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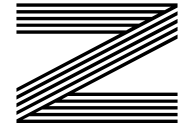
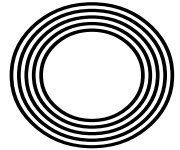
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SIR CLIFF RICHARD OBE
A look back at his career as he turns 80

Kirsty
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Presenter celebrates her return to the limelight



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Editor's notes...



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** Leigh-on-Sea.

We continue to ride the choppy waves of 2020 that have been riddled with restrictions and unprecedented times. We know things are still far

from normal, so it's never been a better time to check in with our friends and family.

I had a chat with a friend recently who said he hadn't spoken to his brother for years and couldn't really remember why, to which I replied, "Life's too short to hold grudges or have any negativity with anyone, whether they did you wrong or not. Be the bigger person and just pick up the phone and give them a call. You never know, they may need you now more than ever."

I've had this too, over the years. Relationships I've had with friends just become distant and we blame life for getting in the way - usually work or starting a family being the excuse.

But although it's harder to meet face to face at present, we are in a world now where it's never been easier to get in touch by phone, text, FaceTime or social media.

Just pick up the phone and say, "How are you?" You never know, it might be the call you and they both need more than ever.

Have you got a story for our Local News section? Please don't hesitate to get in touch. Email us at los@visionmag.co.uk

I hope you enjoy this month's edition.

Nik

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At the time of print all content in **VISION** was relevant and up to date according to COVID-19 government guidelines

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YOU'RE THE VOICE

AS SIR CLIFF RICHARD OBE PASSES 80, HIS STAR IS STILL CHARTING HIGH

Let's begin with a stat: for a long while, Sir Cliff held the record for scoring number one songs in consecutive decades in the UK. He'd hit the top spot twice in the 1950s and on seven occasions in the 1960s. The following decade he left it late, with *We Don't Talk Anymore* his solitary chart-topper in the summer of 1979.

Reinventing himself for the 1980s, spoof track *Living Doll* hit the heights in 1985, followed by *Mistletoe and Wine* in 1988; before *Saviour's Day* in 1990 and *The Millennium Prayer* in 1999 ensured he preserved a most unique chart first.

"I became aware of the run back in the 1970s but it was never an intention to churn out tracks just to keep it going," he says. "I think if you focus too much on that it becomes a bit of a vanity project and you're losing sight of the music itself; but while it went on, it was fun."

These days, the charts aren't for the likes of Sir Cliff. In 2020, they are almost solely the domain of youngsters, both in terms of the record-buying public and the artists themselves.

"Obviously the internet has created major change in the record industry and revised entirely how everything operates.

"It's a shame the charts don't represent the excitement of old when new releases would move around and we'd all follow their progress at home on our radios. I know a lot of people are sentimental about the change that's happened, but as long as people are out there making good music, that should be enough."

'YOU WORK HARD. YOU DO YOUR BEST. AND YOU JUST WANT SOME PEACE: AND THAT'S ALL I WANTED'

For Sir Cliff these days, new music often takes the form of festive tracks.

"I have inadvertently built a reputation for putting Christmas music out there," he admits. "It really all started with *Mistletoe and Wine*.

"Do I mind the association? Of course not – it's such a magical time of the year."

Of course, recognition solely as a musician does a disservice to so many other things Sir Cliff has become renowned for in a celebrated career that began way back in 1958 as lead singer of British group The Drifters. As his pop career exploded, film roles also came his way (famously in *Summer Holiday*) and, beyond that, a passion for wider showbiz projects, faith, philanthropy and a clean-living bachelor lifestyle, even though he came close to marrying on more than one occasion (notably to former British tennis number one Sue Barker).

A proud, kind-hearted and sincere exemplar of a golden age of British entertainment, Sir Cliff found himself in the news for the wrong reasons in 2014 when the darkness surrounding Operation Yewtree began enveloping a number of well-known names.

Almost immediately it became clear that there was no story to be had, and he successfully went on to sue South Yorkshire Police and the BBC for their parts in the media pursuit that followed.

"You know, you get to the point, especially after all these years, where you just want a quiet life," he says. "You work hard, you do your best, and you just want some peace; and that's all I wanted."

Whether Sir Cliff gets peace as he passes 80 is unclear. In socially distancing terms, he will, but as a worldwide base of adoring fans continues to follow his every move, it's clear this is someone who will stay in our admiring consciousness for quite some time yet.

THE WORLD AROUND US *Part 1*

In the first of a new four-part environmental series, we look at the key drivers in the health and well-being of the planet. In this issue, it's animal life, and in particular, the humble cow.

It's not easy being a cow. While farmers are eyeing you up for a trip to the abattoir, those on both sides of the eco debate are ready to slap the blame tag on a little embarrassing flatulence.

Scientists believe the average cow releases between 70kg and 120kg of methane per year. A greenhouse gas, like carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide, methane forms a dangerous blanket around the planet.

A molecule that lasts a decade, in real terms what it contributes to the atmosphere can be equated to little more than two cups of water inside a swimming pool, yet its chemical shape is remarkably effective at trapping heat, thus it has a big impact on how much, and how quickly, the planet warms.

And with 1.5 billion cows on the planet, it's clear there's real environmental interest in reducing the emissions of these animals, who can also lay claim to being the source of two-thirds of all

ammonia in the atmosphere.

In 2019, an experiment in New Zealand saw cows given a vaccine to rid them of certain gut microbes responsible for producing methane. Further development of this could drastically reduce cows' impact on the planet, while still allowing our ravenous consumption of meat and dairy foods.

In the UK, farmers mainly use grass-based silage. By changing to a maize compound, a one-tenth drop in methane production could be achieved.

As ever, environmental aims must be balanced with commercial sense. The UK agricultural industry is worth £25billion per year, yet it's clear less-fibrous diets, further vaccine research and other subtle changes – such as introducing seaweed and higher-quality constituents into the food mix

– can lead to more refined systems... and less windy livestock!



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It's the design feature that flipped on its head the old adage of plastering over walls for a smooth, 'complete' finish.

