

InShape

THE NEWSLETTER OF SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL NO.118 SUMMER 2021



FAMILY FUN DAYS ARE BACK!
After a year's break, our fun days return for four weeks of action-packed activities over the school holidays Page 8

THE EXPLOSIVE PROBLEM OF DISCARDED BATTERIES

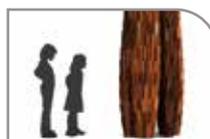
Help us to keep our refuse collectors safe



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NEW SCULPTURE FOR SEVENOAKS

Residents have their say on Bligh's artwork



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ON TRACK FOR A GREAT DAY OUT

Enjoy the stunning Darent Valley by rail



Pages 12 and 13



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Last chance to enter In Bloom

There's not long left to show off your blossoming garden in this year's In Bloom competition!

We've teamed up with Coolings garden centre in Knockholt to find the most stunning gardens across the District. The free competition is open to novice and expert gardeners alike and each household gets a £5 voucher to spend at Coolings as a thank you for entering.

There's lots of categories available, including front gardens, allotments, environmentally-friendly gardens, ornamental gardens, shop fronts

and pub, restaurant, B&B and hotel gardens too.

Whether you have a large or small garden, an allotment, a window box or a hanging basket, there's a category for you!

The deadline for entries is Monday 5 July with judging taking place later in the month.

For details of this year's In Bloom categories and how to enter, visit www.coolings.co.uk.



The explosive problem of discarded batteries

Putting used batteries in with your waste may seem harmless enough, but anyone doing this is putting our waste collectors in danger.

Nothing demonstrates this better than an incident that took place in April when a discarded battery exploded in the back of a refuse truck in Edenbridge.



After our waste collectors heard the explosion, the quick thinking team removed the battery, which then, without warning, burst into flames.

Thankfully, the team carry a fire extinguisher and dealt with the incident straight away.

On this occasion, no one was hurt thanks to the crew's actions, but it could have been much worse. Had the team not investigated and dealt with the problem quickly, the refuse truck could have easily caught fire putting the entire crew in danger.

The problem isn't confined to our refuse trucks. Discarded batteries have the potential to catch fire at waste

transfer and waste sorting centres, putting others in danger too.

Cabinet Member for Cleaner and Greener, Cllr Margot McArthur, says: "It is very dangerous to put any kind of batteries into your waste sacks, regardless of their size. The inside of refuse trucks are hot, meaning batteries can heat up and set alight quickly. We're really proud of the way our team handled the situation but we are urging residents never to put batteries in their waste to avoid this situation from happening again."

To find out more about what you can and can't put in your waste sacks, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/refusesacks

Disposing of old batteries

Recycling is the best way to dispose of spent batteries and is better for the environment than throwing them away.

You can recycle domestic batteries at most supermarkets.

Larger Lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries from laptops and cordless appliances should be taken to your local Household Waste Recycling Centre.

'Seven Oaks of Sevenoaks' chosen as the Bligh's sculpture

Residents voted in their hundreds to choose the new piece of public art for Bligh's Meadow.

This year, our Public Realm Commission invited artists to come forward with their ideas for the busy Sevenoaks site. The sculpture is expected to cost around £17,000 and is not being paid for by tax payers, but with funding secured from property developers instead. We received more than 35 submissions and these were shortlisted to two entries with the help of local artists, businesses and residents.

The two shortlisted entries were 'Three and Four' by Oliver Barratt and 'Seven Oaks of Sevenoaks' by Simone Tchonova and Matthijs la Roi.

Residents were asked to share their views on these proposals during April and May. Nearly 800 residents took part in our survey and 'Seven Oaks of Sevenoaks' was crowned as the people's choice.

The winning sculpture represents the oaks on the Sevenoaks Vine, many of which were destroyed in the great storm of 1987 and then replanted. The piece is symbolic of environmental and climate restoration and what is possible when people work together to improve the environment.

Community involvement is at the heart of the work. Up to 4,500 residents will have the chance to have a personal environmental promise engraved on one of the unique steel pieces that form the sculpture.

Cllr Roddy Hogarth, our Commissioner of the Public Realm, says: "I would like to thank the hundreds of people who took the time to share their views on the two sculptures.



"As with all art, there are strong opinions one way or the other and residents had a lot to say about these proposals. But what is clear from our survey, 'Seven Oaks of Sevenoaks' captured the public imagination.

"I am really excited that thousands of people will be involved by inscribing an environmental pledge on the many steel pieces that make up the sculpture. We can't wait to see it in place."

The Council is hoping to install the sculpture before the end of the year.

To find out more about the work, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/publicrealm

Get into gear with Brands Hatch cycle rides

Our ever popular, professionally-led cycle rides return to the world famous Brands Hatch racing track in August after a two year break.

The free rides are open to all and are perfect for families with small children.

Brands Hatch provides an opportunity to ride on the renowned circuit that once hosted Formula 1 racing. You can cycle at your own pace for up to two hours on a route that includes gentle hills.

