



THE BRIGHT TIMES

Making the most of life in Worcestershire...

www.thebrighttimes.co.uk

Issue 2 March/April, 2008

"An optimist is the human personification of spring" - Susan J. Bissonette

Worcestershire's delight at The Bright Times launch

The Bright Times launch on January 18th proved to be a great success. The Wyvern FM Thunders took to the streets of Worcestershire handing the paper out at various locations, along with the free eco-friendly 'Bright Times' cotton bags.

Since the launch we have received many comments and reviews from people who are delighted to have found a fresh, innovative and positive newspaper. Worcestershire resident Tim Patrickson was particularly pleased to receive his copy of The Bright Times and said "Congratulations on the new paper! It's brilliant, an ambitious start and nicely produced. It looks set to carve a niche in readership in the county."

In this issue we are very pleased to introduce new contributors and more interesting features. Liz Hayden-Jones joins us with her entertaining and informative column 'Liz on Life'. We also have our very own fashion expert who will be giving lucky Worcestershire resident's a makeover in each issue; she'll also let you know what's hot or not!

Spring is a really invigorating time of year with all of the new shoots of life appearing, the beautiful baby lambs, the dazzling daffodils and spectacular blossoms. It is as if nature is demonstrating that there is always an opportunity to make a fresh start. Make this your time for growth and stepping out of your comfort zones. Get round to doing whatever it is you have been putting off, plan that trip you have always wanted; call that friend you have been meaning to catch up with, sign up for that course you have always wanted to take. Follow Spring's lead and start making your plans come to fruition. We hope you enjoy the second issue of The Bright Times and again, if you have any news, views, ideas or anything you would like to contribute then please get in touch.

The Bright Times Team



The Wyvern FM Thunders handing out The Bright Times in Worcester city centre

FREE

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The Bright Times reserves the right to correct any inaccuracies in subsequent editions of the Newspaper.

Discover Bewdley at Heritage Festival

Heritage is at the heart of this year's Discover Bewdley Weekend. The event is now in its third year and will be taking place on Sunday 4th and Monday 5th May in

ordinates the programme of the events but we have tremendous support from the Town, District and County Councils. But it's the people who live and work in the town who organise the



Morris dancers in Bewdley

Bewdley town centre from 10am to 5pm.

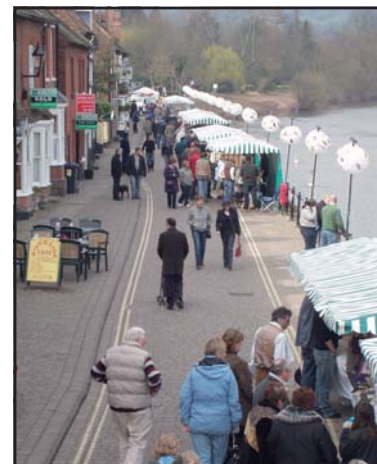
Among the attractions on offer this year are markets, street entertainment, a riverside parade, birds of prey displays, street theatre, poetry recitals, storytelling, live music, guided walks, town tours, water rescue demonstrations, behind the scenes at Severn Valley Railway, exhibitions and workshops, a beer festival and a coracle race. There is something for all the family to enjoy.

Central to the weekend will be the launch of Bewdley's new town trail which is being celebrated with a parade of costumed people, VIPs in civic dress, musicians (including Bewdley Scout Band), dancers and stilt walkers all travelling along the riverside from Dog Lane to Jubilee Gardens. Pupils from St Anne's Middle School, The Bewdley School and Sixth Form Centre and The Town Trail Steering Group have developed the trail thanks to Heritage Lottery Funding.

Miranda Sowden from Bewdley Development Trust said, "The Bewdley Development Trust co-

events – they are at the heart of what is on offer.

We are also very thankful to local companies, clubs and societies, including Wetherspoons and Severn Trent who have helped fund



Bewdley Market

the weekend."