These days, exposed brickwork is all the rage – a modern take on a feature wall that circumnavigates modern, industrial and rustic.

Preparing an exposed brick wall and looking after it isn't difficult if you follow a few simple steps.

Exposing

Chip away a small section of plaster to check your brickwork is in good order. Cover the floor with sheeting, as removal of plaster will throw up considerable dust. Wearing a dust mask, chisel away sections and finish using a wire brush.

Preparing

Use a mild solution comprising equal parts water, dish soap and salt. Use a clean cloth to apply, allowing the solution to soak into the wall. Leave for 10 minutes so the salt dissolves any remaining plaster particles, then wipe the entire wall using a sponge or wet cloth.

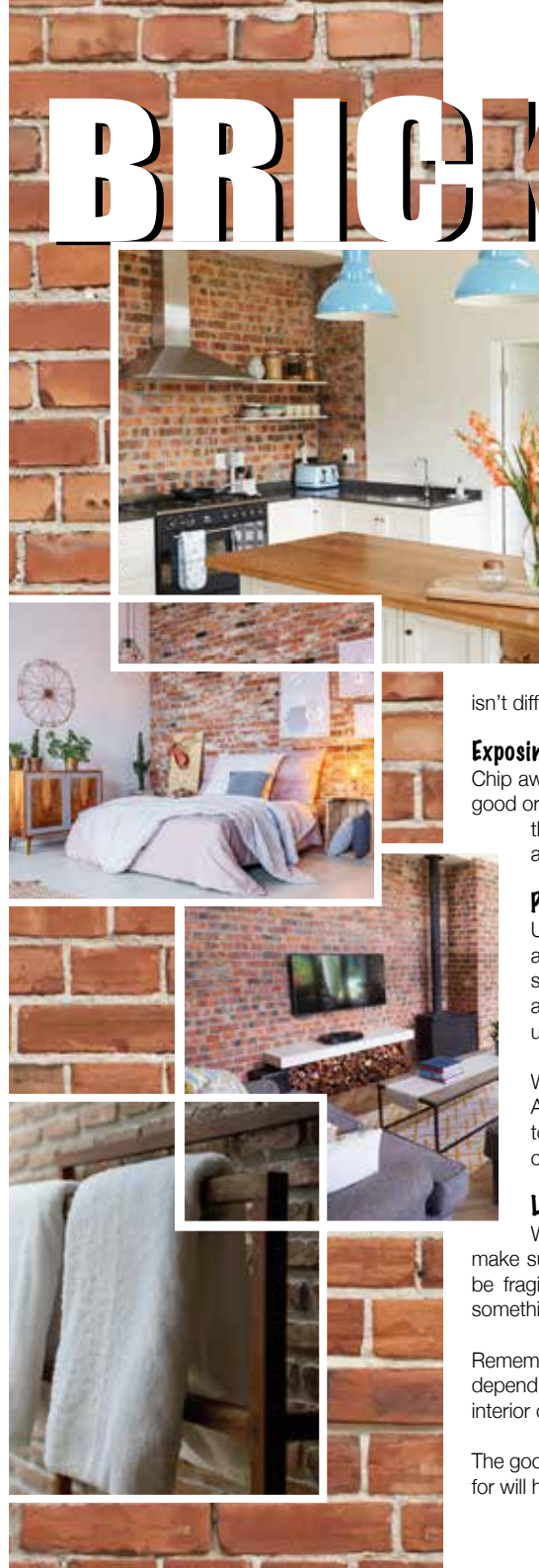
When dry, use an industrial sealant across the entire wall. An acrylic-based application will mean your wall is resistant to scratches, spills and dirt. You'll need to apply at least two coats, ensuring you work the solution into all the gaps.

Looking after

With your pristine wall the envy of visitors, you'll need to make sure you look after it properly. It's inevitable that parts may be fragile and flake off over time, but light cleaning (even with something as simple as a feather duster) will keep particles at bay.

Remember, all brick walls are different, and how they respond will depend on their age, the room temperature and whether they are interior or exterior walls.

The good news is that the matt finish and unpolished look most go for will hide a multitude of sins.



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CANCEL CULTURE

The BBC TV licence – do you need to pay?



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The BBC has never felt pressure like it: a new director general looking to shake things up, accusations of political and social bias, and the move to begin charging over-75s for TV licences – it has left 'Auntie' scratching about for relevance in a changing world where digital and premium channels are taking our attention... and our money.

While the BBC remains one of our country's finest institutions, and excellent value for those who regularly enjoy its diverse range of programming, there have been recent moves to defund the organisation – a Twitter campaign rapidly gained 100,000 followers and continues to apply pressure across social media.

This has led to many looking at the criteria for paying the licence; namely, whether you do indeed need to pay the £157.50 annual charge (£53 for a black and white TV). The answer is yes, if...

> ... you watch or record live TV as it is being transmitted, on any channel

> ... you watch or stream programmes live on an online service (such as ITV Hub, All 4, YouTube, Amazon Prime Video, Sky Go, etc)

> ... you download or watch programmes on iPlayer And the above applies to use on any device, from television to computer to games console.

The good news is that the BBC's brilliant range of national and regional radio is exempt.

If you believe you don't need a licence, the process for opting out is simple – simply declare to TV Licensing via its website and cancel any direct debits. That will stop what many describe as a barrage of threatening letters. However, the onus is, of course, on you to reapply for a licence if your watching habits change.

What's clear is that in a changing world the BBC's stranglehold on compulsory payment may well be coming to an end – even more so if Prime Minister Boris Johnson's move to decriminalise non-payment continues to gather pace.

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Staycate in style with these hip UK hotels that offer inspiring interiors and decadent designs. Choose from chic and contemporary, rustic and rugged or something a little bit quirky. Whatever your preference, you are guaranteed to come away with your creative juices flowing.

ARTIST RESIDENCE, LONDON

Based in the diverse Pimlico area, this unconventional hotel mixes vintage chic with a modern twist. Ideal for those who want a bit of luxury, enjoy its stunning roll-top baths and tin ceiling tiles. It is owned by stylish couple Charlotte and Justin Salisbury, who also have three other hotels which can be found in Cornwall, Brighton and the Cotswolds, with another in Bristol opening in November.