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Six rides are available on:

- Thursday 12 August at 10.30am and 2pm
- Tuesday 17 August at 10.30am and 2pm
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She's a rainbow!

Taking the Rolling Stones shopping, leading a delegation to meet the Queen and running an engineering business are just some of Cllr Diana Esler's achievements.

Now, the colourful character and grandmother of four, who spent three decades living in India, is hoping for a satisfying year as our new Chairman.

After leaving school to study law at the University of London, Croydon-born Diana married at the age of 19 and left her studies and these shores to move to Mumbai (known then as Bombay) with her new husband.

Diana says: "We lived in a small but vibrant expat community. It was a very exciting time. Within a few years, I took over the family engineering business when my eldest was just six weeks old. It's tough running a firm at the best of times but was especially challenging as I was a woman working in a male dominated world.

"Despite heading up a business, I made sure I devoted time to supporting the community. I was a Brownie leader, then a Cub leader with 130 boys under my charge and was heavily involved in helping homeless people and women experiencing abuse.

"One of my proudest moments was leading a British business delegation to Delhi for a cocktail party with the Queen. I also liaised closely with Margaret Thatcher when she stayed in Mumbai and even spent a day shopping with Mick Jagger and Keith Richards when the Rolling Stones performed in the city.



"But after 34 years, I left India and my marriage and returned to England to settle in Beckenham. It was there I met then married John Esler and where I rekindled my love of local politics.

"My dad's brother was a Councillor in Brent and, as a child, I regularly delivered his campaign leaflets. So it was only natural I should become involved in politics and I was elected to Bromley Council."

Later, Diana moved to Sevenoaks and in 2015 was elected to Sevenoaks District Council representing Westerham and Crockham Hill.

Sadly John became unwell around this time and passed away in 2017.

But, last year, Diana married Michael Pearsall, himself a widower, whose life is equally engrained in local politics.

"It only seems natural for me to support DAVSS - the Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Services - during my time as Chairman", says Diana.

"And coming out of a most difficult year, I'm also keen to highlight our District, especially our historic attractions and fantastic gardens."

Diana welcomes invitations to community events. To invite Diana, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/chairman, e-mail chairman@sevenoaks.gov.uk or call **01732 227247**.

Follow Diana on Twitter at [@sdc_chairman](https://twitter.com/sdc_chairman).



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Family Fun Days are back!

FREE

The days are subject to current Coronavirus restrictions – please check our website before you attend.



After a year's break, our Family Fun Days return for four weeks of action-packed activities over the school summer holidays.

As ever, they include everything from crafts to games and sport in a friendly, COVID-safe environment and best of all they're completely FREE.

No booking is needed, simply turn up and have fun, however children need to be supervised by a parent or guardian at all times.

Activities are provided for children under the age of 12, but they may not be suitable for very young children.

Please bring waterproof clothing, sunscreen and your own refreshments. We recommend you check www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/summerfun or our social media accounts before setting off as the programme may change at short notice, especially if there's wet weather.

The days are funded and organised by us and run by Play Place with support from town and parish councils, who are providing the venues.

The Summer Family Fun Days take place on the following dates and locations:

Monday 26 July 10am to 2pm
Seal Recreation Ground, High Street, Seal TN15 0AF

Tuesday 27 July 10am to 2pm
Swanley Park BR8 7PW

Wednesday 28 July 10am to 2pm
Dunton Green Recreation Ground TN13 2UR

Thursday 29 July 2pm to 5pm
Edenbridge, Stangrove Park, off Station Road TN8 5LU

Friday 30 July 10am to 2pm
Eysnford, Anthony Roper Primary School DA4 0AA

Monday 2 August 10am to 2pm
West Kingsdown, Gamecock Meadow TN15 6BZ

Tuesday 3 August 10am to 2pm
New Ash Green, The Minnis DA3 8HH

Wednesday 4 August 10am to 2pm
Knockholt Recreation Ground TN14 7LD

Thursday 5 August 10am to 2pm
Hextable Gardens BR8 7LT

Friday 6 August 10.30am to 2pm
Chipstead Recreation Ground TN13 2SA

Monday 9 August 10am to 2pm
Four Elms Recreation Ground (behind Four Elms Primary School) TN8 6NE

Tuesday 10 August 10am to 2pm
Hartley, Woodland Avenue Recreation Ground DA3 7DB

Wednesday 11 August 10am to 2pm
Halstead Recreation Ground TN14 7HG

Thursday 12 August 10am to 2pm
Crockenhill, Harvestfield BR8 8LH

Friday 13 August 2pm to 5pm
Leigh, The Green TN11 8QL

Monday 16 August 10am to 1pm
Fawkham Village Hall, Valley Road, Fawkham DA3 8NA

Tuesday 17 August 10am to 2pm
Sevenoaks, Greatness Recreation Ground TN14 5BU

Wednesday 18 August 10am to 1pm
South Darenth, Heathside Recreation Ground DA4 9AZ

Thursday 19 August 10am to 2pm
Westerham, King George's Playing Field TN16 1BN

Friday 20 August 2pm to 5pm
Chiddingstone Causeway, Sports Field TN11 8JN

Council and communities take on the fly-tippers

A new community scheme to crack down on fly tipping is already making a big difference.

