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Issue 916 £2.85 5 – 11 January 2024

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2024

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THIS YEAR!**

The
return of
this guy?

**ASTONISHING
EVENTS**

**TWO
NAIL-
BITING
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UNMISSABLE TV & GAMES



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Team GB joins Youth Winter Olympic Games 2024

A team of 36 young British athletes is prepping for the 2024 Youth Winter Olympics in South Korea. Aged between 15 and 18, they'll compete in winter sports like ice hockey, snowboarding and freestyle skiing. The big event takes place in the snowy Gangwon province, and runs from 19 January to 1 February. See p27 for more.



Team GB's Ashleigh Fay Pittaway claimed the skeleton gold in 2016

Banksy artwork stolen



Two men have been arrested on suspicion of theft and criminal damage after a road sign featuring work by street artist Banksy was taken down and removed. The work, a red stop sign showing three military drones, was unveiled in Commercial Way, Peckham, in southeast London. But within an hour of it being authenticated by Banksy on his social media, witnesses filmed the sign being removed by a man using bolt cutters.

Tallest wooden wind turbine powers up



Sweden is now home to the tallest wind turbine made of wood. Constructed with layers of glued spruce – the same wood as sustainably-farmed Christmas trees – the 150-metre-tall (492ft) structure has started to supply around 400 homes with electricity. Modvion, the company that builds them, says using wood instead of steel eliminates CO₂ emissions and makes it easier to transport. Co-founder David Olivegren adds: "Wood and glue is the perfect combination, we've known that for hundreds of years... and because using wood is lighter [than steel] you can build taller turbines with less material."

HAVE YOU

Eight-year-old wows at chess championship



An eight-year-old chess sensation from London has outsmarted top professionals by becoming the top female player at the 2023 European Rapid and Blitz Chess Championship in Croatia. Bodhana Sivanandan started playing chess when she

was five, and has now defeated an international master and even tied with a grandmaster. Bodhana says she is delighted with her achievement and doesn't get nervous while playing. She said: "I was very proud of myself when I got top girl in the European blitz."

New Year's Eve firework display breaks two records

The city of Ras Al Khaimah in the United Arab Emirates kicked off the New Year by breaking two Guinness World Records with a huge fireworks and drone show. The eight-minute display, which featured more than 1,000 drones, broke the records for the

'Longest chain of aquatic floating fireworks' at 5.8km, and the 'Longest straight-line drones display' of 2km. The show was inspired by the desert, sea and mountains of Ras Al Khaimah and had an audience of 50,000.



The longest chain of aquatic floating fireworks in Ras Al Khaimah

HEARD?



Go to the **First News** app for daily news.

L'Oréal heiress first woman worth \$100 billion

Françoise Bettencourt Meyers, who inherited the beauty brand L'Oréal from her family, has become the first woman ever to amass \$100 billion (£78.5 billion). This enormous amount of money makes her the 12th richest person on the planet. Despite her vast wealth, Meyers likes to keep a low profile, preferring to spend her time playing the piano and writing books. However, she still takes an active part in running L'Oréal, the company her grandfather started.



Scientists discover five new hedgehog species

Scientists have identified five new types of soft-furred hedgehogs in a tropical forest in Southeast Asia – two of them brand-new to science. There were two previously known species, so the new discoveries bring the total to seven.

The little creatures are different from each other in their genes and physical shapes, but all have a long, pointy snout and are furry rather than spiny. The findings were published in the *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society*.



New police rules for burglaries



A new Government rule says that police should respond to house robberies within an hour, to help solve more cases and reassure victims. It follows a case where a woman who had her power tools stolen had to turn detective herself, as she said the police were slow to respond. The new rule aims to make sure this doesn't happen again. So now, the police will aim to conduct tests, searches and interviews much faster to catch thieves more quickly.



India launches space mission to study black holes

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully launched a spacecraft to explore the mysteries of black holes. Black holes are old stars that have collapsed in on themselves, where gravity is so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape. The spacecraft, called XPoSat, took off from Sriharikota spaceport and the mission is only the second of its kind in the world. XPoSat cost about £23.5 million to build, and will help scientists learn more about these fascinating space objects. This is another great achievement for ISRO, which successfully landed a rover on the moon last year.

Three-legged cat finds loving home



A brave black and white cat named Tuna, who sadly lost her kittens due to a flea problem, has now found a loving home where she's being pampered. Tuna was rescued by the RSPCA from a house in Grimsby, and was later adopted by the Baker family. Despite having three legs, Tuna is super speedy and quite playful. Mrs Baker said: "She loves to play with toys and the house is full of them. Usually she empties her toy bag so she can then go and hide in it. It's like we have a toddler living here. She's taken over, but we're happy to let her – she's full of fun and thoroughly spoiled and adored."

Five new coins for 2024

The Royal Mint has released five new coin designs to mark special events and anniversaries due to take place in 2024. These include a £5 coin featuring Buckingham Palace, a £2 coin for Sir Winston Churchill's 150th birth anniversary, and another £2 coin for the National Gallery's 200th anniversary. There's also a 50p coin for the 200th anniversary of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) and another 50p coin to cheer on Team GB and ParalympicsGB at the 2024 Paris Games. The coins are collectables and aren't meant to be spent in shops.



● NATIONAL BEAN DAY

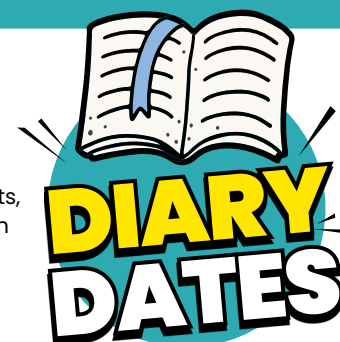
6 JANUARY

Celebrates the development of bean plants and pea plants, and is an excuse to indulge in some tasty beans!

● NATIONAL HOUSEPLANT WEEK

8-14 JANUARY

Promotes the many benefits of indoor plants, including their air-purifying qualities.





VEGANUARY IS BACK ON THE MENU!

MILLIONS around the world are set to try a vegan diet this month in a bid to boost their health – and save the world!

It comes as *First News* launches its Healthy Eating Month to help you to eat well and kick off the new year in the best possible way.

Vegans only eat food made from plants. They choose not to eat anything that's come from animals, such as meat or eggs and dairy products like cheese.

In 2014, a York couple called Jane Land and Matthew Glover launched Veganuary, which invites people to try a vegan diet for the month of January. In its first year, 3,300 took part in the campaign.

Since then, it's become much more popular; 700,000 people signed up through the official Veganuary website last year, and many more tried it without signing up. In its ten years, someone from every country in the world, except for the Vatican City and North Korea, has taken part in the campaign.

Of the people who signed up officially last year, nearly one in five said their main reason was to help the planet.

Animals add to global warming

Since the 1960s, the amount of meat that humans eat has almost doubled, and farmland now takes up half of all habitable land on Earth. This is an issue because the farming of animals produces greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, all of which add to global warming. To make room for farms, it often means cutting down trees, which help cool the planet.

Creating plant-based food, though, produces less pollution than animal farming and takes up less space. Toni Vernelli, Veganuary's International Head of Communications, said: "Veganuary really is driving positive change for animals, people and the planet."



Could you go a whole month only eating vegan food?

Let us know at first.news/polls

Attitudes towards plant-based diets are changing, but while there are lots of meat-free and dairy-free options available in shops and restaurants, Matthew Glover told the BBC: "There's still work to do with vegan cheese!"

A study by *BBC Good Food* in 2021 said that over 20% of children in the UK aged 5-16 are either vegan, or would like to be. However, another study by The Vegan Society found that of 252 vegan pupils, 73% said they had been teased about their diet at school.

Is it healthy to be vegan?

Of course, fruit and vegetables are good for us, and the NHS says we should eat five portions of them a day.

That's not all vegans eat, though – and in fact, experts say such a diet wouldn't be very healthy, as we need other nutrients such as carbohydrates (from things like bread, potatoes and pasta) and protein.

Protein is found in meat, fish and eggs, but for people with plant-based diets, it's also in beans and nuts.

The NHS says a vegan diet can provide a healthy, balanced diet, but it also urges people to plan meals carefully to include all the nutrients we need if they want to try Veganuary or change their diet.

Scan the QR code with an adult to check out *First News*' partner show *FYI*'s short film on healthy eating.



New school will let pupils work from home



Were you taught online during the Covid-19 lockdowns?

A NEW school is set to become the first in the UK designed to let pupils learn from home.

It's aimed at children who feel anxious about coming into school, or parents who don't feel any of their local schools are quite right for their children.

Pupils will only be expected to come in for one day per week, to take part in practical subjects and sporting activities. For the rest of the week, the school will teach live lessons online instead.

It will teach kids from across the UK, right up to sixth form, and will be run by a group called Dukes Education.

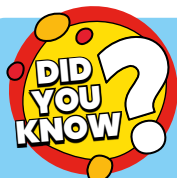
When they need to come into school, it will be at one of the many regular schools and colleges also run by Dukes.

Would you be happy with just one day per week in school?

Let us know at first.news/polls

The mean average temperature was 9.97°C, just behind 2022's record high of 10.03°C.

Last year also brought the UK's warmest Christmas Eve in 26 years, with a high of 15.3°C – but Scotland still saw snow on 25 December.



LAST year was Wales and Northern Ireland's hottest year since records began in 1884.

The Met Office, the UK's national weather service, has projected that overall, 2023 was the UK's second-warmest year on record.

EDITOR'S COMMENT

HAPPY New Year to all of our readers, wherever you are!

We hope you enjoyed our last issue, the review of 2023, and this week we've got a whole load of interesting, wacky and exciting events to look out for in 2024.

Last week we featured our most inspiring kids of 2023, and we've already found one for 2024 – Luke Littler, the 16-year-old who's been beating adults at darts over the past week (see p5).

We can't all be sports champions, obviously, but we're sure that loads of you will be doing amazing things this year, so make sure you write in to let us know what you're up to. And if you think you've got a news story for us from your school or area, let us know about those too! You can always get in touch with us on newsdesk@firstnews.co.uk.



Nicky Cox MBE



Cats

Oli the cat became the very first feline to sail in the annual Sydney-to-Hobart yacht race! The Australian event has been going since 1945 and happens every year on Boxing Day. Oli and his owner, a retired navy officer called Bob Williams, sailed one of the 103 yachts to race this year.

Pounds and ounces

THE Government has decided to keep going with the metric system of grams and kilograms when we shop for our groceries. It had thought about bringing back the old imperial system of pounds and ounces, which was possible after Brexit. More than 98% of the public said they wanted things to stay as they were.



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Teenager takes darts by storm



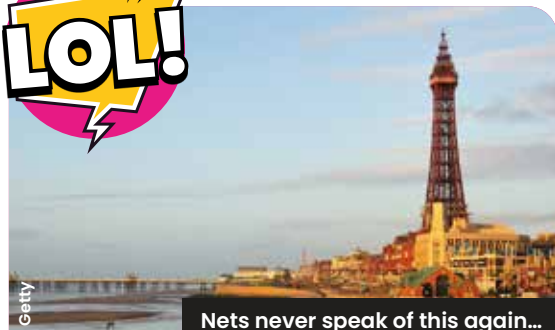
Little Littler has a big future!

A BOY from Warrington broke records and set the darts world alight over the festive period.

As *First News* went to press, Luke Littler, aged 16, had reached the semi-finals of the PDC World Darts Championship with a string of unexpected victories over much older and more experienced stars, including some of his heroes. His history-making run had earned him £100,000 in prize money.

Luke began playing with a magnetic darts set when he was 18 months old and was voted most likely to become famous by his Year 11 classmates when he finished his GCSEs last summer.

He says his daily routine is: "Just wake up, play on my Xbox, have some food and have a chuck on the [darts] board and go to bed – that's it!"



Nets never speak of this again...

FIRE crews scrambled to deal with a blaze at Blackpool Tower in the run-up to New Year, only to discover it was an epic false alarm.

Six fire engines and a helicopter rushed to the landmark after people spotted what they thought were flames at the top of the tower.

Upon arrival, though, the crews saw that the 'flames' were just orange netting fluttering about in the stormy seaside wind!



Ricotta be kidding me!

HERE'S one way to use up all the leftover Christmas cheese – chuck it all on a pizza!

Two chefs teamed up with a cheesemaker and a YouTuber in France to create a pizza with 1,001 different types of cheese on top.

They now hold the Guinness World Record for the most varieties of cheese on a pizza – and you must say, that's dairy well-deserved!

IT'S ELECTION YEAR!



The Conservative leader Rishi Sunak (left) and his rival, Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer

IT'S going to be a huge year for British politics – and one in which we could get yet another new prime minister.

That's because there'll be a general election this year, which is when adults vote for the party they want to run the country. It's usually a bitter battle between the two biggest parties, the Conservative Party and the Labour Party, and it's likely to be the same this year.

The Conservatives have been in power since taking over from Labour in 2010. In that 13 years, there have been five leaders of the Conservatives, which means there have been five prime ministers. The current prime minister, Rishi Sunak, started the job in October 2022.

Labour's leader, Sir Keir Starmer, wants to take the job off him, though – and Labour are ahead in a lot of surveys about which party the public would like to be in charge.

That means the Conservatives have some work to do to persuade the public that they should remain in power.

Jeremy Hunt is the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Each year, it's his job to announce something called the Budget, which lays out how the Government will use the country's money. This year's Budget will be on 6 March, which is slightly earlier than expected. Many think that's to give the Conservatives time to announce plans that might win them votes in the general election, like tax cuts.

This might mean that the general election is held in the spring. Labour have been calling for an election for some time, but the prime minister gets to choose when it happens.

Both Mr Sunak and Mr Starmer are expected to start the year by setting out lots of big new policies to explain what they would try to do in the coming years as prime minister.

Millions of kids miss seeing the dentist

FIVE million children in England missed out on a check-up with an NHS dentist in the past year.

An investigation by *The Times* says dental care is in crisis. Over 26,000 children had to go to hospital last year to have decaying teeth pulled out, and pupils are missing school because of tooth pain.