The weekend has proved to be a huge success on previous years attracting over 5000 people to the town. Most of the events are free. For more information about times, venues and meeting points contact Bewdley Tourist Information Centre on 01299 404740 or Bewdley Development Trust on 01299 405516 or visit www.bewdley.org.uk

Just for fun - Find the egg

How many eggs like this can you find hidden in the pages of The Bright Times.



Answer on page 37

Have you got something to say?

Write to us at
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or email your letter to
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Worcester University
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Hallow News agent
Texaco Garage (A38 Droitwich Rd)
Shrub Hill Train Station
The Bank House Hotel
The Worcester Whitehouse Hotel

Inkberrow Stores
Flyford Flavell Garage

Evesham

Evesham Tesco
Evesham Library
Arden News HS
Wood Norton Hall & Conference centre
Kidderminster
Kidderminster Tesco
Kidderminster Library
Dunhampton Total Garage
Cuttnall Green Post Office
Mann's Superstore
HooBrook Stores (Chester Rd South)

Stourport on Severn

C.N.A News (Kidderminster Rd)
Shell Garage
Stourport news (Woodbury road north)
Stourport Sport Centre

Redditch

Mount Pleasant Post Office & Stores
Astwood Bank Total Garage
Rai News (Dowlers Hill)
Star Bordesley Texaco garage
Headless Cross Co-op
Redditch Library

Bewdley

Bewdley Co-op
Martins
Bewdley Library
The Elms hotel (Abberley)
The Wrye Forest visitor centre

Pershore

Pershore Co-op
Pershore Sommerfield
Pinvin Stores & Post Office
Bromsgrove

Texaco Garage (Birmingham Rd)
Bromsgrove Library
Rock Hill Post Office
The Hillton Hotel

Malvern

Malvern Co-op
Upton-upon-Severn Co-op
The Malvern Hills Hotel

Broadway

Broadway Texaco
Broadway News Agent
Broadway Library

Droitwich

Spar Express
Rons News Queen Street
Brookwood news (Tagwell)
Droitwich Library

Tenbury Wells

Tenbury Wells Co-op
Clows Top Post Office
Tenbury Wells Library

Farmland wildlife in jeopardy

Until October last year EU requirements meant 8% of a farm's land had to be left fallow - known as 'set-aside'. However, in response to rising food prices caused by shortfalls in global production, a 0% set-aside target has now been imposed. This means up to 423,000 hectares of set-aside in England from 2007 could be lost including field margins, buffer zones and small fields - vital refuges for wildlife.



More and more fields will be used to grow crops

On the 30th January, Defra published the first results from monitoring the impact of 0%. The results show that the amount of set-a-side left uncropped is likely to fall by more than 50% in 2008. For the West Midlands Region it means 33,700ha of set-a-side land from 2007 will reduce by over half in 2008 and be put back into cultivation this coming year.

Set-aside was introduced in the early 1990s as a means of addressing over-production and controlling the supply of cereals. But it has delivered many environmental benefits and become a vital habitat for birds, insects and plants.

Caroline Corsie, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's Agriculture Officer is considering how to protect the biodiversity gains which set-aside land has brought to the Trust's Lower Smite and Hillcourt Farms. Corsie said, "While we could now grow crops on more of the land, we'll try to keep a balance between the income that would generate and the loss of wildlife habitat. A proportion of our original set-aside will remain uncultivated or growing the bird seed crops which were always permitted on set aside areas. Short term, with high grain prices, we'll see some increase in income from

arable crops and will invest this in other wildlife-friendly management. Farmers have done a fantastic job benefiting the environment through management of set-aside land and we hope that they too might find ways to avoid losing all of this biodiversity gain completely. Agri- environment funding schemes need to provide means to support farmers in doing this."

Brains as well as beauty

Worcestershire Resident Marilyn Fernihough has been busy preparing her Australian Shepherd, Armatan Sun and Steel, or Piper as she is known at home, for her Crufts debut in March. 15 month old Piper has been making a habit of winning in the show ring since she was a puppy.



