into the economics of climate change in 2006, what impression did it make?

I was quite impressed by how much notice people did take, and then over time I became more worried that actually they would say yes, of course there's a way forward, but then they would be very slow in taking it. So



In the book, Nick says that "progress in solar, wind and storage have made the clean become cheaper than the dirty in electricity generation across the world"

it's the job of you young people to go out there and say: "Look, we know what to do. So why aren't you doing it?"

Would countries have moved faster if there were more scientists in government?

I think it is a good idea to have more scientists in government. Many politicians have had careers in law and many of them have studied politics or English or geography, and that's all very good; those are great subjects... but they don't tell you about science.

Stories about AI tend to make it sound either exciting or scary, but you say it can make a huge difference by doing lots of boring stuff.

The first is the management of systems. That sounds a bit boring, but it's not. If you're running a complicated public transport system or water supply, all sorts of bits and pieces have to fit together, and AI can make them work much better. Also, AI can discover things. AI is very good at searching for answers to complicated questions about new materials that we can put in solar panels or make our batteries work much better. AI can also help with understanding weather and climate systems. Being warned of a flood a day in advance is much more useful than being warned of one in ten minutes!

You say that young people can help to kick-start more positive climate action, so what would your advice to First News readers be?

Show your teachers, your parents and your friends that you understand the problems and that you know they're important. One of those big problems is food waste. It's sad to say, but we waste around a third of food. If you've got three bananas, probably one of them will be thrown away. So if you're more conscious about waste, you can live a better life. And if you don't waste things, then you're better off. The same is true about heating and electricity: if you leave the lights on all over the house, you're throwing away electricity that needs resources to be created, but if you don't waste electricity, your electricity bill goes down and you're better off. Show those around you that possibly you understand the problems better than they do. You have to do some work to make sure you do understand the problems better than they do, but then you can be a citizen who plays a really active role in society, as well as shaping your own life to live much better.

Nick's book isn't aimed at kids, but if you're a confident reader and want to see why he's so positive about beating climate change, you can download it for free at tinyurl.com/growthstory21.



"Developing countries have a special opportunity to leapfrog the dirty, destructive paths followed in the past by developed countries," Nick says



This report is from the Science Museum in London



DID you know that people once associated unicorns with medicine?

In ancient Greek medical texts, the horn of a unicorn was claimed to have the power to cure ailments and act as an antidote to poisons.

Though no such animal ever existed, this idea remained popular and by the 1500s the unicorn had become frequently mentioned in texts regarding natural medicine.

This shop sign was made in the mid-18th century, long after increased scientific research had phased out beliefs in mystical cures. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that the unicorn remained a recognised symbol of medical practices.

To see this shop sign and explore the history of medicine further, you can visit Medicine: The Wellcome Galleries at the Science Museum.



Science Museum Group

A pharmacy sign in the shape of a unicorn's head



TOP TEN NEW SPECIES REVEALED

SCIENTISTS from Kew Gardens and their international partners have revealed their pick of the top ten plants and fungi named new to science in 2025.

A whopping 125 plants and 65 fungi from across the globe were named last year, but sadly some of those are already under threat and at risk of extinction. This list highlights the need to protect nature, invest in conservation and raise awareness of the issues that the planet is facing.

Here are the top ten weird and wonderful species!

1 Gruesome spider-killing fungus

From: Brazil

Fun fact: Nicknamed 'zombie fungi', this type of fungus infects trapdoor spiders buried in the forest floor. Eek!

2 Bloodstained orchid growing on tree daisies

From: Ecuador

Fun fact: This new species has leaves that mimic female flies, to attract insects for pollination.



L Baquero

3 Fire demon flower

From: Peru

Fun fact: This forest shrub can grow up to 3m tall and has flame-like bright orange/red and yellow flowers!



Rocaflo Vasquez

4 A new subspecies of 'living stone' called 'mopane lithops'

From: Namibia

Fun fact: Famous for their stone-like camouflage, these plants have a single pair of leaves and produce a single, daisy-like flower.



Sebastian Witt
RBG Kew

5 A new snowdrop

From: The Balkans

Fun fact: The new *Galanthus subalpinus* snowdrop has been traced all the way to the grasslands of Mount Korab in northern Macedonia and Kosovo.

6 New banana/guava-tasting tree fruit

From: New Guinea

Fun fact: This unusual fruit is found on the stems of an 18m-tall tree from Manus Island. The stems run down from the trunk and along the ground for up to 7m!



Femie Venter

7 Endangered five-tonne tree

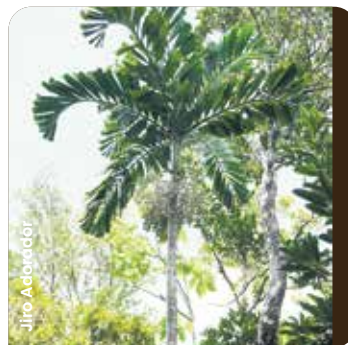
From: Cameroon rainforest

Fun fact: The biggest and heaviest new species scientists at Kew have described, this huge tree can grow up to 34m tall with a trunk diameter of 66cm. Woah!

8 Fungus from grass roots

From: Inner Mongolia, China

Fun fact: The new *Magnaporthiopsis stipae* is a type of fungus that spends its life inside living plants and is very difficult for humans to see!



Jlro Adedadi

9 Amuring Christmas palm

From: Philippines

Fun fact: This beautiful red-fruited palm tree is highly sought after by palm enthusiasts who want to grow it in their own gardens.

10 The caterpillar orchid

From: Indonesian New Guinea and Maluku

Fun fact: The *Dendrobium eruciforme* is nicknamed the caterpillar orchid because the tiny, creeping plants look like a colony of caterpillars sitting on a tree trunk.

ANEESHWAR'S
ANIMAL OF
THE WEEK



MULTI-
WORLD
RECORD
HOLDER!

ANEESHWAR Kunchala is a ten-year-old wildlife campaigner and officially the world's youngest newspaper columnist! He shot to fame as a finalist on *Britain's Got Talent*. Now, he's presenting the documentary *Save Our Wildlife* from Sky Kids and Sky Zero. You can watch it at first.news/climatecrisis.

Aneeshwar's Animal of the Week is the...

GIRAFFE



istock

HABITAT

● Grasslands, savannahs and open woodlands of sub-Saharan Africa.

FUN FACTS

- Male giraffes called bulls sometimes fight by butting their necks and heads. The two challengers aren't usually hurt but one will leave with its neck held high!
- Giraffes have the largest eyes of any land mammal and they can see things that are far away. Their eyes can get to be the size of a golf ball – that's huge!

SPECIAL SUPERPOWER

● Giraffes have super long necks that allow them to reach the highest areas of the tree. Their necks also allow them to scan the horizon for predators like lions or hyenas.

CONSERVATION STATUS

● The giraffe is listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, although IUCN experts said in August that giraffes are now classed as four separate species.



Aneeshwar's giraffe art

Penguin Awareness Day!



Super cute penguin chicks!

DID you know it's Penguin Awareness Day on 20 January?

The day is all about learning about penguins and how we can help them. To celebrate, here are five fun facts about our adorable feathered friends:

1. There are 18 different species of penguin.
2. Emperor penguins are the biggest species.
3. Antarctica is nicknamed 'the Land of the Penguin' and is the true home of the emperor and Adélie penguin.
4. Penguins typically moult once a year and have to stay out of the water during this time as they're not waterproof!
5. Adélie penguins can hold their breath for up to six minutes at a time, making them excellent divers!



A MOMENT FOR MO!



First News' Hannah with her family

COTSWOLD Wildlife Park celebrated the arrival of not one but two rhino calves last year, and *First News* had the pleasure of being among the very first visitors to see the second arrival, little Mo!



What happened?

First News was visiting the park to meet another white rhino calf called Markus, but in a surprising twist of events, keepers soon discovered that another of their mother rhinos, Ruby, was just about to give birth! It meant we couldn't get up close to Markus but we could meet his new pal, Mo, a day later!



Mo at just one night old!



Hey, Mo!

Why was this birth so exciting?

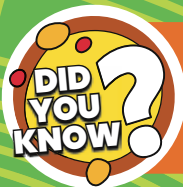
Keepers knew that Ruby was pregnant, but they didn't expect her new arrival so soon! It's rare to catch rhino births on camera as females usually give birth during the night. Luckily, Conservation Officer Bethan Peacock managed to capture the event! Just 30 minutes after Mo was born, she was taking her first wobbly steps. Mo is Ruby's sixth calf with breeding male Monty!



FEMALES only reproduce every two to three years. They stay pregnant for 16 to 18 months and then a single calf is born.

Why is the new calf called Mo?

Keepers named the new calf Mo in honour of a much-loved former member of staff, Maureen Clifford. Maureen worked at the park from 1978 until her retirement in 2017 and still visits with her family today. How cool!



MO'S mum Ruby travelled to the UK all the way from the Mafunyane Game Farm in South Africa!



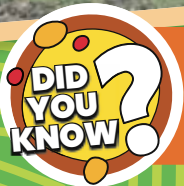
Mum and baby stay close

Ruby with Mo and some of the 'crash' in the rhino paddock



Why is Mo's birth such a success story?

White rhino births in captivity are extremely rare. Mo's arrival means that Cotswold Wildlife Park successfully produced the UK's only two white rhino calves in 2025! In total, including these new siblings, just six white rhinos were born in European zoological collections in 2025. The Park's curator and managing director, Jamie Craig, said: "A paddock full of rhino is a great sight and the new arrivals are certainly keeping the team on their toes". *First News* is hoping to go back and see the happy family together soon!