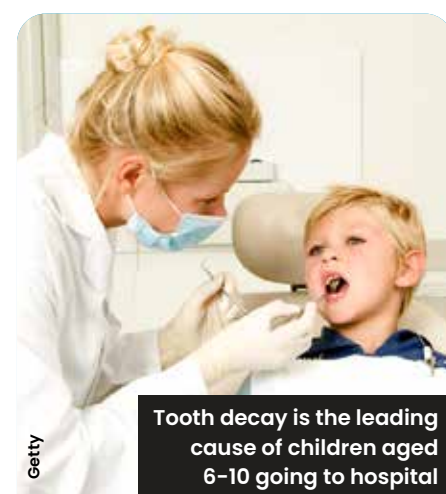
Seeing an NHS dentist is cheaper than seeing a private dentist. However, most high street dentist surgeries have decided to stop accepting new NHS patients, which has made it impossible for many to get an appointment that they can afford.

Overall, just 52% of children were

able to see an NHS dentist last year, and dental leaders are worried about the long-term effect of this.

Shawn Charlwood, a chairman at the British Dental Association, said: "Every dentist that moves away from the NHS results in thousands more patients being unable to access care." He wants the Government to increase funding for NHS dentistry, adding: "The government is letting down millions of children."

Only one in seven kids had an annual check-up in some parts of the country in 2022-23, with those in Breckland in Norfolk, the worst-affected.



Tooth decay is the leading cause of children aged 6-10 going to hospital

Plan to help recycle your electrical junk

THE Government has announced plans to help us recycle our old electrical items, rather than chuck them away.

E-waste (broken or unwanted electricals) is causing a big problem. A report by the United Nations found that annually, nine million tonnes of items that could be recycled end up in landfill sites around the world. In the UK alone, 500 tonnes of Christmas lights are thrown away every year.

Under new plans, suggested to start in 2026, our electrical junk would be collected directly from our homes, just like our

rubbish and recycling bins are. The Government says this doesn't mean we'll need another bin at home, and it won't cost the public anything because the producers of electrical items will help pay for the collections.

Retailers would also have to take our old items like fridges and cookers away when delivering new ones.

The Government's recycling minister, Robbie Moore, said: "Our proposals will ensure gadgets are easy to dispose of without the need for a trip to your local tip."

**London, UK**

Getty

FIREWORKS light up the London skyline over Big Ben and the London Eye to celebrate New Year's Eve.

Sydney, Australia

Getty

SYDNEY Harbour Bridge is lit up for the annual Sydney New Year's Eve firework show.

Edinburgh, UK

Getty

EDINBURGH'S Hogmanay torchlight procession returns for the first time since 2019. Vikings from Shetland's South Mainland Up Helly Aa Jarl Squad carried fire torches and marched through the city centre, to kick off Scotland's New Year celebrations.

Shenyang, China

Getty

THE annual lantern fair opens to the public, kicking off celebrations for the upcoming Spring Festival (Chinese New Year). The fair runs until 3 March, featuring colourful creations themed around dragons, as this year marks the Year of the Dragon in the Chinese zodiac.

Alicante, Spain

Getty

LOCALS take part in the annual Els Enfarinats food battle. People wear military outfits to throw flour and eggs at each other, while fireworks are set off. The December festival is held every year to remember the biblical story of King Herod and Holy Innocents Day.

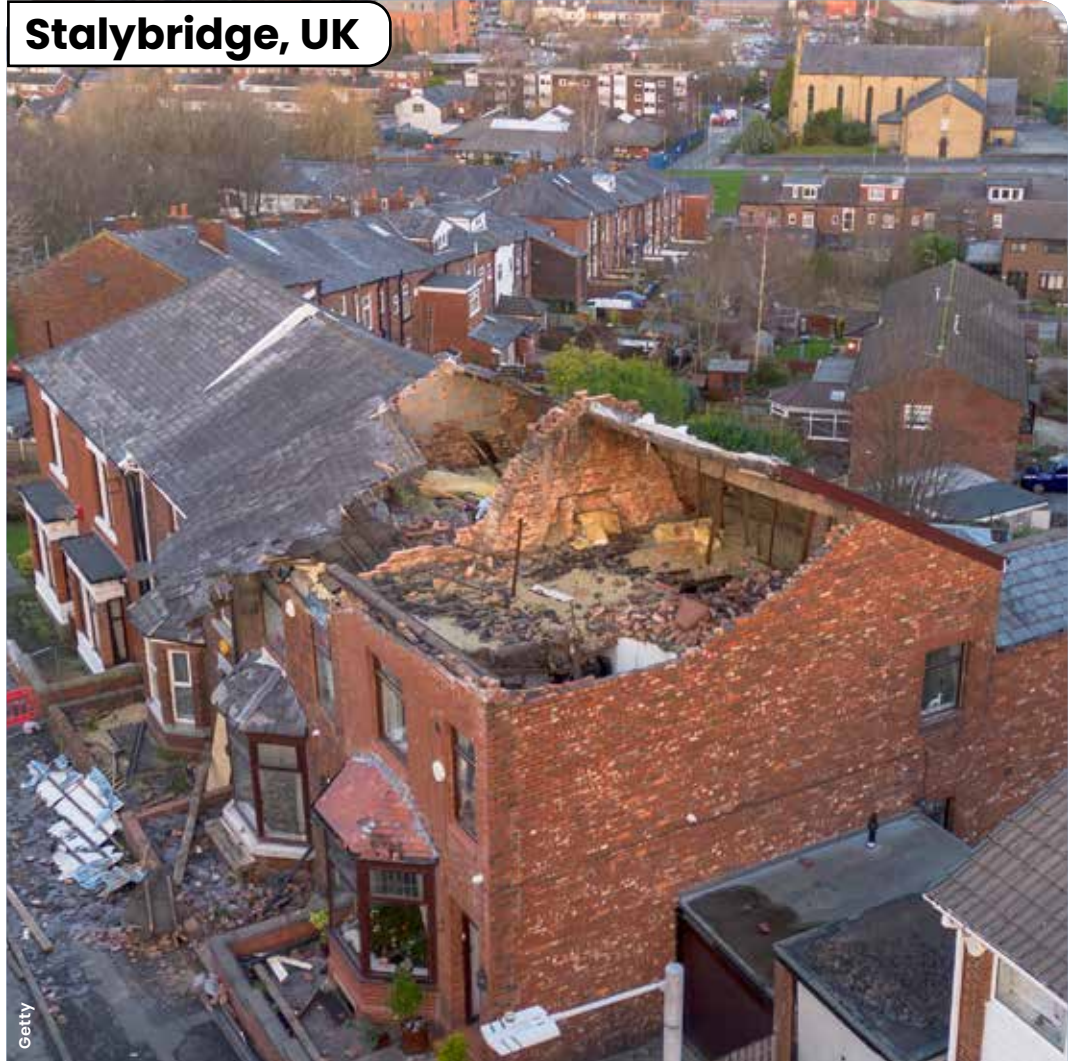


Chester, UK



CONSERVATIONISTS at Chester Zoo are celebrating the birth of a critically endangered Coquerel's sifaka. The tiny new arrival is currently staying close to its mum. Zookeepers say the baby lemur will begin to explore on its own at around three months old, which is when they'll reveal if it's male or female. Chester is the only zoo in the UK, and one of just three in Europe, to care for members of this species.

Stalybridge, UK



AROUND 100 houses were damaged following a rare British tornado on 29 December. Tameside Council said people were evacuated after the "mini tornado", but thankfully no-one was hurt.

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UK

Make a note of Charles

It's been over a year since the new banknotes featuring the face of King Charles III were announced, and they'll finally be out in mid-2024. The King's picture will be on all four polymer notes (£5, £10, £20, £50), and his image will also appear in the see-through window on banknotes. To minimise the negative effect on the environment, you'll still be able to use the current notes featuring Queen Elizabeth II, as new notes will only be printed to replace those that are worn out. The reason for the delay since the death of the Queen in September 2022 is that self-service tills need to be programmed to recognise the new image, which is a long process.



The King's new note

SCOTLAND

Kiltwalks for all, and a Mini Kilo

Jacket? Check. Hiking boots? Check. Tartan? Check. You're now ready for the Kiltwalk by Scotland's national children's charity, Children 1st! The 22.6 miles (36.4km) of the Mighty Stride may be a stretch, but the three-mile Wee Wander at the scenic Loch Lomond is sure to be fun. Plus, it's an excuse to wear your kilt or other tartan. Kiltwalks take place all around Scotland, with the Glasgow walk on 28 April. Another event by the charity that will get you moving is the Mini Kilo – a 2.6k run starting and ending at Edinburgh's Murrayfield rugby stadium.



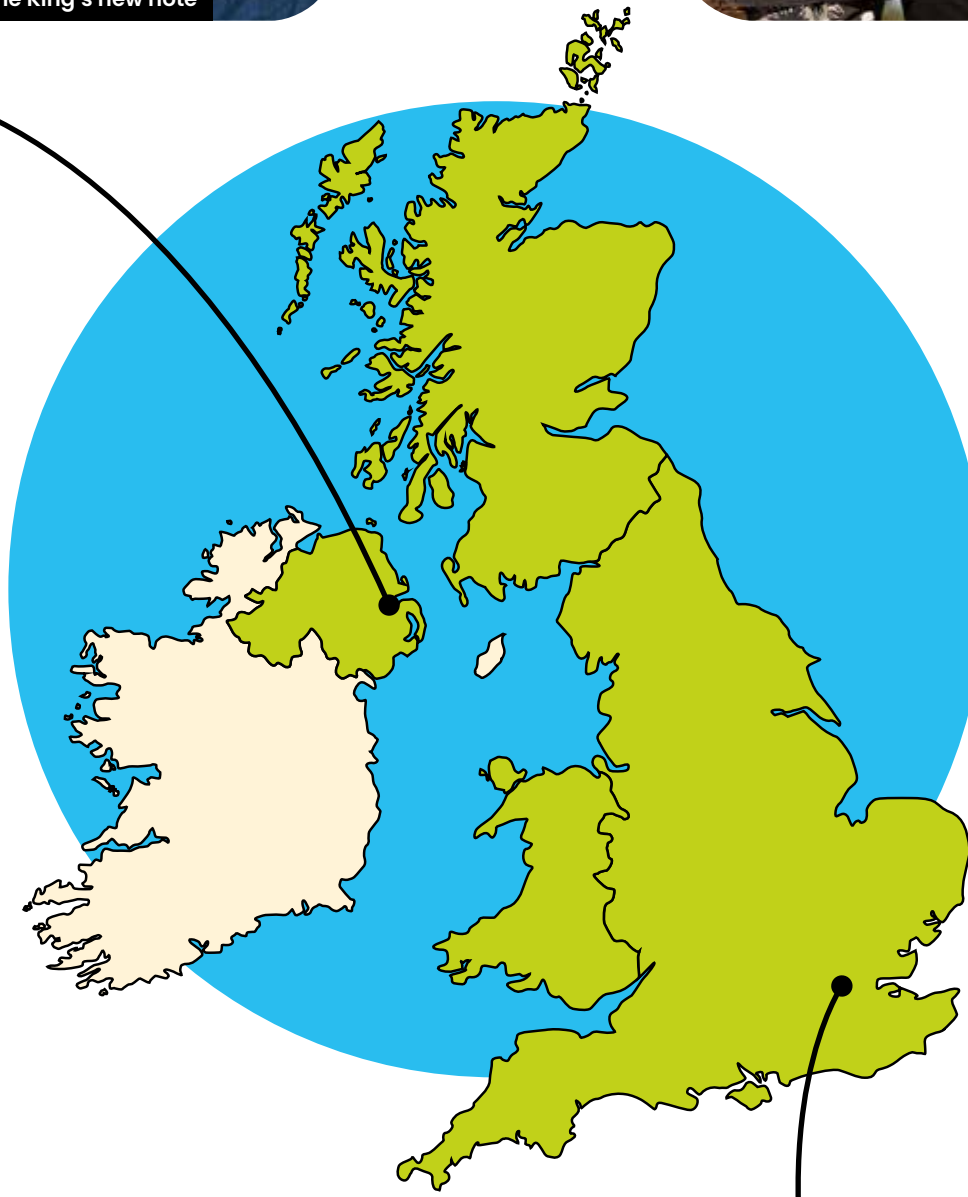
BELFAST



Little Murrem at the 2023 festival

You take the stage at Children's Festival

Dancing feet at the ready, as the much-loved Baby Rave returns alongside Belfast Children's Festival, which is on from 8 to 16 March. The festival is run by Young at Art and gives children the chance to express themselves through literature, theatre, and, of course, having a boogie! Each year, Young at Art sets aside some of the Belfast Children's Festival performances exclusively for schools, across various venues in the capital. One of last year's performances was *Little Murrem*, a dance theatre show that featured ground-breaking projection, an extraordinary soundscape and a blizzard of paper and confetti.



UK

Explore historic buildings for free

England's largest festival of history and culture returns, giving you the opportunity to see inside some of the UK's most hidden places! From 6 to 15 September, thousands of volunteers will run Heritage Open Days, offering a way for people to explore different historic buildings and try out new experiences for free. Heritage Open Days was established in 1994, and over the past few years it has celebrated Extraordinary Women, Astounding Inventions and Edible England.



A trip to Tanat Valley Light Railway near Oswestry

UK

Building memories with LEGO

Brick Festival returns in 2024, where people can have fun in the world of LEGO without worrying about making their room messy! The nationwide festival began in 2018 and celebrates all things LEGO. Child and adult builders alike will be able to compete in speed-building competitions and large-scale displays, with a dedicated building area for those who just want to experiment. Events are taking place in arenas all over the country throughout the year.



Brick Festival

LONDON

Barbie's 65th birthday

The Design Museum is celebrating the 65th anniversary of Barbie with an exhibition that's been three years in the making. It will take fans back in time through the history of Barbie to see how the fashion, architecture, furniture and vehicle design have changed. The Barbie story began when Ruth Handler saw that her daughter Barbara liked playing with paper dolls. She and her husband, co-founders of the Mattel toy company, then made a 3D doll, named after Barbara. The exhibition will run from 5 July 2024 to 23 February 2025.