Marilyn said, "Piper has been winning lots of awards since she started going to shows at the age of six months, including many best puppy of breed wins at championship shows."

Although it will be Piper's debut at Crufts she is fortunate

to have an experienced handler in Marilyn, who has been showing her dogs for several years and has made it to Crufts in the past. Marilyn said, "I often go to the shows with my sister-in-law Marsha, who is also a keen dog handler. There is a really good atmosphere at the shows and it is a very social affair, we tend to crack open a bottle of wine when someone has a win to celebrate. We often take the caravan and heading off to shows for a few days at a time or sometimes we stay in hotels which allow us to have the dogs."

Marilyn has been out cycling early every morning to prepare Piper for her big day. "Taking her out on the bike builds up her muscles in preparation for showing," Marilyn added. In order to qualify for Crufts Piper had to win at a championship show where there were challenge certificates on offer. There are currently only a few of these shows throughout the year as the breed is quite rare and has only recently joined the Kennel Club.

Not only does Piper make the top of the class with her beautiful and unique look but she has also put her intelligent



mind to good use passing her bronze, silver and gold in the good citizenship awards at the age of 11 months. Marilyn commented, "These are Kennel club obedience tests going up in difficulty for the dog and handler. The handler must take a written test too before the award can be obtained. These were achieved with the help of Brenda and Ed at Evesham and District Dog training club which is held in Norton Village Hall." For more canine information, or for a list of registered breeders see: www.the-kennel-club.org.uk.

Keeping shoppers in the know

Shoppers in Redditch can access the latest crime prevention advice from West Mercia Constabulary on a new interactive information stand at the Kingfisher Centre. The Infobox has four touch-screen displays which people can use to log on to current appeals, police news, crime prevention information and other advice via an instant link to the force website, www.westmercia.police.uk.

They are currently using the point to warn shoppers about the use of mobile phones when driving, keeping your purse safe when shopping and not to leave sat nav equipment in view when leaving your car. Shoppers accessing the website can also use the Local Policing link to find out about their Local Policing Teams and the dates for PACT (Partners and Communities Together) meetings in their wards.

Crime prevention advice and other messages are regularly flashed up on the Infobox screens and these can be almost instantly updated with appeals

and other police information as and when necessary. It is the first such device to be used by the force to relay messages to the public in this way. Police say that the unmanned information point, also offers a gateway to job opportunities in the police, and allows officers to put out urgent information, which can be updated instantly. It also links to the Crimestoppers website, where people can give information about crime in complete confidence. During the first month of usage the screens have already been used by over 24,600 shoppers.

Inspector Ian Joseph from Redditch police said the move was part of the force's commitment to be increasingly accessible by making it easier for the public to contact them for information. "This will help our local communities interact with us more easily. It is an excellent and exciting initiative, which takes us out into the busiest area of town," Inspector Joseph added. "I'm looking forward to seeing how it is received, but I'm confident people will like



PC Fergus Green with the info box it and want to take advantage of it."

Jason Levy, National Sales Manager, Infobox Interactive Ltd said "Infobox is all about giving everyone the opportunity to easily gain information about their local area where it has never been readily available before. "We are very pleased that we are working with West Mercia Police and the team at the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and will be working closely with them to constantly develop new and exciting services that can now be offered in the Centre through Infobox."



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comfortable.