WHITE rhinos are the largest of the five rhino species, and the second largest land mammal after the elephant!



A BRAND-NEW book inspired by the famous Sycamore Gap tree has just been published.

Tree Thing by Piers Torday tells the story of Marlo and his squirrel Rinti finding a glowing emerald acorn that grows into a miraculous Tree Thing. When the shadowy Rider arrives with an axe, Marlo needs all his bravery to stand between triumph and disaster. The story is all about hope and the marvels of the natural world, inspired by the sad news of the Sycamore Gap tree being illegally cut down in 2023.

Tree Thing is available to buy now.





USA



The fountain has featured in some of skateboarding's biggest videos

Skateboarders campaign to save 'ugly' fountain

Skateboarders in San Francisco have been battling to save a concrete fountain from being torn down. The Vaillancourt Fountain was built in 1971 and some of the city's residents call it an ugly eyesore. For skaters though, it's become a legendary site where they can practise tricks and make cool videos.

The public vote

The fountain was fenced off recently after its pumps failed, and the city's Recreation and Park Department say that it's become a safety hazard that's too expensive to repair. However, one skateboarder, Ted Barrow, told the *Wall Street Journal*: "People come here just to see it because they feel like they're on hallowed ground." Its fate now lies in the hands of the public, who were due to vote on the matter this week. Check the *First News* app for an update on what happened!



GERMANY



Rivers carry human litter into the sea, damaging the environment

It's rubbish for Europe's sealife...

New research suggests that as much as 4,700 tonnes of litter flows down the Rhine, a major river in Europe, toward the North Sea every year. That's about the same mass as 50 blue whales. In a year-long study, researchers led by Leandra Hamann used floating traps to catch some of the litter that flowed through Cologne in Germany. Of the items caught, over two-thirds were plastic and over a quarter were food or drink related.

SOUTH KOREA



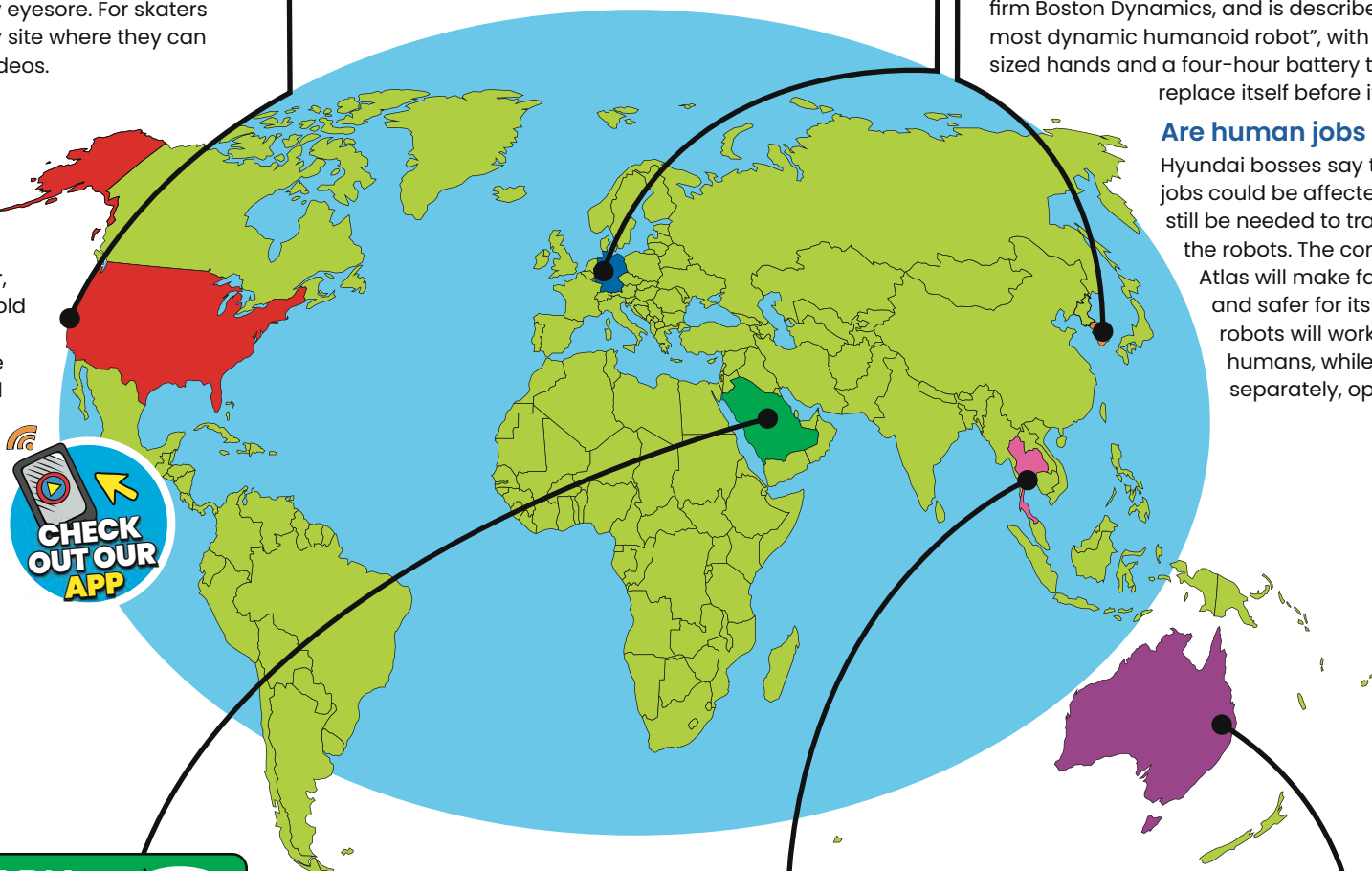
Atlas was shown off at an electronics show in Las Vegas

Human-like robots to work in Hyundai factories

South Korean car company Hyundai has revealed that a fleet of human-like robots called Atlas will work in its factories from 2028. Atlas has been created by US firm Boston Dynamics, and is described as "the world's most dynamic humanoid robot", with two legs, human-sized hands and a four-hour battery that the robot can replace itself before it runs out of juice.

Are human jobs at risk?

Hyundai bosses say that while some jobs could be affected, humans will still be needed to train and maintain the robots. The company says that Atlas will make factory work easier and safer for its employees. Some robots will work together with humans, while others will work separately, operating machines.



SAUDI ARABIA



It's top of the plops!



Waterpark with world's tallest slide opening soon

An enormous waterpark is sliding into Saudi Arabia later this year. Aquarabia is a desert-themed waterpark with 22 rides, 22 dining spots and seven shopping centres. It could be open as soon as March, with a final cost of around \$750 million (£556 million). Four of its rides will be record-breakers, including the world's tallest waterslide and a 12 storey-high watercoaster (a cross between a rollercoaster and a log flume). Aquarabia is part of Saudi Arabia's huge Qiddiya City complex, which will also boast theme parks, a stadium and a race track.

THAILAND



The line-up of performers will be announced soon

Major music festival heads to Asia

Heading to any festivals this year? Well, music fans in Thailand can look forward to a major festival later this year! Tomorrowland is an annual festival in Belgium that specialises in European electronic dance music. Now, it's signed a five-year deal to stage extra festivals in Thailand. The first one will run in Pattaya from 11-13 December, with full weekend tickets costing 12,500 baht (£300). One of Tomorrowland's bosses, Bruno Vanwelsen, said: "Expanding to a new continent is a milestone we approach with great excitement."

AUSTRALIA



Fruit bats are among the largest bat species in the world

Fruit bats take over town

A huge colony of fruit bats, also known as flying foxes, is menacing the city of Gympie, screeching from trees and covering homes and cars in poo. Locals say the situation is so bad that the bats are affecting their happiness and reducing the value of their houses. Glen Hartwig, the city mayor, explained: "Residents are trapped in their homes, they can't have their grandkids play out in the yard. These homes are worthless. No-one would go and purchase a home and have bat excrement [poo] and noise 24/7."





sky KIDS

sky KIDS

INVESTIGATES

WORLD. WAR. ME.



RIGHT now, around one in six children live in areas affected by conflict. That's more than 450 million children around the world.

A NEW Sky Kids investigation shows what life is like for children affected by armed conflict. Here, Bana, who lived in a war zone for five years, shares more...

My story

I was born in Syria in the Middle East, but in 2011 when I was just three years old, my country changed forever. Ordinary people, angry at the way they were being treated by a cruel government, rose up and began to protest. The government attacked the protesters – killing their own people. Before long, Syria was at war. My home city of Aleppo was bombed and it went on for years. For us as children, it felt like it was torture. Children lost their parents and they were trying to look after their siblings, there was no food or water, we were starving. For a child to see these things, it wasn't normal. Tragically, one of those killed in the bombings was my best friend Yasmin.

Calling for peace

I decided it was time to show the world what was happening to the people in Aleppo, and I used social media to do it. It started with a simple post. I wrote the words: "I... need... peace!" Before long, my messages were read by millions of people. But, my protest



came at a cost. My family and I were targeted by the government, angry that I was telling the world what was happening. Our apartment was bombed and we had no place to live and no food to eat. Honestly, I felt like our hopes and our dreams were destroyed with the house.