Barbie's 1962 DreamHouse will be on display



EXCITING NATURE EVENTS OF 2024

Whipsnade Zoo's annual stocktake

On **8 January**, Whipsnade Zoo will be counting all its animals for an annual census. Every creature, from the tiny turtles to the majestic tigers, will be included in the headcount. The count helps keep track of the zoo's ever-growing family and supports conservation efforts.



Humboldt penguins being counted at a stocktake

Children's Gardening Week

From **25 May to 2 June**, kids across the UK can go green for National Children's Gardening Week. It includes fun activities like making mini ponds and gardens, racing snails, flower pressing and building hedgehog huts. The exciting week can get everyone outdoors and closer to nature. So, get your wellies on and get ready for some spring gardening.



National Marine Week

Usually taking place in **late July/early August**, amazing ocean-themed activities will take place across the UK for National Marine Week. Participants can discover incredible sea creatures, learn about coastlines, and even picnic with porpoises. From snorkelling in Devon to rockpooling in Yorkshire, the week is about creating awareness and protecting the oceans and the creatures that live there.



Bottlenose dolphins in UK waters



A goldfinch

Big Schools' Birdwatch

From **8 January to 19 February**, young birdwatchers can take part in the Big Schools' Birdwatch 2024. Schoolchildren nationwide are invited to spot and count the number of feathered visitors that appear in their playgrounds. It's hosted by the RSPB and free information packs are available, with activities, challenges and awards up for grabs!



The Great Big Green Week

From **8 to 16 June**, everyone around the UK is encouraged to take part in the Great Big Green Week. It'll be packed with cool activities like beach clean-ups, letter writing, arts and crafts, school assemblies, litter picks and football matches. It's a fantastic stand against climate change and a chance for everyone to join in and help to protect our planet.



The Great British Beach Clean

From **20 to 29 September**, everyone in the UK, including dogs, is encouraged to come along and clean up the nation's beaches. The litter data collected will help scientists better understand the pollution in our oceans and help take steps to reduce it. So, let's get involved and pitch in to help our seas by tidying our beautiful beaches.



ANEESHWAR Kunchala is an eight-year-old wildlife campaigner. He shot to fame as a finalist on *Britain's Got Talent*. Now, he's presenting the new documentary *Save Our Wildlife* from Sky Kids and Sky Zero. Watch it at first.news/climatecrisis.

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

RED FOX



HABITAT: Foxes are slick and sly so they can survive in different habitats like forests, grasslands and deserts.

FUN FACTS:

- A male fox is called a dog fox or a tod, and a female is a vixen.
- Male foxes have slightly thicker muzzles and larger heads than females.

SPECIAL SUPERPOWER: Red foxes generally live around the world in many diverse habitats like forests, grasslands, mountains and deserts. They also adapt well to human environments such as farms and large cities.

CONSERVATION STATUS: Least concern, says the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List.



Aneeshwar's red fox painting

We're asking you to send in photos of your own drawings or paintings of wildlife to add to an online gallery. Ask a parent, guardian or teacher to send in your photos by emailing them to yournews@firstnews.co.uk.



TO THE MOON... AND BEYOND!

THE best thing about science is that you can't predict it, so there could be all kinds of discoveries, surprises and "Eureka!" moments this year.

But even though we don't know what science has in store for us, there are some events and exciting launches in the diary already, so here are a few for you to keep your eye on in 2024.

Phones on the moon and a rover with its own rover!

Although most of the attention this year will be on NASA's Artemis II mission round the moon (see below), one that's more interesting in many ways is the IM-2 mission that's due to launch to the moon this year. When it lands near Shackleton Crater, close to the moon's south pole, quite a few interesting experiments will start.

One of those is PRIME-1 (Polar Resources Ice-Mining Experiment-1), which will attempt to drill a metre down into the moon's surface, then bring all that rock and soil up so that it can be examined. The idea is to see how much ice and other materials are in there, as a first test

This report is from the Science Museum Group

SCIENCE
MUSEUM
GROUP

HAPPY New leap year!

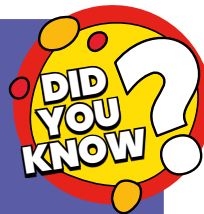
This year, our calendars get one extra day – on 29 February. Our calendar year is defined by the time it takes the Earth to journey around the sun, but it isn't a round number. The journey takes 365 days, six hours and nine minutes, which is rounded down to 365 days as no calendar can easily accommodate those extra hours.

But to make up for those lost hours across the years, and to make sure months match up with seasons, an extra day is added to calendars every four years. This system has been in place since 1752 in Britain, but Ancient Romans and Egyptians already had their own versions of leap years over a thousand years before then.



An astronomical clock with perpetual calendar that shows leap years

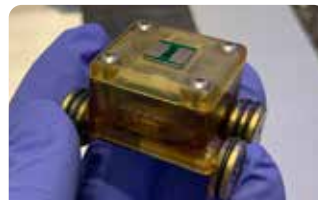
THE company behind ChatGPT, OpenAI, is expected to release the new, improved version of its AI in 2024. ChatGPT currently runs the GPT-4 version of the AI, but GPT-5 could be released pretty soon. OpenAI has a few competitors now though, including Google's Gemini, although lots of researchers say it's not quite as impressive as Google claims.



to see how easy it'd be for astronauts in the future to use the moon's resources.

If humans do ever set up bases on the moon, they'll need to be able to communicate with each other, which is why tech company Nokia is sending up a 4G communications network with this mission. A rover called MAPP will then pootle across the moon's surface, testing how good the signal is at various distances from the antennae. The same will also be done by Micro-Nova (pictured top right), a 'hopper' that's also going along on the mission. It doesn't hop like a rabbit, sadly, but travels in short, controlled bursts of flight. Its main task is to seek out ice in craters that rovers can't access.

Probably our favourite part, though, is that MAPP will have its own tiny rover called AstroAnt, which is about the size of a Matchbox toy car. It will drive around on top of MAPP, collecting data about MAPP's temperature. It's the first moon test of an AstroAnt, but in the future, whole swarms of them could be working in space, keeping tabs on the performance of rovers and spacecraft.



The tiny AstroAnt is possibly the cutest space explorer in history

Another step towards seeing humans on the moon again

Humans haven't set foot on the moon since 1972, but NASA's Artemis II mission will see four astronauts get pretty close. They're set to venture around the moon, on the first manned flight aboard NASA's new Orion spacecraft. The team will be checking that all of the spacecraft's systems operate how they're supposed to, in preparation for Artemis III, which will hopefully see astronauts back on the moon's surface.

The only 12 people to have walked on the moon were all white men, so NASA wants to put a woman and person of colour on the crew for Artemis III.

Artemis II is scheduled to launch in November 2024.



The Artemis II crew

The search for alien life continues

October should see the launch of NASA's Europa Clipper, which will be off on its way to Jupiter's icy moon Europa. Many experts think that Europa is one of the most likely places in our solar system where life could exist, as there's a huge ocean underneath the moon's icy crust.

The Clipper will perform dozens of flybys, passing over



An artist's impression of the Micro-Nova 'hopper' craft on the moon

pretty much every point on the moon and building up a map of the ice's thickness and temperature, and finding out what else the moon is made of.

Although it won't touch down, it should get as close as 16 miles (25km) to the surface on its closest approach, and it could show us if anywhere underneath the ice could support life. Probably not little green men, but possibly little green fish.

A mission to a Martian moon

It's a pretty big year for space exploration, as the Japanese space agency JAXA is launching its MMX mission. MMX stands for (sort of) Mars Moon eXploration and the spacecraft is due to study the Martian moons Phobos and Deimos, then land on Phobos and bring home the first ever sample from it.

The 10g sample that's expected to be collected might be tiny, but it could help us to discover whether the moon is a part of Mars that broke off in an ancient collision, or if it's an object that was 'captured' by Mars' gravity. It could also give us an insight into how other planets in our solar system formed.

However, don't expect those results any time soon, as the sample won't arrive back on Earth until 2029.

British Science Week's 30th anniversary

Moving back down to Earth, this year's British Science Week is an extra special one as it marks 30 years since the very first week back in 1994.

The theme will be 'Time', with a ten-day celebration of science, technology, engineering and maths planned between 8-17 March.

See www.britishtime.org to find out how you can take part.



Preparing for the next pandemic

Although many people just want to forget about the Covid pandemic, most of us can probably agree that the world needs to be better prepared the next time a new disease comes along.

That's why scientists and government officials have been working for the last couple of years on a global treaty that would commit countries to sharing data and warnings. But also handing out vaccines in a fair way, as opposed to rich countries hogging them for themselves, which happened with the Covid jobs.

Many experts want the treaty to ensure countries improve the health of their citizens and provide free healthcare for all, as well as improving gender equality. However, there are already concerns that the early proposals have been watered down, and that the final agreement may not be as strong as many hoped.

An aerial photograph of Bowling train station in Glasgow, Scotland, showing severe flooding. The River Clyde has overflowed its banks, with murky brown water reaching the top of the train platforms. The station has two main platforms with stairs leading up to them. Various rail infrastructure like tracks, signals, and benches are visible. In the top left, a few cars are parked on a wet surface. A large blue circular graphic with white text is in the top right corner.

THE BIG PICTURE

AT first glance, you might think that this is a canal, but it's actually Bowling train station.

The station is on the north bank of the River Clyde, to the northwest of Glasgow, and rain dumped by Storm Gerrit brought the water levels almost to the top of the train platforms last week.

Since it obviously wasn't safe to run trains in the area, the line was closed in both directions, causing huge disruption for commuters.

In case you think the situation looks familiar, the same thing happened less than three months ago. Climate change is expected to bring even more extreme weather, so rail bosses in Scotland could be seeing incidents like this more often in the future.



80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE D-DAY LANDINGS

THIS year on 6 June, people will be marking 80 years since the D-Day landings. It was the biggest air, land and sea invasion in history, but how much do you know about it?

What was D-Day?

D-Day, which was also codenamed Operation Overlord, was an important day in World War Two where the Allied forces began a large-scale invasion of Nazi-occupied France. This historic day started a domino effect that led to the Allied forces winning the war.

The Allied forces were a group of countries made up of the UK, US, France, Canada and more. They worked together to plan an attack across the English Channel where they used 5,000 ships and landed over 150,000 soldiers across five beaches in Normandy.

It took the combined effort of 13 countries and their meteorologists, scientists, inventors and militaries to carry out D-Day, which is considered one of the most significant battles in history.



American troops approaching 'Omaha' beach in Normandy

How did they do it?

US General Dwight D Eisenhower and British General Bernard Montgomery commanded the invasion, which began on the afternoon of 5 June 1944, when 5,000 ships set off from the ports of southern England.

By 6am on the following day, 6 June, the bombing and shooting had begun.



Allied chiefs Air Marshal Arthur Tedder (left), General Dwight D Eisenhower (third from left), and General Bernard L Montgomery (far right)

The Allied forces carried out the attack using a tactic of deception: they spread false information to the enemy, pretending that they'd be landing in Calais, another part of France, instead of Normandy. This drew enemy forces away from the five beaches chosen for the invasion, which were codenamed Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword.

By the end of D-Day, the Allied troops had managed to take control of a part of mainland Europe, something they hadn't been able to do since 1940.



John in the Royal Navy. He served from 1938 until 1978

John's story

John Roberts joined the Royal Navy in January 1938, aged just 13. At the time of the D-Day landings, he was a sub-lieutenant on HMS Serapis. He didn't land on a beach but was close to Sword beach, where he operated offshore between 6 and 20 June. John said: "HMS Serapis was in the Normandy area for about two-and-a-half weeks. Our role was to make sure the German warships were prevented from leaving the port and also to defend our ships from German aircraft such as the Focke 190s".

John told *First News* he travelled from Portsmouth, through the English Channel to Normandy for the landings: "At around 5am on 6 June we were off the Normandy coast and had to wait for smaller minesweepers [ships used to clear mines] to guide us closer, as the water was too shallow for the minesweepers that had led us from Portsmouth. At 6:30am we had been joined by minesweepers that could work in shallow sea and we started moving closer to the land. This was when we could see small explosions emitting light on the beaches. At 7am we started bombarding the coast at Sword beach and it was an amazing sight – I'd never seen anything like it before."



Getty



John at last year's Poppy Appeal launch

What's happening to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day?

There are many events happening this summer to celebrate the anniversary. The Royal British Legion will be hosting events in the UK at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire on 6 June, and the Royal Albert Hall will also be hosting a number of shows to remember the story of D-Day.

The city of Normandy will be celebrating the anniversary with firework shows and a special festival where visitors can enjoy cultural and historical events.

The official international ceremony will take place on 6 June on Omaha beach and will welcome officials and veterans from around the world.



Allied forces build up on Omaha beach



THE GAMES WE CAN'T WAIT TO PLAY IN 2024!

IF you thought that 2023 was a massive year for games, just wait until you see what's coming up in 2024! We've picked out some of the highlights for you to get excited about...



Tales of Kenzera: Zau
Nintendo Switch, PS5,
Xbox Series S|X, PC
Out 23 April

This is a single-player story about finding courage while dealing with family loss. As Zau, you must face your own emotions to become a worthy Nganga, a spiritual healer. But restless spirits stand in your way, from ordinary warriors to the mighty Impundulu or GaGorib.

Mario vs Donkey Kong
Nintendo Switch
Out 16 February



A classic Mario game that reignites an old rivalry. Donkey Kong has stolen all of the Mini-Mario toys, and it's your job to track him down and get them back. Local co-op has been added, so you and a pal can take on a barrel-load of increasingly challenging 2D levels together.

Luigi's Mansion 2 HD
Nintendo Switch
Out Summer 2024



Mario got a lot of attention in 2023, so now it's time for Luigi to take the spotlight. In this spooky quest you'll visit the eerie Evershade Valley, taking on troublemaking ghosts. You can also scale the terrifying ScareScraper tower with up to four players.