Our Environmental Enforcement Team has mapped the District's fly-tipping hotspots and is working with residents in these areas to act as the eyes and ears on the ground.

"Residents have amazing local knowledge," says Cllr Margot McArthur, our Cabinet Member for Cleaner and Greener. "They're aware of the problem areas and when they share this with us, we can take action to make these sites less attractive to fly-tippers. In one area, local people are using their residential CCTV systems to check for evidence."

Cllr McArthur adds: "Harnessing community support is now providing us increased enforcement opportunities and ultimately helping us to reduce fly-tipping."

The scheme is currently operating in nine parishes and the ambition is to roll it out to the remaining areas in the District.

If you want to play a part in reducing fly-tipping in your community, please contact environmentalenforcement@sevenoaks.gov.uk or your local town or parish council.

Our latest success!

This new scheme has led to a recent court prosecution, four £400 Fixed Penalty Notices and more than a dozen incidents under criminal investigation.

The court conviction was secured on 14 May 2021 for fly-tipping on School Lane near Fawkhams last year.

Last August, a resident reported a large amount of fly-tipped waste. Soon after, our Environmental Enforcement Team put up CCTV cameras and signs advising CCTV was in operation.

Just eight days later, a man was spotted removing waste from his transit van. A further three days later, a resident witnessed rubbish being dumped on the road and more rubbish was tipped a week later. Eagle-eyed residents made a note of the vehicle registration and

shared it with us. Evidence found in the tip allowed us to trace the waste to a resident and a business who had paid the culprit to dispose of their rubbish.

At Sevenoaks Magistrates' Court, the fly-tipper was ordered to pay £2,330 in fines and was given a criminal record.

Cllr Margot McArthur, our Cabinet Member for Cleaner and Greener says: "This fly tipper had little regard for the environment, dumping his waste in woodland, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, not to mention the inconvenience to others by blocking the road.



The man who dumped this waste was caught and fined thanks to help from residents

"I would like to thank the residents who reported details of the cases, helping us to secure this conviction.

"This latest prosecution sends out a strong message to anyone thinking about dumping rubbish in the District: our residents and the Council will not tolerate fly-tipping."

Working for disabled people

With 15% of our residents indicating they had a disability at the 2011 census, the District's independent Access Group is making sure their needs are taken seriously.

The Group's new Chairman, Cllr Faye Parkin, spoke with In Shape about the role of the group and what they're hoping to achieve.

"Disability is something that's likely to affect us all at some point in our lives," says Cllr Faye Parkin.

"Sadly, some people are born with disabilities, while an event or accident may result in a permanent disability for others. But, as we get older, many of us will experience disability too be it arthritis or sight, mobility or memory problems."

"But disability, in whatever form, should not be a barrier for people to lead happy and fulfilled lives. And that's where we come in."

"The Access Group was created and run by volunteers who are working hard to promote greater awareness and understanding of the needs of people with disabilities.

"To help improve access to services, we lobby and work with local councils, transport providers and other organisations. This may include offering advice on their policies and procedures as well as advocating for changes to building and infrastructure, better signage and improvements to information provision.

"Recently, members of the Group worked closely with Network Rail to improve access to Swanley Station. The works included new pick up and drop off points, disabled parking bays,



Cllr Faye Parkin, the Access Group's new Chairman

a taxi rank and step-free access to all platforms via the lifts.

"However, there's more we need to do. We are keen to hear about the real-life experiences of disabled people to better understand how we can help. We want to develop a stronger online presence and continue to lobby at a national and local level for improved access to services.

If you would like to know more about the Access Group or support their work, please email communities@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Celebrate local wildlife this summer!



Connecting with nature and living sustainably has never been more important.



To help you appreciate the natural wonders that surround us and learn more about why local wildlife is so significant, we've organised family wildlife trails and scavenger hunts throughout July and August with prizes!

Along the way, they'll also be fun facts and tips on how you can be more environmentally friendly.

The events are completely free and there's no need to book, simply turn up and have fun!

And to help you do your bit for nature, we've produced five short videos about the small but important changes you can make to support nature in your garden. They cover insect hotels and homes for birds, water and food for wildlife and composting and recycling.

Find out where your nearest wildlife trails and scavenger hunts are taking place and view the wildlife videos at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/wildlife.



Nothing gets 'cheddar' than this

This year, we are celebrating 20 years of the West Kent Partnership's work to provide the best environment for our businesses and residents to thrive economically.

Over the past two decades, the Partnership that works across the Sevenoaks District and the boroughs of Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells, has focused on developing the skills local businesses need and supporting young people into work.