Hope arrives

Miraculously, a short ceasefire was eventually negotiated – enough time to evacuate the people of Aleppo. My family came to Turkey and because of my campaigning, I was invited to meet the Turkish president. Since then, to honour the friends I lost, I continued to campaign for peace and for the rights of children like me, caught up in war.



Making my mark

I've written two books about my experiences, and in November last year I won the prestigious International Children's Peace Prize. I still get so many nightmares repeating over and over again. These traumas, they don't disappear. But while my experiences stay with me, they've given me a determination to help others. No child deserves to live under bombing, to be afraid constantly or to lose hope and their dreams. I am still calling for peace – and I'm not the only one! There are many other young people fighting for it too.

CONFLICT ACROSS THE WORLD

THERE is conflict happening in countries across the world right now. For example, in Gaza in the Middle East, children's lives have been devastated by two years of brutal war.

Fighting broke out on 7 October 2023 when the Palestinian group Hamas crossed into Israel, killing around 1,200 people in ruthless attacks, and taking 251 hostages.

In the war with Israel that followed, more than 70,000 Gazans are believed to have been killed – and it's estimated that around 20,000 of those were children.

Almost all the schools in Gaza have been destroyed and hundreds of thousands of children have had their education disrupted. Now, international aid organisations are setting up temporary education centres to provide schooling for the children there.

SEEKING REFUGE

MANY people affected by conflict seek refuge in the UK, such as Tumi, who lives in Bolton near Manchester. When Tumi was four, she and her family fled the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) because of armed conflict. Following her experiences of having to leave her home and make a new life somewhere else, Tumi now wants to speak out for other refugees. She said: "Refugees are humans too. My message to world leaders is to make it easier for people to become refugees, make it easier for people to be in countries that are safer for them and make it easier for war to not happen."

KANGAROO – HOPPING INTO

WHAT'S THE STORY?

KANGAROO is about ex-TV personality Chris Masterman, who becomes stranded in a town outside Alice Springs (Mparntwe) in Australia. There, he teams up with 12-year-old indigenous Australian girl Charlie. The pair form an unlikely friendship and work together to rescue and rehabilitate orphaned joeys in the remote but stunning outback community – a mission that proves to be life-changing for them both!

Inspired by an incredible true story, this is a family film you won't want to miss.



WHO IS CHRIS 'BROLGA' BARNES?

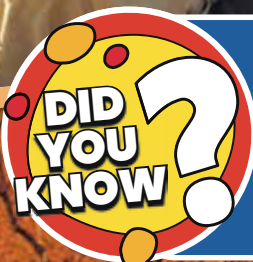
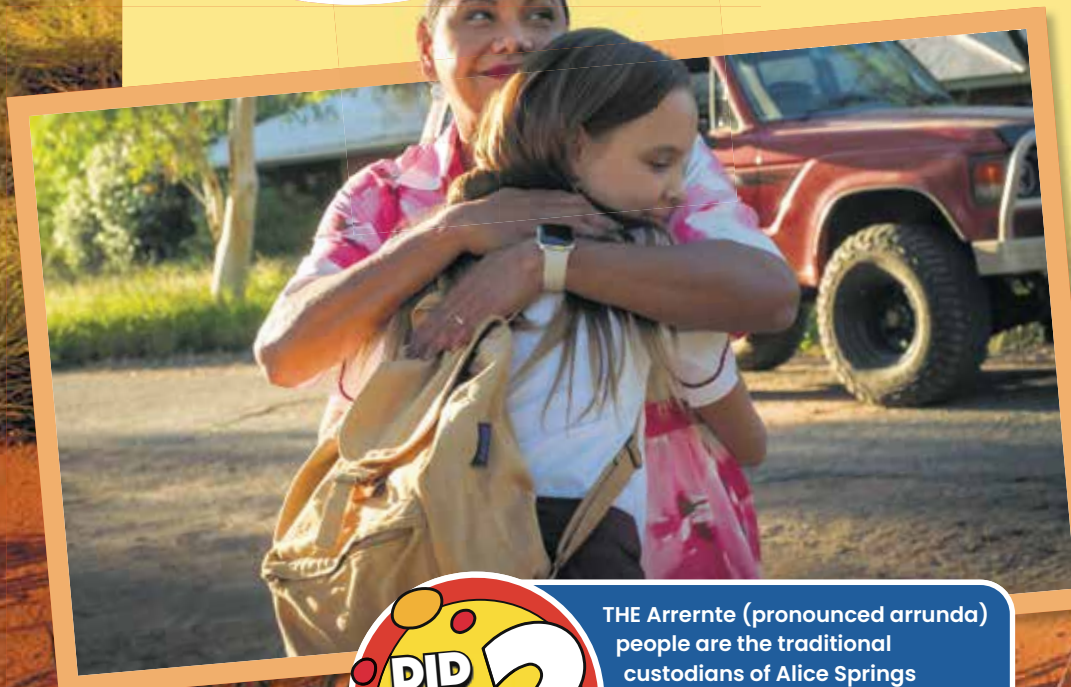
The movie is inspired by the real-life journey of Chris 'Brolga' Barnes, who created the now world-renowned Kangaroo Sanctuary in Australia to help orphaned joeys and injured adult kangaroos. Brolga and his wife Tahnee have grown the Kangaroo Sanctuary to include 188 acres of wildlife reserve and a rescue centre, and have helped over 1,000 orphaned joeys!



HE SAID THAT:

"This movie is about finding your mob, finding your people who have your back and support you."

– Actor Ryan Corr, who plays Chris Masterman



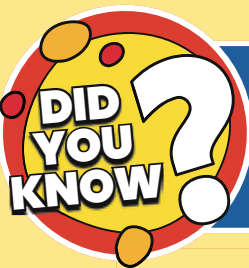
THE Arrernte (pronounced arrunda) people are the traditional custodians of Alice Springs (Mparntwe) and the surrounding region. That means they are responsible for protecting and looking after the area.



Don't miss this

CINEMAS FROM 30 JANUARY!

, **KANGAROO** is the heart-warming
need this winter!



THE film is set in the fictional town of Silver Gum. In the local Arrernte language, this is pronounced Tangitjarr, which means 'together'.



FROM THE STUDIO THAT BROUGHT YOU PADDINGTON!



FUN FACTS ABOUT THE JOEYS

- 1 Adorable joeys Margot, Emily and Connor play the three lead joeys in the movie, while their companion Biscuit also appears in some scenes.
- 2 All the joeys are orphaned and being cared for by the Kangaroo Sanctuary's Rescue Centre.
- 3 The gang were treated like proper movie stars, with their own trailer, a portable hopping yard and bottles of milk every three hours!
- 4 Since filming, the joeys have all grown up and been released back into the wild!

FIND THE FRIENDS!

g c b x d a j x h r i f v s m s
v a x t i s u r o s i e d m h k
p s c b f t t r s k f s a l n f
b p b i n a j i z j a y u y i e
s e n m q y r p p b f u h r f t
s r y e z h z f t e x l h n k z
h y v q c b o j a r d d c e s j
s h u w u d a n h n u g o q h f
w v w n y d u e q a r w x v m e
o i l t m w i k y d k u y j g d
x c d b a l z u n e y s b v v p
x v f h r w f n w t i l m y c e
x i p a j v s j e t b c m x y b
h s h l n t i g o e c r y l x f
x c s t z q r n d l n s m g r c
n p h z p e g n w q o e h f j w



Can you find all of these characters in the wordsearch?

- Chris
- Charlie
- Rosie
- Bernadette
- Casper
- Ruby



WE'RE giving one lucky reader the chance to win this amazing bundle of **KANGAROO** film goodies, including an activity pack, soft toy, book and skipping rope.

All you have to do is answer this question:

Where is **KANGAROO** set?

- a) America
- b) Australia
- c) Africa

Enter at first.news/comps or see page 20.
The closing date is 30 January 2026.

epic adventure!



BAA-GAIN HUNTERS



German Embassy London/Facebook

SHOPPERS in Bavaria, Germany, got a shock as 50 sheep stormed a supermarket looking for a baa-riliant deal.

The German Embassy in London reported that the sheep broke away from their group of 500 before flocking to a Penny discount shop in the village of Burgsinn.

After forming an orderly queue to get in, the animals certainly weren't feeling sheepish, as they stayed grazing the shelves for around 20 minutes, knocking over bottles and cereal products.

They eventually ewe-turned and saw themselves out, leaving a big clean-up operation for staff.

Luckily for shepherd Dieter Michler, the shop saw the funny side of it and won't make him pay any costs.

The sheep take over the shop

AI turns cop into frog

A US police force got a fairy-tale twist after artificial intelligence (AI) said that an officer had been transformed into a frog!

Officers in Heber City, Utah, have been using AI to write police reports from body camera footage.

The error happened because a Disney film, *The Princess and the Frog*, was playing in the background and the AI got confused.