THE PIG-IN THE WALL, SOUTHAMPTON

With 12 unique bedrooms, deli-style dining and plenty of cosy corners to relax and unwind in, THE PIG-in the wall is quite unlike any hotel you have been to before. In terms of interior design, enter with an open mind and take in the eclectic range of rooms that boast original wooden beams, slanted ceilings and walk-in monsoon showers.

STRATTONS, NORFOLK

If you hate generic hotels, you will love Strattons. Located in a quiet lane in a conservation area within the town, this family-friendly hotel prides itself on offering luxury, comfort and inspiring interior design. With 14 individual rooms, expect open fires, original period features, a free-standing bath at the foot of the bed and even mermaid mosaic.

CRAZY BEAR, BEACONSFIELD

Flamboyant and luxurious, Crazy Bear combines dramatic architecture with never before seen features such as the copper bath that is filled directly from the ceiling. Perfect for leather lovers, more than 50 different types were used to create its unique atmosphere, with leather featuring on the upholstery, walls, ceiling and even the doors.

Photo credits: artistresidence.co.uk, thepighotel.com, strattonshotel.com, crazybeargroup.co.uk



LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Photo credit: Ruby Ward, @theartoflondon

Baptist church member raises vital funds for charity

A member of Leigh Road Baptist Church (LRBC) has raised thousands of pounds for charity after completing the virtual London Marathon.

LRBC's Sean Hill lost a close friend who took his own life, which inspired him to run for Trust Links.

Trust Links is a charity his friend was passionate about, and it supports people with mental health and well-being needs.

The London Marathon was scheduled to take place this year in April, but was abruptly cancelled as a result of the pandemic.

It was subsequently held as a virtual event, and Sean completed the 26.2 miles on October 4.

Sean completed the distance by running in bouts of 10km before finishing at the Trust Links Growing Together garden in Shoeburyness. It's just one of the

tranquil community gardens that hosts a number of mental health and well-being projects.

Speaking about losing his friend, Sean said: "If running in his name will help, then 26.2 miles is just the start.

"It was at his funeral that I found out that he was a huge supporter of Trust Links and had been volunteering and more recently working for the charity.

"It's my aim today and from now on to continue his efforts and do my utmost to encourage the message he was so passionate about. Trust Links may not be a nationwide charity, but it has people involved who care, people who are desperate to help and hold no judgement."

To donate to Sean, visit uk.virginmoneygiving.com/ fundraiser and search for Sean Hill VMLM 2020.



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Volunteers thrive in bid to return cliffs to former glory



A group of volunteers has started to transform the overgrown Leigh Cliffs, below Cliff Parade, in a bid to bring them back to their former glory.

Friends of Love Leigh Cliffs (FROLLC) was only formed 10 weeks ago by Carolyn Sherwin, Carol Lambert, Craig Watt and Suzanne Beechey. The four founder members now have a following of more than 130.

Leigh Cliffs are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike and offer stunning views across the estuary.

Now, thanks to the group, progress is being made to uncover some of the plants that remain under the brambles, ivy and weeds.

Currently the group meets every Thursday and works in COVID-19 friendly groups across the cliff.

Carolyn, who has lived there all her life, told **VISION** Leigh-on-Sea: "Many local people remember how beautiful these cliffs once were, when the council had more funds and teams to garden.

"But with the present cutbacks it has become impossible for the council to cover all its local parks so we, with council permission, set out to do some gardening and restore the 1920s flower beds.

"With no funds to our name at the moment, we asked the community, through Facebook, if anyone had any plants they could donate. We are delighted to find that each week people pop down and donate a selection of plants, bulbs and even compost.

"We are always looking for more volunteers to join us. No gardening experience is necessary, and you can choose jobs to suit your fitness level."

For more information or to join Friends of Love Leigh Cliffs, visit its Facebook page.

Former police inspector faces court

A former police inspector from Leigh-on-Sea will have to wait until August next year before he faces a trial for sexual offences.

Jonathan McLeod, 37, is accused of kissing a

woman and touching her bottom at a police station while he was a serving Essex Police inspector.

He was in the dock at Ipswich Crown Court on Thursday, October 8 for a plea and trial preparation hearing, where he pleaded not guilty to four offences of sexual assault concerning the same alleged victim.

McLeod was serving at Basildon Police Station at the time of the alleged offences between 2016 and 2018.

The former inspector resigned from Essex Police in March.

It is alleged Mr McLeod touched the victim's bottom when she did not consent.

The other three allegations are of kissing the woman when she did not consent. Two of the offences are said to have happened at Basildon Police Station and the other at a Tesco car park in the town.

Mr McLeod's trial will take place on August 16, 2021.

Library gardens receive first Green Flag award

Leigh Library Gardens achieved a Green Flag award in its first year of entry thanks to the dedicated support of the Friends of Leigh Library Gardens (FOLLG) group.

The Green Flag awards recognise well maintained parks and green spaces across the country, and Leigh Library was one of seven spaces in Southend to win one.

Russell Hallmark, chair of FOLLG, said: "At a time when green space is so important for social wellbeing, the receipt of this award is a fantastic outcome for our community and the visitors to Leigh-on-Sea.

"I would like to acknowledge the commitment from our volunteers and the successful collaboration with the council's parks team for achieving this important milestone in our first year – which now presents us with the possibility to build on this success."



Photo credit: Southend-on-Sea Borough Council



SIR DAVID AMESS MP

Member of Parliament for Southend West



LOCAL NEWS

I realise that many residents will be anxious about any further restrictions on their lives as we move towards Christmas. For my own part, I am pressing the government for some clarity in the strategy for living with the virus, ensuring that we can interact with each other safely and do not crash the economy. I am very pleased that we now also have a drive-through test centre at Nazareth House.

Recently I have undertaken a number of visits throughout the constituency that I represent. Similarly, in that respect, I am having a surgery in each of the nine wards in rotation, which has proved to be a great success.