This is continuing today with the Partnership backing Kickstart, a scheme that provides full funding to businesses to help unemployed young people into paid employment.

Award-winning organic Cheesemaker Dave Holton of Blackwoods Cheese

recently took on two 'Kickstarters' at his Chiddingstone operation.

Six-month Kickstart placements can start up to the end of the year. Businesses can find out more and apply at www.kickstartwestkent.co.uk. Young people looking for work through the scheme need to be claiming Universal Credit to qualify.

The West Kent Partnership is also supporting other exciting schemes to connect schools and colleges with employers to help young people.



Dave Holton of Blackwoods Cheese with Oscar Tuxford, one of his Kickstarters

Recent initiatives include:

- Kent WOW TV (World of Work) on YouTube showing young people and parents what work looks like
- Business challenges for schools
- Recruiting senior managers and business owners to volunteer time to help schools better understand the labour market and prepare pupils for the world of work

If you run a business and would like to know more, please email westkentEAN@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

Shop. Eat. Drink. Breathe. Local.

Rediscover what the town centres across Sevenoaks District have to offer

From independent boutiques and artisan food shops to salons and world-class eateries, our high streets are home to an abundance of unique and diverse businesses. A visit to Sevenoaks, Westerham, Edenbridge and Swanley offers a personal experience that you can't get online.

Support your local high streets today.

Town Centre Ambassadors

Over the past few months, our wonderful Town Centre Ambassadors have been busy answering your questions and ensuring COVID-safety guidance is being followed, so a huge thank you to them.

Outdoor dining on Bank Street

Bank Street in Sevenoaks has been transformed into a pedestrianised, al fresco dining and drinking area. From Monday to Sunday (10am to 11pm), Bank Street-based pubs and eateries welcome outdoor-seated customers to enjoy the town centre.

Meet the faces behind your high streets

To support our District's businesses as they have reopened, we've been working on a special video project with our town centre traders.

Running on YouTube and shared across our social media channels, our vibrant businesses are demonstrating their skills, talking about products and services in fun and inventive ways, and encouraging people to visit the high streets safely.

Among those featured are Sebastien from Brisket & Barrel in Sevenoaks, Jane at Entre Nous in Westerham, Michelle at Flowerworks of Swanley and Jamie from The Old Eden in Edenbridge.

You can view the videos at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/highstreets

The campaign is being paid for by the EU's 'Reopening High Streets Safely Fund'.



Swanley Park



Archbishop's Palace, Otford

Get on track for a day out in the Darent valley

A favourite of renowned Victorian artist Samuel Palmer, the Darent Valley is a unique nature haven in West Kent. It is here that one of only 200 chalk streams in the world - the River Darent - cuts through the North Downs on its way to the Thames. It is home to rare chalk grasslands, which come alive with butterflies in the summer, fields of heavily-scented lavender and footpaths winding through the landscape.

Set up in 2019, the Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership has been working with local communities to improve access to - and the appearance of - all the stations between Swanley and Sevenoaks, encouraging locals and visitors to engage with rail travel.

Here's a guide to the many fabulous places you can access by train:

Swanley station

Swanley's fabulous Park covers 60 acres with a miniature railway, water parks, a lake, award-winning green spaces, amazing play areas and much more. The ever-popular Wednesday market in Swanley is a draw too. And check out the footpaths crossing the A20 towards Eagle Heights in Eynsford, enjoying far-reaching views on the way, or take a longer walk to Farningham Woods Nature Reserve and catch the train back from Farningham Road Station.

Eynsford station

Eynsford has much to offer, from Lullingstone Roman Villa to the brooding beauty of Eynsford Castle, a rare example of a (ruined) Norman castle and Lullingstone Castle with its stunning World Garden and riverside walks. Lullingstone Country Park (30-minute walk) has something for everyone, with children's play areas, adventure trails and a visitor centre. Eynsford village (15-minute walk) has several pubs and cafés, plus local shops and a beautiful riverside setting next to a ford.

SWANLEY

EYNSFORD

SHOREHAM



Knole, Sevenoaks



Castle Farm is one-and-a-half miles from Shoreham and Eynsford stations

Shoreham station

This is one of the easiest-to-reach-by-train villages along the line. Visit the Mount Vineyard to taste their award-winning wine, dine on locally-produced food or explore the grounds just soaking up the atmosphere. The quaint Shoreham Aircraft Museum contains relics discovered in the valley following WW2. Again, there are great cafés and pubs, plus easy access to footpaths.

Otford station

The heart of the village is a 10-minute walk, where you will find the only listed duck house in the UK on the village pond. Try the Heritage Trail, view the remains of a once vast Archbishop's Palace, explore a scale

model of the solar system, and enjoy independent shops, cafés and pubs. The North Downs Way passes through the village, rising high on the Downs with stunning views across the valley and the Weald.

