

NEWS KIDS CAN **TRUST**

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR*



First News

Issue 970 £2.95 17 - 23 January 2025

2.6M READERS*



WE LOST EVERYTHING!



THREE SISTERS IN LA SHARE THEIR STORY! 11

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* Newspaper Awards 2023, Niche market Newspaper of the Year. First News readership is 2,626,625. Source: Opinion Matters 2020. First News is the widest-read of all children's publications audited in the UK. First News supports children's charities.

MEET THE TEAM



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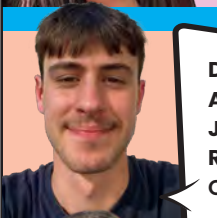
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HAVE YOU HEARD?

Snappy stories to get you talking!



UK FEELS THE CHILL

The UK has had its coldest January night in 15 years, with temperatures plummeting to an icy -18.9°C in Altnaharra in the Scottish Highlands. Schools across the country closed due to snow and freezing conditions, particularly in Highland regions, where 50 shut their doors. While some areas like Northern Ireland and southwest England stayed warmer at $5-10^{\circ}\text{C}$, places like Cumbria saw temperatures drop to -11.2°C . Forecasters predict milder conditions ahead, though temperatures will remain below average for the season. So do wrap up...



FORMER US PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER HONOURED

All five living former US presidents gathered to pay their respects at former President Jimmy Carter's funeral. President Joe Biden led tributes to Carter, who died in December, aged 100. Carter, who served as the 39th president from 1977 to 1981, is remembered for his dedication to public service both during and after his presidency. The ceremony brought together current and former presidents including Trump, Obama, Bush and Clinton.

THEY SAID THAT!

"I accept this Fellowship in honour of everyone living with dwarfism or any form of difference, reminding us that our uniqueness can be our greatest asset."

– Warwick Davis



WARWICK DAVIS GETS TOP FILM AWARD

Actor Warwick Davis is set to receive the highest honour in British film, the BAFTA Fellowship, for his work in movies and helping others. The star, famous for his roles in *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter*, will get the award at a ceremony in London next month. Davis started acting when he was just 11 years old and, besides acting, he runs a talent agency helping other actors shorter than five-foot tall (1.52m) to find work. He also has a charity to support people who have dwarfism.

META DITCHES FACT CHECKING



Meta boss Mark Zuckerberg has announced that Facebook, Instagram and Threads are getting rid of fact-checkers in the US. Fact-checkers are independent, unbiased teams that keep a check on fake news and misinformation. Zuckerberg says, instead, users in the US will be able to tag corrections and notes onto any controversial posts, as they do on Elon Musk's social network, X. In a video message, Zuckerberg admitted: "It means we're going to catch less bad stuff, but we'll also reduce the number of innocent people's posts and accounts that we accidentally take down." The head of the independent body that reviews Facebook and Instagram told the BBC that she's "very concerned" about "huge problems" that the decision may cause, such as its impact on groups like the LGBT+ community. Look out for a *First News* special report on this story in next week's paper.

VEG SHORTAGE

Shoppers may find it harder to buy broccoli and cauliflower this spring due to unusually warm weather affecting harvest times. The generally mild autumn and winter caused these vegetables to come up earlier than expected, leading to possible shortages during spring. Farmers across the UK and Europe are struggling with this impact of climate change, which has brought heavy rains and warmer temperatures. Any shortages will make longer the so-called “hungry gap”, which runs from April to early June, when few crops grown in the UK are ready to eat. Experts say people can switch to alternatives like spring greens and cabbages, which have been growing well despite the difficult conditions.



PRIVATE TEACHERS THREATEN STRIKE OVER PAY

Private school teachers have said they might go on strike because they're getting lower pay rises than their state school colleagues. United Learning, which runs 90 academies and 14 independent schools, has offered private teachers a 2-3% pay increase, while state school teachers get 6.5%. United Learning says it is unable to pay more because of new taxes on private school fees.



PENGUIN PROTECTION ALERT

With Penguin Awareness Day coming up on 20 January, scientists warn that more than half of penguin species face extinction threats. These remarkable birds, found only in the southern hemisphere, are battling challenges from climate change to ocean pollution. Experts say simple actions can make a difference, like choosing sustainable seafood and reducing plastic waste. They say that these birds are vital indicators of ocean health and must be protected.



WHALE MAKES A SPLASH IN UK WATERS

A humpback whale has been spotted swimming off the Kent coast, sparking excitement for local wildlife experts. The sighting was reported to Kent Wildlife Trust's dolphin tracking programme by a wildlife watcher near Deal. This rare visit comes as other parts of Britain, including near Sussex and Cornwall, have reported similar whale sightings. Experts use these sightings to understand sea life better and to protect it. The whale's appearance also highlights growing concerns about planned underwater cable work in the area.

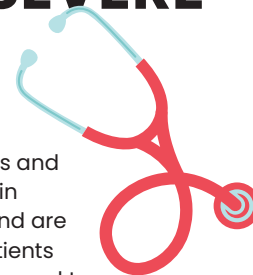


HARRY AND MEGHAN HELP FIRE VICTIMS

Prince Harry and Meghan have been helping people affected by dangerous wildfires in Los Angeles, USA, which have destroyed thousands of homes. The couple visited Pasadena to support those who lost their homes, and the emergency workers fighting the fires. They helped to serve food at a community centre. The fires have burned through 155km² (60 square miles) of land and led to the death of at least 24 people. The couple, who live nearby, have also asked people to donate clothes and toys to help families who lost everything in the disaster.

NHS UNDER SEVERE PRESSURE

NHS emergency departments are under severe strain similar to Covid pandemic levels, with rising flu cases and cold weather causing major delays in patient care. Hospitals across England are dealing with more than 5,400 flu patients daily – that's triple the number compared to last year. Some patients report waiting times of more than 30 hours in corridors, while ambulances face long delays. Healthcare experts warn the situation may worsen before improving, with some describing conditions as “brutal” and “appalling.”



BRAINS 'CLEAN' DURING SLEEP



Scientists have discovered how brains clean themselves while we sleep. Research on mice shows that, during deep sleep, blood vessels in the brain regularly squeeze and relax, helping to pump fluid around. Now, they want to find out if the same thing happens in human brains. The findings were reported in the journal *Cell*.



THOUSANDS TURN TO CHILDLINE OVER LONELINESS

Nearly 5,000 children and teenagers contacted Childline last year seeking help for feelings of loneliness and isolation. The free 24-hour service, run by children's charity NSPCC, reported that many young people are struggling with overwhelming feelings of being alone, especially during school holidays and winter months. The charity has launched Building Connections, a text service where young people can chat with trained helpers for up to 11 weeks to learn ways to cope with loneliness.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR DAY

20 JANUARY

King was a rights campaigner who championed equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of their colour.

RED SQUIREL APPRECIATION DAY

21 JANUARY

Red squirrels need your help! Raise awareness of the endangered species to protect them.



CALENDAR DATES



Go to the **First News** app for daily news posted throughout the week.



LOS ANGELES ON FIRE



A fire rips through a street, and firefighters inspect the damage

LOS Angeles (LA) is still battling what experts predict will be the most expensive wildfires in US history.

As *First News* went to press, 24 people had died in the fires, while 23 others were missing.

A further 90,000 had been told to evacuate their homes, while others had returned to find their houses, cars and streets reduced to ashes.

It's thought that the fires have caused more than \$200 billion (£164 billion) of damage. A number of famous faces have lost their homes too, including British acting legend Anthony Hopkins, *Chicken Run* star Mel Gibson and Tina Knowles – the

mother of pop superstar Beyoncé.

Beyoncé has donated \$2.5 million (£2 million) to a relief fund to help the city to recover. Other celebrities have also pitched in, while Prince Harry and his wife Megan have met with victims.

2

The two largest LA fires are so big, their smoke can be seen from space

How did the fires start?

We don't yet know for sure, but they began on Tuesday 7 January, when 100mph winds swept across LA. Climate change is a factor. However, residents have also sued energy firm Southern California Edison, claiming its electrical equipment caused a blaze called the Eaton fire.

Questions to answer

Firefighters have fought bravely to try to contain the city's ten separate blazes. Crews from Mexico and Canada, as well as inmates from Californian prisons, have arrived to help, too.

However, firefighters say that some fire hydrants had no water, which affected their ability to tackle the fires. There is also anger over whether cuts to the fire department's budget affected the response.

● See p11 for the impact of the fires on LA's children.

Starmer launches AI boost for Britain

PRIME Minister Keir Starmer has revealed big plans to use artificial intelligence (AI) to boost public services across the UK.

Mr Starmer said that AI has "vast potential", and that the government has a duty to use it to "transform the lives" of working people.

The government's AI advisor, Matt Clifford, has come up with 50 ways that the technology can be used to fix and improve our public services.

They include things like:

- Building a new UK supercomputer to boost the nation's computing power
- Teachers using AI to help them with lesson-planning and record-keeping
- AI using road cameras to detect potholes on roads that need filling in

Dame Wendy Hall, a top computer scientist, said the plans were "ambitious" but "necessary" to help the UK to keep up with the ways other countries use AI.



The prime minister

UK keeps an eye on meddling Musk

THE UK Government is keeping a check on social media posts by Elon Musk in case they risk national security.

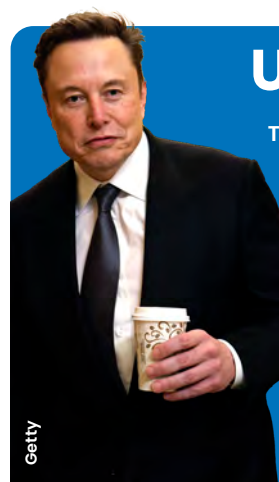
It comes after he criticised Labour minister Jess Phillips and called her names, which led to her receiving violent threats.

The world's richest man has more than 212 million followers on his social media platform, X. He has become extremely outspoken on politics and has attacked the UK's Labour

government many times.

The *Financial Times* has even reported that Musk has thought about how he can unsettle the UK enough to remove the prime minister, Keir Starmer, from power before the next general election. Mr Starmer has warned of the danger of people like Musk "spreading lies and misinformation".

French President Emmanuel Macron and Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre have spoken out against him meddling in the politics of other European countries, too.



Getty

EDITOR'S COMMENT



Nicky Cox MBE

STUDIES show that false social media posts spread up to 20 times faster than true ones.

So, Mark Zuckerberg's announcement that his Meta company plans to axe its US fact checkers is really worrying (p2).

It's a guarantee that Meta's platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, will have even more fake news and misinformation.

For that reason, *First News* has never been more important. We are somewhere you can come to – the paper or the app – for trusted news and information that you can rely on.

We want to help you make sense of the world and your place in it.