Fortnite OG is back
Nintendo Switch, PS4/5, Xbox
One/Series S|X, PC
Coming in 2024



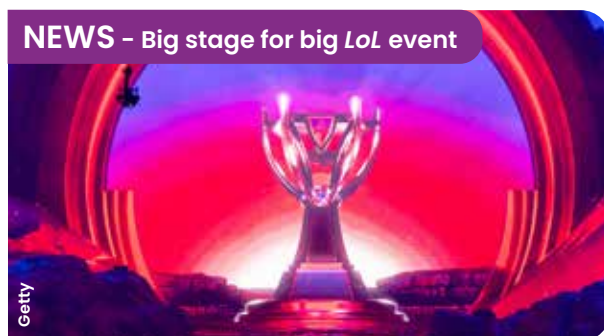
Exciting news for *Fortnite* fans who've been around since day one – the original map that welcomed us into the game in 2017 will return! Chapter 4's OG Season gave *Fortnite* its biggest ever day with 44.7m players, and we can expect more trips down memory lane this year. See you on the Battle Bus!

Princess Peach: Showtime!
Nintendo Switch
Out 22 March



The stage is set for Princess Peach to shine. She and her friends arrive at the Sparkle Theatre to see a show but a terrible tragedy unfolds. The wicked Grape and the Sour Bunch have sabotaged the performance, and it's up to Peach to save the play – and the day!

NEWS – Big stage for big LoL event



The *League of Legends* World Championship Finals are heading to the O₂ arena in London in November. Teams will battle it out to destroy their opponent's Nexus on the biggest stage, an arena that can hold up to 20,000 people. The Worlds have grown to become Super Bowl-style events in recent years, which is fitting for one of the biggest esports around. *LoL* itself has gone from strength to strength since its 2009 launch, where teams use strategies to destroy an opponent's Nexus base.

NEWS – Gamescom returns



The world's biggest gaming convention returns to Cologne in Germany this August. Gamescom attracts more than 350,000 gamers from across Europe every year, and it's the place to be to find big names and hear important announcements.

NEWS – Happy Birthday, Minecraft!



Expect big birthday additions from Mojang Studios, who are celebrating *Minecraft*'s 15th anniversary in May. After the game hit 300m sales in 2023, Helen Chiang, head of Mojang Studios, said: "Our incredible community has built *Minecraft* into what it is today and what it will become in the future. We can't wait to share new *Minecraft* content and experiences in the years ahead."



★ THE YEAR AHEAD ★

THERE could be a lot of power-shifting going on in 2024 – it's the world's biggest election year ever!

More than two billion people in 50 countries around the globe may be voting for their leaders, while there are also huge festivals, new cities and amazing natural wonders to look forward to...



USA

America decides... again

NOVEMBER: The world will be watching as Americans go back to the polls to vote on who will be their president. There are two parties in America that run for the presidency: the Democrats and the Republicans. The current president, Joe Biden, is a Democrat, and he'll be trying to win a second term in office. Donald Trump is a Republican. He'd like another go as president but he's been banned from entering the vote in the states of Colorado and Maine, for his part in encouraging a riot in Washington, DC, after he lost his presidency in 2020. The Republican Party will pick its candidate in July.



Joe Biden enters the White House in 2021



MEXICO

The 'Great American Eclipse' starts here

APRIL: On 8 April, a total eclipse of the sun will be visible across the continent of North America, from down on the Pacific coast in Mexico right up to Newfoundland, which lies off Canada. A solar eclipse is when the moon passes between Earth and the sun, blocking out the light and turning the sky dark. It'll start in Mexico at 11:07am, travel over 13 states in the US and finish over Newfoundland at 5:16pm. The last 'Great American Eclipse' happened in 2017, but space agency NASA says this year's will be the last total eclipse over North America until 2044.



An amazing sight!



GRENADA

Half a century of independence

FEBRUARY: Grenada has a whole series of events lined up to celebrate 50 years of independence from the UK on 7 February. Independence is when a country splits from another. Grenada used to be a British colony, which means it was under British rule, but ever since 1974, it has governed itself. Activities to mark the milestone began in November, with the launch of a mobile museum all about Grenada's history travelling to every school. This month, and right up until the big day, there are music and dance concerts, sports competitions and festivals to celebrate Grenadian food, entertainment and culture.



Prince Harry meets stilt-walkers on a visit to Grenada in 2016



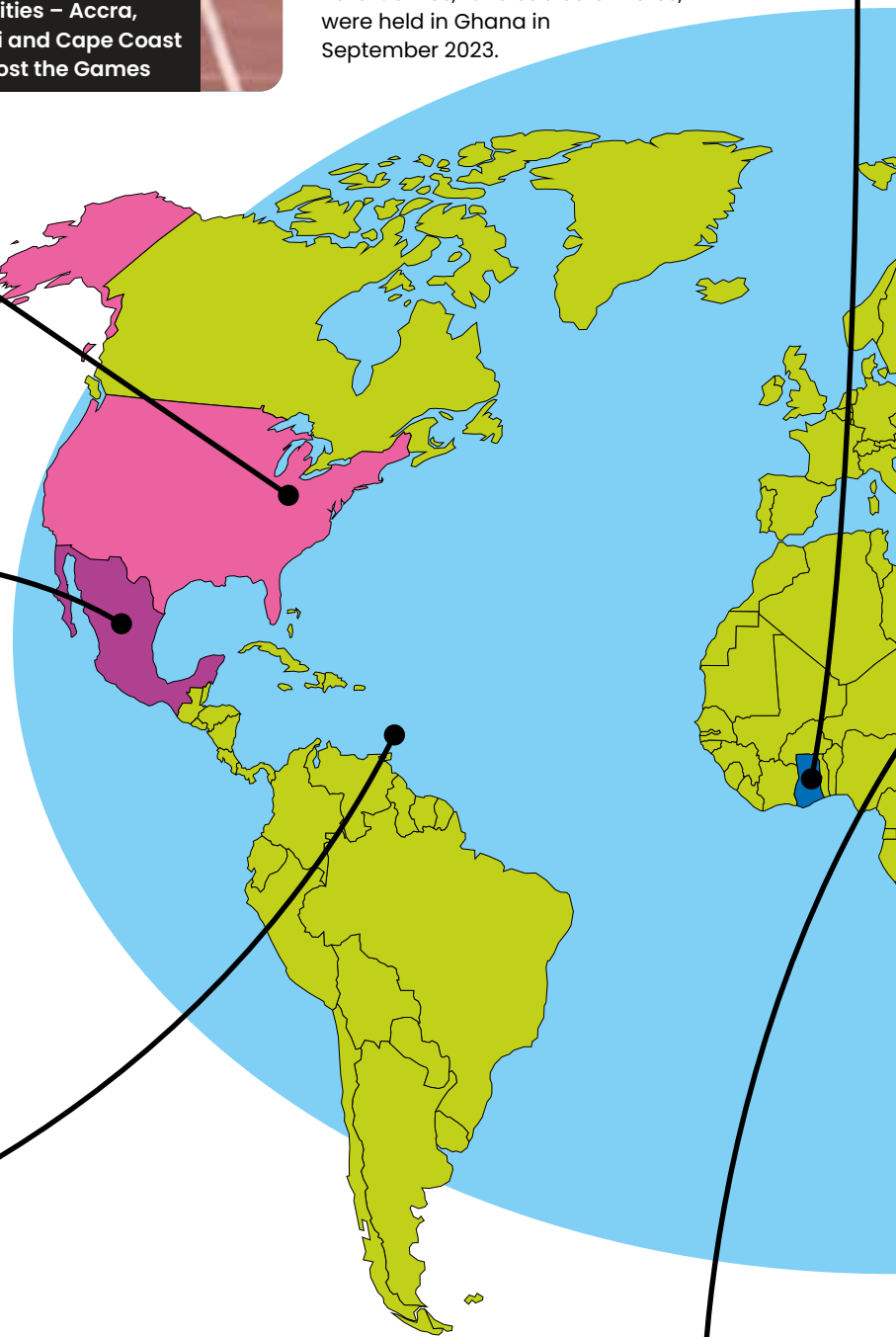
GHANA



Three cities – Accra, Kumasi and Cape Coast – will host the Games

One year later, let the Games begin!

MARCH: Ghana will host the 13th African Games this spring, with the opening ceremony set for 8 March. It's expected that 53 nations will take part. The big sporting spectacle was meant to happen last year but it was postponed, partly due to the fact that the building of some of the venues wasn't finished. At the 2019 Games, Egypt's athletes bagged 102 golds and topped the medal table by miles. The very first African Para Games, for disabled athletes, were held in Ghana in September 2023.



AZERBAIJAN



Countries agreed to "phase out" fossil fuels at COP28. What will they decide to do this year?

What will happen at COP29?

NOVEMBER: This year sees the 29th edition of the United Nations climate talks, where leaders from 198 countries come together to try to agree what to do about the climate crisis. For a while, they couldn't even agree who should host this year's event. The rules said it was Europe's turn, but Russia refused to vote for any country in the European Union. Armenia and Azerbaijan also blocked each other's bids, until Armenia stepped aside. Critics aren't sure about Azerbaijan hosting, because lots of its money comes from selling fossil fuels, like oil and gas, to other countries.



UKRAINE



Mr Zelensky on a visit to the UK

Zelensky faces the public vote

MARCH: As Ukraine continues its fightback against Russia's invasion, which began in 2022, it's also gearing up for a presidential election. It's unlikely that there'll be a change at the top, though – polls show that around 90% of Ukrainians think Volodymyr Zelensky is doing a good job. Mr Zelensky was a comedian on TV before he won the presidency by a landslide in 2019. Since Russia's invasion of his country, he has campaigned tirelessly for international support. In the first year of the war, he got £2.3 billion of military support from the UK, on top of things like missiles and anti-aircraft guns.



SOUTH KOREA

The second AI Safety Summit heads east

MAY: South Korea has been chosen to help the UK host the next big meeting of important global figures to talk about artificial intelligence. The UK hosted the first AI Safety Summit in November. It was attended by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and King Charles III, plus guests from 28 countries, including the world's richest man, Elon Musk. They discussed the risks of highly advanced AI, which could be more intelligent than humans soon and may be used in a number of dangerous ways, like meddling in elections. The UK and South Korea agreed a £4.5 million deal to work together to research groundbreaking technology, such as AI. ICT Minister Lee Jong-ho said: "Korea will do our part to contribute [to] discussions on... a global order for the safe use of AI."



Visitors meet a humanoid robot at a show in South Korea



CHINA

Fired up for the Year of the Dragon

FEBRUARY: From 10 to 24 February, over a billion people worldwide will celebrate Chinese New Year. It's also known as the Spring Festival, because it marks the end of winter and the start of spring, and every year it triggers a massive travel rush known as chūn yùn, as many Chinese people return home to spend time with their families. The 15-day celebrations close with the Chinese Lantern Festival to start the year with good fortune. In China, each year is named after one of 12 mythical animals from an ancient poem; 2024 is the Year of the Dragon, which last occurred in 2012. Is that the year you were born? Those born in the Year of the Dragon are said to be creative, curious and determined!



The dragon-shaped lanterns are ready to go!



INDONESIA

An all-new capital city

AUGUST: This summer, Nusantara will be officially declared as the new capital city of Indonesia, replacing Jakarta, which has been the country's capital since 1949. Nusantara is a brand-new city – building work began in 2022, and it isn't expected to be finished until 2045. The switch is part of President Joko Widodo's plan to share money around the country and reduce Jakarta's population and traffic jams – it's hoped 1.9 million people will move to Nusantara when it's finished. Indonesia will hold elections on Valentine's Day (14 February), but Mr Widodo says the project to build the city, which is expected to cost about £27.5 billion, "will continue to be safe" whether he remains president or not.



The new city under construction



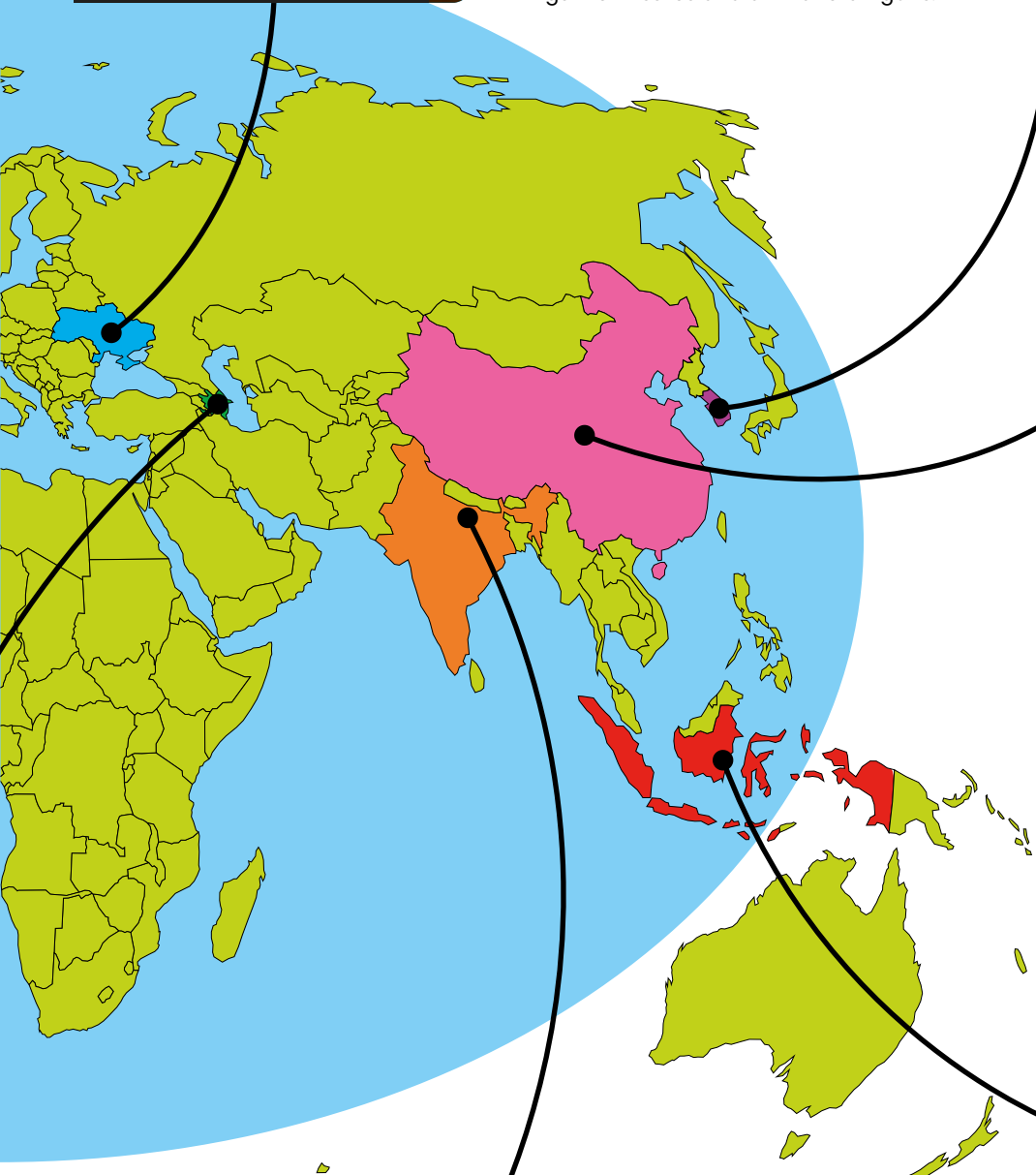
INDIA

Grand temple is blessed

JANUARY: A Hindu temple in India's northern city of Ayodhya is due to be consecrated on 22 January. That means it will officially be declared sacred. The Ram Mandir is being built on what was the site of a Muslim mosque called the Babri Masjid. It was demolished by Hindu mobs in 1992, sparking riots. Hindus and Muslims had contested the site for decades, as Hindus believe it is the birthplace of the god Rama – an incarnation of Vishnu. A top court granted the site to Hindus in 2019, and gave Muslims a different plot to construct a mosque.