Bat & Ball station

Beautifully restored, this station is a destination in its own right, with an on-site café and characterful meeting rooms for hire. It's close to shops and cafés on St John's Hill and a 15-minute walk from Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, a 73 hectare former quarry with five lakes, family-friendly trails and hides (some accessible) and a visitor's centre. Nearby Bradbourne Lakes is worth a detour too.

Sevenoaks station

A vibrant market town, Sevenoaks has a huge range of shops, food and drink venues, the Stag and other cultural offerings and to explore. It also has the extraordinary Knole Park and House a few minutes' walk from the centre, a truly picturesque open space with roaming herds of deer and hundreds of ancient oaks.

Try Go2, an on-demand bus service to help with the first and last miles, or local bus and taxi companies. Bring your bicycle, travelling in the first carriage of the train.

For further information check www.darentvalleycrp.org and check train times on www.nationalrail.co.uk.

OTFORD

BAT & BALL

SEVENOAKS

Meet your One You team!



Say hello to the advisors who make up part of our One You team and find out more about the services they can offer to help you achieve your health goals...



Make a change

Cookery and pottery whizz Jenny Nolan has worked with our One You team since 2018 and has helped hundreds of people!

The One You Lifestyle Improvement Service offers 1 to 1 support for anyone looking to make some healthy lifestyle changes. The service can help you lose weight, increase physical activity, improve your diet, reduce alcohol consumption and more.

Jenny says: "We take a person-centred approach where the individual lets us know what works best for them and together, we come up with a plan to help achieve their goals.

"The biggest change we see in clients has to be their confidence. Sometimes all we need is some support and maybe a little nudge to get us going in the right direction. It's nice to know you have someone in your corner cheering you on".

Shape up!

Edenbridge resident Natalia Abdelaziz has been with the One You team since 2019 and has helped many people lose weight through the 'Why Weight' 12-week programme.

The weight management sessions are for people who are struggling with obesity or losing excess weight. The aim of these sessions is not to put people on a diet but to focus on nutrition and explore their relationship with food.

Natalia says: "Positive lifestyle decisions, especially small everyday choices will benefit you in the long run. Even something as simple as drinking more water or eating smaller portions can make a huge difference.

"The group element of the sessions adds an extra level of support and motivation. Even after the 12-week programme ends, we stay in contact with our attendees for further support and advice."

For more information about the 1 to 1 lifestyle improvement or group weight management programmes call **0300 020 0636** or visit **www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/oneyou**.



Crush the habit!

Helen Smith is part of the One You Stop Smoking team and over the last four years has helped over 700 people quit smoking for good!

Helen runs seven-week programmes. During the sessions, Helen looks at the clients' smoking habits, the reasons for smoking and the benefits of giving up.

Latin and Ballroom dance enthusiast Helen says: "The benefits of giving up smoking are many. It reduces the risk of Cardiovascular Disease, improves your immune system, increases life expectancy and lowers the risk of cancer, to name but a few.

"We provide support and coping strategies to alleviate the cravings and desire to smoke. I quit smoking 15 years ago so I can really empathise with people who are looking to give up for the first time, or those who have relapsed".

For help quitting smoking call **0300 123 1220** or text 'quit' to **87023**.



Council commmits to Net Zero

We're determined to do our bit to tackle the climate crisis and have committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

As well as cutting our use of fossil fuels in just eight years' time, we're supporting residents and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint too.

We're off to a good start with 98% of residents' household waste either recycled or reused. We have replaced some diesel vehicles with electric, installed electric charging points in some car parks and introduced planning standards so new homes have a minimal impact on the environment.

To take our efforts to the next level, we have produced an annual plan with actions to reduce our carbon emissions further and offset anything that we can't cut completely.

Our actions for this year include:

- Improving energy and water efficiency in our buildings
- Supporting the community, landowners, businesses and partners to do their bit
- Promoting green travel
- Making the best use of green spaces
- Measuring and reporting our carbon emissions
- Making sure all our plans align with our commitment to reach net zero
- Encouraging new sustainable buildings and renewable energy generation.

Here's a few tips to help you reduce your carbon emissions too.



Be fantastic without plastic! – plastic free July

Refuse single use plastics and join the global movement to reduce plastic pollution and keep your community plastic free.

Here are some ideas to go plastic free:

- Celebrate in style, ditch the glitter and balloons, create DIY reusable decorations made from paper, fabric and fresh flowers
- Use reusable water bottles and coffee cups
- Bring your own shopping bags
- Buy produce without plastic packaging, go for loose veg and avoid plastic trays
- Swap liquid soap for soap bars
- Have a plastic free picnic
- Use pet food that comes in tins or paper bags
- Reuse tin cans by punching holes in the bottom to plant herbs and flowers instead of buying plastic pots.

Find out more at www.plasticfreejuly.org



Stay cool and be a Net Zero hero

Things are beginning to heat up! An effect of climate change is hotter and drier summers.