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Solve it by walking

There's a famous latin motto, 'solvitur ambulando', which means 'solve it by walking'. When faced with difficult feelings, take a walk for at least 20 mins - ideally in a natural setting such as a park, a wood, or among hills. Adjust your mind to the rhythm of your footsteps. By the end of your walk you will see things in a truer perspective

Brave Worcestershire runners take on London Marathon

Here we look at just a handful of the many entrants from Worcestershire in this year's London Marathon

Droitwich man becomes face of Leukaemia care ad campaign

Droitwich man, Norman Farmer has been selected as the face of Leukaemia CARE's Flora London Marathon campaign. Norman is a 63-year-old with mild asthma who underwent heart bypass surgery a few years ago but that won't stop him tackling the 26-mile Flora London Marathon for the third time on Sunday April 13. In the eyes of Leukaemia



Marathons, proving that you can be any age, and don't need to be a super macho running machine to take part and enjoy the events. We all admire him immensely. Norman's been massively loyal to our charity, he has great fun each time and we all love him for his continued support. We'll all be rooting for him on the day."

Norman said: "My daughter Juliet entered the London Marathon for the first time in 2004 and it made me wonder whether I could also achieve the seemingly impossible by completing the marathon myself. I decided it was time for me to get fit so I started training to enter the marathon and decided to take part in Leukaemia CARE's Christmas Fun Run in the meantime, by which time I had lost four stone and was healthier than I'd been in a long time. I went to the charity's offices on Christmas Eve to pay in my sponsorship money and somehow ended up signing up for the 2005 marathon while I was there."

Norman has so far raised more than £5,000 for Leukaemia CARE and is aiming to raise at least £1,300 more through his marathon effort this year. If you would like to help him reach his target, you can make a secure online donation by visiting www.justgiving.com/normie.



Norman Farmer in training

CARE, this has made Norman something of a legend.

Alice Watts, Leukaemia CARE's Fundraising Executive, said: "For us, Norman is the perfect 'face' to promote our fundraising activities. He exemplifies the qualities of a charity runner in the

Macaroni Cheese Breakfast

Dr Thomas Rose, 59, from Malvern is taking part in the London marathon this year for the second time. He is supporting the Kaleidoscope charity in Malvern

who provide respite care for disabled children.

He said "You don't even know you have started until you get to London Bridge. The physical and mental challenge starts then. I train on the Malvern Hills when I get time, it's easier now the evenings are getting lighter. I am also taking part in the Tough Ten in Weston Super Mare in preparation."

Dr Rose expects to complete the marathon in about 5 hours. He added "On the day of the race I will prepare by eating two tins of Macaroni cheese for breakfast. The thought of crossing the finish line is what keeps me going. The crowds of spectators and the bands provide great motivation to keep going". If you would like to sponsor Dr Rose you can contact him on 07976253359.



A Fighting Spirit

In November 2003, PC David Austin responded to an emergency call from the public – it nearly cost him his life. Serving as a police officer in the West Mercia Constabulary David was involved

one being to complete the London marathon! He will be pounding the streets of our capital city on Sunday April 13th with his best friend John Birbeck on behalf of St. Richards Hospice, who have a team of eight runners competing this year and raising funds for the

life is that my glass is always half full instead of being half empty. What happened to me in the accident that I had has magnified this outlook considerably.

What four words would you use to describe yourself?

Determined, Positive, Strong minded.

It is often said that people learn the most in the face of adversity, what would you say you have learnt from the whole recovery experience?

What I have learnt is that if you are determined and believe in yourself then anything is possible.

Was there anything in particular that drove you on?

I have always loved

physical exercise and have always got a real buzz from it. I was fit before I had my accident and I was determined to exceed my fitness levels from what they were before my accident, I have now done that.

What is the best piece of advice you have ever been given?

The best piece of advice I was given throughout my recovery was to be patient with the healing process of my head injury as it takes a long time.

If you had to give someone advice who was facing a similar situation what would it be?

Believe in yourself and you can do it.

Do you have a motto by which you live?

Mind over Matter.

When and where are you at your happiest?

I'm at my happiest when I'm training at the Boxing Club or the Gymnasium.

What is your biggest fear?
Growing old.



PC David Austin training with John Birbeck

in a traffic collision which left him in a coma for several weeks. He suffered some brain damage, a fractured skull and a fractured femur, the doctors warned him he may never walk again.