I am very pleased that we were able to launch our findings to the Endometriosis Enquiry in Parliament on

October 20. It has been well received, and now I want to see the recommendations acted upon.

I know how disappointing it will be for many people that Remembrance Sunday will not be as in previous years, but I am confident that our scaled-down services will still be a fitting tribute to all those who lost their lives defending our country.

Finally, my next two surgeries are being held on Friday, November 20 at St Cedd's Church, Bridgwater Drive, Blenheim, SS0 ODS, and on Friday, December 4, at The Stables, Leigh Road Baptist Church, Marguerite Drive, Leigh, SS9 1NN.

Surgeries are held between 10am and 1pm, and are by appointment only.

To book an appointment please call 020 7219 3452 or email amessd@parliament.uk



Have your say on school merger

A consultation on whether to merge two Leigh-on-Sea schools is now open, with the deadline for comments being November 13.

Local parents, teachers and members of the community are being asked to give their thoughts on the possibility of amalgamating Chalkwell Hall Infant School and Chalkwell Hall Junior School as one school – creating Chalkwell Hall Primary School.

There is currently a vacancy for a headteacher at Chalkwell Hall Junior School.

The first phase of the consultation has now started and will be live until Friday, November 13. Parents/carers of children attending the two schools, parents/carers of young children who may be considering attending the schools, school governors and members

of the community can all feed into the consultation.

Councillor Anne Jones, cabinet member for children and learning, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, said: "The consultation is seeking views on the proposed plans, including whether or not you support the plans, and reasons why you have come to that decision. This consultation is just one of the steps along a detailed process. Following the consultation, the results will be compiled into a report which will then be reviewed and discussed by the council's cabinet.

"It is really important that we hear from as many people connected to the two schools as possible, so please make sure you have your say."

To view the consultation, go to yoursay.southend.gov.uk

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Leigh-on-Sea

TOWN COUNCIL



LOCAL NEWS

In view of some social media comments we have seen on local sites, the town clerk thought it would be beneficial to clarify our plans for this year's Leigh Christmas Lights.

Sadly, owing to the current pandemic, we cannot hold the traditional Friday evening Leigh Lights event, but the Christmas lights will be lit up at some point on a date which is yet to be decided, so Broadway and Leigh Road, along with the Thames Drive section of the London Road, will have festive Christmas lighting as has been the tradition.

Back in July, the council made the decision not to proceed with any planned events this year owing to the current national crisis. However, staff were asked to research what could be done instead. This was presented to council in September, plans were agreed and since then we have been working to put in place what is required. Owing to time and budgeting constraints we are limited with what could be added.

Leigh-on-Sea Town Council is currently awaiting approval from Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to install a small lighting display aimed at younger children to enjoy on a walk in Leigh Library Gardens with their parents. It will comprise three ground-mounted features, one of which will incorporate an illuminated free-standing postbox for children to post a letter to Santa (they will get a reply). Additionally, there will be some festoon lighting in some of the backing trees. The displays will be up for approximately three weeks leading up to the weekend before Christmas. Leigh Library Gardens will be locked every evening (6pm Sunday to Thursday and 7pm Friday to Saturday) and reopened each morning at 7.30am.



We are also working with the traders in the town to provide a tiny Windows Trail. Shops that join in will have festive painted windows as part of the trail and the children will be able to get a stamp from each shop to complete their Trail Sheet. When completed, this can be popped in the postbox at the community centre and be entered into a draw for a prize.

Following the success of our 20th anniversary Virtual Farmers' Market, the council will be hosting a Virtual Christmas Market which will run online from December 1; check [@leighfarmersmarket](https://www.facebook.com/leighfarmersmarket) on Facebook for more information, offers and products on sale.

So, sadly, there will be no parade event, Carols on Strand Wharf event or Christmas Craft and Farmers' Markets in the Community Centre.

Please feel free to always contact us at council@leighonseatowncouncil.gov.uk if you ever have any questions or queries.

Group helping fans find work



A man from Leigh-on-Sea has created a group to help football supporters search and post jobs.

Neil Taylor, 60, launched the Hammers for work Facebook group alongside Danny Panrucker, and the pair are keen to help anyone struggling to find employment as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

Neil believes the club-focused initiative is the first of its kind in the country and hopes that, as well as helping people into work, it will invite food banks to post details to advertise their services free of charge.

For more information visit Hammers for work Facebook page.



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PUZZLES & TRIVIA

PUZZLES

Answers can be found on the Contents Page 4

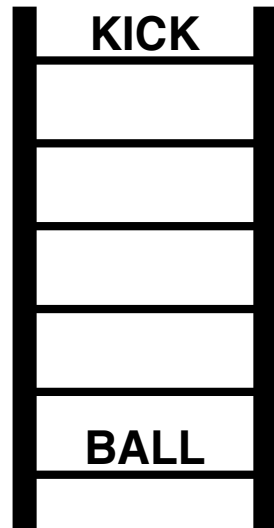
- ▶ ARCHERY
- ▶ ATHLETICS
- ▶ BADMINTON
- ▶ BOXING
- ▶ DIVING
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- ▶ FENCING
- ▶ FOOTBALL
- ▶ GYMNASTICS
- ▶ HANDBALL
- ▶ HOCKEY
- ▶ JUDO
- ▶ ROWING
- ▶ SAILING
- ▶ SHOOTING
- ▶ SWIMMING
- ▶ TENNIS
- ▶ VOLLEYBALL
- ▶ WATER
- ▶ POLO
- ▶ WEIGHTLIFTING

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DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Vatican City is the smallest country in the world
- ▶ The Gotthard Base Tunnel in Switzerland is the longest rail tunnel in the world
- ▶ E is the only vowel not used as the first letter in a US state name
- ▶ Russia is the largest country in the world
- ▶ The African continent has three deserts: Sahara, Kalahari and Namib
- ▶ Peninsulas are surrounded by water on three sides, for example Spain and Portugal
- ▶ Angel Falls in Venezuela is the world's largest uninterrupted waterfall
- ▶ Canberra is the capital city of Australia
- ▶ The Trafalgar Square Christmas tree is donated by Norway every year

WORD LADDER



THE AIM: Change the word at the top of the ladder one letter at a time to make the word at the bottom.