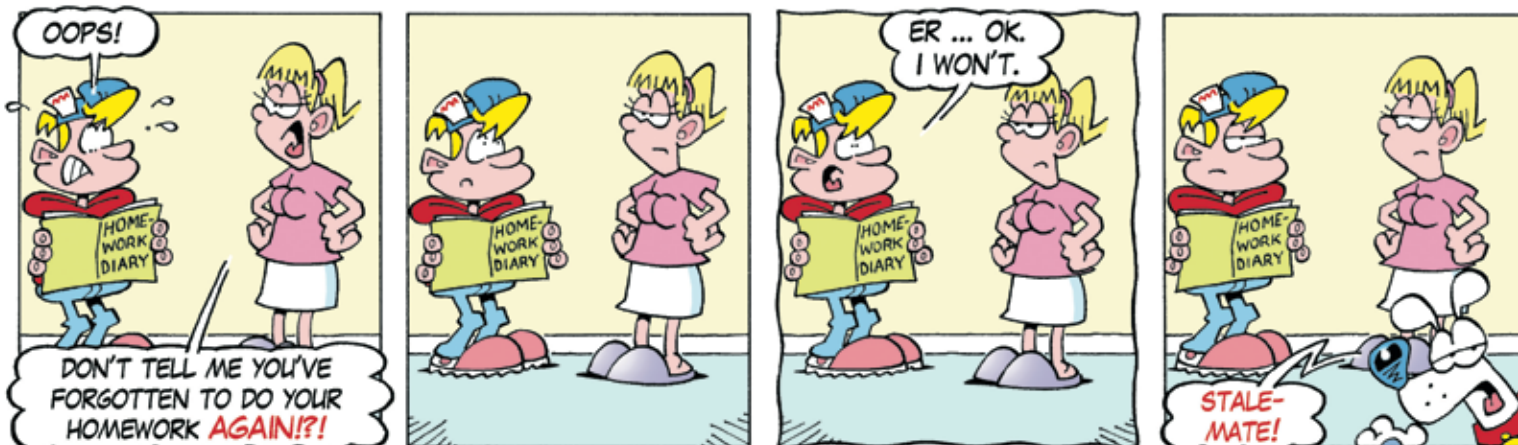
Police say they are keeping the technology because it saves hours of work, but that humans will now double-check the reports before anyone hops to conclusions.



istock



Written and illustrated by Paul Palmer





IS IT FAKE OR FACT?

CAN you tell if a story is the real deal or made up? Every week, we'll be challenging you to see if you can sniff out the news from the nonsense! See what you think of this story, then turn the page upside down to see if you were right.

CHATGPT RUINS WEDDING



A COUPLE from the Netherlands have discovered that they're not officially married, as ChatGPT didn't meet the legal requirements needed for a wedding! The couple chose a friend to conduct their wedding ceremony, but their pal used ChatGPT to write their speech. Unfortunately, a court in Zwolle has now ruled that the speech didn't feature the correct legal wording, so the couple aren't legally wed. Oops!

Check out more on spotting fake news at:
● first.news/takeorfact ● first.news/spotfakenews
Or get yourself a free copy of our updated 28-page special edition, all about making sense of the news, how to spot bias, fake news and much more! Go to first.news/fake-news



This story is FACT. The wedding ceremony did not include an important declaration for the couple to 'do their duty to one another as required by their wedded state'. Therefore, the marriage isn't official.

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE!

FRANCIS BOURGEOIS TALKS SPACE

THE NEXT STEP ON TOUR!

DON'T MISS IT!

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EDUCATION



THE BIG PICTURE

ZSL London Zoo kicked off its 200th anniversary with its annual animal count. Humboldt penguins, Asiatic lions, corals, Seychelles millipedes and capybaras (pictured) were among the 8,000 animals being counted by zookeepers. The data from the annual count is shared with other zoos around the world via a global database, where it is used to help manage worldwide conservation breeding programmes for endangered animals.



"PERCY JACKSON IS ABOUT HOPE!"

HAVE you watched Percy Jackson's epic new quest, *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*? The show is based on the best-selling book *The Sea of Monsters* by Rick Riordan. We caught up with Walker Scobell (who plays Percy), Leah Sava' Jeffries (Annabeth Chase) and Aryan Simhadri (Grover Underwood) to chat about filming season two of the hit Disney+ series.



Leah filming chariot races as Annabeth

Hi guys! So, what do you think are the main themes that pop up in season two of the show?

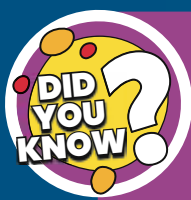
Walker: Loyalty, trust, belonging and maintaining hope. Also fate! That's a huge part of the Percy Jackson universe.

You were all fans of the books before filming the series. What's it like working with author Rick Riordan?

Aryan: He's just the nicest dude ever!

Walker: Yeah, he's just Uncle Rick.

Leah: He's very humble and down to earth. These books



THE next leg of *The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical UK* tour kicks off in Wales this week. *RuPaul's Drag Race UK* champion Danny Beard has joined the cast as the grumpy god of wine, Mr D.



have been out for so long, but he's still willing to hear our ideas for how to change things up for the series.

What was the best piece of advice you got on set?

Aryan: We get so many pieces of advice every day just from our acting coach Andrew. I even wrote my college admission essay about one of the first things he ever told me. This was in the first season when I wasn't really analysing the script properly, because I didn't want to over-prepare. He told me: "If you were writing a script about your life, how many pages upon pages would you write to give to the person who was going to play you?" That changed the way I see preparation for a script.

Leah: I've got a funny one from Jules, our director of photography. We were filming on chariots wearing armour [left], and it was so hot outside that I couldn't really give it my all. He shouted: "Cut" in the middle of my scene. I was like: "What happened?" He called me over and said: "Darling, I'm falling asleep!" It helped me

because it perked me up and boosted my energy. I made sure he never said that to me again!



Grover (pictured) is trapped in the Sea of Monsters. Can Percy and Annabeth save him?

Percy Jackson and the Olympians is on Disney+ now.



● **Gladiators, ready?!**

The new series of *Gladiators* kicks off this weekend, alongside *Gladiators: Epic Pranks!* Fans can look forward to a series of new events, including Everest and Destruction. Nitro and Giant are also returning after being injured. We can't wait! Catch the shows on BBC One and iPlayer from 17 January.



● **Michael McIntyre's Big Show returns!**

Our favourite comedian is back for a new series, packed with even more laughs and surprises! Which celebs and unsuspecting members of the public will he rope into his silly antics this time round? We'll have to wait and see! Watch the show on BBC One and iPlayer from 17 January.



A NIGHT AT THE GOLDEN GLOBES



All pics: Getty

OWEN Cooper makes history as the youngest ever winner of Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Supporting Role at the Golden Globe Awards. The 16-year-old was recognised for his starring role in hit Netflix drama *Adolescence*. The awards take place in America and honour the best in film and TV.



WICKED: For Good didn't win any of the awards that it was nominated for, but that didn't stop star Ariana Grande partying the night away!



TIMOTHÉE Chalamet scoops the gong for Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy for *Marty Supreme*. He celebrated with his famous girlfriend Kylie Jenner.



THE cast of *Hamnet* – a movie about William Shakespeare and his wife Agnes – celebrate winning the prize for Best Motion Picture – Drama. Irish star Jessie Buckley also won Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Motion Picture – Drama for her role.

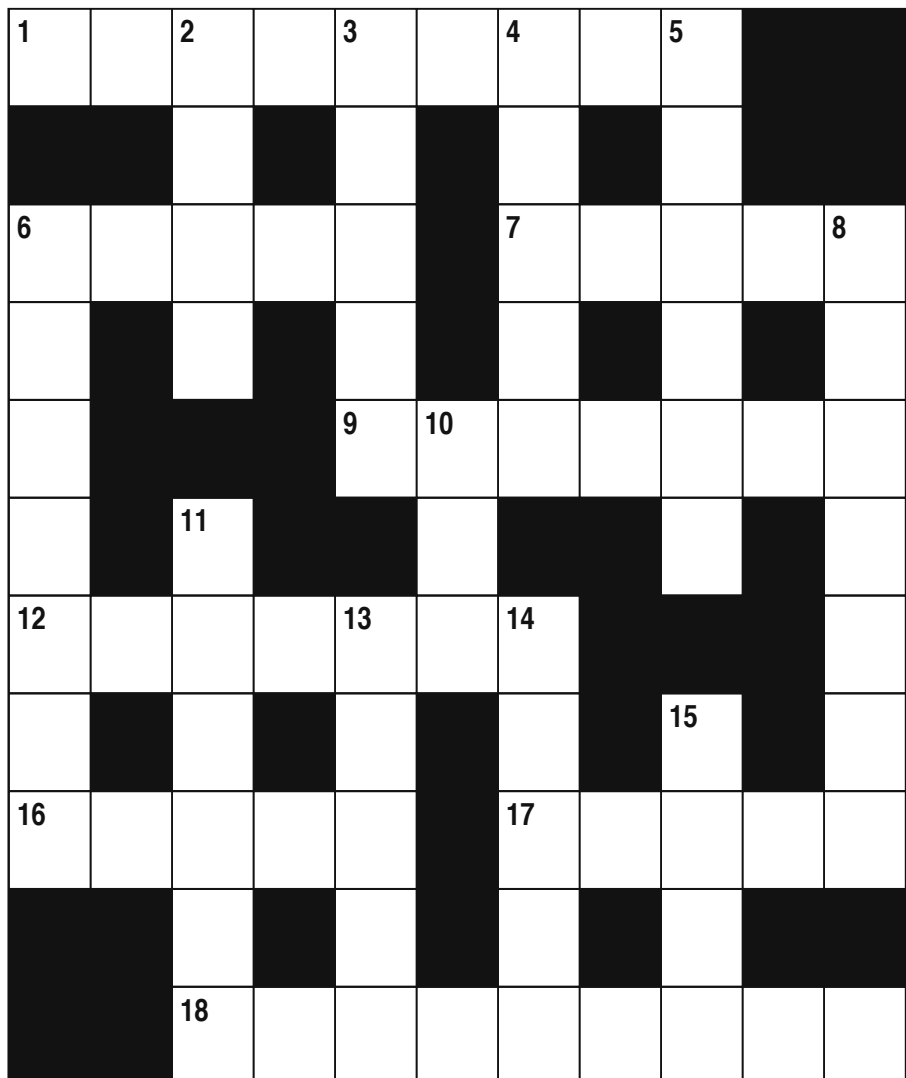


AUDREY Nuna, EJAЕ and Rei Ami win Best Original Song for *Golden* from KPop *Demon Hunters*. The movie was also awarded Best Motion Picture – Animated, beating the likes of *Zootropolis* and *Elio*.