As a result of these horrific injuries David had to re-learn the things that you and I take for granted, things such as swallowing, speaking and walking. His journey of recovery has been neither short nor easy but he continues to improve even now. He stunned his friends, family and the medical professionals by making such a miraculous recovery.

David says, "I owe my life to the emergency services that attended my accident and to the hospital staff that cared for me. I am forever indebted to those dedicated and caring persons."

David has, with the support of West Mercia been able to continue his career as a Police Officer. Throughout his recovery David has set himself goals, his latest

charity. The pair are hoping to raise £4000.

Anyone who would like to sponsor PC Austin for the London Marathon should call 08457 444888 ext. 4953 or visit www.justgiving.com/davidaustin2.

Five minutes with PC David Austin:

What do you think helped you to make such a remarkable recovery?

I have got a very close family that has supported me tremendously. My best friend John Birbeck also helped me greatly return to fitness training and boxing training. It was John who used to get up extra early before he started work to come running with me to help me re-learn how to run again. I have also had a great deal of support from the West Mercia Constabulary, especially Chief Super Intendant Rod Reynolds.

Have you always had a positive attitude?

I have always had a positive outlook on life. The way I look at my

Competitive Ken Joins Team Bertie in Marathon Fundraiser

Ken Jones is about to realise his dream of running the Flora London Marathon as he is finally taking part in the 26-mile race on Sunday April 13. While it's not the first marathon Ken, Audit and Assurance Director at local accountants Kendall Wadley, has tackled the London Marathon is the one he has aspired to for many years.

Ken is running as part of Team

Bertie, a group of runners raising money for Worcester-based national charity Leukaemia CARE and is looking for help in boosting his sponsorship to help them continue their vital work. You can help Ken achieve his target of £2000 by making a secure online donation at www.justgiving.com/kenjones1.

In total, 147 runners will be donning the Team Bertie kit this

year, including 48 women and 99 men so far. From 20 years to 63, team members have come from across the UK (and a few from further afield) and from all walks of life: there are five accountants, five bankers, two civil servants, nine NHS workers, three financial advisers, three teachers, six IT professionals, four police officers, five sales people, five students and two solicitors in the team.

The Bright Times team would like to wish all those taking part in the London Marathon the very best of luck

Vibrant natural environment can boost economic growth

Liam Byrne MP, Minister for the West Midlands, endorsed the new 'Landscapes for Living' Prospectus – the exciting yet ambitious 50-year vision of the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership which was published recently.

The Prospectus argues the



All wildlife needs a good quality habitat to live in

economic and social case for landscape scale conservation with a strong emphasis being put on the benefits of a high quality natural environment in supporting economic growth and investment. Its focus is the whole West Midlands region.

"For too long the natural environment has been regarded as something apart from people and their living, working lives," said Andy Graham,

Primary School shines in Ofsted report

Bayton Church of England Primary School near Bewdley is celebrating an excellent OFSTED report, following an inspection by HMI in December. The Headteacher, Mrs Avis Pounder and Chair of Governors, Mr. David Chance, wish to thank all the staff and pupils for their continuing hard work and the families for their loyalty and support for the school

All aspects of the school, without exception, received "good" or "outstanding" grades, including, curriculum provision, standards, teaching and learning, leadership and management and personal development and well-being.

The inspector reported that "throughout the school, pupils show high levels of attainment" and that their behaviour is "exemplary, routinely treating each other with consideration and tolerance." Mrs Pounder was particularly pleased that OFSTED were concerned with the personal development of the

Conservation Manager at Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. "We aim to put it back where it belongs – as fundamental to our health, well being and prosperity. We must all work with nature to secure a healthy, sustainable future for ourselves and our children."

The Prospectus, created in consultation with organisations across the West Midlands, describes how fundamental an environment rich in wildlife is to the wellbeing of the whole population.