Construction began in 2020





OUR TOP SHOWBIZ EVENTS OF 2024!

HOLD on to your hats, as this year is packed with exciting showbiz events from the worlds of TV, film and music!



DANCING ON ICE JANUARY

Our favourite skating show returns to dazzle us with more flips, twists and spins on the ice! This year, the line-up includes former boxer Ricky Hatton, West End star Amber Davies (pictured), reality TV star Miles Nazaire, Olympic athlete Greg Rutherford, actor Ryan Thomas and radio DJ Adele Roberts. Look out for famous ski jumper Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards, too!



MIGRATION FEBRUARY

A new funny, feathered family are set to delight you in this comedy movie! The Mallard family are stuck in a bit of a rut, but mum Pam is desperate to show her kids – teen son Dax and duckling daughter Gwen – the big wide world. Pam eventually persuades her husband Mack to embark on an exotic adventure, which sees them heading to New York City and a tropical Jamaica.



KUNG FU PANDA 4 MARCH

Our favourite panda is back in action! This time, Po is on a mission to find and train a new Dragon Warrior. But, the new baddie, Chameleon, will do anything to try to stop him. Jack Black is joined in the voice cast by legendary Oscar winner Viola Davis – expect some fiery scenes!



GHOSTBUSTERS: FROZEN EMPIRE

Who they gonna call? The Ghostbusters gang are ready to save New York from some seriously spooky goings-on! Do they have what it takes to stop the Death Chill? Paul Rudd and his co-stars sure think so, but we reckon we might be hiding behind some pillows or our hands while we watch this one! Fun fact: this year marks the 40th anniversary of the original *Ghostbusters* movie!



EUROVISION SONG CONTEST/ JUNIOR EUROVISION MAY/NOVEMBER

Eurovision is heading to Malmö in Sweden! This is the third time that the city will play host to the famous contest – it was also held there in 1992 and 2013. Sweden gets to host thanks to Loreen (above), who scooped the top spot in Liverpool in 2023. Years & Years singer Olly Alexander (above right) will be representing the UK this year. Meanwhile, the Junior Eurovision Song Contest will be held in France, after Zoé Clauzure won last year.



INSIDE OUT 2 JUNE

Our emotions are set to take centre stage once more as Disney Pixar's hotly anticipated *Inside Out 2* comes to cinemas! Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear and Disgust are given a shock when some new Emotions start arriving in Riley's mind! Riley, now a teenager, is experiencing some big changes with growing up. But, how will the gang react?



DESPICABLE ME 4 JULY

Fancy a summer of laughing out loud?! The Minions are sure to help you do that! They're back for the fourth film in the series, which is set to feature another epic adventure with their leader Gru. Lots of details are still being kept under wraps, but we can surely expect some more trouble to keep the Minions on their toes, right?



TAYLOR SWIFT: THE ERAS TOUR JUNE–AUGUST

The country queen is coming to the UK this summer with her Eras Tour, and fans are set to go wild! Taylor will be performing in Edinburgh, Liverpool, Cardiff and London, where she's expected to bring the house down with tracks including *Love Story*, *Shake It Off* and *Bad Blood*. She's being supported by rock band Paramore.



STRICTLY'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY SEPTEMBER

Put on the razzle dazzle, as *Strictly Come Dancing* is celebrating its 20th anniversary! It's rumoured that the BBC is going to host a royal spectacular at Buckingham Palace, with Queen Camilla already revealing that she's a big fan of the show!



THE HUNGER GAMES STAGE SHOW AUTUMN

The Hunger Games is heading to the London stage! Suzanne Collins' famous book, and the hugely successful film franchise, is being adapted for theatre audiences. The show will tell the story of Katniss Everdeen and the deadly contest that sees teenagers from poor districts battle it out to entertain the Capitol. We're still waiting for details on the cast and venue!



PADDINGTON IN PERU NOVEMBER

Our favourite bear is back for his third movie outing! Paddington's latest adventure will see him and the Brown family head back to Peru to visit Aunt Lucy at the Home for Retired Bears. But, the group ends up on an epic journey through the Amazon rainforest and up the mountain peaks of Peru. We're already getting our marmalade sandwiches ready!



ABOUT MY BOOK

by Matt Goodfellow,
author of *The Final Year*

MATT Goodfellow wanted to shine a little light on regular children in the north of England. So, he wrote this book from Nate's first-hand perspective – and in Nate's own accent and dialect, too! Here, Matt tells us all about his book, and why it's important.

My book, *The Final Year*, tells the story of Nathan 'Nate' Wilder, a boy moving from Year 5 into Year 6.

Nate is the eldest of three brothers who live with their mum in a chaotic but loving family. The boys all have different dads – none of whom are on the scene – and Mum has problems of her own, which means that Nate often finds himself looking after his brothers.

● Tough times for Nate

Across the story, and moving into Year 6, Nate has an awful lot of things to navigate, including being put in a different Year 6 class to PS (his best friend since nursery), the pressure of SATs, and a medical emergency for his youngest brother, Dylan.

Nate finds support and solace [comfort] throughout this journey from his new Year 6 teacher, Mr Joshua, as well as Caleb, who he comes closer to as Year 6 progresses. Nate struggles with anger issues, which he's been carrying a long time, but with Mr Joshua and Caleb's support, he begins to understand that he possesses a power with words and begins to use poems as a way of expressing himself.

● Finding his voice

I believe this is a story that needs to be told because in my ten years as a primary school teacher, I taught many Nates: children carrying a weight in their eyes whose stories can be easily overlooked. I wanted children going through similar circumstances to understand that they're not alone and hopefully see themselves reflected in a story whose ultimate message is one of hope.

I also wanted to authenticate the story [make it realistic] by allowing Nate to speak in his own accent and dialect in order to speak his own mind and express his own thoughts, feelings and ideas – well away from the standard spoken English that weighs heavy across the curriculum.

● Teachers are there to help

Mr Joshua is in his first year of teaching and my aim was to show just how much of an impact teachers can have on



the lives of the young people in their classrooms. Without Mr Joshua's care, I'm not sure how Nate would have fared on such a difficult journey.

As a former Year 6 teacher, I wanted to lay bare to the world just what a pressurised environment a Year 6 classroom can be.

The story is also a love letter to the genius *Skellig*, a book by an author called David Almond. Mr

Joshua reads the story to the class, and Nate begins to recognise aspects of himself within the story.

● The journey of life

I hope that children and teachers can find themselves within this story and that it opens up many classroom conversations about the journey of life – and that for all its peaks, troughs and difficulties, life is full of love, friendships, family and hope!

The Final Year by Matt Goodfellow, illustrated by Joe Todd-Stanton, is out now.



Your **accent** is about how you pronounce words. Your **dialect** is about which words you choose to use – people in different areas of the UK sometimes have entirely different words for the same thing!

Reader review

EL Norry writes children's books and is passionate about equality and diversity.

The book *Fablehouse* is a good and entertaining novel, highlighting the importance of working together, trusting one another and being a team.

It is a spellbinding read, full of magical and mythological people who are

brimming with excitement about bursting into the human world and wreaking havoc everywhere.

I recommend this book to all who love fantasy and adventure, as it keeps you on tenterhooks and you want to continue reading it to see what awaits the fate of Fablehouse and its people.

Review
by Caitlin
Claydon



Write us a book review!

WHETHER it's fiction, non-fiction, a comic book or an audiobook, we'd love to hear about it!

Send your review, along with your name, age and,

if you like, a picture of yourself (with your parents' permission) to bookreviews@firstnews.co.uk and we'll do our best to get it in an upcoming issue!

Is this the year to face your fear?



WE all feel afraid sometimes. A new author is on a mission to make us feel a little better about that – through a collection of spooky stories!

Zak Bellingham has just released the third of his debut series of books, *Be Afraid*. Each volume in the trilogy contains 14 original short stories that involve children overcoming their fears and anxieties.

Some are funny, some are creepy and some are downright strange... and when you discover how they came about, it's no wonder!

Zak says: "Some years ago, when my daughter was just seven, she had a fascination with horror stories. As we had no actual children's horror books in the house, I was forced to essentially make up stories on the spot, every evening – for years!

"I told her that I would one day pick out the best stories and create a book... eight years later, I finally found enough free time to achieve my goal."

With dreamy drawings by Zak's friend EJ Rowland to accompany the stories, and an overriding aim to help you work through whatever's troubling you, they might just make perfect bedtime stories for you, too.



SO, what did YOU do over the holidays?

A Year 2 pupil from Barnsley had a Christmas to remember – she became a published author! Esther Turner, aged just six, entered Wigfield Farm's 'Once Upon a Time at the Farm' short-story competition last summer, and won.

Her story, *The Smelly Adventures of Splat*, is about a guinea pig's quest to become the top animal at its farm. A local illustrator added pictures, and the book was sold at Wigfield Farm's shop.



NEW YEAR, NEW BOOKS!

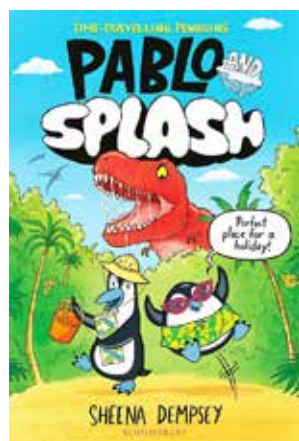
THE fireworks have finished popping, so now it's your turn – your turn to pop to your nearest bookshop or library, that is!

★THE YEAR AHEAD★

It could be that you're a big book fan, or perhaps reading a little more is one of your New Year's resolutions (and a very good resolution it is, too). Whatever the case, here's a sneak peek at some exciting titles coming out in 2024.

We can't wait to get our page-flicking fingers on them! There's a mix of fiction and factual, from young inventors to time-travelling penguins to wartime buddies on a mission. A world of reading adventures await this year!

What will you pick up first?



● **Pablo and Splash** by Sheena Dempsey

This full-colour graphic novel tells the wild tale of two penguin buddies on a time-travelling adventure.

Release date: 18 January



● **Superhero Animals** by Chris Packham

Nature-loving TV presenter Chris Packham shows us how animals save the world, every day.

Release date: 1 February



● **Hide and Seek: A Bletchley Park Mystery** by Rhian Tracey

Set in Wales during World War Two, can three friends hide a secret stash of priceless art from their enemies?

Release date: 29 February



● **The Secret of the Moonshard** by Struan Murray

Domino is an 11-year-old cursed with a strange allergy – if she goes anywhere near magic, it will kill her!

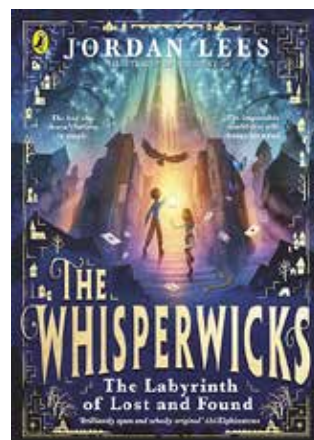
Release date: 7 March



● **Pirate Academy: New Kid on Deck** by Justin Somper

Danger awaits as a new student arrives at an elite school for pirates... and seriously rocks the boat!

Release date: 7 March



● **The Whisperwicks** by Jordan Lees

A boy who doubts magic is swept into an impossible world and soon finds himself on a dangerous quest.

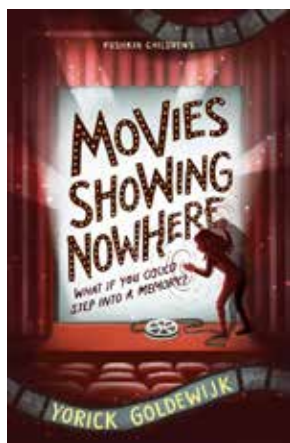
Release date: 28 March



● **Keedie** by Elle McNicoll

If you liked *A Kind of Spark* (or the BBC's TV adaptation), this prequel is about Addie's older sister, Keedie!

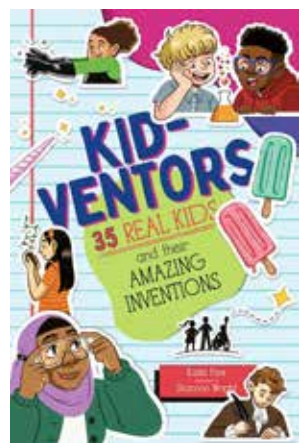
Release date: 4 April



● **Movies Showing Nowhere** by Yorick Goldewijk

Translated from Dutch, it's about a girl who stumbles into an abandoned cinema full of films of her memories!