CROSSWORD

CAN you solve our crossword puzzle using the clues below?



ACROSS

- 1) To vanish from sight (9)
- 6) What you do at school (5)
- 7) We play these for fun (5)
- 9) Mobile home (7)
- 12) Organisation that raises money for those in need (7)
- 16) Exit (5)
- 17) Opposite of lower (5)
- 18) Large reptile similar to a crocodile (9)

DOWN

- 2) Exchange (4)
- 3) Feeling of alarm (5)
- 4) Keen (5)
- 5) Take away (6)
- 6) Sensible; reasoned (7)
- 8) Brighter (7)
- 10) Small insect (3)
- 11) Country in North America (6)
- 13) Most suitable; perfect (5)
- 14) Opposite of old (5)
- 15) See; notice (4)



Sudoku

CAN you complete our sudoku puzzle, filling in the numbers one to nine?

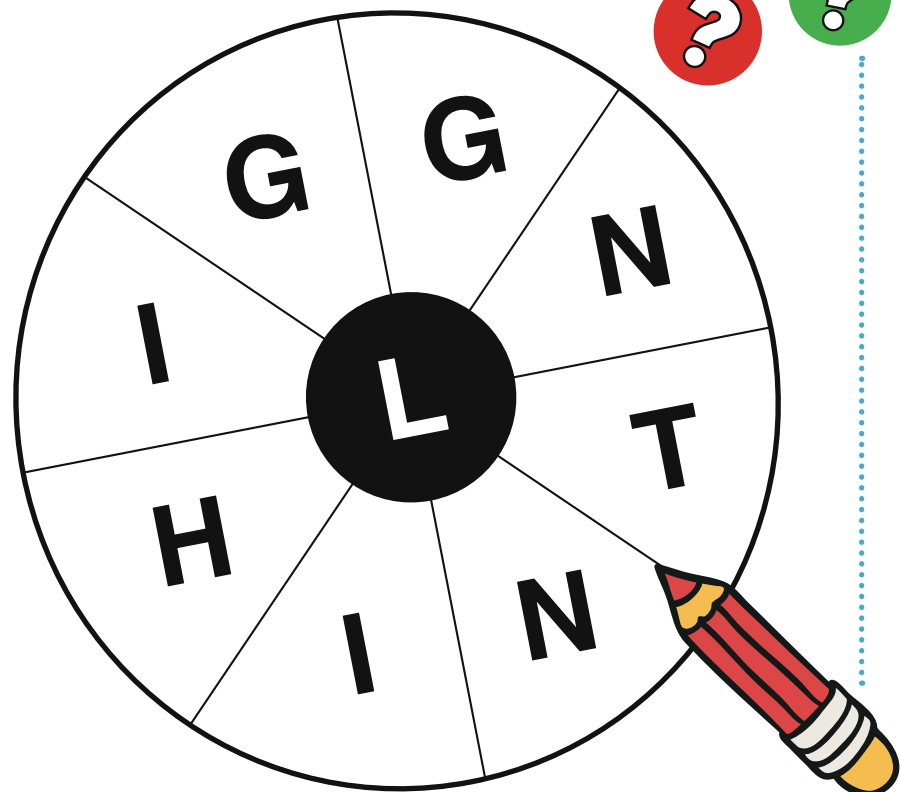
	6			8			2	
	8		5	7	9		3	
5	3						8	9
		8	7		2	6		
	1	4				8	7	
		6	8		1	3		
6	4						1	3
	7		1	5	4		6	
	9			3			4	



COMPETITIONS: To enter, email us at win@firstnews.co.uk putting 'competition name' (e.g. Holiday), in the subject box or visit first.news/comps. *First News* competitions are only open to those aged 15 and under and residents of the UK & Republic of Ireland, except employees of *First News*, First Group Enterprises Ltd, Reach plc and any associated companies and their families. Winners will be selected at random from all those with the correct answer. No purchase necessary. *First News* will not enter into any correspondence. All winners will be notified accordingly. If you are a winner, your details will be securely passed on to the person who is providing the prize so they can post it out to you. If you are contacted but don't reply within 28 days, we may offer the prize to another entrant. No cash alternative for any prizes will be offered. The winner may be required to partake in media activity relating to the competition. Your personal data will be held for a maximum of 12 months after the competition and then destroyed. It will not be used for any other purpose unless you have given us permission. If you would like your data deleted before this, please do get in touch with us. You have the right to complain to the ICO if you believe there is a problem with the way your data has been handled.

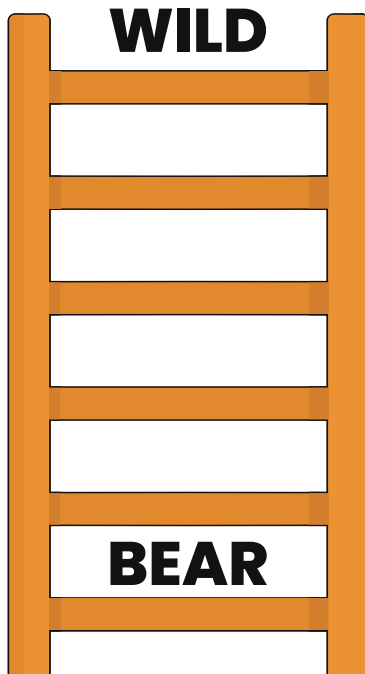
Word wheel

SEE how many words of three or more letters you can make, using the middle letter in each one. And can you find the word that uses all the letters?



Word ladder

SEE if you can get from the top of the ladder to the bottom by changing one letter at a time to make a new word.

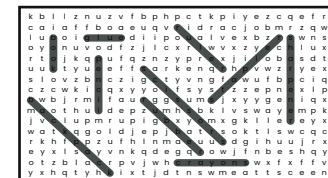


ISSUE 1,021 ANSWERS:

Word wheel: detective.

Word ladder: feel, feed, fend, fond, food, good.

Spot the difference: 1) Lines on newspaper that man is reading on bench 2) Plate of sandwiches missing on picnic blanket 3) Running man's shorts now green 4) Man on blanket's beard and hair now purple 5) Stretching man's hand missing 6) Extra balloon added 7) Boy with backpack is missing his hat 8) Man at bottom of pic now has flat hair 9) Woman on phone's shirt has changed colour 10) Cake near stretching man's foot.



5	9	4	3	1	7	2	8	6
3	7	2	6	8	9	4	1	5
8	6	1	5	4	2	9	7	3
9	3	8	4	2	1	5	6	7
4	5	7	8	9	6	1	3	2
1	2	6	7	5	3	8	9	4
6	1	9	2	7	5	3	4	8
2	4	3	9	6	8	7	5	1
7	8	5	1	3	4	6	2	9



Enjoying the puzzles? See the *First News* app for more fun, quizzes and games! This QR code should be scanned by a responsible adult.



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

CAN you find the ten changes we've made to this zoo scene?



IT'S A FACE-OFF!

CAN you tell who these famous people are?



1)



2)



3)



4)



5)



6)

WIN! THE FIRST CAT IN SPACE BOOK BUNDLES!

JOIN the hilarious, space-faring adventures of *The First Cat in Space* series by Mac Barnett and Shawn Harris.

Perfect for readers who love quirky characters and cosmic capers, these graphic novels deliver laughter and heart in equal measure.

In the fourth instalment, *The First Cat in Space and the Baby Pirate's Revenge*, the intrepid team encounter Captain Babybeard and his crew of washbuckling pirates!

We're giving away three *The First Cat in Space* book bundles for *First News* readers. For your chance to win, just answer this question:



Which of these is a famous pirate?

- a) Captain Marvel
- b) Captain Topi
- c) Captain Blackbeard

ENTER NOW! MARK YOUR ENTRY PIRATE

first.news/comps or see page 20. The closing date is 30 January.



MEET FINN!

THERE'S a new kid in class who you really should meet. He's trying to survive Year 7, but chaos and failure follow him everywhere he goes! We spoke to Phil Earle about his new book, *Finn's Epic Fails*...



● **Hi, Phil! Tell us all about Finn.**

He describes himself as a fail magnet. He's like any normal Year 7 lad, but his entire life path is strewn with the biggest, slipperiest banana skins. Everywhere he turns, something's waiting to trip him up! I want kids to recognise themselves in him. You'll want to cheerlead for him all the way through.

● **How does Finn feel about starting Year 7?**

In junior school, by Year 6, you feel like you're the top dog. Then all of a sudden, that goes! Finn's dressed in a school uniform that's 15 sizes too big. It feels like his shirt collar is made out of barbed wire. His bag weighs about 1,100 kilograms. His older brother Jono makes his life a misery at every turn. So it's very much a rude awakening for poor Finn and he finds himself completely out of his depth from page one. The illustrations inside kind of give you a sense of this poor kid's life.