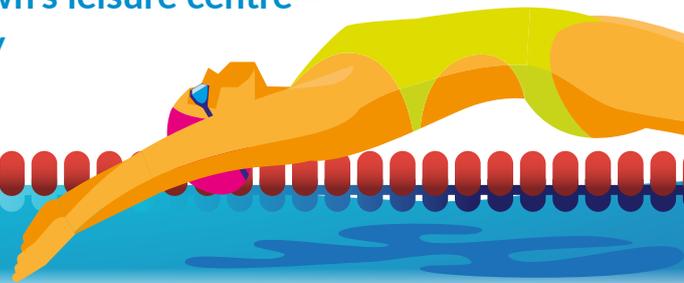
But you can take a few simple steps to ensure your carbon footprint stays a cool neutral:

- Block direct sunlight to keep heat out of your home
- Turn your fan off if you leave a room – fans cool people, not spaces
- Turn down air conditioning by a degree or two – the difference in energy usage is substantial
- Check the weather and if it's going to be hot, keep the windows and curtains closed in the morning
- Plant trees and have a cool space to relax in hotter days, which is good for your pets too.

For more hints and tips on reducing your carbon footprint, follow us on Facebook and Twitter and look out for our weekly **#netzero** posts.

Reopening the doors... and welcoming back our sporting talent

BBC Radio Kent and BBC News South East paid a visit to Sevenoaks in April just days ahead of the reopening of the town's leisure centre – and to look at preparations in place as the severely impacted sector looked to get back on its feet.



The film crew met brother and sister swimmers Aiden (17) and Daisy (15) McMillan who have both seen their competitive swimming careers curtailed by the pandemic.

Aiden, who began swimming at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre at the age of seven and has been a Kent champion multiple times, qualified for the 2020 Olympic trials and again for this year's British selection ahead of the Tokyo games, only to see the first cancelled and the second considerably reduced in size as a result of ongoing global restrictions.

Sister Daisy, also a Kent Medal List competitor, turned her efforts to open water swimming when the leisure centre closed.

"As a competition swimmer you are focused on major meets and events, none bigger than a chance to represent your country at Olympic level," says Aiden. "This past year has been disappointing and frustrating but the whole local swimming community is massively grateful for the way Sencio Community Leisure has offered us as many training hours in the pool as it could as and when restrictions allowed."

Sevenoaks District Sports Council chairman Edward Oatley – himself an almost-daily, early morning swimmer – was also interviewed by the BBC.

"We all know sport has an incredible power to build communities, develop a whole range of life skills and inspire individuals to improve themselves physically and mentally," he says.

"It has been a hugely problematical year for everyone, but the Sevenoaks District is blessed with incredible sporting talent, superb coaches and wonderful volunteers and I'm confident they'll all put this difficult time behind them and go on to do even greater things."



Making a splash again at White Oak

Swanley's White Oak Leisure Centre has reopened with the emphasis on swimming for fitness and families. And, as In Shape went to press, plans were being finalised to reintroduce the popular water inflatable sessions with the further easing of lockdown restrictions due on 21 June.

"We know our members, especially families, have missed the fun elements of the pool," says Jane Parish, Chief Executive of Sencio Community Leisure. "But we also know that creating a safe environment and building confidence in and around water, especially among young people, is essential. It's great to be back!"

www.sencio.org.uk/white-oak

Top tips to ease you into exercise

Many of us will have recently returned to exercise following a time that might have been high on binge watching and sofa surfing but low on getting the body moving and heart pumping.



We asked James Arnold, Wellness Supervisor at Sencio Community Leisure, for his six top tips.

1. If you've been inactive for some time, take it easy! Small steps are your best route back.
2. As always, talk to your GP before exercising if you've any health issues or concerns.
3. Listen to your body and know the difference between having overdone it and simply readjusting to being active again.
4. It's important to avoid potential injury so always ask for advice if unsure.
5. Use your time away to come back and maybe try something different like a new class, workout or sport. There is so much to choose from, and you might find a different fitness passion.
6. It can be hard getting your fitness mojo back, so team up with a friend. For advice on exercise and fitness speak to a Sencio Wellness coach.

Back in the swing

Of the many things lockdowns has taught us, our need for human interaction and remaining active is as key to our mental health as it is our physical health.



"Being able to play golf again has been so welcome following the latest lockdown," says Ricky Stanton, captain of Lullingstone Park Golf Club senior's section and club president.

"This is especially true for those that have been experiencing feelings of isolation and who are now enjoying getting back out and being able to meet friends and family for a round in accordance with the Government rules.

"Each successive lockdown during the pandemic has felt progressively more difficult, having enjoyed the earlier lifting of some restrictions only to have them reimposed again," adds Ricky.

"To be back has been such a boost for everyone's general wellbeing. It's not simply the physical exercise whilst playing, enjoying the views around the courses and finally being able to return to some sorely missed social interaction are all hugely beneficial to our mental health.

"The teams at Sencio and Lullingstone Park Golf Course must be congratulated. They have worked tirelessly throughout the Covid 19 crisis to provide a safe environment in which everyone can play the game they love."