HOW TO: Change one letter on each step to make a new word. By the time you reach the end, you should have created the new word.

DO NOT rearrange the order of the letters.

TIP: There is usually more than one way to solve this puzzle.



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Kirsty Gallacher



...A GOOD SPORT

From fashion undergraduate to Sky Sports presenter, it was a curious career trajectory for Kirsty Gallacher, who seemingly had the world of light entertainment at her feet.

That was, until a series of events knocked the Edinburgh-born beauty off track.

Her recent return to the limelight is tribute to the strength and perseverance of the 44-year-old, but also a marker for us all in these difficult times.

The die was cast relatively early for Kirsty, as the daughter of Scottish Ryder Cup champion Bernard Gallacher, with a career in sport seeming the obvious choice. In reality, however, the presenter endeavoured for the cut and thrust of fashion, even when, still a youngster, the family upped sticks and moved to Wentworth to help her father's golfing ambitions.

Swapping Scotland for Surrey, Kirsty came to count Bruce Forsyth as a neighbour when growing up. And with a golf star for a dad, she was hardly unfamiliar with larger-than-life personalities popping in for coffee.

"I think maybe there was a pressure for me to do something grand," she begins, "but for many years that wasn't really me. I guess in the end I fell into it, but there was no nepotism going on – I was just lucky."

Kirsty recalls the time as a broadcaster with BSkyB when, having climbed to the position of editorial assistant, there came the opportunity to do a screen test.

"I was horribly nervous, but I've always been of the mind that once you are offered something you should always give it a try. Plus, back then, there was still a sense of adversity from traditionalists who didn't believe in women fronting sport, although that has clearly changed now."

Her time on *Sky Sports News* led to onward recognition as she went on to front shows including *Kirsty's Home Videos*, *Kirsty and Phil* and *Soccer Extra*.

So for someone so happy, it was perhaps surprising to see Kirsty's light fade in the midst of her father's poor health, and a painful divorce to ex-rugby pro Paul Sampson, her partner of 13 years, of which they were married for five.

"There were some tough things to process, though rather than take some time off to regroup and look after my boys, I threw myself into work, into new ideas and new projects."

A stint doing *Strictly Come Dancing* saw Gallacher looking desperately thin, and when a drink-driving incident saw her lose her driver's licence for 18 months, the star had hit a new low.

"It's actually really interesting how just when you think you are calm and settled, the carpet can be swept from beneath you," she admits. "It was horrific at the time, truly horrific – but at least now I can see that it was just a few life events colliding together. We are human beings for our ability to ride the rough waves and emerge out the other side stronger, and that's what I've done."

Her focus these days is on celebrating a return to the front line of presenting duties. Her successful podcast, *Stripped Back Sport*, is back on our screens at prime time, and even in a few short years she has witnessed a real evolution in television.

"As far as gender goes, it's definitely played out on more of an equal footing now," she says. "Broadcasting has really undergone a fantastic change over the past 20 years and British television remains the very best in the world. From a purely selfish perspective, it's so great to be back."




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GARDENING

NOVEMBER BIRTH FLOWER OF THE MONTH

Chrysanthemum

For those born in November, your birth flower is the cheerful chrysanthemum. Often referred to as just "mums", these beautiful blooms have a long and rich history. One of the most popular autumn garden flowers, chrysanthemums are easy to grow and will come back year after year.

WHAT DOES THE CHRYSANTHEMUM SYMBOLISE?

Native to Asia, the chrysanthemum is considered by both Japan and China to be an emblem of youth. The flower is also said to help prevent grey hairs, and a single petal placed at the bottom of a wine glass is believed to aid longevity.

When presenting the chrysanthemum as a gift, the colour you choose conveys a particular meaning:

- A red or pink chrysanthemum means "I love you"
- A white chrysanthemum symbolises innocence and purity
- A yellow chrysanthemum represents unrequited love

WHAT DOES THIS BIRTH FLOWER SAY ABOUT YOUR PERSONALITY?

If your birth flower is the chrysanthemum, you are said to be friendly, cheerful and loyal. Although at times you may appear tough on the outside, you are a compassionate person who is fiercely protective of your loved ones.

HOW CAN I GROW CHRYSANTHEMUMS?

If you love these vibrant flowers, you will be pleased to hear that they are relatively easy to grow. They thrive in moist but well-drained soil, so choose a sheltered and sunny spot and add plenty of compost or well-rotted manure. However, chrysanthemums do tend to break at the base, so they will need staking. Once they finish blooming in autumn, mulch them with straw to protect them from frost.

ARE CHRYSANTHEMUMS POISONOUS TO PETS?

Unfortunately, chrysanthemums are toxic to pets, and to cats, dogs and horses in particular. If your animal does ingest the flower, they may experience vomiting, skin inflammation and hyper-salivation.



HORTICULTURE HEROES:

Frances Tophill



It speaks volumes when someone who has ascended the horticultural heights of Alan Titchmarsh tips you to become the next big thing in green-fingered greatness; though to her credit, Frances Tophill hasn't yet allowed the praise to go to her head.

Tophill, a regular on *Gardeners' World*, offers a fresh, young, dare we say stylish take on the earthy, sometimes grubby surrounds of our lawns, beds and shrubbery. She is a presenter who articulates and conveys a sense of calm, with a modus operandi that is always to embrace anything that comes her way. That is, after all, how she got into gardening in the first place.

"I was 19 years old and desperate really just to reach out and do anything. I'd never given gardening a second thought, nor did I know much about it, but I saw an apprenticeship advertised and, when I read up further, quickly fell in love with everything to do with the outdoors."

Frances' energy on screen is infectious. "My advice to people is just to get out there and enjoy yourselves," she says. "Get some dirt under your fingernails, perhaps pull up some weeds, or even just lie down on a lawn and soak up what it feels like to be in a pure, green space."

"Our gardens are very different environments to our local parks, and for the most part are private spaces where we can create our own world. I think that's what excited me the most, and once I realised how much was there and available, I never really looked back."