Using cash can help adults to budget their spending

Cash

YOU can pay for things with a card, a phone and even a watch nowadays, but lots of people still prefer the old-fashioned way. For a third year in a row, the use of notes and coins increased in the UK in 2024. Nationwide has reported that 33 million withdrawals were made from its cash machines last year – up from 25 million in 2021.



Oliver Bäte, head of Allianz SE

Germans

GERMANY is world-class when it comes to football and sausages, but here's a title it didn't want – its grown-ups have been branded the "world champions of sick leave" by the head of the country's biggest health insurance provider, Allianz SE. Germans take twice as many sick days as the average person in the European Union.

CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEEKLY QUIZ!

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



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



THE MISSING LYNX

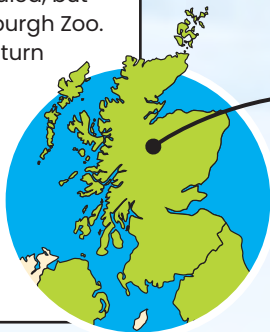
WILDLIFE experts have criticised troublemakers who set four lynxes loose in Scotland last week.

The lynx is a big cat that was native to Britain until it became extinct in the wild here at least 500 years ago. They're not thought to be dangerous to humans, although police do warn people to stay back and let experts handle them.

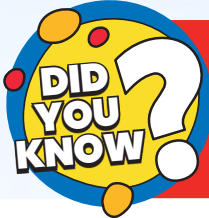
The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) used humane traps to catch two lynxes near Kingussie, in the Highlands – only for two more to be spotted the next day. One of them died, but the three survivors were taken to Edinburgh Zoo.

Some people want to see the lynx return to the wild in Scotland, but animal groups say that illegal releases aren't the right way to do it.

Dr Helen Senn, from the RZSS, said that this incident shows "the folly [foolishness] of abandoning these amazing animals in the wild, with no... real concern for their welfare."



Kingussie



IN a poll, we asked *First News* readers if they thought that the lynx should be re-introduced to the wild in the UK – and eight out of ten of you said yes!

All pics: Getty

South Korea's president blocks doors with buses



Buses block the gates to Mr Yoon's home

THE president of South Korea has parked buses, blocking the entrance to his home, to stop police from arresting him.

President Yoon Suk Yeol is in deep trouble. In December, he declared martial law in South Korea. That's when the military are given extra powers and put in charge of running a country, instead of the elected government.

Most people think he did this because other politicians wanted to remove him from his job. There were protests, and the government voted to impeach him, which means forcing him to step down.

Courts have ordered Mr Yoon's arrest but, so far, he's ignored this. Instead, his bodyguards have barricaded the gates to his home using buses and barbed wire.

Police have spoken to 1,000 investigators to try to cook up a plan to find a way in. However, one senior person has warned that arresting Yoon by force is risky, as it could trigger an "enormous backlash from enraged citizens", and possibly lead to civil war.

This week, it was announced that Yoon's salary will increase by 3% to £147,000 per year, despite the chaos going on around him.

Scientists say man-made substances put kids at risk

RESEARCHERS have warned that synthetic substances could be contributing to children's illnesses.

Synthetic substances are man-made materials created with chemicals. They include plastics, nylon, polystyrene and some types of rubber.

The Consortium for Children's Environmental Health reports that, today, the production of these substances is 50 times higher than it was in 1950.

During the same time, childhood cancer

rates have risen by over a third, and cases of conditions like asthma and diabetes have risen, too.

The production of synthetic substances continues to rise, yet very few are tested for their toxic effect on children.

However, several tragic cases have shown that children are "far more vulnerable to toxic chemicals than adults".

Researchers say that changes in law and the chemical industry should be made to protect children's health.



BITCOIN BLUNDER

Rubbish news for man who threw his fortune in the bin

● What's the story here, then?

James Howells, from Newport in Wales, has been refused permission to search the local tip for a computer hard drive that he accidentally threw away in 2013.

● What's so special about this hard drive?

It stored his wallet of bitcoins (a type of digital currency), which he'd forgotten he had. Bitcoins weren't worth much when he bought 8,000 of them in 2009 – but their value has rocketed. Today, they'd be worth £598 million.

● Ouch. Why can't he get it back?

It would be hard to find, for starters. The tip contains 1.4 million tonnes of waste, and Mr Howells has been told that, by now, the hard drive would lie 1.2-1.5m (4-5ft) deep. The council says the search would break environmental permits, too. Mr Howells has offered to split the money or share it with the community. He even tried to take the council to court, but a judge said he can't do that, as he has "no realistic" chance of winning.

● What has he said?

Mr Howells says he's "very upset" not to be allowed to argue his case, and is frustrated that he's "been trying to engage with Newport City Council in every way which is humanly possible for the past 12 years" and got nowhere. Worse still, he says that this time next year, his bitcoins could be worth £1 billion.



IF you thought it was cold in the UK last week... well, yes, you were right. But it was nowhere near as cold as it was in Finland!

In Lapland, the country's northern-most region, temperatures plummeted to a spine-chilling, nose-nipping, brain-freezing **-38.9°C**. That's Finland's coldest recorded temperature this winter. Brrr!



Wiltshire, UK



Ian Turner

LONGLEAT'S rare Amur tiger cubs were among the animals enjoying a snow day at the famous safari park. Parts of the UK saw frost and snow last week as temperatures dropped.

Woburn, UK



Woburn Safari Park



CUT it out, you two! North American black bears enjoy some playful sparring on a frozen lake at Woburn Safari Park. Watch a video of their antics on our app!

Ciudad Juárez, Mexico



Getty

STATUES of horses are covered in ice as the city felt one of its coldest days of the season.

Luxor, Egypt



Getty

RUNNERS compete during the 32nd Egyptian Marathon, while hot-air balloons fill the skies behind them. The marathon route passes through ancient sites like the Colossi of Memnon, Medinet Habu, the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens.



Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



THE Chinese community holds a fish parade ahead of Lunar New Year on 29 January. Traditional fish lanterns are used to celebrate the year ahead and wish luck and good fortune to families.

London, UK



CIRQUE du Soleil returns to the Royal Albert Hall in London with a show called *Corteo*, until 2 March. The show features amazing acrobatics, aerial stunts and illusions.

London, UK



OWNERS of the Sinclair C5 gather at Alexandra Palace for the 40th anniversary of the vehicle's launch. The electric tricycle was seen by some as the future of transport when it was released in 1985, but it proved to be a flop.

Qinhuangdao, China



A TOTAL of 279 competitors from six cities take part in an ice dragon boat race.



EDINBURGH

No to drones

Edinburgh will stick with fireworks instead of drones for Hogmanay this year, officials say. Around 45,000 people were due to go to the city's New Year's Eve event a few weeks ago, but it was cancelled because of high winds. Some leaders have called for drones to be used instead, as these are used in many other countries for big celebrations. However, officials have ruled this out due to high costs and the risks of flying hundreds of drones over a busy city centre. The unused fireworks from the cancelled display are being saved for this year.



It's the third time since 2003 that bad weather saw Hogmanay cancelled

Getty



It's a raid!

Chris Gledhill

YORK

Vikings return

Europe's largest Viking festival returns next month for its 40th year! From 17-23 February, the Jorvik Viking Festival's family-friendly events will fill the cobbled streets of York. The festival features a mix of free and paid-for events. One of the highlights looks set to be the Midgard Marquee at the end of Parliament Street, where young warriors can learn new skills safely like axe throwing. Keep an eye out for the March to Coppergate – a parade of more than 200 Viking warriors through the city streets. The fierce-but-friendly event ends as any Viking disagreement should, with a battle! Find out more at jorvikvikingfestival.co.uk.

WREXHAM

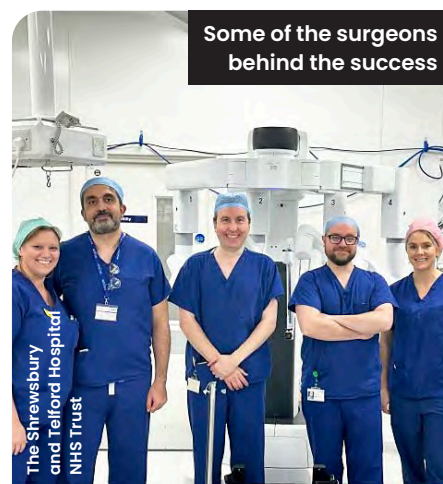
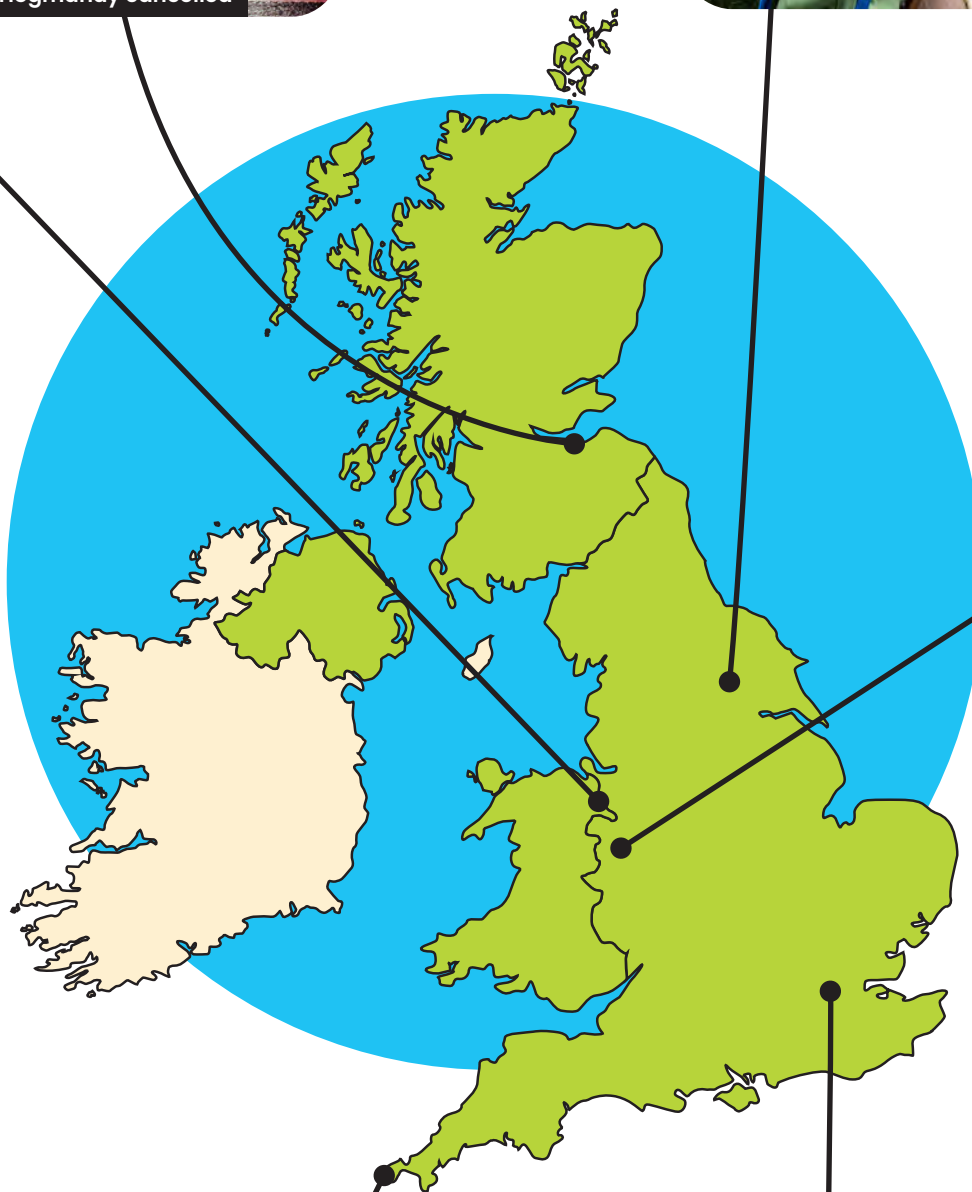
Goals on tour

Wales will build up to their first ever major women's football tournament appearance by playing matches around the country. Fixtures in the top tier of the Nations League will take place in the coming months, with Wales having been drawn against Italy, Sweden and Denmark. The cities to host the country's heroes are Wrexham, Swansea and Cardiff. Fans will hope to give them a big send-off ahead of the history-making Euro 2025 finals in Switzerland this summer, which run from 2-27 July. Wales reached the tournament after a dramatic two-legged victory over the Republic of Ireland.