To book, call **01959 533793** and for further details go to www.lullingstonegolfcourse.co.uk



Sevenoaks District Community Safety Unit

To report or receive advice on: anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping, graffiti, licensed premises, abandoned vehicles, environmental and noise nuisance, crime reduction, neighbourhood watch and other community safety issues, call **01732 227000** or e-mail **community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk**

A breath of fresh air

From 10 to 17 May, we supported Mental Health Awareness Week and the theme was connecting with nature.

Nature is proven to be hugely beneficial to our mental and physical health but sadly, many of us are not connecting with the environment around us. Throughout Mental Health Awareness Week, we encouraged residents to engage more with the outdoor spaces across the District and show that something as simple as a short walk can have a huge impact.

Five tips for connecting with nature to improve your mental health

1

Get out into nature

spending as much time outside as possible will help improve your mood and reduce your risk of mental health problems

2

Connect with nature using all your senses

once outside, take some quiet time to reflect on what you are seeing

3

Bring nature to you

if you don't have the time to go out into nature, bring it into your home. Houseplants and flowers will have a beneficial effect on your mental health

4

Exercise in nature

exercise is always good for our mental health but combining it with the outdoors is even better!

5

Protect nature

taking care of nature is not only good for the environment but a great way to feel good. Things like walking more or community clean ups are a good place to start

If you are struggling with your mental health and need immediate help, call the Samaritans on 116 123 or text 'Shout' to 85258.

Help us keep this area special

As restrictions began to ease in the spring, we wanted to make sure everyone who visited the District followed the principles of the Countryside Code; respect everyone, protect the environment and enjoy the outdoors.

Our message is simple, treat our outdoor spaces with respect and help us keep this area special. We want to encourage visitors to deal with their litter responsibly and to take their rubbish home if they find litterbins to be full. Drivers are also being encouraged to park responsibly when visiting popular areas of the District.

Posters have been put up in well-used public areas and we've also put the messages across all our social media channels.

We will continue to work with the Police, landowners and other partners to promote this message throughout the summer. You can help us by always leaving outdoor areas as you find them and by sharing our posts on Twitter and Facebook.

Reporting crime

To report a crime that is taking place, always call 999. If the incident has passed, call Kent Police on 101 or Crimestoppers on **0800 555111**

Social media

For the latest community safety news follow us on Twitter visit **@sdc_csp**

Tackling domestic abuse

For support and advice for all victims of Domestic Abuse call the Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Service on **01892 570538**

For the Community Domestic Abuse Programme for men call **07933 359210** or visit **www.kentcdap.org**

Warnings issued about letter, text and email scams

Sadly, scammers are finding new ways to get money out of people every day. It's essential to stay vigilant, always be cynical if you're contacted out of the blue and never give your card details out over the phone. It's also important to make any vulnerable people you know aware of current scams. Here's three that have been reported recently and locally...

Chartered Trading Standards Institute

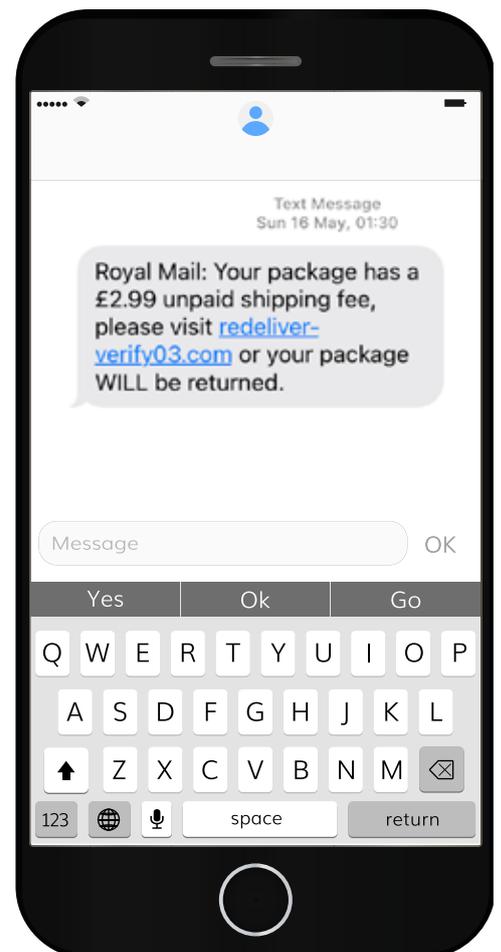
Letters are being sent from 'The Chartered Trading Standards Institute' saying 'Verge Capital' has scammed the recipient. The letter urges you to call a telephone number to get a refund. Once through, you are then asked to transfer £5,000 to cover the legal costs. It's important not to call the number on the letter and by no means part with any money.

The Post Office

There have been several reports of emails and texts claiming to be from the Post Office trying to persuade the public there is a problem with a delivery and to click on a link to fix it. The Post Office will never contact customers in this way and it's important not to click on the link.