That brand of enthusiasm and endless excitement has seen her move to the top table of terrestrial gardening.

"I am the example of someone making it up as they go along, and we all know that's the secret to great gardening."

Photo credit: Pinterest

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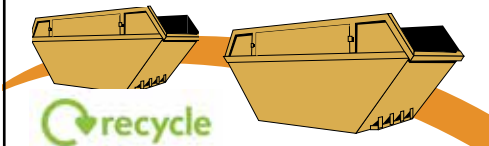
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Suede & Leather

The first thing you should do if you buy a pair of leather or suede shoes is to treat them with a specialised spray protector, as this will help preserve them for longer.

In terms of cleaning, suede should be gently brushed with a suede brush to remove any dirt or dust without damaging it.

Leather is best cleaned with shoe polish as this will not only clean but also moisturise it, which helps to lengthen the lifespan of the shoes.

If your leather shoes get caught in the rain, place them upside down on dry paper (not newspaper) and leave to dry naturally.

Canvas & Fabric

Slightly easier to take care of, most canvas shoes can be washed in the washing machine, although be sure to let them air dry and never place them in the tumble dryer as this will ruin their shape. If there is only one spot of dirt on your fabric or canvas shoes, simply brush it off with a toothbrush or wash with a sponge dipped in soapy water.

Trainers

Some trainers can be washed in the washing machine, although always check their label before doing so. It can be a good idea to place your trainers in a pillow case before washing and to wash them with a few towels to avoid your footwear banging around and becoming damaged. Liquid detergent is preferable as powder can get stuck in your trainers.

Signs your shoe soles need replacing

- > The centre of your soles feel weak or spongy
- > They start to feel thinner in some areas
- > You notice a circle emerging





5 natural BATH SOAKS



Is there anything more relaxing than soaking in a warm bubble bath during the winter months? Arguably not, but have you ever stopped to think about all the harsh chemicals that you are exposing your skin to each time you reach for your preferred products? Here are five natural alternatives to try.

1. Honey

Honey is an antibacterial substance that can help prevent infections and heal minor skin abrasions. It is also full of natural antioxidants that can help boost your immune system and help combat the signs of ageing.

Simply add two tablespoons of raw honey to a running bath and then soak for a minimum of 15 minutes.



2. Green tea

A popular choice for a bath soak, green tea can help to reduce muscle pain, soften skin and reduce any redness. Loaded with antioxidants, it also has anti-ageing benefits. Just fill your bath as normal, pop in six green tea bags, leave to steep for 15-20 minutes and remove.



3. Lavender

You may already be using a lavender-scented bath product owing to this herb's ability to instantly soothe and relax. However, why not cut out the chemicals and use pure lavender essential oil instead? All you need to do is add between six and eight drops to running water.



4. Baking soda

A store cupboard essential, also known as sodium bicarbonate, this natural ingredient is found in most bath products owing to its exfoliating properties.

Simply mix five tablespoons of baking soda into a warm bath and allow to dissolve.



5. Epsom salt

Not actually a salt but a naturally occurring mineral, Epsom salt is made up of magnesium and sulphate. Ideal for counteracting stress, Epsom salt can also help to ease pain and alleviate sore muscles. Add one or two cups to your bath five minutes before you plan to get in.

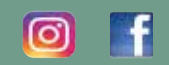
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The OBESITY ALPHABET

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- A** for *Apple*: Choose whole fruit over juices – the sugar content is less and the fibre will fill you up.
- B** for *Boredom*: Be aware whether you're eating out of hunger or simply for something to do.
- C** for *Calories*: Keeping a check on calories is a restraining belt to excess.
- D** for *Doughnuts*: 'Dough nut' undo your good work with empty processed calories.
- E** for *Exercise*: The best counter to obesity of them all.
- F** for *Fats*: Know your good fat from your bad.
- G** for *Goals*: Set them, make them achievable and stick to them.
- H** for *Holiday*: Have a cheat day each week.
- I** for *Inspiration*: Surround yourself with positive examples and role models.
- J** for *Juice*: Beware of the sugar content of supposed healthy juices and smoothies.
- K** for *Keep a diary*: Log fitness progress and also the foods that make you most energetic, bloated and gassy.
- L** for *Lemon*: Great for cleansing the gut, hot water and a lemon is a winner.
- M** for *More not less*: Fill yourself up with bowls of healthy, nourishing food.
- N** for *Night-time*: Don't eat after 7pm.
- O** for *On the money*: Stick to the fundamentals rather than wasting money on fads.
- P** for *Prep*: Meal prep is essential to prevent you reaching for the easy microwave option.
- Q** for *Quit*: Choose five things to categorically strip from your diet.
- R** for *Rest*: Sleep is an important part of stabilising metabolism.
- S** for *Shout*: Announce your success with like-minded people.
- T** for *Takeaways*: Fast food and takeaways are the evil of good health.
- U** for *Undermine*: Keep self-doubt – as well as fatty foods – at arm's length.
- V** for *Vitamins*: A vitamin supplement will boost your health quickly and easily.
- W** for *Wholefoods*: Go for wholefoods and avoid anything processed, if possible.
- X** for *X-treme*: ... dieting never works.
- Y** for *Yesterday*: ... is gone; look only to the future with your health.
- Z** for *Zinc*: Zinc is a brilliant mineral that helps control your metabolism.



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KIDS

Kids love making music. From the moment they are able to hold a spoon and start banging it on your pans, to the time when they are able to learn a real instrument.

So why not encourage this natural passion and challenge them to make their own band?

Get organised

This initial step will be dependent on your children's ages, although it can be a good idea to get your older kids to help the younger ones. You can set them the task of deciding what type of music they would like to make, what name they want to give their band and who is going to play what.

Make your own instruments

Some great ideas for DIY musical instruments include:

- > **A HARMONICA.** This can be easily made by sellotaping different-sized straws together and blowing in the holes.
- > **SENSORY BIN SHAKERS.** A great option for little ones. Fill different-sized containers with rice, buttons, pasta or anything else you have to hand, secure and shake.
- > **CEREAL BOX GUITAR.** If someone is keen to be the lead guitarist in the band, then all you will need is an old cereal box, a pair of scissors and a few elastic bands.
- > **CAN DRUMS.** Simply take some old tin cans, stretch a cut-up balloon over the open ends and hit with a spoon or stick.