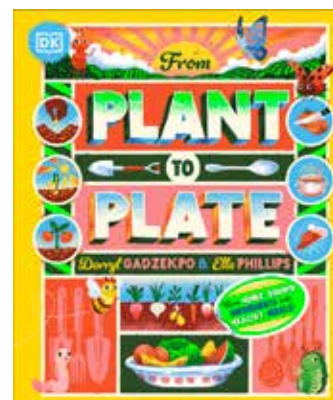
Release date: 4 April



● **Kid-ventors** by Kailei Pew, illustrated by Shannon Wright

An inspiring book about real-life children who have changed the world with the most amazing inventions.

Release date: 23 April



● **From Plant to Plate** by Darryl Gadzekpo and Ella Phillips

Take food tech home with this clever book that will show you how to grow your own food – and cook it!

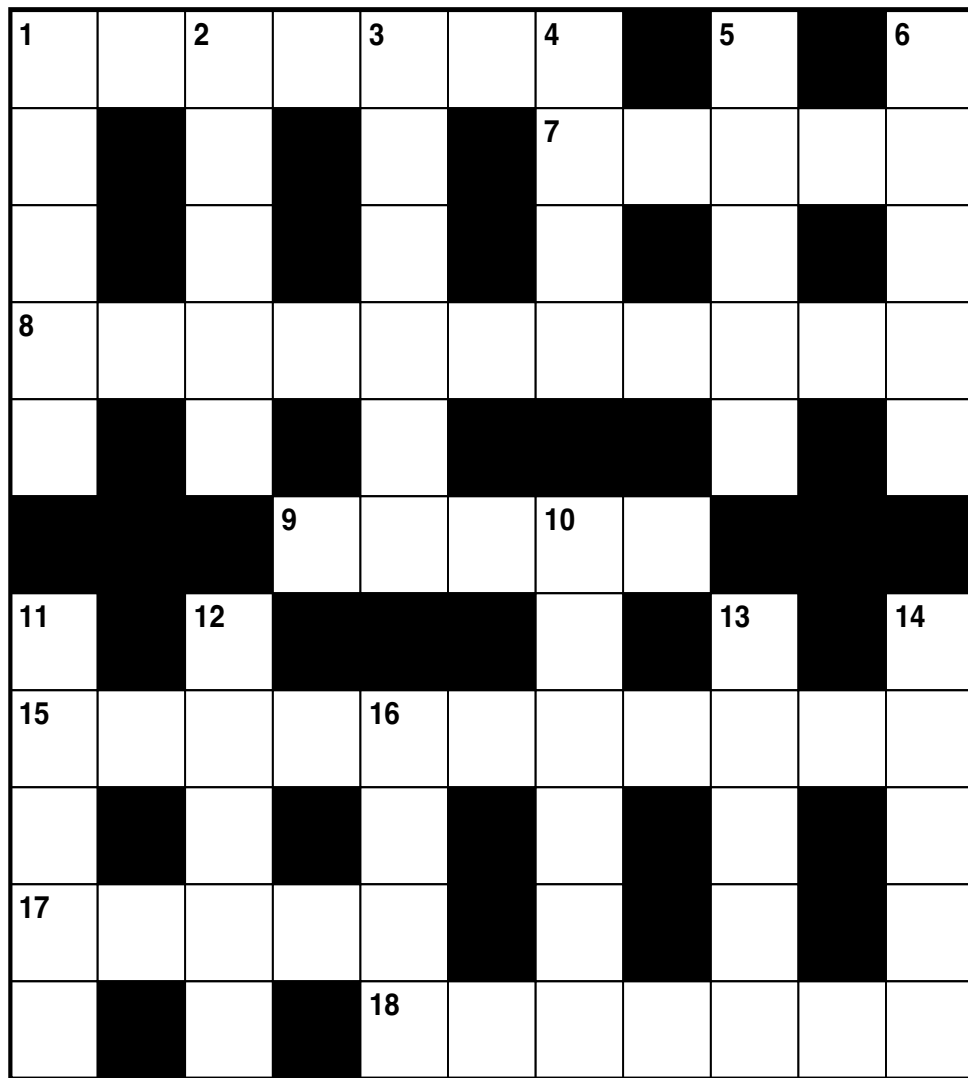
Release date: 2 May





CROSSWORD

CAN you complete our crossword puzzle using the clues below?



ACROSS

- 1 Reasons not to do something (7)
- 7 Let happen (5)
- 8 Country whose capital is Kabul (11)
- 9 Go to see (5)
- 15 These cause the ground to shake (11)
- 17 A large black and white mammal (5)
- 18 Sticky material put over a cut (7)

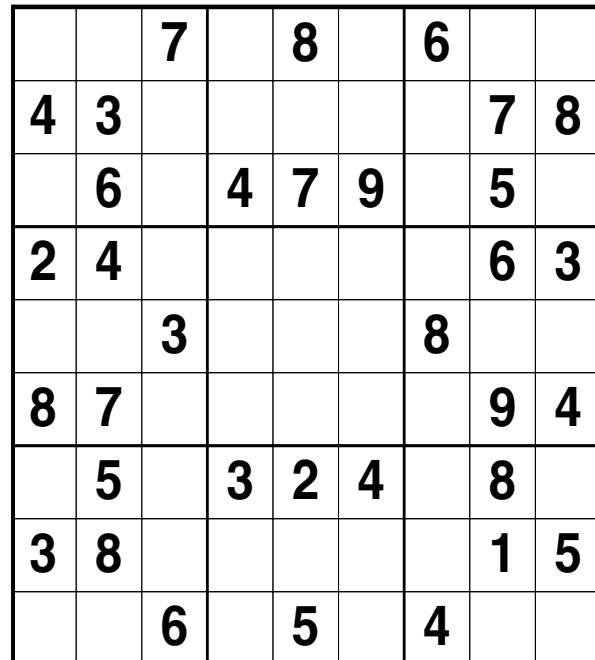
DOWN

- 1 A piece of writing (5)
- 2 Latin American dance (5)
- 3 Trip to observe animals in their natural habitat (6)
- 4 Indian dress (4)
- 5 What you eat food off (5)
- 6 Playground item that moves back and forth (5)
- 10 Large type of lizard (6)
- 11 Entice (5)
- 12 Opposite of back (5)
- 13 Clothing fastened around the waist (5)
- 14 Top film award (5)
- 16 Pile of things (4)



Sudoku

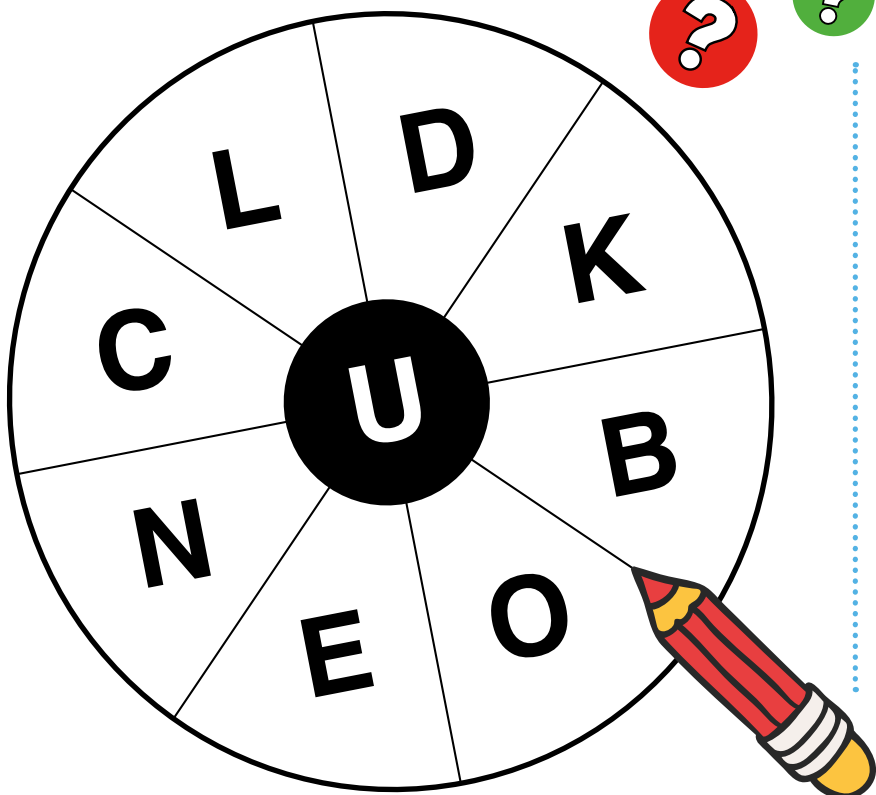
CAN you complete our sudoku puzzle, filling in the numbers one to nine?



COMPETITIONS: To enter, email us at win@firstnews.co.uk putting 'competition name' (e.g. Holiday), in the subject box. Please include your parent or guardian's name, address and phone number. *First News* competitions are only open to those aged 17 and under and residents of the UK & Republic of Ireland, except employees of *First News*, First Group Enterprises Ltd, Reach plc and any associated companies and their families. Winners will be selected at random from all those with the correct answer. No purchase necessary. *First News* will not enter into any correspondence. All winners will be notified accordingly. If you are a winner, your details will be securely passed on to the person who is providing the prize so they can post it out to you. If you are contacted but don't reply within 28 days, we may offer the prize to another entrant. No cash alternative for any prizes will be offered. The winner may be required to partake in media activity relating to the competition. Your personal data will be held for a maximum of 12 months after the competition and then destroyed. It will not be used for any other purpose unless you have given us permission. If you would like your data deleted before this, please do get in touch with us. You have the right to complain to the ICO if you believe there is a problem with the way your data has been handled.

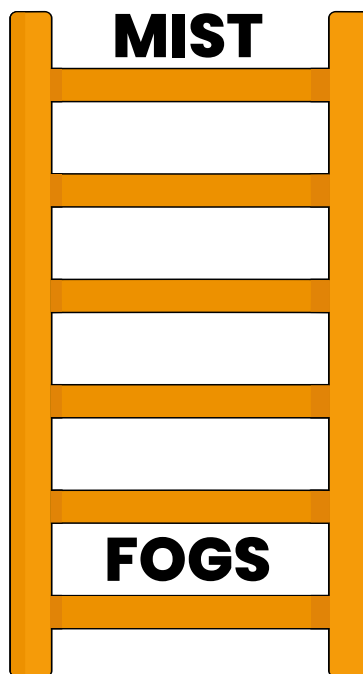
Word wheel

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



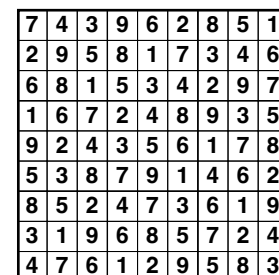
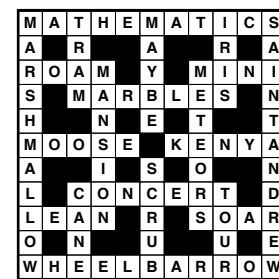
Word ladder

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



ISSUE 914 ANSWERS:

- Word wheel:** outnumber.
- Word ladder:** loud, lord, ford, form, firm, film.
- Spot the difference:** 1) Sunglasses on boy's head 2) Black belt 3) Boat in water 4) Watch has changed colour 5) Boy wearing bow tie.



Enjoying the puzzles? See the *First News* app for more fun, quizzes and games!



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

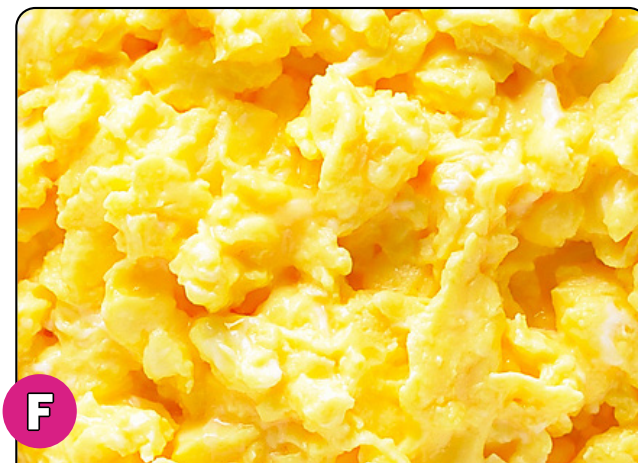
CAN you spot the five changes we've made to this picture from *The Masked Singer*? The new series is now showing every Saturday on ITV.



ITV/Bandicoot TV

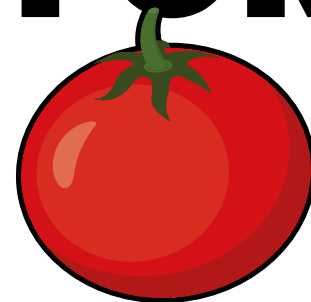
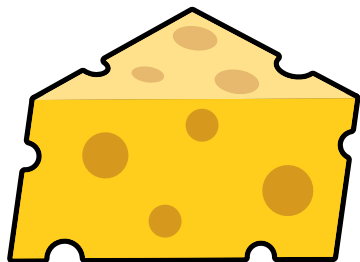
? ? WHAT ON EARTH? ? ?

CAN you identify these different types of foods?





CRACKING EVENTS FOR A CRAZY YEAR



NOTHING makes us smile more than a wonderfully wacky event!
Here are some of our favourites coming up in 2024.

Chasing cheese

IT might sound like cheesy good fun, but the Cooper's Hill cheese rolling event isn't for the faint-hearted!

The annual event is set to take place near Gloucester on 27 May, with hundreds of people ready to chase after a huge wheel-shaped cheese!

The cheese can roll down the hill at speeds of up to 70mph (112km/h), with some contestants even causing themselves injuries. Canadian Delaney Irving won the women's race last year, even though she was briefly knocked unconscious. Ouch!



Turning the town red



HAVE you always been told that it's better to eat your food than throw it? Well, that doesn't count for this festival!

Things get messy in the town of Buñol in Spain in August, when thousands of people take part in a world-famous food fight called La Tomatina.

The tomatoes arrive in the centre of the town on trucks and you get just one hour to throw as many as you possibly can at your friends and family. Then, the clean-up operation begins!

Bog snorkelling

GRAB your goggles and head down to the muddy bogs of Wales on 25 August!

Competitors from across the world will don their trunks or swimming costumes to swim through a peat bog for 60 yards (55m) and back again! The winner is the person who completes the course in the fastest time. Some even opt for wacky fancy dress (we love the toad hat below!)