● **Are any of Finn's epic fails inspired by your own experiences when you were in Year 7?**

Yeah – mine, and also my kids! There are a lot of pranks that go on throughout the book, usually at the expense of supply teachers, and my kid Stan told me about a game his class plays with supply teachers. A lot of the stuff that's in there is stuff that my kids have taught me. Finn's dad is a huge source of embarrassment in the book, constantly wearing Lycra for cycling. He's based on me!

● **What new challenges do Finn and real-life Year 7s face today that you didn't have to worry about back then?**

Oh man, there are so many. Finn falls foul of the mobile phone era – he wakes up one morning, and his little sister

has transformed his face into a unicorn, including super-glueing a toilet roll to his forehead. His brother takes a photo and puts posters all over school, saying: 'Have you seen this rare Pokémon?' And he puts Finn's mobile number on the post, so Finn's phone is just like ding-ding-ding-ding!



● **What survival tips would Finn give to any of our readers moving up to Year 7 this year?**

Finn's so lucky to have his friends, Google and Laszlo. If there's one thing that's going to get you through school, it's friendship – it's finding those people who have got your back.



● **This is the first book in a new series! Can you tell us anything about the next book?**

The second book comes out in July, and then the third book comes out in February 2027. I've already written all three! In book two, called *Downhill From Here*, Finn and his family go on holiday to Tenerife. If you can imagine anything that possibly could go wrong on holiday, that's what happens...

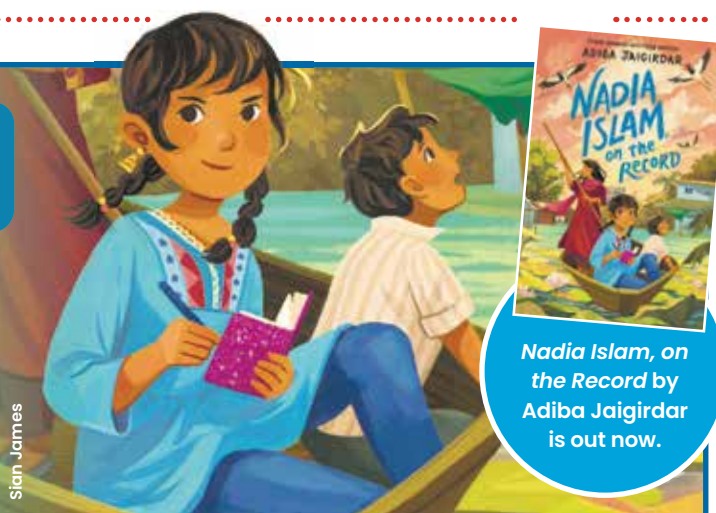
Finn's Epic Fails by Phil Earle is out now.

JUNIOR JOURNALIST

YOU'VE met Finn (above), so now, how about another all-new character?

Nadia Islam (right) is the star of a new book by Adiba Jaigirdar. She dreams of becoming a journalist, and when she travels to Bangladesh, her reporting skills are really put to the test.

To find out what Nadia is like, check out this chat with the character!



Nadia Islam, on the Record by Adiba Jaigirdar is out now.

● **Hi, Nadia! Why did you want to become a journalist?**

Journalism is so exciting. You talk to different people, ask questions and find out all about the world!

● **What was it like reporting from Bangladesh?**

It was my first time reporting from Bangladesh, and it was so cool! It was sometimes a little difficult because I didn't know about all of the things happening there, so I needed to do my research. But I learned all about climate change and met so many amazing people.

● **What's the hardest thing about being a journalist?**

People don't always take me seriously! Sometimes, people think if you're young, the things you say don't

matter. But everyone has important things to say – even young [eight-year-old] journalists like me!

● **What's one thing journalists should avoid doing?**

They shouldn't believe anything easily! Like how I believed all we had to do for climate change was reduce, reuse, recycle and conserve water. But then I learned there was a lot more that I, and everybody else, could do too.

● **What's your ultimate dream?**

I want to be a journalist reporting amazing stories from all over the world just like my khalamoni [aunt]! I want to tell the kind of stories that others don't. Important stories that matter to me and people from my community!

Recommended reads

in partnership with Peters



Travels through time

SURE, 2025 is so last year, but do you want to dive a bit deeper into the past? Transport yourself to a different period entirely, from wartime London to Aztec adventures, with one of these thrilling stories!



The Timekeepers: The Aztec Adventure by SJ King, illustrated by Esther Hernando

The time-travelling team must stop the time bandit Delay from disrupting history by recovering an Aztec chocolate maker's stolen cacao bean.

Blitz: One Family's War by Martin Impey

Two siblings watch their ordinary world in East London change during the outbreak of war against the Nazis and the dark days of the Blitz.

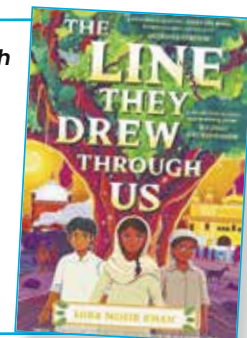


Hunt for the Golden Scarab by MG Leonard, illustrated by Manuel Šumberac

Epic adventure meets time travel when a young boy has to solve an ancient Egyptian mystery before sinister forces catch up with him.

The Line They Drew Through Us by Hiba Noor Khan

Three best friends – and their homeland – are torn apart when the British announce Indian independence. Could a miracle bring them back together?



Shrapnel Boys by Jenny Pearson

In 1939, Ronnie and his friends discover a secret among the Blitz shrapnel that could change the fate of the Second World War.

FIND YOUR ANIMAL. KNOW YOUR DESTINY.

OUT NOW!



KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR BOOK 2, NOAH'S BEAR, COMING THIS SUMMER!

ADVENTURE AWAITS AT WILD HAVEN SCHOOL! Here, Animagicals – children who can change into animals – will learn to control their powers. Mia can't stop turning into a mouse, but will this be her true form forever?

PAULA HARRISON

Illustrated by Erwin Madrid

nosy crow

FirstNews
WEEKLY
NEWS QUIZ!

YOUR BRAIN VS THE NEWS!

Think you've got what it takes?

Rank	Name	Score
1	Tamara	700
2	Isabella	653
3	Em	535
4	Nina	399
5	ESSHEE	393
6	Nini	375
7	Mummy	263
8	Simone	222
9	Amongus	213
10	Emma	211
11	Doughyo	193
12	Matilda	181

At home? Use your Web ID

At school? Head to first.news/school-quiz



HELLO! I'm Charlie, the leader of the *First News Your News* pages.

This week on Your News, Morgané talks about bouncing back from cancer and achieving her cheerleading dreams.

Also, Autumn and Olivia praise their award-winning teacher, Gil smashes a disability race and Anna lights up winter with her cello.

You can find out how to become a junior journalist in the top right of the opposite page. Also, make sure to check out the latest opportunities online at first.news/fnopps.

MY CANCER JOURNEY



Morgané has big cheerleading goals

BACK in 2024, Morgané found a lump on her hand, which turned out to be rhabdomyosarcoma, a rare and aggressive soft-tissue cancer. After months of treatment, she's rebuilding her strength and is back doing what she loves most: cheerleading. We speak to her about her journey.

with Morgané, aged 15

What was going through your mind when doctors first told you the lump on your hand was cancer?

Cancer was an experience I never thought would happen to me. Mum said I took it better than she did – but it didn't feel real and still doesn't.

Every day for three weeks I had to have something done: blood tests, MRI scans, CT scans. I was very ill and had no energy. I lost all my hair [inset], but it's come back. It's only now that I feel I can go out and be myself. Before, I would have to make sure I looked normal, but now my eyebrows have grown back and so have my lashes – and everything is so much thicker! My hand is getting stronger, but it was hard taking my mock GCSE exams because it kept cramping up. But I'm getting stronger every day, and I've got so much to look forward to.

What helped you stay positive during the most challenging moments?

My cheerleading friends helped to keep me going. They were always the ones I could talk to about my feelings.

How did it feel to get back to your cheerleading?

My hand is getting stronger thanks to the exercises I have to do, and improving all the time as I'm constantly using it. It sounds weird, but I want my body to ache from all the exercise, as when it's taken away, you realise you take things for granted. We have a national cheerleading competition at Wembley Arena next month – the Legacy Cheer and Dance competition – and my coach is being really supportive and helping me strengthen every muscle in my body. This year is going to be amazing!

Your cheer team qualified for the World Championships in Florida – how did that make you feel?

It felt like my heart had exploded. After everything that I'd been through, it felt like I actually had something to look forward to. My team has helped me through the toughest time of my life, and they kept me part of it; even though I couldn't compete, I was there cheering them on. I'm so

proud of myself for fighting with cancer to still be part of the team. It's my happy place where I can just be me.

What message would you give other young people who are facing big challenges?

If I could give other teens a message, it would be whatever you are going through, it doesn't define you. Because just like me, it could all be on the line when you're fighting for your life and every problem you had experienced beforehand isn't so big any more. You must take every day as a new day because you don't know what is going to happen, but celebrate the wins even if they are small, as they will feel huge to you.

It was a really difficult time for me and my family. We had to rely on everyone, including all the doctors and nurses, but we were lucky to have the best oncologist [a doctor who specialises in diagnosing and treating cancer] in sarcoma at UCL Hospital. I would like to thank everyone who helped me in my treatment and recovery, all the doctors and nurses who do an amazing job. It must be so tough on them physically and emotionally, as I know how hard I was as a patient. They couldn't get any blood out of my veins as the chemotherapy shrinks them, but they were so kind and lovely. It was like they had won whenever they found a vein.