Start practising

Again, this will be dependent on your kids' ages and attention spans and can range from half an hour to a full day. Keep them motivated by creating a 'show time' when they will be able to perform to the rest of the family.

Ideas for simple songs that they can try to play along with:
Jingle Bells | *Twinkle, Twinkle* | *Hickory, Dickory, Dock* | *Incy Wincy Spider* | *Baby Shark*

NB: Please make sure all instruments are safe for babies and young children. Avoid or cover safely all sharp edges and small choking items. Remember to secure or seal all tubs tightly.

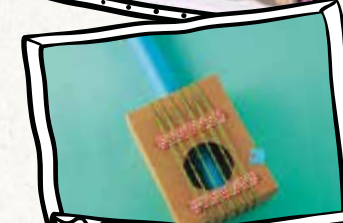


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Return TO YOUR ROOTS *part 2*

Last month we celebrated the carrot, praised the parsnip and tackled the turnip. Now it's time to explore the culinary delights of three more tasty and nutritious root vegetables.

BEETROOT

Instantly recognisable by its bright purple hue, the beetroot often gets a bad rap as some believe that it tastes a little too much like the soil in which it is grown. However, it is worth sampling for its health benefits alone, with this root vegetable being rich in antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

HOW TO STORE: Place beetroots in a perforated plastic bag in the vegetable drawer of your fridge. Lifespan: 3 weeks.

HOW TO COOK: The most famous beetroot dish is borscht, an eastern European winter warmer. Alternatively, roast in olive oil and cumin seeds.



JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE

Full of iron, potassium and vitamin B1, the Jerusalem artichoke is reported to be both an aphrodisiac and a natural digestive. In season from November to March, choose artichokes that are firm to touch and pale brown in colour.

HOW TO STORE: Keep in the fridge or in a cool, dark place. Lifespan: 1-2 weeks.

HOW TO COOK: Cook Jerusalem artichokes in the same way that you would a potato or parsnip: roasted, sautéed, dipped in batter and fried or puréed into a soup.



SWEET POTATO

Seen as a healthier alternative to potatoes, this root vegetable contains iron, calcium, selenium, vitamin A and C, plus it's full of fibre.

HOW TO STORE: Avoid storing in the fridge as this will result in an unpleasant taste; instead, place in a dry, well-ventilated container away from heat. Lifespan: 3-4 weeks.

HOW TO COOK: Although baking sweet potatoes will result in a richer taste, when boiled they have a low glycaemic index (GI).



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FOOD & DRINK

THE perfect pud

Packed with delicious dried fruit, drenched in brandy and served with lashings of cream, it wouldn't be Christmas without a rich and decadent Christmas pudding. Although you can purchase a shop-bought variety for as little as £2, there is something special about taking the time to make your own.

YOU WILL NEED:

120g suet | 20g breadcrumbs | 100g flour | 175g soft dark brown sugar | 500g dried fruit (raisins, sultanas, etc) | 25g flaked almonds | 25g candied peel | 1 tsp mixed spice | ½ tsp nutmeg | ½ tsp cinnamon | 1 grated cooking apple | zest of ½ orange | zest of ½ lemon | 150ml brandy | 2 eggs | optional: coins

HOW TO MAKE:

Combine suet, breadcrumbs, flour, sugar, fruit and spices in a bowl | Add the rest of the ingredients and mix well | Butter a heatproof pudding bowl | Pour in the mixture | Cover with baking paper and tie on

securely with string | Place the pudding in a large pan and pour in boiling water until it reaches halfway up the outside of the bowl | Cover with a lid | Steam the pudding for 4 hours making sure it does not boil dry (add water if necessary) | Test if the pudding is cooked by inserting a skewer into it; if it comes out dry, it is done | Leave to cool | Cover with fresh baking paper and wrap tightly in cling film | Store in a cool, dark place for up to 6 weeks | When ready to serve, steam for a further 2 hours | Light using a ladle of warm (not boiling) brandy

VARIATIONS ON THE TRADITION:

Instead of brandy, try adding rum, stout or sherry | For a vegan pudding, leave out the eggs and use vegetable suet with a little bit of soya yogurt | Substitute traditional raisins, currants and sultanas for cherries, figs or crystallised ginger

If you are going to add coins, wrap them in tin foil first to avoid choking.





Thrills ON WHEELS

CORONAVIRUS FUELS A RECORD RISE IN CAMPERVAN HOLIDAYS IN THE UK

It's been a year like no other, where overseas travel has either been ruled out completely or become fraught with danger and the threat of quarantine.

So with that in mind, it's little wonder the UK has experienced an exponential rise in campervan holidays. They offer freedom, seclusion in safe groups, affordability and safety, plus a wanderlust that was sparked in most of us from having spent so many weeks in lockdown.

Consider as well what has been a beautiful British summer, and experts believe our appetite for UK holidays on wheels has truly been reignited thanks to coronavirus.

The numbers speak for themselves – the rise in people hiring campervans is up 170 per cent, and that's despite a lack of bookings that would usually come from trips to Glastonbury and other music and culture festivals. And the caution that

appears to have been placed on every aspect of our lives hasn't stretched as far as four wheels, with 69 per cent trying out a campervan for the first time.

Perhaps we shouldn't be so surprised – these vehicles are virtual mobile hotels and a far cry from the flimsy caravans of decades past. With the ability to comfortably accommodate up to seven people, with large kitchen spaces and almost as much internet access as you'd get at home, people can feel detached from real life, yet still perfectly connected.

The biggest draw, however, is almost certainly the thrill of waking up in a new location each day. And as for where we're headed to in these magnificent motorhomes, the Highlands, predictably, top the list. Cornwall and the Peak District are other go-to locations for families and groups looking to get away, with the trend for campervan holidays now on the increase all year round.