The event in Llanwrtyd Wells usually raises lots of money for charity, too.



Baby jumping

DEFINITELY don't go trying this at home, folks!

El Salto del Colacho ('The Devil's Jump') is a baby jumping festival that takes place in Spain in June.

The unusual event sees a person dressed as the Devil jump over babies in the village of Castrillo de Murcia.

The tradition, which is said to rid the babies of sins, is part of a religious festival to mark the Catholic holiday of Corpus Christi. Thankfully no-one gets hurt!



Man v horse

FANCY running an epic 23-mile race... against a horse?!

This bizarre competition on 14 September pits runners against horses and their riders to see who can complete the course in Somerset in the fastest time. Remarkably, it's not always the horse that wins!



Written and illustrated by Paul Palmer





CAN YOUR SCHOOL SAVE THE PLANET?

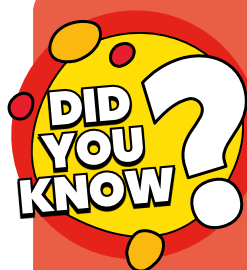
PUPILS AND TEACHERS JOIN FORCES ON CLIMATE ACTION



WHEN we're learning about our future, it can be worrying. We know we've harmed our environment, and we know we have to change. But it's also an opportunity! On our own it seems like there's not much we can do, but when we come together, as pupils, teachers and schools, we make a big difference. Let's kick the new year off in style!

What's the problem?

Our planet runs on energy from the sun. This gets absorbed by the land, oceans and plants, then radiates away into space. When energy coming into the planet is balanced with the energy going out, we're in a sustainable state. But actions such as burning fossil fuels and cutting down trees are increasing levels of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. When this gets too high, it



SCHOOLS play a vital role in the UK's carbon emission targets. In fact, schools and universities release 36% of UK public building emissions. A single school or academy chain has huge impact by simply using less electricity or making buildings more energy efficient.



acts like a blanket around the Earth, trapping energy from escaping and raising the temperature of our planet. Higher temperatures do all sorts of things, such as cause heatwaves, floods, storms and unusual weather. They even affect the amount of food we grow and the spread of pests and diseases. We're in a race to cut carbon to stop the planet warming by more than 1.5 degrees – the point at which scientists know it will be hard to reverse. So what can we do?

Why schools?

Schools are trailblazers for community change. With schoolchildren in 42% of all UK homes, our classrooms inspire progress right across communities. Change in



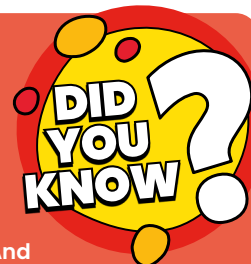
schools already helps whole families see the benefits of thinking and acting more sustainably. Low-carbon schools inspire children to cut the carbon dioxide coming from our homes, streets and workplaces.

Let's Go Zero!

More than 2,600 schools have joined Let's Go Zero – the campaign to help schools reach zero carbon by 2030. We try to persuade the Government to make policies, and money available, for schools to be more sustainable. We've created a network of Climate Action Advisors to help schools make zero-carbon plans. And we're holding a National Schools Climate Action Month in the summer to show schools the first steps towards sustainability.

By getting your school to sign up, you can show the Government that education is ready to go green. Ask your head teacher to join Let's Go Zero today to see how your school can make our planet better for us all! Visit letsgozero.org for more information.

SUSTAINABILITY is an exciting subject, because it is in every subject! It reaches from geography and science to history, design and English. We simply can't be sustainable unless we look at the whole joined-up picture! And this goes beyond the curriculum. How do we travel to school? What's in our school meals? How does our school get its energy?





WHAT YOU SAID IN 2023

A round-up of our best polls in 2023 and how you voted in them.

Lots of you don't read for pleasure!

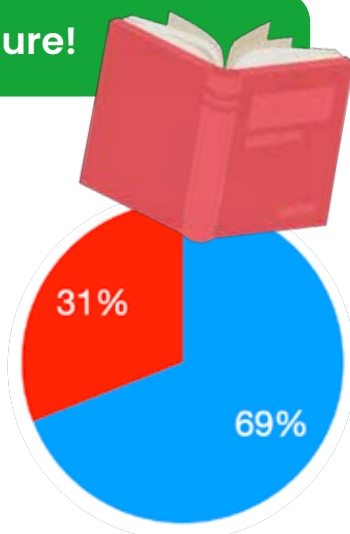
We asked 1,890 of you...

Do you read for pleasure?

The results

591 (31%) of you said **YES**

1,299 (69%) of you said **NO**



Many of you have been taken in by a fake video or news report. That's why it's so important to use trusted news sources.

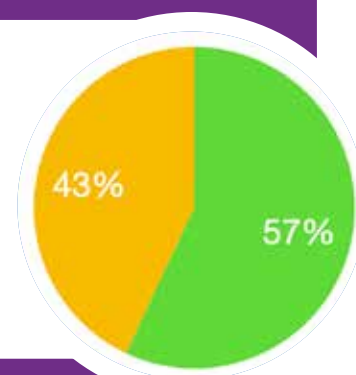
We asked 2,304 of you...

Have you been taken in by a fake video or news report?

The results

981 (43%) of you said **YES**

1,323 (57%) of you said **NO**



Almost two-thirds of you don't want to give up using straws.

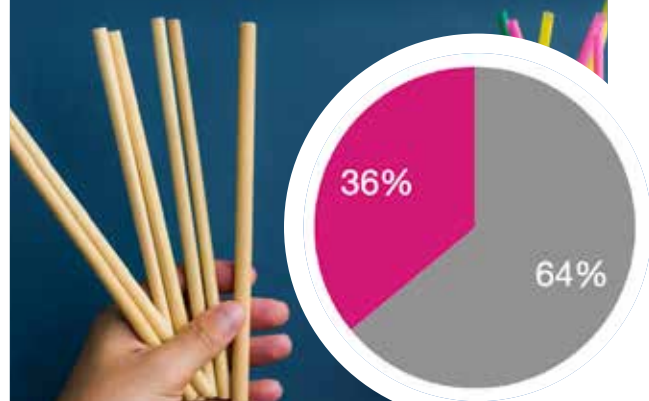
We asked 1,573 of you...

Should we give up using straws completely?

The results

567 (36%) of you said **YES**

1,006 (64%) of you said **NO**



You said that the adults are better at recycling in your house. Only just though, so time to step up your game in 2024.

We asked 2,027 of you...

Are the adults or children better at recycling in your house?

The results

1,090 (54%) of you said **ADULTS**

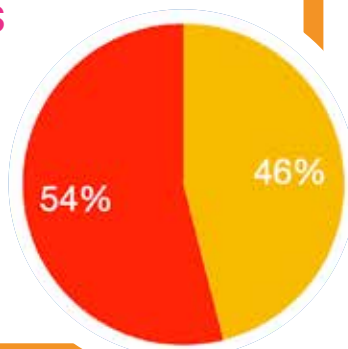
ARE BETTER

1,342

(46%) of you said

CHILDREN

ARE BETTER



Just under half of you think that school isn't preparing you for jobs.

We asked 2,287 of you...

Do you feel school is preparing you for jobs?

The results

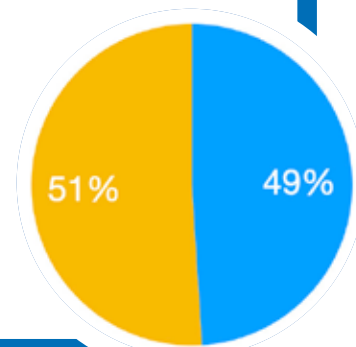
1,161 (51%)

of you said **YES**

1,126 (49%)

of you said **NO**

NO



Most of you think money should be spent on other important things, rather than space missions, but there are quite a few on the way in 2024!

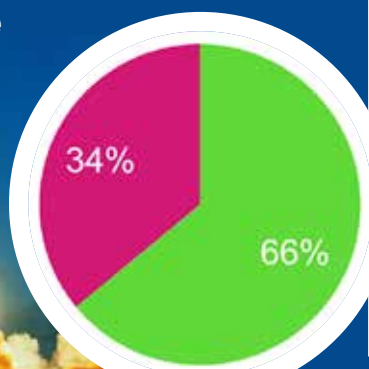
We asked 661 of you...

Should the money spent on space travel be used for something more important?

The results

439 (66%) of you said **YES**

222 (34%) of you said **NO**



Most of you don't want to eat lab-grown meat.

We asked 935 of you...

Would you be happy to eat lab-grown meat?

The results

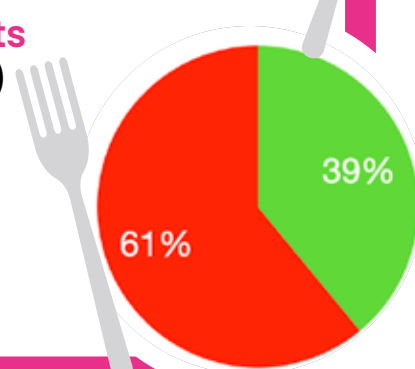
366 (39%)

of you said **YES**

569 (61%)

of you said **NO**

NO





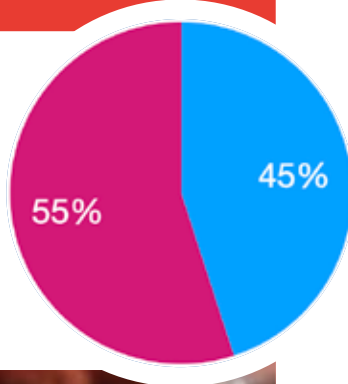
Most of you wouldn't like to swap your teachers for robots, which I'm sure they'll be glad to hear!

We asked 2,405 of you...

Would you like to be taught by robots, instead of teachers?

The results

1,063 (45%) of you said **YES**
1,342 (55%) of you said **NO**



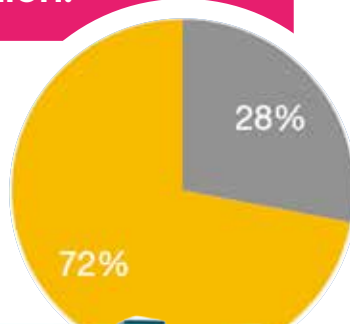
You must love ice cream because lots of you said you wouldn't get rid of ice cream vans to help air pollution.

We asked 1,254 of you...

Should ice cream vans be banned to help reduce air pollution?

The results

356 (28%) of you said **YES**
898 (72%) of you said **NO**



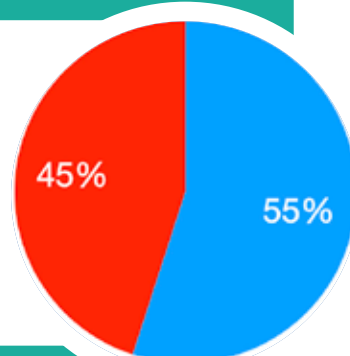
More than half of you think we should stop calling teachers 'Miss' and 'Sir'.

We asked 2,005 of you...

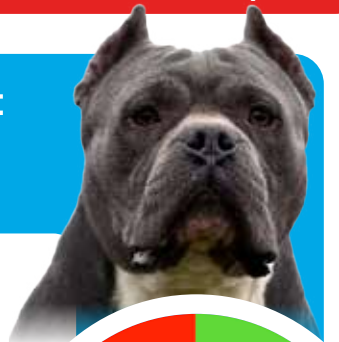
Should we stop calling teachers 'Miss' and 'Sir'?

The results

1,108 (55%) of you said **YES**
897 (45%) of you said **NO**



The majority of you thought that American XL bullies should not be banned.

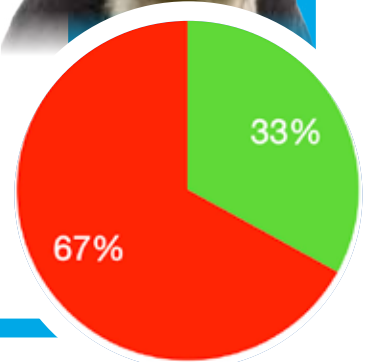


We asked 3,079 of you...

Do you think American XL bully dogs should be banned?

The results

1,025 (33%) of you said **YES**
2,054 (67%) of you said **NO**



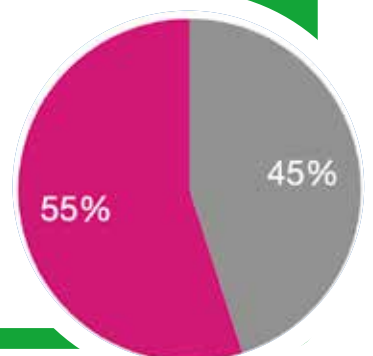
You don't think people should fly less. Perhaps we just need to find more environmentally friendly ways of flying!

We asked 1,772 of you...

Do you think everyone should fly less?

The results

745 (45%) of you said **YES**
927 (55%) of you said **NO**



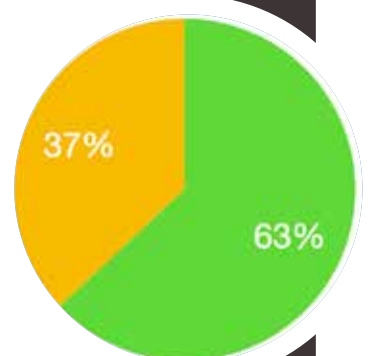
A big number of you said you would be happy to receive secondhand gifts at Christmas.

We asked 2,423 of you...

Would you be happy to get secondhand gifts this Christmas?