You received a Cancer Research UK Star Award. How did it feel to be recognised in that way?

It felt special. My mum nominated me to make me smile as I was going through so much. She thought it would be a nice surprise for me to receive it – and it was!

Morgané is raising awareness of the Cancer Research UK for Children & Young People Star Awards. The Star Awards celebrate the courage of children who have been diagnosed with cancer. For more details and how to nominate, visit cruk.org/starawards.

SCARLETT TALKS POLITICS



Scarlett

HELLO! I am a junior journalist and A level student, studying politics, English and psychology. You can also see me in some FYI films at first.news/fyi. I write a fortnightly column for Your News about major politics issues in the UK, with a focus on stories that affect young people.

PARLIAMENT has officially returned after the winter break. This is called the first sitting of the year, and it marks the moment when politicians officially return to work and begin new debates and discussions. So what did they talk about?

First day back

The focus was questions to government ministers. MPs asked about the issues that people are dealing with right now, including crime and border security.

One big topic was poor mobile phone signal in the countryside. MPs talked about how some areas have weak or no signal, which can make calling, use of the internet or getting help in emergencies really hard. They asked the government what plans are in place to fix this.

The second day

MPs began debating a new law about cyber security. They discussed how to protect important computer systems and keep them safe from hackers, especially systems used by banks, transport and hospitals.

Later in the week

MPs took part in PMQs (Prime Minister's Questions), directly asking Prime Minister Keir Starmer about issues such as the cost of living and public services.

The week ended with Parliament debating changes to rules around gambling. They want to make it easier for local areas to decide where betting shops can open, because too many of these shops in one area can cause problems such as debt and stress for people in the community.

Final word

The first sitting is important because it shows what Parliament plans to focus on next and lets MPs start raising the issues that matter to people across the UK.



Keir Starmer speaks at PMQs



Our library legend!

JULIE Broadbent was named School Librarian of the Year 2025 for her work that celebrates reading. Two of her pupils from Northampton International Academy explain why she deserves it.

by Autumn and Olivia

We are so proud that Mrs Broadbent has won the School Library Association's Secondary School Librarian of the Year award.

We believe that she is an amazing librarian who deserves to be recognised. Mrs Broadbent works hard to ensure that every student has opportunities to explore literacy and reading, while also helping them whenever she can.

She goes above and beyond to make sure that students get to experience wonderful trips that may not be possible at other schools. Since she joined the school, she has transformed the library into an accessible place that is not only for books but also for students to study, grow and share their love for reading.

We are lucky enough to have two library facilities: one for primary and one for secondary. The libraries are open for all students so that they have access to a large range of books for all ages and interests. The library has provided lots of opportunities to meet and talk with authors including Onjali Q Raúf, Nathanael Lessore and Emma Swan, as well as illustrators and other exciting visitors.

We also have a weekly committee that takes place in the library called Reading Pioneers. The main aim for the committee is to promote reading and educate people about its many benefits. When it first started, there were only three of us and now it has expanded to more than 30 students. We all share a love for reading and have had the opportunity to go on trips and also to work with The McCarthy-Dixon Foundation for the Intergenerational Project.



Pupils Autumn and Olivia with Julie (centre)

**WANT TO
FEATURE ON
THESE PAGES?**

**JUNIOR
JOURNALIST**



If you want to be a junior journalist for *First News* and go to cool press events or write about something that you're passionate about, get in touch by asking a trusted adult to email us at yournews@firstnews.co.uk.

We can't wait to hear from you!

Winter Wonderwheels

WINTER Wonderwheels powered by Marvel is the UK's biggest festive mass-participation disability sports event. It challenges participants to run, walk or wheel 1km, 5km or 10km through Windsor. Gil tells us what it was like to take part in it.



Gil (right) crosses the finish line

by Gil Murray, aged ten

I felt a bit nervous at the start, but the glitter station and fake tattoos got me in the mood and the hot chocolate was the best fuel.

There were lots more people this year, which was brilliant as I love meeting others who face the same challenges as I do. It makes me feel like part of a bigger team.

I loved meeting Sophie Christiansen CBE. She's an eight-time Paralympic equestrian champion, which is pretty special. She was my celebrity helper and I was the team captain.

I ride with the Cotswold RDA and showed her my Level One showjumping certificate as I'm really proud of this. She shared some horsey tips with me and it was amazing that a gold medallist was so willing to come out and get cold and wet with us.

My fave bit was seeing my friends achieve their goals. Biggest thank you to Superhero Series for inspiring and encouraging me to keep trying new challenges. I'll see you at Superhero Tri this summer!

Save the dates for the 2026 Superhero Series powered by Marvel! Visit superheroserries.co.uk.

My musical family

**JUNIOR
JOURNALIST**



Anna playing the cello

MORE than 100 young musicians lit up Woolwich Works in London with an imaginative Winter Concert. Anna was one of them, playing the cello. She tells us why she loves performing.

by Anna

Performing with the National Children's Orchestras from 2021 to 2025 has been an incredible journey for me.

It's been filled with unforgettable concerts and friendships that I know will last for a lifetime.

Over the years, I've discovered how powerful teamwork can be, especially when everyone is working towards the same musical goal. I've learnt what it

feels like to rehearse with real focus and trust the musicians around me.

I think every young person should have the chance to get involved in music. It's not just about performing, it's about the sense of belonging, the joy of creating something together and the confidence that grows with each step.

My final performance at the Winter Concert was incredibly emotional. Looking around and seeing how much my friends and I have grown, both as musicians and people, reminded me why this journey means so much.

Collaborating in a professional-style orchestra at a young age is an experience I'll always carry with me, wherever music leads me next.

FirstNews Quiz

THE answers to all these questions can be found in the pages of this issue. Why not set yourself, or your friends and family, a time challenge to see who can get the highest score in the quickest time? See how well you did by checking the answers at the bottom.

1 What musical instrument has been found by a team of archaeologists in Norfolk?

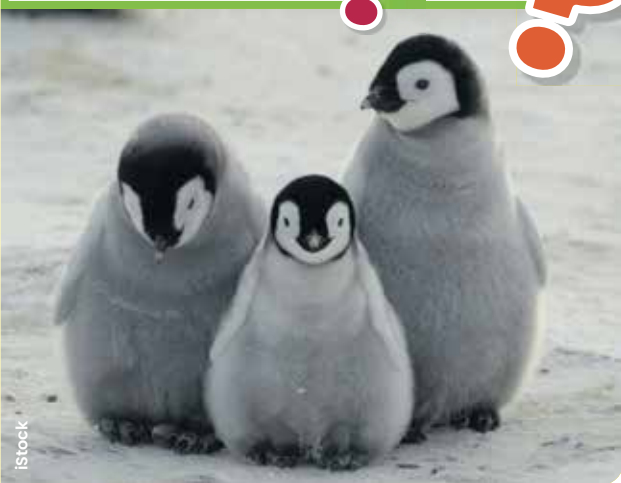
2 What was the highest-grossing film in the UK and Ireland in 2025?

3 When was NASA's Perseverance rover launched to Mars?



4 What did people once associate unicorn horns with?

5 When is Penguin Awareness Day?



6 Plans to build the UK's longest ski slope have been approved, but where would it be?

7 Who does Leah Sava' Jeffries play in *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*?



8 How many new rides at a waterpark in Saudi Arabia will be record-breakers?



9 What animals have taken over the city of Gympie in Australia?

10 Which country is hosting the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games?



11 Which non-league team shocked footie fans by beating holders Crystal Palace in the FA Cup?

12 How many sheep stormed a supermarket in Bavaria, Germany?

13 What is the name of the newest white rhino calf at Cotswold Wildlife Park?



14 What scooped the best animated film award at the Golden Globes?

15 Research has found that one in eight children aged 5-8 don't own a book. Is that true or false?

If you enjoyed this, why not check out our Quiz that you can play online as an individual or with your family? You can find it at firstnews.co.uk/quiz and on the *First News* app!

Head online for more quiz questions!

At home? Ask a grown-up for your Web ID to use the app.

At school? Teachers can access the quiz at first.news/school-quiz.




Answers:
1) Battle trumpet 2) A Minecraft Movie
3) 2020 4) Medicine 5) 20 January
6) Morthyr Tydfil 7) Annabeth Chase 8) Four
9) Fruit bats 10) Australia 11) Macclesfield
12) 50 13) Mo 14) *KPop Demon Hunters* 15) True.

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Lake Placid, USA



All pics: Getty

TALK about a leap of faith! Ukraine's Yan Havriuk and his fellow freestylers showed that humans can master the art of flight with some breathtaking bravery at the FIS Freestyle Aerials World Cup in Lake Placid, New York.