Wrexham will host Wales against Sweden on Tuesday 25 February

Getty



Some of the surgeons behind the success

SHREWSBURY

Robotic recoveries

Hospital patients are recovering from diseases quicker, thanks to robotic-assisted surgery. The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust (SaTH) has been using the tech, called da Vinci Xi, since June 2023. It helps to perform major operations with more accuracy. More than 200 patients have received the robotic surgery so far, which has helped to reduce hospital waiting times. The system also offers 3D views of the body, making surgery a lot easier for doctors. Dr John Jones, Executive Medical Director at SaTH, said: "It's great to see robotic-assisted surgery making such a positive difference."

The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust

LAND'S END

Charity challenge

A man is taking on a mega mission to raise money for his local special educational needs (SEN) charity. Perry Scopes is walking 315 miles (507km), from Grays in Essex to Land's End in Cornwall. He's raising money for the Friends of Treetops School, a charity that supports the growth of four to 19-year-olds who have SEN. He's aiming to walk ten hours a day during the challenge and has already smashed his target of £1,000, reaching £14,000 when *First News* went to press! He's even pushing a shopping trolley round with him, which he's named Bruce!



Instagram/peliscapes

Perry set off on 3 January



istock

The vibrant streets of the UK capital

LONDON

World's top spot

London has been named the world's most popular destination for 2025. The UK capital was ranked on factors such as food and art. It was selected by travel guidance platform TripAdvisor, for the 25th anniversary edition of its Travellers' Choice Awards. Other top cities to make the list were the French capital of Paris, New York in the USA and Italy's capital, Rome. It's set to be a big year for Rome as it celebrates its Jubilee. Taking place once every 25 years, millions of people arrive in Rome and Vatican City for a religious celebration.



LASERS REVEAL ANCIENT TATTOOS

The tattoos on a hand (right) and forearm of two of the mummies



SCIENTISTS have used lasers to reveal previously hidden details of tattoos on 1,200-year-old mummies from Peru.

A report in *PNAS* describes how the researchers used a technique called laser-stimulated fluorescence (LSF) on more than 100 mummies from Peru's Chancay culture. The Chancay lived in what is now the central coast of Peru, from around 900–1533 ACE.

Tattoos naturally fade and spread as people get older, but the mummification process also makes them become less clear. The LSF technique helps to show the original tattoo lines, and the scientists found some incredibly precise artwork on a few of the mummies.

A standard modern tattoo needle has a point that's 0.35mm wide, but some of the ancient tattoos were made with a tool between 0.1–0.2mm across. The scientists suggest that it could have been a sharpened bone or cactus needle.

The report says that this level of detail is greater than anything previously seen in Peru from this time.

HUMANS have been tattooing themselves for more than 5,000 years. The oldest known tattoos are the ones found on a mummy known as Ötzi, who was discovered in the Alps on the border between Austria and Italy. He is thought to have been killed by an arrow around 5,300 years ago, before the cold and ice naturally mummified his body.



A model of what Ötzi would have looked like



Getty

Michael Pittman and Thomas G. Kaye

World's darkest skies in danger

ASTRONOMERS across the world are worried that a proposal for a chemical plant and power station in Chile will spoil the planet's clearest view of the stars.

Chile's Atacama Desert is host to lots of telescopes, as it has the darkest and clearest skies in the world.

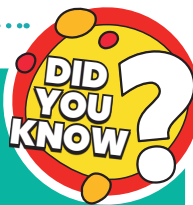
Experts at the Paranal Observatory say that the site proposed by US company AES will be just 5–11km away from its telescopes. It will be built by AES Andes and tech company Samsung's construction division.

The Paranal site was built by the member countries of the European Southern Observatory (ESO). It has cost billions of pounds, but has led to major scientific breakthroughs.

A benefit to humanity

ESO Director General Xavier Barcons said that light pollution from the new site and dust from construction pose a "critical risk to the most pristine [pure] night skies on the planet".

THERE are lots of Dark Sky Parks in the UK, especially in Scotland. These are places where you can see many more stars than if you were in a town or city. If you want to find your nearest one, go to tinyurl.com/darkskylocator.



The new site would include a port, solar and wind power, and plants to produce ammonia and hydrogen. It would also be absolutely massive – around 3,000 hectares, which is three times the size of Richmond Park, the largest park in London.

The ESO site in Chile "benefits all humanity," said the ESO's Itziar de Gregorio. "It is crucial to consider alternative locations for this megaproject that do not endanger one of the world's most important astronomical treasures."

AES told us that it was sticking to all guidelines and laws, and "supporting local economic development while maintaining the highest environmental and safety standards".

The company added that the project will use the "highest standards in lighting in its design, complying with the Ministry of the Environment's new regulation requirements, which aims to prevent light pollution, protecting the astronomical quality of the night skies, the health of people and biodiversity."

This report is from the Science Museum in London

SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP

YOU might be surprised to see this box of shiny objects in the Mathematics gallery of the Science Museum.

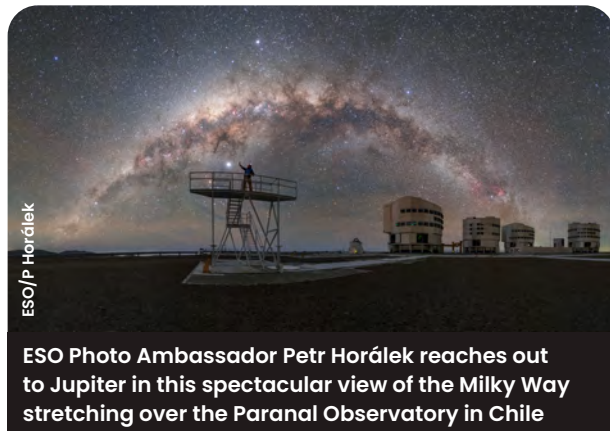
While it might look like a set of precious jewels, these finely cut shapes aren't meant to be worn, they were used to teach geometry in the 19th century. Geometry is a part of mathematics that focuses on shapes, angles and dimensions.

This set includes 33 geometric shapes made from glass. You might recognise some of them, such as a cube or a sphere, from shapes you've studied at school. The number on each shape and the little book that came with it helped students identify each of them, from the recognisable pyramid to the slightly less common hexecontahedron, a figure with 60 sides!



Science Museum Group

It looks like jewellery, but it isn't!



ESO/P. Horálek

ESO Photo Ambassador Petr Horálek reaches out to Jupiter in this spectacular view of the Milky Way stretching over the Paranal Observatory in Chile



BUMBLEBEES BUILDING NESTS EARLY



BUMBLEBEES have been building nests this winter instead of hibernating, say conservationists.

Experts from the charity Buglife spotted worker bumblebees nest-building during the mild temperatures over the Christmas period, particularly

in parts of Scotland.

However, this unusual behaviour puts the bee colonies at serious risk.

Bees struggle to find enough food in the winter as there are fewer flowers around for them to collect pollen and nectar from, and sudden cold snaps

could destroy entire nests.

The charity's Paul Hetherington said: "The fact that there are active workers means not only have the queens awakened from hibernation but they have gone to the extent of starting new nests."

Calls for an end to whale shows

ANIMAL experts are calling for an end to shows where whales and dolphins perform unnatural tricks for tourists.

Wildlife charity Born Free warns that these intelligent sea creatures suffer greatly in small tanks, which are a very different environment to their natural ocean homes.

It says there are more than 3,600 whales, dolphins and porpoises in captivity. The charity wants travel companies to stop selling tickets to these shows and for tourists to avoid them.

Born Free says the animals are forced to do tricks, and are sometimes drugged to control behaviour, shortening their lives.

The charity successfully helped close all dolphin shows in the UK in 1991, and is now campaigning for a 'tank-free' future for all marine animals across the globe.



Stop feeding red kites, says charity

AN Oxfordshire wildlife charity is urging people to stop feeding red kites, after reports of the birds swooping down on people's food and pets.

Wild About Wallingford's campaign aims to protect both humans and the birds of prey, which have made an incredible comeback from near extinction. From just five pairs in the 1980s, there are now about 10,000 in south central England!

Mike Acreman from the charity said there had been "a change in the behaviour" of some of the red kites, which now associated people with food.

The birds – which have a two-metre wingspan – have been snatching sandwiches, disrupting barbecues, frightening children and even causing problems for pet owners.



ANEESHWAR'S ANIMAL OF THE WEEK

MULTI-WORLD RECORD HOLDER!

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

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

CLOWN KNIFEFISH



HABITAT:

Also known as the clown featherback, these fish live in tropical lakes and freshwater.

FUN FACT:

They are one of the many fish to use electricity to navigate and communicate. However, the voltage isn't strong enough to kill their prey.

SPECIAL SUPERPOWER:

Clown knife fish can swim backwards as well as forwards!

CONSERVATION STATUS:

The International Union for Conservation of Nature says that they're of least concern.



Aneeshwar's clown knife fish art

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. You can view the gallery by asking a responsible adult to scan this QR code.





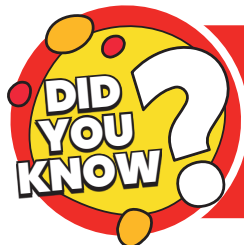
WE LOST EVERYTHING

CHILDREN SPEAK OUT ABOUT LA WILDFIRES

CHILDREN affected by the destructive wildfires that have been sweeping through Los Angeles have been telling their stories to our partner Sky TV show, *FYI*.