The results

1,630 (63%) of you said **YES**
793 (37%) of you said **NO**



HAVE YOUR SAY IN 2024 – Vote in our polls at first.news/polls

FirstNews Quiz

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

1 Who has become the first woman to have amassed \$100 billion (£78.5 billion)?

2 Eve Muirhead has competed in world championships for curling and what other activity?



3 Who will represent the UK at the Eurovision Song Contest?

4 Where is COP29 taking place?

5 The Design Museum in London is hosting an exhibition to celebrate which famous doll?

6 This year an extra day is added to our calendars. What is that date?



7 In what month does the Great British Beach Clean happen?



8 What animal is celebrated in the Chinese zodiac this year?

9 What is the name of the 16-year-old taking the darts world by storm?



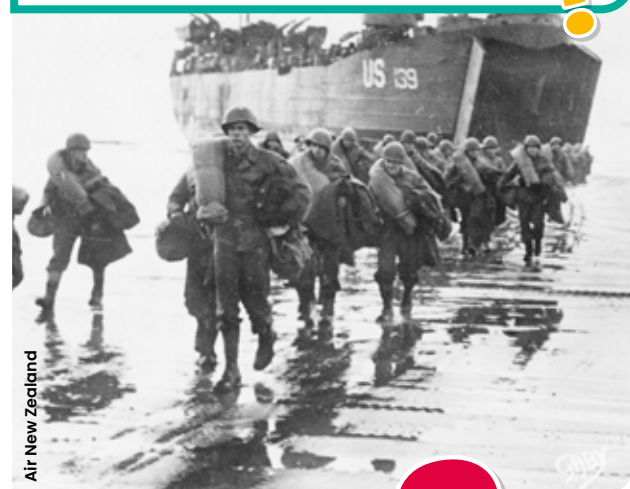
10 How many new types of furry hedgehog have been discovered in Southeast Asia?



11 What space mission is scheduled to launch in November?



12 2024 marks how many years since the D-Day landings?



13 Who wrote the book, *The Final Year*?

14 What does the 'Devil' jump over during the El Salto del Colacho festival in Spain?

15 Where are the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games taking place?

Answers:
1 Françoise Bettencourt Meyers 2 Bagpipes
3 Olly Alexander 4 Azerbaijan 5 Barbie
6 29 February 7 September 8 Dragon 9 Luke Littler
10 Five 11 Artemis II 12 80 13 Matt Goodfellow
14 Babies 15 Paris



COOKING UP SUCCESS

EVE Muirhead is a former Olympic, world and European curling champion, who retired in 2022. Her next challenge is being the 'chef de mission' (person in charge) for the Team GB squad that's going to the Winter Youth Olympic Games in Gangwon, South Korea, this month.

We talked to her about her career, why mental health is so important for athletes and why switching off from social media can be a good thing for them too.

Why did you want to take on this massive job?

I think it's very hard just to completely step away from something that's been more or less my life for the last 15–20 years. This is a great opportunity to be involved in sport and a great opportunity to help inspire these young athletes to do great things.

What advice will you have for them?

The Youth Olympic Games is the highest level of multi-sport event for young athletes, so it's a massive opportunity in front of them. They should enjoy it, but it also gives them an idea of where they are compared to other athletes from around the world.

Eve on the way to winning Olympic gold



In all of your Olympics appearances, is there anything that you wish you'd done, or hadn't done?

If I go back to my first couple of Games, like Vancouver for instance, I probably wish I'd trained a little bit harder or realised what it took to be an Olympic champion. I was still quite young and my team were quite a bit older than me and I went there and I just loved every minute of it. I enjoyed it, I took it all in, but part of me is like: 'Did I take it seriously enough as an athlete?'

Is it hard to avoid getting distracted at such a huge event like the Olympics, when there's so much going on?

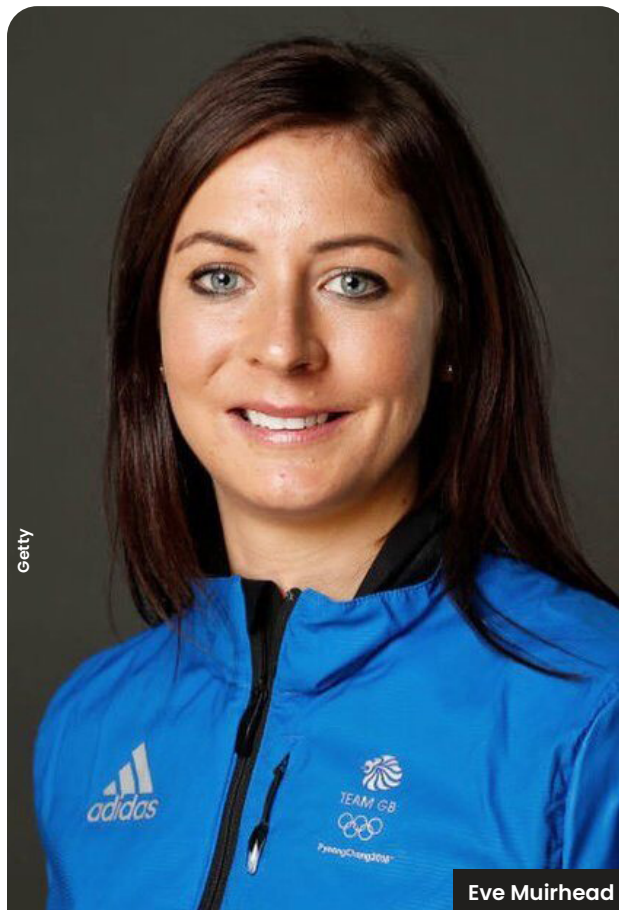
It is difficult, but I think it's one part of it that you need to be able to sit down and speak about before you go. Probably the best bit of advice that I got was to completely switch off from social media. At the Beijing Winter Olympics in 2022 I had a different phone – I think I only had seven contacts on it.

You've talked about how important the mental health of athletes is, but is that the kind of thing that you wouldn't have even talked about when you were starting out?

Yeah, I guess years ago it wasn't really spoken about very much. But I think it is important that people know, and that athletes know, that it is okay to say you're not okay, and it is okay to speak up.

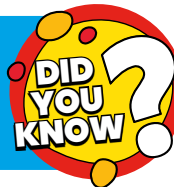
It was in the news a lot when Simone Biles pulled out of a lot of events at the last Olympics. What was your reaction to seeing the best gymnast in the world struggling with her mental health?

It was really sad to see that. But it's great to see that she has come out the other side, or I hope she's in the process of coming out the other side. Of course it's very sad to see, but it's also quite rewarding to see her talking about it. So



Eve Muirhead

THE multi-talented Eve has also competed in world championships at something completely different to curling – the bagpipes!



many athletes don't speak up, so it is nice to see such a high-profile athlete speak about her mental health and her problems. Of course, you wouldn't wish it on anybody, but it's something that I think she should be very proud of.

There are only a couple of curling rinks in England, so do you think it'd be good for Team GB if the UK had more?

I'd love to have more rinks around the country, even in Scotland. It's sad to see energy prices are now forcing ice rinks to close their doors, so it's important that we try and keep as many open as possible, if not open new ones. But it's not only curling, it's sport in general, as it's proven to help your mental health by getting outside, getting active.

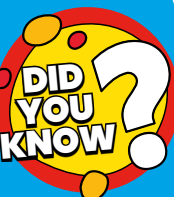
Do you have any regrets from your career?

It has been a career of ups and downs, and at times you maybe play an event and you fail, and you have a bit of regret when you come away feeling awful. But then you look back and you think those are the events that actually made you stronger and made you a better athlete. So... not really, no, I don't think I do.

The Winter Youth Olympic Games takes place from 19 January – 1 February. For livestreams, replays and highlights, see olympics.com/en/gangwon-2024.

The British Olympic Association has teamed up with the charity YoungMinds to support the mental health of athletes and fans – see www.youngminds.org.uk.

EVE'S most embarrassing moment came at the Vancouver Winter Olympics in 2010. "I was young back then and I got a bit frustrated," she told us. "So I hit my brush against my leg and it broke in front of the 6,000 fans. It was very embarrassing to go back and get a new brush."



Olympic challenge

CHRISTOPHE Dubi is the Olympic Games Executive Director at the International Olympic Committee (IOC), looking after the Olympics and the Youth Olympics.

We asked him how the IOC is trying to keep the Olympics relevant for younger sports fans.



How do you think the IOC is doing in keeping the younger generation interested in the Olympics?

Keeping young people interested in the Olympics is really important to us, and we know that the way young people participate in sport changes. That's why we're adding new and exciting sports like skateboarding and surfing, and using cool websites and apps to reach people.

The Youth Olympic Games Buenos Aires 2018 were a really important step for us. The breaking (breakdancing's official Olympic name) competition attracted large crowds. Over 50,000 people watched the five days of breaking activities, and more than 2.5 million watched breaking content on social media.



Breaking at the 2018 Youth Olympic Games

This progress continued for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, where we added skateboarding, sport climbing, surfing, BMX freestyle and 3x3 basketball. All were a big hit with young audiences.

We have also just announced the Olympic Esports Games after holding an Olympic Esports Week in 2023. But when looking at virtual sport, it is important to us that sports and games align with our Olympic Values. This means inclusion, gender balance and no violence, because that would be against the IOC's mission, which is to unite the world in peaceful competition.

What impact do you think the new Olympic sports such as skateboarding have had?

The new Olympic sports are really cool, and it's really exciting to see youth getting into them. We had medallists in Tokyo who were as young as 12, 13 and 14. These new sports are action-packed, fun, and young people can try them out in many towns and cities across the world.

We saw the impact already at Tokyo 2020, which reached more than three billion people on TV. The amount of TV coverage was 33% more compared to Rio 2016, and digital content went up by 34%. We think the exciting new sports played a major role in making them hugely popular on social and digital platforms.

While they are great, keep an eye out for some exciting new additions in the future, like cricket, lacrosse and flag-football, baseball, softball and squash, which will be at Los Angeles 2028.

See the daily stories in the *First News* app today (Friday 5 January) to read more from Christophe about the IOC's future plans and making the Games more sustainable.



THE SPORTING CALENDAR!

ON your marks and get set for another busy year of sporting drama!

Two huge events are set to dominate the back pages this summer, while the likes of Chelsea's women's football team, Formula One star Max Verstappen and tennis legend Novak Djokovic will hope 2024 is another dominant year for them.

★ **THE YEAR AHEAD** ★

2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games

THEY call it the Greatest Show on Earth – and this year, the Olympic Games are back for the 33rd time.

Stars like Katarina Johnson-Thompson (heptathlon), Sky Brown (skateboarding) and Adam Peaty (swimming) are all likely to represent Great Britain in Paris as Team GB look to better the 64 medals they won at the last Games in 2020.

There will be 32 different sports taking place, with breakdancing making its debut at the Olympic Games.

Then, it's the turn of the Paralympic Games, with 22 sports from archery to wheelchair tennis on show.

Dates: Olympic Games, 26 July – 11 August;
Paralympic Games, 28 August – 8 September



Katarina Johnson-Thompson



Bukayo Saka (left) and Harry Kane

UEFA Euro 2024

YOU can't beat a month-long festival of football!

England's men's team should have little to fear as they try once again for their first trophy in 58 years – not with the world's best young player (officially!), Jude Bellingham, in midfield and goal machine Harry Kane leading the line.

The host nation, Germany, are in patchy form, while Man City star Erling Haaland won't even be there as his Norway side failed to qualify – but the likes of France, Spain and the Netherlands always present a challenge.

Scotland are there too, while Wales could yet qualify for the tournament through the play-offs in March.

Dates: 14 June – 14 July

ICC Men's T20 World Cup

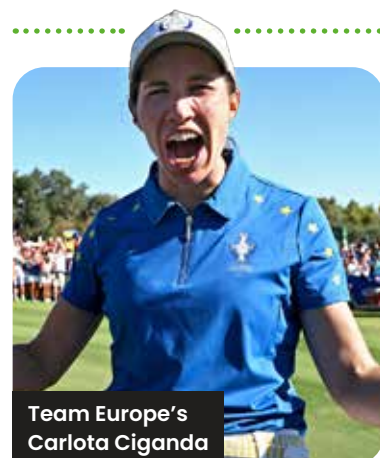
REIGNING champions England will be hoping to take the trophy away again after this year's tournament.

They're one of 20 national teams who'll be slogging out the sixes in search of the trophy. The US is hosting matches for the very first time, together with the West Indies.

Dates: 4–30 June



England star Jos Buttler



Team Europe's Carlota Ciganda

Solheim Cup

LAST year was a great one for European golf!

Team Europe's men beat Team USA in the Ryder Cup, while the women got to keep the Solheim Cup after a tie against their American rivals.

The women go again in September. Last year's event was in Spain, but this time it's on Team USA's turf, in Virginia.

Dates: 13–15 September



Carlos Alcaraz

What else?

In **tennis**, the first-time winners from last year, Carlos Alcaraz and Markéta Vondroušová, will target a second Wimbledon title on the spin when the championships start on 1 July.

In **rugby**, Ireland are the team to beat when the men's Six Nations starts on 2 February. The women's tournament starts on 23 March, with England hoping to retain their title.

Also next month, Las Vegas hosts **American football**'s glitzy Super Bowl for the first time.

The 2024 **F1** season begins in Bahrain on 2 March. In **football**, Wembley Stadium is the venue for the Champions League final on 1 June, before the gem of the **cycling** calendar, the Tour de France, starts on 29 June.

Braydon's on the ball

THE FYI presenter takes us through his pick of the week's top footie action.



Liverpool remain top, underdogs Villa are still thriving, Manchester City are looking to find form, Arsenal need to get back to winning ways and Spurs are still in the mix... it's all to play for in 2024!

However, it's not all about the Premier League, and we've got some mouthwatering FA Cup ties to come this week. The big teams join the competition in the third round and there are lots of good games, but I think two stand out – Arsenal v Liverpool and Sunderland v Newcastle. Both have the potential to be thrillers.

Arsenal will have high hopes to go far in the cup, but it will be interesting to see what team manager Mikel Arteta decides on. Liverpool are strong this season, but what will they do in terms of their starting line-up? I think both sides will either go for it, or put out weaker teams and give their youngsters a chance.

Sunderland are playing against rivals Newcastle for the first time since 2016!



Sunderland v Newcastle will be a great game to watch and I'm expecting the atmosphere to be amazing as it's a derby we don't often see, with the teams in different leagues. On paper, it should be a comfortable win for Newcastle, but in an FA Cup derby, anything can happen.

Sticking with cups, the Champions League returns next month. I believe Man City, the current holders, will go far, along with usual contenders Bayern Munich and Real Madrid – but there's usually an underdog story as the tournament progresses. Do you think we'll have a shock this year? Let me know in the poll!

Who'll win the Champions League?

Let us know at first.news/polls



Will Man City defend their European crown in 2024?

Issue 916 | £2.85



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