A high quality, natural environment supports the economy by attracting employers, visitors and inward investment. At the same time, it improves our quality of life through providing cities, towns and villages with space to relax and exercise, natural cooling, water storage which helps prevent flooding and a greener, living landscape.

However climate change poses new threats with rising temperatures and different weather patterns. Some species will be unable to adapt unless we expand the areas of good quality habitat and remove barriers which prevent movement by creating a net-

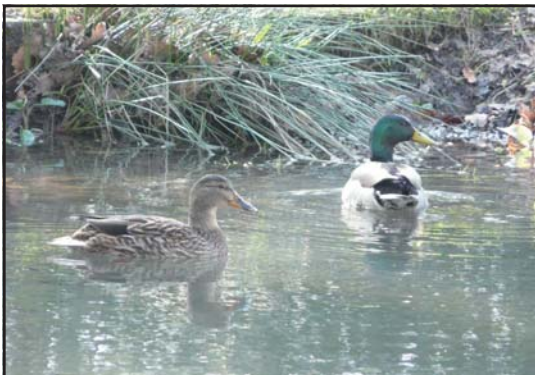
whole child, not only academic attainment. Encouraging children at a young age to recognise the importance of good manners and tolerance of others must be high on every schools agenda. Mrs Pounder said "We expect the very best behaviour from our pupils, including courtesy and treating each other in a kind and considerate manner. We make our expectations very clear and concise through our school code of conduct and all adults in school are expected to set a positive example to the children. Parents, staff and children work hard to make their school a safe and happy place to be."

The main area to develop is to bring Maths standards as high as English. In 2007 SATS, Bayton were in the top 2% of the country for their KS2 English results.

Mrs Pounder is delighted with OFSTED's endorsement of the school and is committed to continuing to build on the school's successes.

work of wildlife areas across the region.

The 'Landscapes for Living' prospectus provides a long-term framework for action on rebuilding biodiversity across



Ducks in their natural environment

the many differing landscapes of the West Midlands.

In south Worcestershire, The Severn and Avon Vales Wetland Partnership (SAVWP) is working with The Wildlife Trust, farmers and landowners to recreate wetlands and re-establish thousands of hectares of sensitively managed farmland within the two river valleys.

This project delivers a number of benefits including securing income for farmers, enhancing populations of rare and declining bird species as well as increasing opportunities for the public to enjoy a more natural environment.

To accompany the 50-year vision, the West Midland Biodiversity Partnership has developed a regional biodiversity map showing the areas containing where the region's most precious biodiversity resource is currently concentrated. It is these areas which

will need to be expanded and linked to provide the kind of landscape scale approach which will benefit both our people and our wildlife.

"I congratulate the West

Midlands Biodiversity Partnership in articulating such an exciting vision for the region's future which so clearly shows how the natural environment and economic growth can complement and support each other," said Liam

Byrne MP.

Rob Williams, Head of Regional Policy and Partnerships for Natural England, West Midlands, also welcomed the launch of the Prospectus, on behalf of Natural England, saying, "Working at a 'landscape scale' is essential if the region is to meet the government's England Biodiversity Strategy aims of halting biodiversity loss and adapting our countryside to climate change.

The Prospectus shows where partners can look for opportunities to join up actions that will not just benefit the environment, but grow real jobs and improve the quality of life for everyone in the region."

For further information on Landscapes for Living in Worcestershire contact Andy Graham, Conservation Manager at Worcestershire Wildlife Trust on 01905 754919 or email andyg@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org

Use it or lose it

Residents in Worcestershire who are over the age of 60 are being encouraged to improve their fitness and get down to the gym.