Scan the QR code on this page to see them talk about their experiences.

Neighbourhoods have been destroyed across Los Angeles from the coast to the hills. At least 12,000 buildings have burned to the ground, including homes, businesses and schools.



THE Los Angeles wildfires have burned through an area of land bigger than Paris, the capital of France.



THE LOVING FAMILY

THERE are five children in the Loving family. Their house on Monument St in the Pacific Palisades was completely destroyed by fire – nothing remains. We hear from three of the sisters.

SASHA

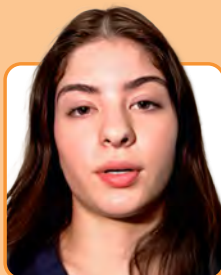
"We lost our house and everything in it. It's burned to the ground. We haven't been able to see it in person so the emotions haven't really set in that it's real.

"I am not super emotional right now because I feel like I need to see the house to actually believe that it's all gone. I am just so sad that everything from my childhood is gone. Everything that my parents have been saving for me is gone. Family heirlooms and, not even materialistic stuff, but sentimental pieces I'm sad about because it's just so hard to believe that there's nothing left.

"Everybody's been affected. Not just our neighbours have lost their houses, but so many of our close family friends have lost their houses. I know so many celebrities have lost their houses too. Our schools have burned down.

"I'm very grateful to all of our first responders and firefighters and everybody who has come to help. I feel quite angry on the mismanagement of this whole situation and how there's no water in the fire hydrants. So, as much as the firefighters want to help, there's nothing that they can do.

"There's been dry brush for 30 to 40 years that hasn't been cleared out where, so easily, the whole hill just



ignites and is on fire and in flames. There could have been so many ways to avoid this situation because I feel, in a community like this, a fire or a catastrophe shouldn't have to be this extreme and this horrific because so many people's lives are destroyed."

ALANA

"We had to evacuate our house because the smoke filled the house and then my house burned down. We have no clothes, we have no shoes, we have no toys and no stuff for our dogs.

"I feel sad because our house burned down and I don't have any of my childhood memories. And I also feel happy because I have our dogs with us and my family's here and we are all safe.

"The fires started on a hill close to my school and we all had to evacuate and leave early from school because of the fire."



CASSIA

"I feel sad because a lot of important stuff that I really liked is gone, and I can't take it back. The fire burned down my friends', my teachers', my neighbours' and my dance teachers' houses.

"If you are ever in a dangerous situation like we were, just stay calm, don't worry, and evacuate as quickly as you can."



THE CHURCH FAMILY



The children's grandfather, originally from West Ruislip in the UK, moved to the US in 1985. He worked hard to build up enough money to purchase his plumbing business, Palisades Plumbing, in 2007. It has been completely destroyed in the wildfires, as you can see in the below before-and-after photos. The family is devastated and is trying to fundraise some of the money needed to rebuild the business.

BEFORE



AFTER



Scan this QR code to watch the *FYI* film about children affected by the wildfires in LA.





CROC SKULL SMUGGLER CAUGHT

A CANADIAN traveller was arrested at Delhi airport in India after security found a baby crocodile skull hidden in his luggage.

The man, who was trying to fly back to Canada, claimed he bought the strange souvenir in Thailand, and that he hadn't hunted or killed it.

The 777 gram skull was wrapped in cloth and discovered during a security check.

Wildlife experts confirmed that it belonged to a protected species of crocodile.

Last year, a Canadian woman was caught trying to take home Indian animal horns as a souvenir.

SEARCH FOR MINI LEGO MASTER



YOUNG LEGO enthusiasts have the chance to become a Mini Master Model Builder in a worldwide competition launched by LEGOLAND Discovery Centres.

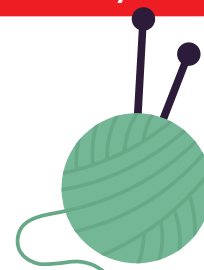
Entrants can showcase their brick-building skills at LEGOLAND Discovery Centres in Birmingham and Manchester on all weekends until 2 February.

The competition is free to enter and open to all young builders under the age of 18.

The lucky winner will see their creation displayed at the famous LEGO House in Denmark, receive £100 to spend in the LEGOLAND store, and get a family annual pass. They'll also compete against other mini masters from around the world.

To enter, just visit either centre during competition weekends and let your imagination run wild!

Woolly record!



A GROUP of creative crafters in St Albans have knitted their way into the history books with a festive world record.

Over the holidays, the St Albans Postboxes team decorated 102 postboxes with colourful Christmas-themed toppers, earning them a Guinness World Record for the largest collection of textile postbox decorations in one location.

The woolly works of art, displayed throughout December across the city and nearby villages, helped raise over £30,000 for community charities.

Team leader Clare Suttie expressed the group's excitement at achieving the world record title, saying they were "thrilled".

JOKE OF THE WEEK

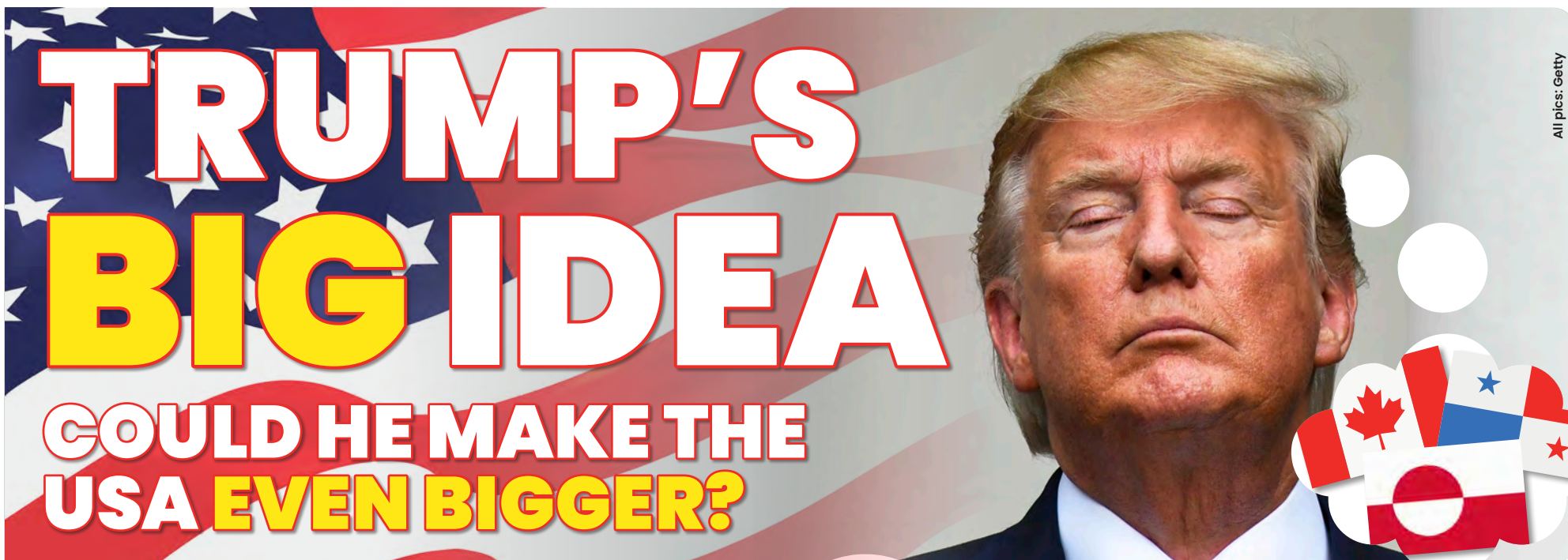
haha ha

What's a crocodile's favourite card game?
Snap!

Paper Boy!

Written and illustrated by Paul Palmer





All pics: Getty

TRUMP'S BIG IDEA

COULD HE MAKE THE USA EVEN BIGGER?

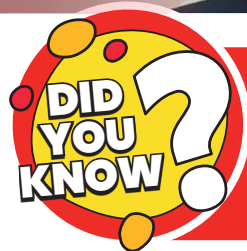
THE red carpet will be rolled out for Donald Trump in Washington, DC on Monday (20 January) as he returns to the White House as president of the USA.

The 78-year-old has spoken about lots of plans for his second spell in office. The bottom line is that he thinks he can

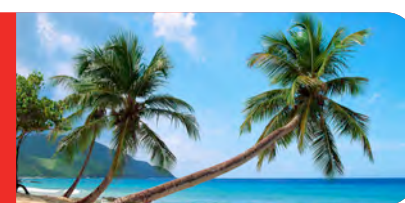
make the world's most powerful country even bigger and better – and it's that 'bigger' part that's making the headlines!

He's keen on expanding the USA's territory by taking control of the Panama Canal, Greenland and even Canada.

Is he serious? *First News* investigates...



THE USA last expanded in 1917, when it paid Denmark \$25 million (just over £5 million at the time) for the Virgin Islands, in the Caribbean.



PANAMA CANAL



Four out of every ten US cargo ships pass through the Panama Canal

A shortcut for ships that runs through Panama, connecting the Pacific Ocean with the Caribbean Sea.

● **What has Donald Trump said?**

"The Panama Canal is vital to our country... we gave the canal to Panama. They've abused that gift."

● **Why might he want it?**

The USA built the canal, and used to run it until it handed control over to Panama in 1999. Trump says that this was a big mistake, and that US ships are charged more than other countries' ships to use it. He thinks that China has too much power over the canal, and claimed that it's being run by Chinese soldiers. That isn't true, but a Chinese firm does run ports at either end of the canal.

Controlling the canal would give the USA more power over other countries. Trump would also like to re-name the Gulf of Mexico, calling it the Gulf of America.

● **Could it really happen?**

Panama says it hasn't received any offer from the USA for the canal, and its president, José Raúl Mulino, has insisted that his country will keep "every square metre" of it. However, Trump has hinted that he's prepared to try to take it by force.



"The only hands operating the canal are Panamanian – and that's how it's going to stay."

– Javier Martínez-Acha, Panamanian Foreign Minister

GREENLAND



Trump's son, Donald Jr, visited Greenland last week and told locals: "We're going to treat you well."

The world's largest island governs itself, but has been part of Denmark for 600 years.

● **What has Donald Trump said?**

"People really don't even know that Denmark has any legal right to Greenland. If they do, they should give it up because we need it for national security."

● **Why might he want it?**

Greenland sits in a great spot between the USA, Europe and Russia, and Trump thinks it could be useful for tracking Russian and Chinese ships. There is already a large US military base in Greenland.

The island is also seeing an increase in shipping and trade, and there are valuable deposits of rare minerals, oil and gas there, too.

● **Could it really happen?**

The USA has been keen on Greenland for over 100 years, and Trump hasn't ruled out using the USA's money to raise fees on American goods if Denmark rejects his offer to buy the island.