British Gas

Similarly to The Post Office scam, there have been reports of emails and texts being sent from British Gas claiming a refund is due and to click on a link. Again, British Gas do not communicate in this way and the link should not be clicked on.



How to keep ahead of the scammers

One way to spot scams is that they are usually full of spelling mistakes or unusual website links.

You can protect yourself by signing up for the latest scam alerts at **www.kent.gov.uk/scams**

If you believe you have fallen victim to a scam, contact your bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud at **www.actionfraud.police.uk** or by calling **0300 123 2040**. You should also forward any suspicious emails to **report@phishing.gov.uk**

Your Councillors

Sevenoaks District Council's priorities and policies are decided by 54 Councillors who were elected by local people. The Sevenoaks District is divided into 26 smaller areas, known as wards and each ward is represented by one or more District Councillors. You are very welcome to contact the District Councillors to express your views and to ask for their help on local issues.

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Independent (I)
Labour (L)
Liberal Democrat (LD)
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How to contact your District Councillors

We have provided your District Councillors' phone numbers and e-mail addresses. If you would like to write to them, their postal addresses are available on our

website www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/councillors or by calling us on **01732 227000**. If you are unsure which ward you live in, please call us on **01732 227000**.

Stag prepares for bright future after lockdown

There has been lots of work going on behind the scenes at The Stag as the team has been preparing to reopen as the lockdown continues to ease.

Like all local businesses, it has been a difficult time and the not-for-profit charity has been hard hit with around £1million being lost due to the pandemic. However, thanks to donations from the public, local authorities and grants, The Stag has been able to stay afloat and all eyes have remained on being able to welcome back customers and performers.

The financial support has meant that much needed projects throughout the building have been able to be completed, such as rejuvenating The Stag Plaza and giving it a fresher, more modern look, updating the toilets, replacing old equipment and facilities and rewiring throughout the building to provide improved WiFi for meetings. Overall it means The Stag is now a brighter, better, safer place to visit.



Stag Business Development and Marketing Manager, Lisa Whitbread, says: "We wanted to make the most of the time that we were closed to complete the work that normally would be quite disruptive if the building was open to customers and staff. We are enormously grateful to

everyone's support and invite you all to come along and see what we've been doing!"

There is a busy list of events coming up with plenty of live shows and the latest films on offer to suit everyone.

The Stag hosts hundreds of events every year as well as offering excellent and affordable meeting and hotdesking spaces right in the heart of the town.

Lisa Whitbread adds: "We need people to keep supporting us as we get back on our feet. From buying tickets, volunteering, donating or hiring the building, it all makes a real difference and helps us to keep giving residents an excellent theatre, cinema and arts venue right on their doorstep."

For the latest updates on events, visit www.stagsevenoaks.co.uk or follow The Stag on Facebook and Twitter.

New Councillor joins our ranks

The latest Councillor to join us is Keith Bonin who represents Brasted, Chevening and Sundridge ward.

Cllr Bonin, a retired Finance Director and a Trustee of the Stag Theatre, was elected on 6 May.

The election was called after Robert Piper vacated the seat after 14 years.



Shed over heels

If retirement has meant losing the social network and support you relied on, or if you're looking for a focus, the Step by Step (SBS) Kent Sheds project may offer the solution.



SBS Kent Sheds is an established project designed to improve wellbeing via community workshops where people can meet to socialise, engage in hands on activities and learn skills from one another.

Each shed reflects the interests of its members with the most popular activities being woodwork and gardening.

Many sheds have reopened safely in line with Government guidelines, while the virtual sheds set up last year continue to operate, owing to their great success.

If you or someone you know would like to join a shed, please visit the Kent Sheds website for more details at www.kentsheds.org. Alternatively, visit the Kent Sheds Facebook page to see what the guys have been up to at www.facebook.com/kentsheds1.

Run by Activmob for Kent County Council as part of the EU funded SBS programme, 22 sheds have been set up across Kent and the number is growing.

The project extends to Hampshire in the UK as well as in France, Belgium and the Netherlands, with the aim of bringing SBS Men's Sheds to local communities in these countries.

Sevenoaks District Council at your fingertips

Main Office

Argyle Road, Sevenoaks,
Kent TN13 1HG

01732 227000

Open Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 5pm and Friday 8.45am to 4.45pm.

Emergencies (outside office hours)

01732 227000

then listen to the options.

Leisure centres

Ash Green Sports Centre*

01474 707164

Edenbridge Leisure Centre**

01732 865665

Lullingstone Park Golf Course**

01959 533793

The Olympic, Swanley*

01322 669201

Sevenoaks Indoor Bowls Club***

01732 451889

Sevenoaks Leisure Centre**

01732 470700

White Oak Indoor Bowls Club, Swanley***

01322 665571

White Oak Leisure Centre, Swanley**

01322 662188

* Operated by the local town or parish Council

** Operated by Sencio Community Leisure

*** Operated by independent limited companies



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