Microsoft celebrates 25 years of Windows

Microsoft's launch of Windows back in 1995 marked a true turning point in personal computing. Not only was it fresh, accessible and affordable, but as something called 'the World Wide Web' gradually came into focus, it connected us with the rest of planet Earth in a way we'd never before thought possible.

In many ways, Bill Gates and his team of boffins simply took a customer-focused approach to software, where previously it had been the domain of tech nerds and those who loved the intricacies of computing. A start button, a menu, a task bar and better naming and labelling systems for files do not today seem like revolutionary steps, but as the Millennium approached, our reliance on computers increased, and with that, a need to make them as user-friendly as possible.

Perhaps the most defining feature of Windows, however, was MSN. Offering chat rooms, email,

newsgroups and, crucially, the ability to type those holy characters 'www' into a URL box, we were truly the masters of our own tech destiny.

Windows' popularity also saw use of the Internet Explorer browser exceed anything else out there, and by 2003 a whopping 95 per cent of consumers were using it to access the web. While its decline since owes much to rivals Mozilla and Google Chrome upping their game, Windows itself has stuck.

Yes, Mac and Linux have mixed things up in a market that is distinguishable by its refusal to sit still, but what is certain is that Windows 95 (and its various updates over the years... 7, 8, 10, XP, Vista and 2000 to name a few) is regarded as being as innovative and revolutionary today as it was then.



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Getting back to

BUSINESS

The unexpected upturns coronavirus brought about for small businesses

One has to be careful with any mention of a global pandemic in some way being good for business. Clearly what enveloped the world over the course of 2020 was a set of circumstances and outcomes we would never want repeated, and they carry on today. Yet while COVID-19 called time on the legacy of thousands of businesses, for others it has provided new vision, renewed focus and a world of opportunity.

Most of these have come in the form of directors, managers, sole traders and other decision-makers having a rare opportunity to step back and reassess.

In the early days of the lockdown, so profound were the circumstances around us and so urgent was the need to strip back, downgrade and economise, that businesses reverted to skeletal structures just to survive.

So when the UK began to emerge out of the famine of lockdown, many owners realised they could survive on these new,

low levels of efficiency. From reverting to four-day weeks to cancelling direct debits for subscriptions, software and other resources we actually didn't use; from encouraging working from home, embracing tech such as video conferencing, right through to enriching staff by asking them to adopt fresh ideas, tackle wider tasks or embrace new skills in order to get additional jobs done, there was a new take on what we needed.

In total, we found that COVID-19 brought about a need for transparency none of us could pull a curtain across. Unequivocally, it changed our attitudes towards everything from money to socialising to personal space, but also altered our perception of business – what it is, how we utilise it and, in some cases, how little we need the bells, whistles and fanfare. We are a simpler, more efficient nation because of coronavirus, and once we're out of the woods that will surely help us to flourish again.



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The PARTEY IS OVER



Arsenal's decision to lay off club mascot Gunnersaurus on the day they splashed £45million on midfielder Thomas Partey has furthered the debate of just how connected our Premier League sides are to the real world.

The decision to release the Gunners' iconic mascot, who has been parading around home games for 27 years, was announced at the start of October. That meant lifelong fan Jerry Guy would have to find something else to do on matchdays.

In the club's defence, it was accepted that dressing as a dinosaur and parading around the pitch in front of empty stands was probably a waste of time; but Arsenal, just like so many other clubs who have cut back in the wake of coronavirus, have scored a spectacular own goal in their failure to see the bigger picture.

From north London neighbours Tottenham Hotspur to Premier League champions Liverpool, an insistence on micromanaging rarely ends well when we are, as a nation, looking for togetherness and unity as we are during the time of this pandemic.

When players' astronomical wages are paid in full yet staff on the minimum wage are furloughed and, in some cases, made redundant, you wonder if the disconnect can ever be bridged.

When a 126-year-old club such as Macclesfield Town, who played in the Football League last season, are allowed to be wound up for the sake of less than two weeks of Arsenal midfielder Mesut Özil's wages, surely we've lost sight of the game.

Speaking of Özil, who hasn't played competitive football for the club in seven months but continues to pick up his full wage, the German did at least begin to repair his reputation with Gunners fans perennially underwhelmed by his energy and application, by offering to front up Gunnersaurus's wage himself.

It's troubling that a player has to make that move, and that his employers cannot see that abandoning the little man – or in this case, dinosaur – is a PR faux pas that becomes far more costly.

Photo credit: Javier Garcia/BPI/Shutterstock



Extending ELECTRIC

What's the furthest you can go in an electric car without recharging?

The concept is great – cleaner, cheaper, some may even say smoother driving. Electric cars have given us a new way of getting from A to B, but for many considering investing in one of the greenest advancements ever conceived, the need to recharge at such regular intervals has been a major stumbling block.

And yet, improvements in technology have meant the range of our electric vehicles is better than ever. Take this year's Tesla Model S, for instance. Elon Musk's pioneering vehicle brand is ripping up the rule book and this shimmering, humming piece of tarmac tech will take you 402 miles on a single charge... that's right up there with petrol and diesel vehicles. The only downside is the £75,000 price tag.

And if you fancy a hybrid of electric and traditional fuel, check out the 2018 Toyota Camry LE. This will get you an almost mind-boggling 689 miles – that's the equivalent of driving from London to Amsterdam... and back.

If you want to go for a purely electric car without needing to remortgage the house – in other words, steer clear of Teslas, who occupy four of the top five positions for range, with their X (351 miles), 3 (322 miles) and Y (316 miles) models – then have a look at the Chevrolet Bolt EV. You'll be looking at around £30,000 for a car that will take you well over 250 miles on one charge.

Hyundai (the Kona Electric also hits 250 miles) and Kia (the Niro Electric will take you 230 miles before you plug in again) both represent good value, and 2018 models can be picked up second-hand for around £15,000. For those seeking a bit more status, there is of course the ever-popular Jaguar I-PACE. Up to 300 miles in a car that balances eco and image perfectly... what's not to like?



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Tesla Model S



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Toyota Camry LE



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