Aaja Chemnitz, a politician from Greenland, says Trump's idea is "disrespectful". Germany and France have warned Trump about his conduct, too.



"Greenland is for the Greenlandic people. They are a very proud people... Greenland is not for sale."

– Mette Frederiksen, Prime Minister of Denmark

CANADA



The USA invaded Canada in 1812, but it was defended by the British

The second-largest country in the world borders the USA and is home to more than 40 million people.

● **What has Donald Trump said?**

"Canada and the United States – that would really be something. You get rid of that artificially drawn line [the border]... look at what that looks like."

● **Why might he want it?**

The USA is made up of 50 states. The most recent to join were Alaska and Hawaii, in 1959. However, Trump thinks Canada should become the 51st state.

He says that the USA spends "billions a year" to help and protect Canada, stating: "We've been good neighbours, but we can't do it forever, it's a tremendous amount of money." He says that Canada needs the USA more than the USA needs it.

● **Could it really happen?**

Trump wouldn't invade Canada by military force, but as with Greenland, he's ready to put financial pressure on Canada to get his way. Experts warn that it would be a big political risk. Canadians would get to vote in US elections, and could vote against Trump's Republican Party in the future.



"There isn't a snowball's chance in hell that Canada would become part of the United States."

– Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

IRELAND

Dogs sniff to save sheep buried in snow

Heavy snowfall across the Galtee Mountains near Tipperary last week led to one farming family's flock of sheep getting trapped for five days. The animals were buried 4.5m (15ft) under the freshly-fallen heap, and were so well-hidden that the Cunningham family needed their four dogs, Sue, Sally, Hemp and Ted, to sniff around and find them. The farmers then dug carefully with shovels to free the flock and help the sheep to safety. The wintry weather also caused lots of power cuts and road closures.



Getty

Thank goodness for those woolly jumpers...

FRANCE

Jewish buildings sprayed with hateful graffiti

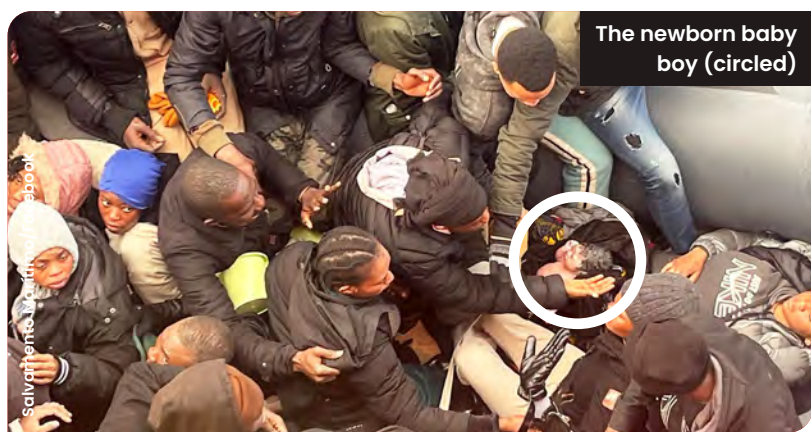
Police have revealed that ten Jewish homes and businesses around Paris, plus a synagogue in Rouen, were sprayed with hateful graffiti last week. The synagogue has been targeted before – it was set alight last May and vandalised last month, too. France has the largest population of Jewish people in Europe, but Natacha Ben Haim, who manages the synagogue, says that anti-Semitism (a hatred of Jewish people) is rising. Jews are the victims of six out of ten anti-religious attacks in France.



The synagogue in Rouen

CANARY ISLANDS

Baby born at sea on migrant boat



The newborn baby boy (circled)

Coastguards who rescued 60 migrants packed onto a dinghy were shocked to find a newborn baby on board. A woman on the boat had given birth to the baby boy as it crossed the Atlantic Ocean and approached the Canary Islands. The rescue ship's

captain, Domingo Trujillo, said that the baby had been born no more than 20 minutes earlier. "I covered him up, took him [to my chest] and patted him so that he would stop crying," he said. Once ashore, medics took the mother and baby to hospital in Lanzarote for checks.

ANTARCTICA



The team worked in temperatures of -35°C!

European scientists dig up million-year-old ice

Some of the oldest ice on Earth has been dug up by a team of European scientists in Antarctica. The team spent four years unearthing a cylinder of ice that's 2.8 kilometres long (that's longer than eight Eiffel Towers placed end-to-end), and 1.2 million years old. "It's an amazing achievement," said

lead scientist Carlo Barbante, adding that the ice contains "bubbles of air that our ancestors breathed a million years ago." It will be cut up into one-metre pieces now and shipped to research labs around Europe to help scientists discover more about the planet's ancient history and climate.

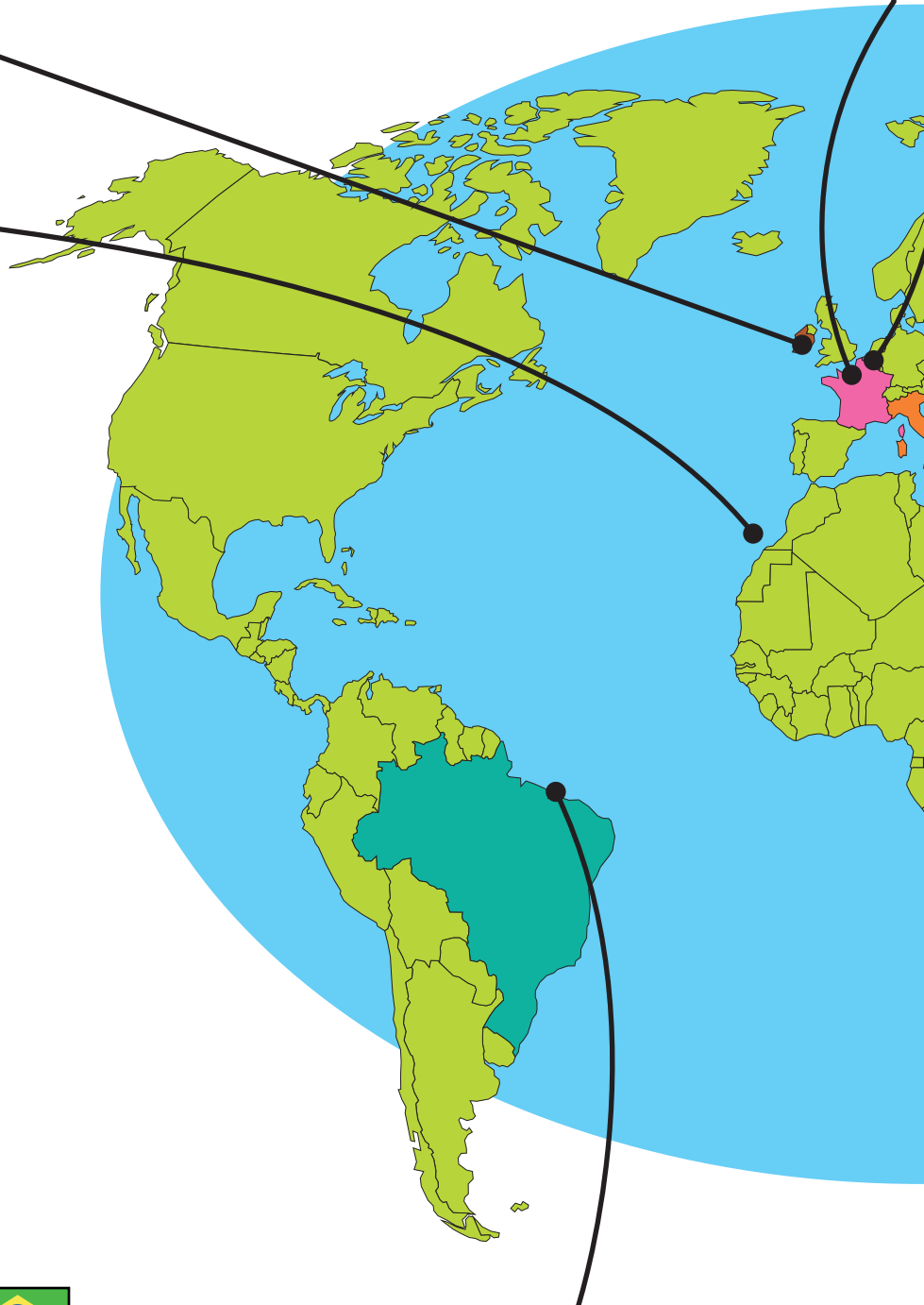
BRAZIL



Lobo in action last summer

Olympic hero rescues drowning woman

A kitesurfer who represented Brazil at last year's Olympic Games in France has rescued a woman who appeared to be drowning at sea. Bruno Lobo was testing a new camera off the coast of São Luís when he heard a woman screaming. The 31-year-old surfed out to her, scooped her from the water and used his kite to glide her back to the beach. The athlete told his Instagram followers: "I only did my duty", and warned people about the dangers of the sea.



BELGIUM

Belgians told not to eat their Christmas trees

Belgium's food agency has urged people not to nibble on their dead Christmas trees. It comes after Ghent City Council released tips on how to re-use Christmas trees to reduce waste. These tips included using them in recipes for things like flavoured butter and soup. However, the national food agency said: "There's no way to ensure that eating Christmas trees is safe – either for people or animals." That's because most Christmas trees are treated with chemicals to keep them fresh.



INDIA



World's largest religious gathering gets underway

Around 400 million Hindus from across the world are expected in Prayagraj for the Kumbh Mela festival. It's the world's largest religious gathering, and is held once every 12 years. This year's is an extra-special event called Maha Kumbh Mela, which happens every 144 years when the sun, moon, Jupiter and Saturn line up. During the festival, worshippers

wash away their sins and purify their soul by bathing in the Sangam, the point at which three rivers meet – the Ganges, the Yamuna and the legendary Saraswati. It began on Monday (13 January) and runs for 45 days, but more than 16m people took their dip on the first day. A huge 'tent city' has been set up on the banks of the river to accommodate everyone.

CROATIA

Museum of laughter is open for business!

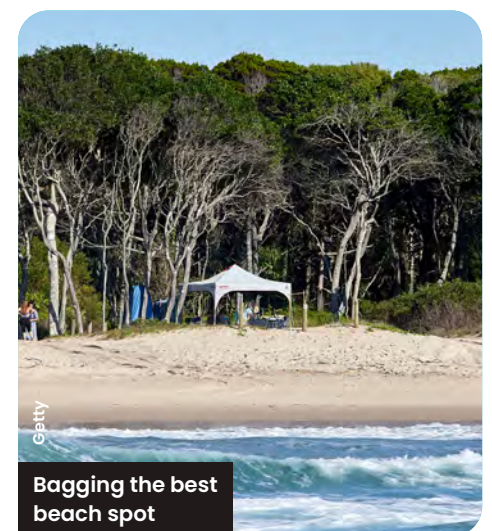
The world's first museum entirely dedicated to making people laugh has opened in Croatia's capital city, Zagreb. The HaHaHouse was created by specialist designers and artists and is filled with playful exhibitions. The fun begins at the entrance, where visitors of all ages pass through a 'Happy Portal' – a spiral slide that plunges them down to a playground of laughter. The museum launched on 10 January, and its founders say that its aim is to boost people's mental health and relaxation, and offer them a welcome break from everyday stresses.