If anyone needs convincing of the significant benefits associated with keeping physically active later in life, surely a quick glance at the legendary song and dance man Bruce Forsyth celebrating his 80th birthday is all the evidence they need. Having spent his entire life entertaining the nation with his energetic performances he still remains as fit as ever. The Hereford and Worcester Age Concern Charity has revealed that every one

over the age 60 is entitled to receive an advance 25 card that gives the card holder a 25 per cent reduction on all activities at sports centres in Worcester. Upon proof of age the card can be purchased for just £7.60 a year. More information is available from Perdiswell Leisure Centre, Nunnery Wood Sports complex, Worcester Swimming pool and St Johns Sports Centre where memberships can also be obtained at a reduced rate with reductions for those on benefits. It is never too late to try something new so make a decision today to get moving, whether it be signing up for a class or a gentle swim with a friend, start enjoying the benefits of activity.

News in brief

Health course Ethnic minorities living in Worcester are to benefit from health related courses, Hereford and Worcester Age Concern along with the Winn Project, Worcester Primary Care trust and the voluntary sector, have joined together to provide Health care sessions on a Monday afternoon. The sessions for women are at St Swithin's Institute, the Trinity, and male sessions at the community centre in Midland Road, Tallow Hill, both fortnightly from 10.30am to 12.30am. For more information call 01905 726652.

The One and Only

Former Worcestershire resident Kathy Setterfield took the country by storm as Dusty Springfield to be crowned winner of the Saturday night show 'The One and Only'. 37 year old Kathy who has been a professional singer since 1989, was up against the very best of the UK's tribute acts, as they battled out for a once in a life opportunity to perform on the grandest stage of them all as part of the worlds longest running musical tribute show Legends in Concert in Las Vegas. When Kathy and her husband Andy Hodge, lived in Lower Wyche Road, Malvern they regularly performed in the region with their long-running rock and roll show That'll Be The Day.

Bag busters A Campaign to rid a Worcestershire town of



plastic bags has been officially launched. The Evesham Bag Busters are hoping to encourage Evesham

to become a town in which single use plastic carrier bags are no longer socially acceptable.

The group was started by several environmentally minded people who belong to the freecycle website - an Internet based organisation that encourages people to recycle unwanted goods.

Be a safe driver not a sorry driver

Media campaigns over the years have become increasingly hard hitting with disturbing images showing the results of poor driving. These images are enough to make some of us stop and think about the consequences of our actions. However, many continue to make their own judgements about what they consider acceptable driving. The laws are there for a reason and are based upon extensive research into motoring safety. The 'it will never happen to me' attitude drives this reluctance to take note of the laws. The truth is it could happen to you, me, or anyone of us. It is never possible to know who is round the corner, what is going to jump out of the hedge, which child is going to dash across the lane, or which car is going to fly around the corner. It is better to be a safe driver than a sorry driver. We cannot remove all motoring risks, however, at least by adhering to the laws we can limit the potential risks.

West Mercia Constabulary's Seven Deadly Sins road safety campaign is being updated for 2008 after the number of collisions involving pedestrians and cyclists rose in 2007. Citizens in West Mercia are more likely to be involved in a driving incident than they are being a victim of crime.



The Seven Deadly Sins are:

- Motorcycle Safety
- Speed
- Drink and Drug driving
- Poor Driving including mobile phone safety
- Illegal Vehicles
- Seatbelt Safety
- Pedestrian and Cycle safety

Sergeant John Roberts, from the Collision Investigation Unit said, "Road safety is an important priority for West Mercia Constabulary and the force is committed to reducing road casualties. The Seven Deadly Sins initiative is a force wide education, publicity and enforcement programme that raises awareness about the issues that contribute to collisions."

Speed - Speeding is a serious traffic

offence and continues to be a problem that results in accidents. Speeding is often still seen as a minor offence. It is estimated that 70% of drivers exceed the basic speed limit placing vulnerable road users at risk of injury. Research suggests that if speed is reduced by just 1mph, there would be a 5% reduction in casualties.