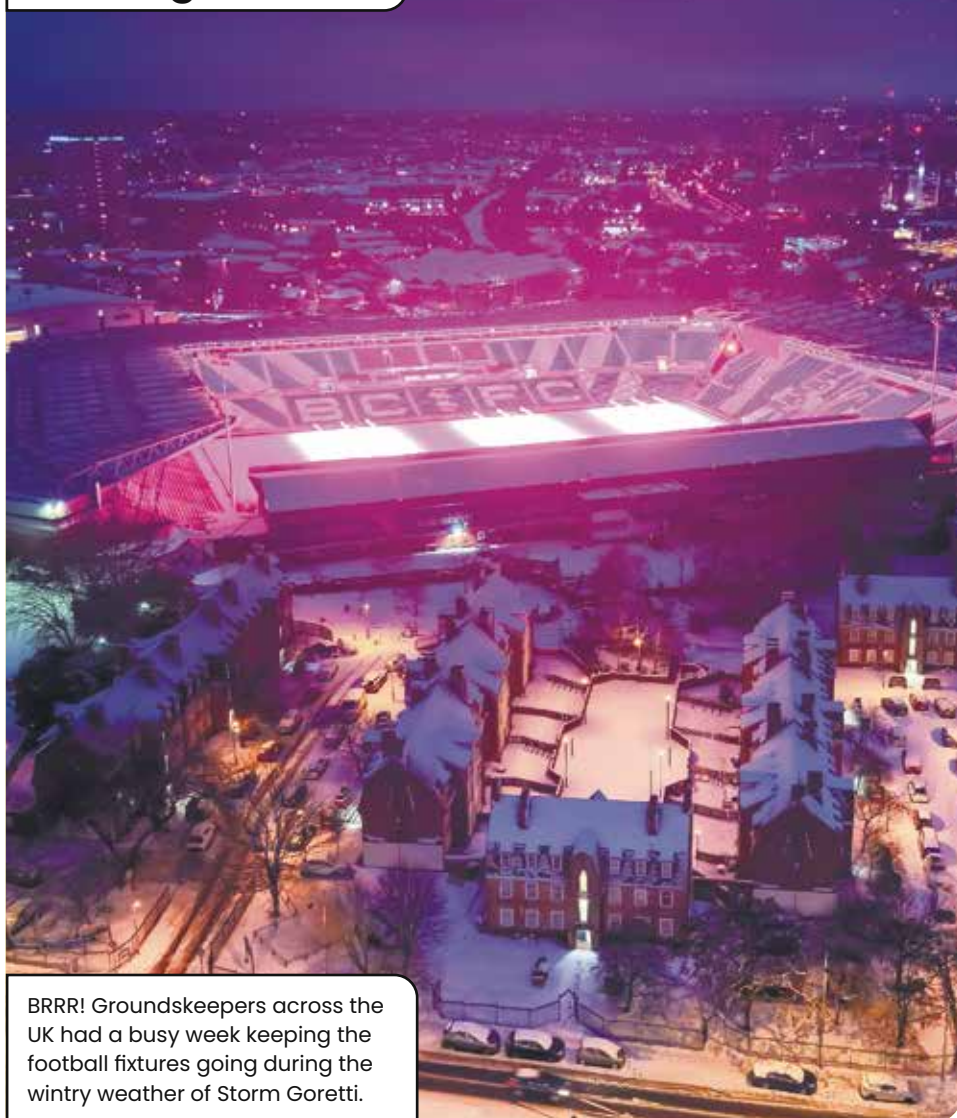


Emma Weiss



Jiaxu Sun

Birmingham, UK



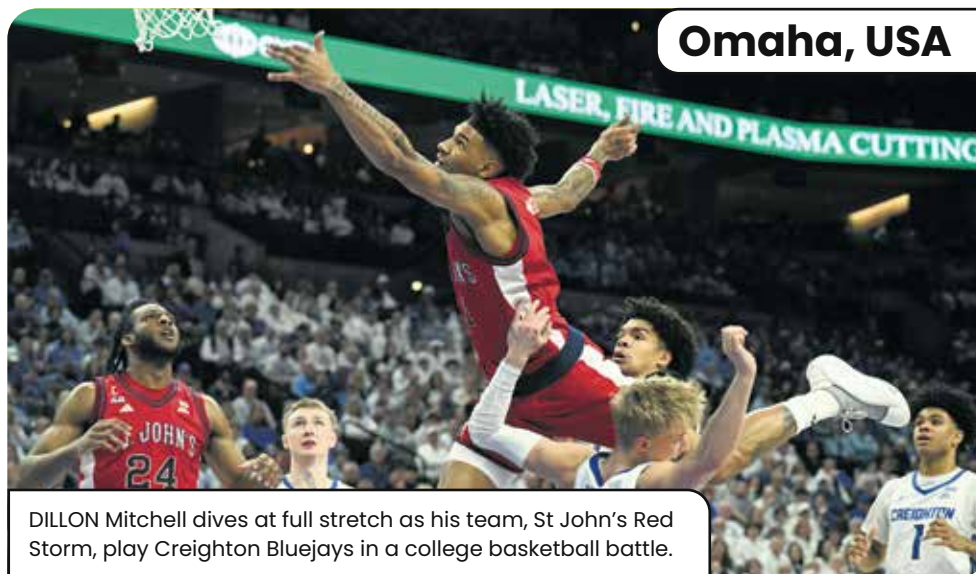
BRRR! Groundskeepers across the UK had a busy week keeping the football fixtures going during the wintry weather of Storm Goretti.

Fontwell, UK



MUD flies as horse hooves pound the ground at Fontwell Park.

Omaha, USA



DILLON Mitchell dives at full stretch as his team, St John's Red Storm, play Creighton Bluejays in a college basketball battle.



Macclesfield goalscorers Isaac Buckley-Ricketts and Paul Dawson



CRAZY CUP-SETS!

NON-LEAGUE Macclesfield provided the greatest FA Cup shock of all-time by beating last year's winners Crystal Palace.

Managed by John Rooney, the younger brother of Man United legend Wayne, the sixth tier side survived a late fightback by their Premier League opponents to deservedly win 2-1.

With 117 places between the sides in the English football pyramid, it goes down as the biggest giant-killing in the history of the famous competition.

The full-time whistle sparked joyous scenes as the Silkmen advanced into the fourth round.

Who else secured their place? Check out the biggest talking points on the right.



CITY SCORE TEN

The Ashes may have ended, but this one looked more like a cricket score than a football one! Man City recorded the biggest FA Cup win by a top-flight side since 1960, thrashing League One's Exeter 10-1. Antoine Semenyo (pictured) struck on his debut following a £64m move from Bournemouth, but Erling Haaland couldn't get on the scoresheet!



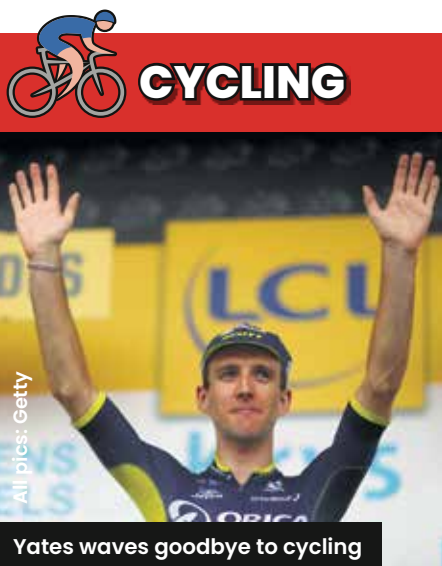
BELTERS GALORE

If we're talking about quality of goals, check out the highlights from this one! League One Mansfield won 4-3 away to Championship team Sheffield United, helped by two belters from Louis Reed (pictured) against his former club. Gustavo Hamer also fired in a rocket for the Blades, but it proved to be not enough.



PRESSURE FROM THE SPOT

Who doesn't love a penalty shoot-out?! Well, the answer to that question is probably Nottingham Forest, MK Dons, Bournemouth, Everton, Swansea and Blackburn, who all lost in cruel fashion from the spot. Penalties also provided some 'cup-sets' (cup upsets), with Forest losing to Championship side and Hollywood-owned Wrexham (left).



CYCLING

Yates waves goodbye to cycling

TWO-TIME Grand Tour winner Simon Yates has announced a shock retirement from cycling.

The 33-year-old's decision comes just months after he battled for a superb victory at the 2025 Giro d'Italia. The Brit also won the Vuelta a España in 2018.

"This may come as a surprise to many, but it is not a decision I have made lightly," said Yates.

"I have been thinking about it for a long time, and it now feels like the right moment to step away from the sport."



FOOTBALL

Cascarino was allowed to play without tape covering her earring at Juventus

A WEST Ham player was denied the chance to make her debut because of an earring.

Estelle Cascarino joined the Hammers on loan from Juventus, but wasn't allowed to come off the bench against Chelsea as she was wearing an earring that was covered by tape but could not be taken out.

The FA rules state that "all items of jewellery are forbidden and must be removed". Chelsea eventually ran out 5-0 winners.

Elsewhere, Man City stayed six points clear at the top of the WSL by beating Everton, while Liverpool remain winless after a draw with London City Lionesses.



TENNIS

Świątek celebrates the win with an inflatable flamingo

THIRD time's a charm for Poland, who won the United Cup title for the first time by defeating Switzerland.

After defeats in the 2024 and 2025 finals, Poland were more motivated than ever to win the mixed-gender hard court tournament.

However, it was Switzerland who took a 1-0 lead in Sydney when former Olympic champion Belinda Bencic beat world number two Iga Świątek.

Poland responded through Hubert Hurkacz and then a victory in the doubles match to claim the title.



WOW!

McColgan shone on the streets of Valencia

EILISH McColgan's European 10km record stood for more than three years until it was broken at the start of this year, but she wasn't having that! The Brit reclaimed the record in Valencia with a time of 30 minutes and eight seconds – two seconds faster than Belgian Jana Van Lent's effort on 4 January. McColgan told European Athletics she was "really proud" of herself after bouncing back from knee surgery.

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