AUSTRALIA

Prime minister criticises summer beach battles

Australia is enjoying its summertime right now, and it's triggered a hot debate on social media. People have been rushing to the country's famous beaches early to set up portable cabanas (gazebos) and save themselves the best spots to enjoy later in the day. However, many are questioning whether this behaviour is okay. Some have said that the sneaky move is "un-Australian", and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese agrees. He told the TV show *Today* that "everyone owns the beach... every Australian is equal", and that it's wrong "to think that you can reserve a little spot as just yours".



ITALY

Village bans its residents from getting ill

Belcastro, a little village in southern Italy, has banned its residents from getting ill. Its mayor, Antonio Torchia, has signed an order telling locals to "avoid contracting [getting] any illness that may require emergency medical assistance". However, he says it's a bit of a joke, designed to highlight the lack of health facilities. Half of the people in the village are aged over 65 but the doctor's surgery is often closed, and the nearest A&E department is 45km (28 miles) away.



STAND UP TO SCAMMERS



In the last year in the UK, there were 12,500 reports of scams affecting children

OVER 1,000 kids in the UK are scammed every month. In this *FYI Investigates*, Braydon and Lara look at the issue of online scamming targeting children, meet kids who have been scammed, learn from experts about how they are helping to protect you from scams, and find out what you can do to stand up to scammers.

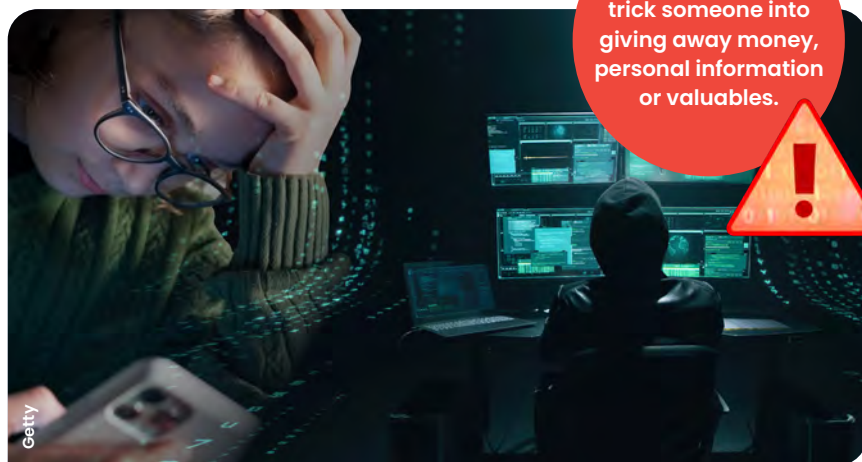
WATCH THE FILM

FYI Investigates are short documentaries from our partner weekly news show that dive into fascinating topics such as vaping, gaming and mental health, and conservation. Watch the full film *Stand Up To Scammers* and more episodes of *FYI Investigates* at [first.news/investigates](https://www.firstnews.com/investigates) or by asking a responsible adult to scan the QR code.



THE SCAMMING PROBLEM

You might have heard the word scam on the news or from adults around you talking about it. But if you think it's something that will never affect you, think again. Numbers show that it's not just adults getting scammed – kids are, too! Scammers are criminals who trick you so that they can steal money, information and trust, and they love to hang out in places where you might be, like on games or social media, or in online shops. So, it's really important to be clued up on how and where they might target you, and to know how to spot a scam and what to do if you are targeted.

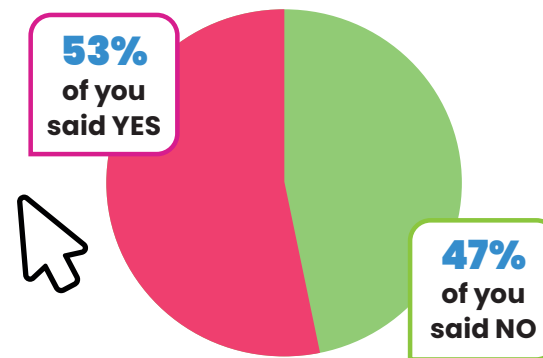


A scam is a dishonest plan to trick someone into giving away money, personal information or valuables.

More than half of you said you have been tricked online!

We asked 6,046 of you:

Have you ever been tricked online?



Vote in our polls at [first.news/polls](https://www.firstnews.com/polls)

WHERE TO WATCH OUT FOR SCAMMERS

There are a number of ways scammers target people, and in this *Investigates*, Braydon and Lara look into them. They chat to two young people who have been the victims of online shopping and gaming scams, and consider where else you need to watch out for scammers.

Leo and Braydon were victims of shopping scams

One way scammers target people is through online shopping. Braydon chats to Leo about it, because both boys were victims of scams on second-hand clothing apps.

Leo's tip: Check that you can trust the seller. Do they have lots of followers and plenty of good reviews?



Braydon and Leo chat about their experience of being scammed while online shopping

Chloe was the victim of an online gaming scam

It's not just online shopping where scammers are targeting young people, it's when they're gaming, too. You might be a fan of online computer games, and for good reason – they're fun! But they can have a serious side, too. Chloe was scammed on *Roblox* by someone who promised her Robux (money in the game). She gave them her username and password so they could do this, but she quickly realised something was wrong. She couldn't go back into her account because they'd changed her password. Luckily Chloe's sisters were around to help her report it and Roblox gave her a code to get back into her



Chloe talks to Lara about being scammed on Roblox, an online game

account, but it could have ended very differently.

Chloe's tip: Always tell a trusted adult if something like this happens.

Look out for scams here!

- Online shopping
- In your emails and on social media
- Online banking or payment cards
- Online gaming
- Fake competitions



THEY SAID THAT!

"We recommend setting up **two-factor authentication**, which helps to provide additional account security. Account login information, including passwords and access codes, should be **kept private** or shared only with a trusted, known parent or care-giver."

– Roblox

LEARN FROM THE EXPERTS



Inside the mind of an ex-scammer

To really stand up to scammers, it's important to understand them and how they work. So, Braydon goes to meet someone who used to be one of the UK's most wanted fraudsters, Elliot Castro. At just 16 years old, he began to scam people into giving personal information away so he could use their credit cards to buy things. He spent around £2.5 million of other people's money. Eventually he was caught and went to prison, but today he works with big companies to help them avoid being scammed. He also goes into schools to teach young people about scamming.

Elliot's top tip: Make sure you have two-factor authentication set up, to ensure no-one else but you can access your online accounts.



Ex-scammer, Elliot

Mastercard

Banking and online shopping are two of the main ways that scammers are targeting people. So, Lara heads to Mastercard, a company whose huge global payment system helps customers and businesses to make payments. But how do they protect people from scams? Lara meets Richard to find out more. He tells her that Mastercard looks for unusual purchases to work out if it's actually you buying something or if it's a scam.



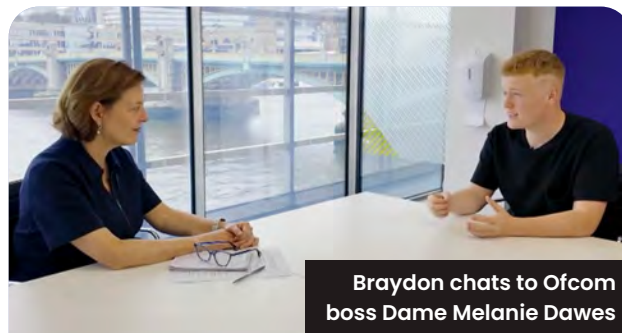
Lara meets Richard from Mastercard

Ofcom

Ofcom is the organisation that is responsible for keeping people in the UK safe online. They hold companies to account if they don't protect us. Braydon meets with the boss, Dame Melanie Dawes, to find out how they do this. She says: "Scamming is a big problem. We think it's in the gaming world that young people are most likely to be scammed. We need to be more careful. But equally, there is more that the companies can do to improve their own systems. If you do see something's gone wrong, it should

be much easier to complain."

Dame Melanie Dawes' top tip: Don't give your personal details away.

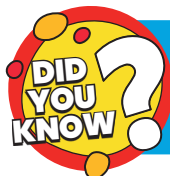


Braydon chats to Ofcom boss Dame Melanie Dawes

The police

Scamming is a crime, so it's really important to report it to the police. If a scam is reported it goes to the City of London Police, which has a dedicated team of officers called the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau. They investigate reports of scams and fraud from all across the country. In the last year, officers there received 12,000 reports of scams, but that's only the ones that were reported. Many more young people have been scammed but not told the police. Braydon meets Detective Sergeant Chris Buckingham to find out more. He says: "Young people should never feel embarrassed to report a scam. I would 100% look to report it. Unless things are reported, we can't build up an intelligence picture."

Detective Sergeant Chris Buckingham's top tip: Disable tap and pay, and move to PIN only. Keep credits on online gaming low.



IN October 2023, it became the law in the UK that companies have to keep users safe online.

THINK YOU'VE BEEN SCAMMED? REPORT IT!

If you think you've been scammed, it's important to report it. A trusted adult can contact Action Fraud (run by the City of London Police) on your behalf by heading to their website at actionfraud.police.uk.



HERE'S HOW YOU CAN STAY SAFE

1. If you are scammed, report it quickly

2. Check and do research on sellers when buying online

3. Get help from a trusted adult if you're unsure of something

4. Use reputable online stores

5. Don't click on any suspicious links

6. If in doubt, don't buy!

7. Don't talk to people you don't know online

8. Disable contactless if you have a payment card

9. Keep credits low on online games

10. Don't share passwords

11. Be aware of your surroundings

12. Don't store passwords in apps unless protected by passcode, facial recognition or facial ID



Find more top tips on our website at first.news/scammingadvice.



FEATURE ON THE SHOW!

Want to be in an episode of *FYI*? Just ask your teacher to set up a **First News FYI News Club** at your school by heading to first.news/FYInewsclub to find out more.



FYI is a weekly news show from Sky Kids that helps you stay up to date with what's going on in the world. You can watch loads of cool videos from them by heading to first.news/fyi or on the *First News* app.



LOOK WHO'S BACK!

TRACY Beaker is back... sort of! Actor Dani Harmer is making a one-off appearance in the new series of *The Dumping Ground*, and she's turned director, too! We caught up with lovely Dani to find out more...

● Hi Dani! How excited are you for Series 13 of *The Dumping Ground*, and your directing debut?