Drink & Drug Driving - Nearly one in six of all road deaths involve drivers who are over the legal alcohol limit. Approximately five people every day are arrested for drink driving in the West Mercia area. Although drink driving has become socially unacceptable, a minority of motorists are still either ignorant of the dangers or are prepared to run the risk of dealing with the consequences of this behaviour. Phrases such as 'I've only had a couple' spring to mind, often even if a person feels completely sober consuming alcohol will have impaired driving ability. Alcohol takes time to leave your system, showering, drinking coffee and other ways of 'sobering up' will not help. If you have been out drinking you may still be over the legal limit the next morning. The only safe option is not to drink any alcohol at all if you plan to drive.

Poor Driving - Poor drivers such as those who are aggressive, erratic, inconsiderate or fatigued pose a serious threat to road safety. Research into driver fatigue has shown that opening a window or turning up the radio do little to prevent a driver from falling asleep at the wheel.

Mobile Phone Safety - Drivers using a mobile phone are four times more likely to be involved in a collision. It is illegal

to use a hand-held mobile phone when driving, even if you have stopped at traffic lights or are in a queue of traffic. Even the most careful driver will be distracted by a phone call or message as concentration and observation skills will be affected.

- Keep your mobile phone switched off when driving and let your voicemail pick up any missed calls
- Only use a mobile phone once you have stopped in a safe place. Never stop on the hard shoulder of a motorway, except in an emergency.
- Using a hands-free device is not illegal but will reduce your level of concentration while driving, putting yourself and other road users at risk. If you must use one, say you are driving and end the conversation



quickly.

Seatbelt Safety An astonishing 7% of drivers still fail to 'belt-up', despite being aware of the dangers involved and the fact that they are at a much greater risk of injury or death if they are involved in a collision.

The driver has full responsibility for ensuring that any passengers aged under fourteen years are wearing either their seatbelt or the correct restraint. Adult passengers (aged fourteen and upwards) are responsible for their own safety and should always ensure that they have secured their seatbelt before the driver sets off.

When driving always...

- Plan your journey and allow plenty of time to reach your destination
- Drive at an appropriate speed for the road and the weather conditions
- Stay calm and avoid conflict with other road users
- Keep an eye on your speedometer
- Keep a safe two seconds distance from the vehicle in front
- Remember that speed limits are a maximum, not a target
- Maintain the speed limits during both day and night
- Don't be pressurised by tailgaters to speed

For more information see:

Think! Road Safety
www.thingroadsafety.gov.uk
 Department for Transport
www.dft.gov.uk
 Highway Code
www.highwaycode.gov.uk
 West Mercia Safer Roads Partnership
www.srowestmercia.org.uk
 The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
www.rospa.com/roadsafety

Changes at Spetchley Park Gardens

Spetchley Park Gardens' 2008 Season commences on Good Friday, 21st March, and will be opening appropriately with a NGS Open Day: Spetchley helped pioneer this scheme in 1924 as one of the first three gardens to open their doors to the public.

This season at Spetchley there have been a few changes. The Victorian conservatory has been restored to its former glory and once again, after a



Spetchley Park gardens in spring

long period of exclusion due to safety concerns, visitors will be allowed in. Another big change is bringing the Tea Rooms back "in house" after a couple of years of being run as a franchise. The Tea Rooms will be offering a range of cakes and light refreshments which can be enjoyed before or after a walk around the beautiful 30 acre Victorian Gardens and can cater for pre booked groups too. The restored Kitchen Garden area is continuing to be worked upon and will be a main focus for the gardeners and visitors alike this year.

The first event of the year will be the 11th Annual Specialist Plant Fair on Sunday 13th April. This event is extremely popular and will be featuring talks from the RHS in their own marquee. For more details of this event please see www.plantfair.co.uk

Finally, as Elgar used to stay at Spetchley in the Gardens and was inspired to write the "Dream of Gerontius" after hearing the wind through Spetchley's pines, we have jointly organised a group itinerary that includes a visit to the Elgar Birthplace Museum, lunch and Spetchley Park Gardens in one "all in" package. For more details of this joint venture please call 01905 333426 or www.spetchleygardens.co.uk



Spetchley Park gardens