This series is just absolutely brilliant and the storylines are great. I was lucky enough to direct episode eight, which I am so proud of. I loved everything about it and I learnt so much. It was like a full-circle moment for me. Your socks will be blown off!

● How did it come about?

I got asked if I wanted to come and shadow direct and I was like: "Yes please!" Then they said: "Let's do one better. Why don't you come and actually direct an episode?" We were discussing whether Tracy might like to make a little appearance as well. It all happened really organically. As I was there, it would've been rude not to pop on the denim jacket and bring Tracy back!

● What are the main messages in Series 13?

It really takes it back to what Tracy Beaker and *The Dumping Ground* is about, which is what it's like to be in care. It's got some hard-hitting storylines, but balanced out with some pure silliness. We've got aliens, food fights, music and more!

DID YOU KNOW?

IN the episode Dani directed, there's a fashion show, a trip to the opticians and a bad hair day!

● What's your advice for someone who might be struggling with the challenges of growing up?

It's so hard, especially now with social media, but communication is key. Talk to your parents and your teachers. That's what they're there for. There's so much help out there in the form of charities too. And if social media gets too much, there's a delete button. The power's yours.



DID YOU KNOW?

TIKTOK routines feature in the new series, but not from Tracy. Dani says: "No-one wants to see my dance moves!"

● Head over to the *First News* app to see behind the scenes of Dani's day in the director's chair!

The Dumping Ground is on CBBC and BBC iPlayer now.

CHECK OUT OUR APP



Dani directs episode eight

WHAT'S HOT

● Oscar nominations revealed

The 2025 Oscar nominations will be revealed on 19 January. Top films including *Wicked*, *The Wild Robot*, *Inside Out 2* and *Mufasa: The Lion King* are expected to receive nominations. The official Oscars awards ceremony is set to take place in America on 2 March.



● **George Webster joins *Something Special***
George Webster, Maddie Moate and Ben Cajee have joined the presenting line-up for the classic CBeebies show *Something Special*. The show is hosted by Mr Tumble and Justin Fletcher, and aims to be inclusive for all children, including those with additional needs and disabilities. George said it was "a huge honour and privilege" to be invited to co-host the new series.



GLADIATORS ARE GO!



Bradley and Barney Walsh are on presenting duties

SERIES two of *Gladiators* kicks off this weekend, with more fast and fabulous fun ahead! Here's the lowdown...

● The OGs

Fans can look forward to seeing the original cast return, with the likes of Sabre, Legend, Diamond, Phantom, Athena, Bionic, Giant, Dynamite, Comet, Viper, Electro, Apollo, Steel and Fire all stepping into the arena once more.

● No Nitro!

Sadly, there is one Gladiator missing, though! Nitro, aka Harry Aikines-Aryeetey, was injured during training and will sit on the sidelines to support instead.

● A new duo

Keep your eyes peeled for the arrival of two new Gladiators. As *First News* went to press, their identities were still being kept top secret. What would be a good name for a brand-new Gladiator?

● A new challenge

There's a new game to keep everyone on their toes. Atlasphears sees contenders and Gladiators go head to head in huge metal spheres to win points.

● More action-packed drama

The BBC has promised the Gladiators are back stronger and better than ever. Let's hope the next batch of contenders have what it takes to beat them. Viewers, are you ready?!



Catch *Gladiators* on BBC One and BBC iPlayer on 18 January



MINECRAFT 2 'BASICALLY ANNOUNCED'

WHO saw this coming at the start of 2025?

Minecraft creator Markus Persson, aka Notch, looks set to be making a "spiritual successor" to the best-selling videogame of all time. But how did it come about?

Well, at the very start of the year, Notch posted a poll on X. The two options were for him to go ahead with a new roguelike game (a role-playing game with randomly generated levels, often involving a dungeon crawl) he was "passionately working on", or to start making *Minecraft 2*.

Despite pleading with his fans to vote for the first option, a perhaps not-so-surprising 81.5% (233,873 people) voted for a *Minecraft* sequel.

A *Minecraft Movie*'s April release means that this year was set to be huge for the popular game anyway. But could fans be treated to even more?



Notch created *Minecraft* with his studio Mojang, releasing it in 2011, before selling the game to Microsoft three years later

In a follow-up exchange with one of his followers, Notch explained a little bit more.

He said: "I basically announced *Minecraft 2*. I thought that maybe people ACTUALLY do want me to make another game that's super similar to the first one, and I'm loving working on games again."

Notch admitted that, while "spiritual successors are usually... tragic", he wanted to make something that people actually want.

The Swedish videogame programmer has had mixed success in making videogames since selling his share in Mojang to Microsoft in 2014. But maybe *Minecraft 2* could be the start of his huge comeback, so we're excited to see what he comes up with!



The beta (test) version of *Minecraft* came out in 2009



Sonic dashes into *Minecraft*

MINECRAFT has a new add-on available, featuring Sonic and his crew!

Thanks to studio Gamemode One, players can now transform into the Blue Blur as well as Knuckles, Tails, Amy and Shadow.

The add-on is similar to classic Sonic games where the player runs through zones to get to a goal at the end, with rings to collect along the way. To succeed, players will also have to bop mods like they're Badniks!

It's not the first time Sonic has featured in the block-building world. The *Sonic the Hedgehog* adventure map and skin was released into *Minecraft* in June 2021 as part of Sonic's 30th anniversary celebrations.



Collect rings with Sonic, Tails and more!



LOOK who it is!

Donkey Kong fans have waited for more than a decade for an original game since 2014's *Tropical Freeze*.

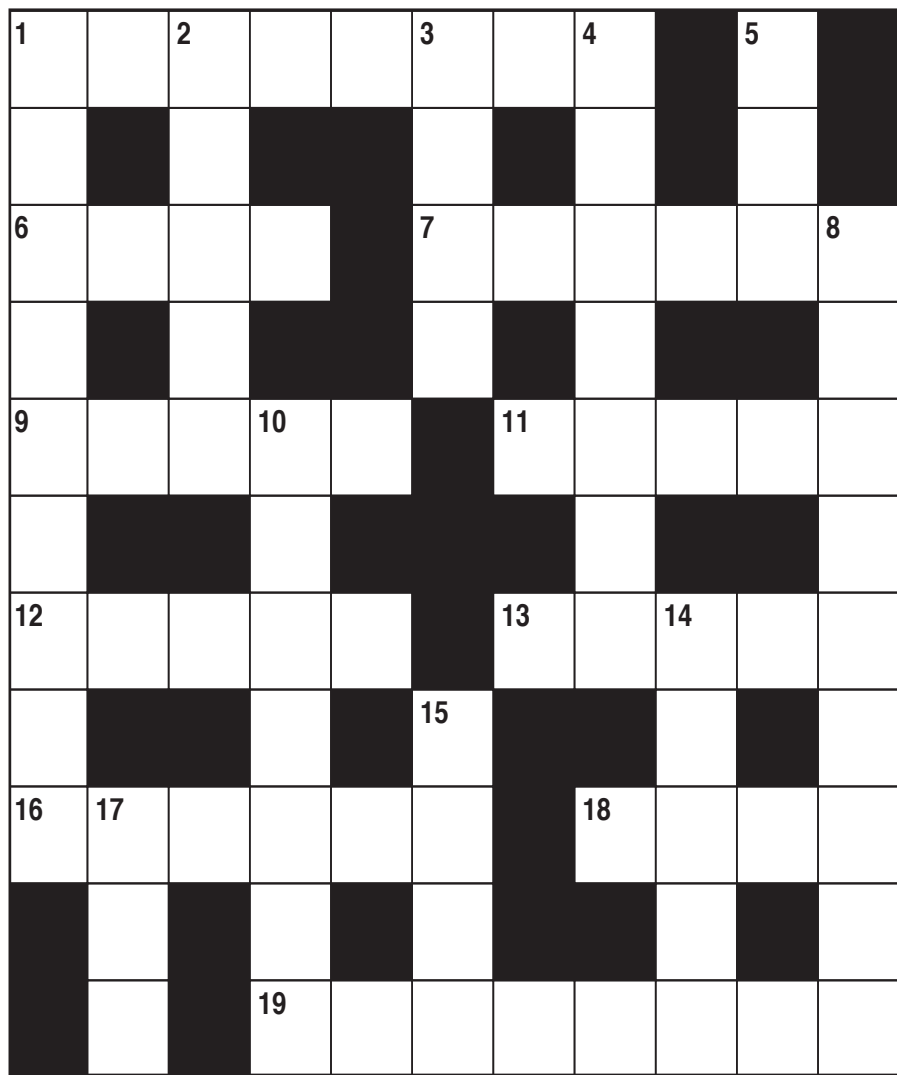
Although there's still no brand-new game on the horizon, fans can at least get their hands on *Donkey Kong Country Returns HD*. This remake of the 2010 Wii game sees players help Donkey and Diddy Kong recover their precious banana hoard from the villainous Tiki Tak Tribe.

***Donkey Kong Country Returns HD* is out now on Nintendo Switch. Keep an eye out for our review of the game next week!**



CROSSWORD

CAN you solve our crossword puzzle using the clues below?



ACROSS

- 1 A red beetle with black spots (8)
- 6 Image that shows your bones (1-3)
- 7 Make certain (6)
- 9 A traditional type of Sunday dinner (5)
- 11 Choose a politician for office (5)
- 12 A large sea (5)
- 13 Ride a bike (5)
- 16 Very easy (6)
- 18 Cut into with your teeth (4)
- 19 Normal (8)

DOWN

- 1 Deluxe and lavish (9)
- 2 Play (5)
- 3 A thought or plan (4)
- 4 Show (7)
- 5 Item used to move a rowing boat (3)
- 8 Very (9)
- 10 Product used to clean hair (7)
- 14 Porcelain (5)
- 15 The person who runs your school (4)
- 17 Frozen water (3)



Sudoku

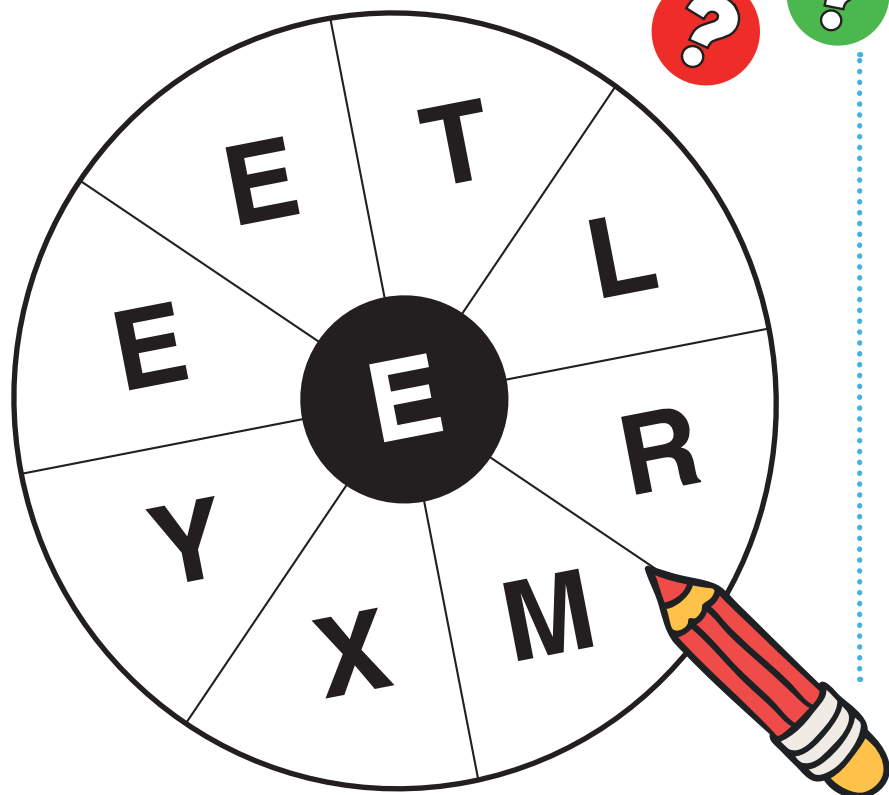
CAN you complete our sudoku puzzle, filling in the numbers one to nine?

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

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

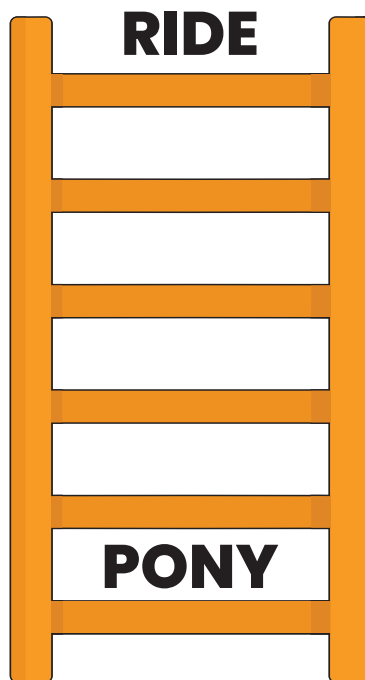
Word wheel

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



Word ladder

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

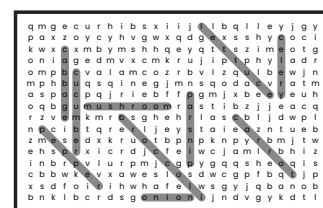


ISSUE 969 ANSWERS:

- Word wheel:** whichever.
- Word ladder:** wind, wand, sand, sank, sack, sock.
- Spot the difference:** 1) Man's hair is bigger 2) Car picture is facing the opposite way 3) Man's leg is longer 4) Woman's bag is different colour 5) Woman is wearing 3D glasses 6) Extra star on space picture 7) Missing info on computer 8) Missing flower on woman's top 9) Extra sofa leg 10) Boy's popcorn is missing.

V	O	C	A	B	U	L	A	R	Y	
I	P	O	S	T	S	L	I	V	E	R
E	P	K	Y	O	E					
R	O	A	R	E	D	G	L	A	D	
G	T	Q	T							
E	C	H	O	D	U	R	I	N	G	
W	E	P	E	N	E					
E	X	T	R	A	E	A	G	L	E	
T	I	N	S							
M	I	C	R	O	S	C	O	P	E	

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



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



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

CAN you spot the ten changes we've made to this park scene?



Wordsearch

Awards season is coming! Can you find all of these film-themed words in the wordsearch? Tick them off as you go!

- Actor
- Actress
- Director
- Soundtrack
- Animation
- Cinema
- Popcorn
- Special effects
- Script
- Cast

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



POOH'S PARTY!

THIS Saturday (18 January) is Winnie the Pooh Day!

It falls on the birthday of Pooh's creator and author, AA Milne – and it invites us to celebrate the little yellow bear and his friends from the Hundred Acre Wood.

Winnie-the-Pooh, published in 1926, has been translated into 50 different languages, and sold over 50 million copies.



...for five facts about AA Milne and his famous bear!



Recommended reads

in partnership with Peters



Turn a new leaf

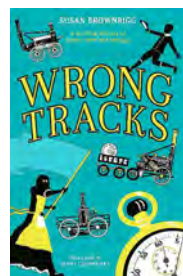
THIS week, Donald Trump returns to the White House as US president. He used to be a reality TV star – it's quite a story! Here are other stories where a character swaps jobs or tries something totally new.



Hedy Lamarr's Double Life by Laurie Wallmark, illustrated by Katy Wu

Love science and the arts equally? Learn about beloved film star and visionary scientist Hedy Lamarr, who helped create the world we live in today.

A TALE OF TRAINS



All aboard for *Wrong Tracks*, a new story stuffed with steam engines, secrets and sabotage...

HAVE you ever been put in charge of looking after something REALLY important?

That's what happened 194 years ago to a 14-year-old boy named Edward Entwistle. It wasn't something small, like making sure the toast didn't burn or watering his mum's favourite

houseplant, though. He was asked to guard a top-secret invention – Stephenson's Rocket, the most famous locomotive ever!

"I thought he would make a great main character for the book I wanted to write about the Rainhill Trials," says Susan Brownrigg, the author of *Wrong Tracks*.

Steam dreams

The Rainhill Trials was a huge competition held in 1829, asking inventors to design a new steam locomotive. It took place on a brand-new railway line that had been built with the hope of carrying goods from Manchester to Liverpool in record time.

"There was a real festival atmosphere [at the trials]," says Susan. "Everyone was amazed by the speed that the locomotives could

travel at!"

One of those locomotives was Rocket, designed by father-and-son team George and Robert Stephenson.

In *Wrong Tracks*, strange and dangerous disasters start messing with Rocket's construction. Soon, young Edward Entwistle begins to suspect that someone is out to stop the Stephensons from scooping the Rainhill Trials' top prize of running the winning locomotive on the new railway.

In real life, Edward grew up to become a famous train driver and engineer. "My first version of *Wrong Tracks* was written in third person, but I kept hearing Edward's voice and realised he wanted to take over and tell the story for himself!" says Susan.

She learned lots while researching the book, including how to drive a steam train herself.

"It was thrilling, hot and dirty in the cab", says Susan. "The smell of hot oil, steam, feeling the weight of the shovel... it all helped me imagine what it was like for Edward. And best of all, I got to pull the whistle! Toot toot!"



Susan on a steam train!



Main: Susan by a replica of Rocket
Above: Edward as an old man

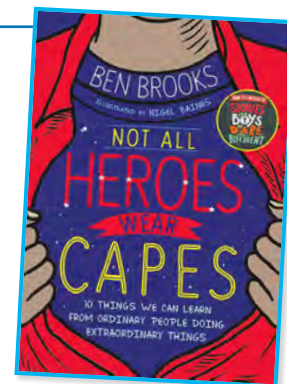
Wrong tracks, nice snacks!

Besides writing a thrilling new book, what's the best thing that Susan's invented herself? "Ha! The only thing I can think of is my jaffa cake croissant!" she told us. "I warm it in the oven then add apricot jam and chocolate spread! They are really tasty but very, very messy to eat!"

Wrong Tracks by Susan Brownrigg is out now.

Not All Heroes Wear Capes by Ben Brooks, illustrated by Nigel Baines

Discover how ordinary people can transform into heroes by doing extraordinary things, from small acts of kindness to life-saving inventions.



The Accidental President by Tom McLaughlin

One minute, you're at school... the next, you're the US president! Laugh out loud at Ajay's accidental adventures in the White House.

Dwayne Johnson by Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara, illustrated by Lirios Bou

From American football to professional wrestling to Hollywood stardom, this book follows The Rock and his exciting and changing career.



Michelle Obama by Anna Doherty

Find out how Michelle Obama went from helping her local community in whatever way she could, to becoming the first lady of the United States.

★ WRITE US A BOOK REVIEW! ★

BAG a new book for Christmas? Whether it was fiction, non-fiction, a comic book or an audiobook, we'd love to hear about it! Send us a review of 100-120 words, along with your name, age and, if you like, your photo (with your parents' permission) to bookreviews@firstnews.co.uk, and we'll print it!

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE!

DON'T MISS IT!

CHINESE NEW YEAR



BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH



HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS!



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VIDEOS



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HELLO! I'm Milly, the leader of the First News FYI News Club.

We're only in January and you're already doing amazing things!

Check out Alice, who's helping to promote the use of British Sign Language; the kids with long Covid who aren't letting it stop them; Naila, the first girl and Muslim to become prime minister for the Sir David Amess Children's Parliament; and Fflur and Emrys, who went to check out a preview for The UK Kids' Comedy Festival.

Do you have news to share? Write in to let me know by asking an adult to email yournews@firstnews.co.uk and you might feature here on these pages!

THIS WEEK'S POLL!

We asked 4,252 of you:

Should unhealthy snacks be made more expensive?

39% of you said YES

61% of you said NO



MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

Cast your vote in our polls at first.news/polls



LONG COVID CAN'T STOP US!

THE Covid-19 pandemic was five years ago, and many of you probably got infected by the virus. While most people get better after a few days or weeks, some still have symptoms years later; this is known as long Covid. The Long Covid Kids (LCK) choir is made up of kids all over the world who have long Covid, but they aren't letting it stop them! They meet regularly online to rehearse. Here, a few of the members tell you all about it.

by Clara, Cerys and Caitlin

The Long Covid Kids (LCK) choir is made up of children with long Covid from all around the world. There are children from the UK, the Netherlands and USA who all have long Covid. Merel van der Knoop leads the choir and she makes the experience very welcoming and fun.

Choir is a highlight of our week. Merel is funny, kind and always chats with us. She understands what it is like to have long Covid, so it doesn't matter if we are not full of energy. We have all made new friends and enjoy singing together. Choir is brilliant!

During choir we check in with each other and chat. We do breathing exercises and

mindfulness to start, and sometimes even tongue twisters! Then, we sing songs. Merel asks us for song suggestions. We have themed weeks too and can dress up in accessories like sun hats or Santa hats depending on the theme.



The LCK choir meets for regular rehearsals online. They are pictured here with their choir leader, Merel (top middle)

Meet the new PM for the Sir David Amess Children's Parliament!

NAILA has just become the first female and first Muslim prime minister for the Sir David Amess UK Children's Parliament. Find out how she feels about starting this important role and what her plans are for the future.

by Naila

My name is Naila Seetal and I am 11 years old. I've recently had the honour of becoming the prime minister of the Sir David Amess UK Children's Parliament. To add to this, I'm the first girl and the first Muslim child to hold this important role.

One of my biggest goals is to encourage more young people, especially young women, to get involved in politics. It's so important that we all have a voice in the decisions that affect our lives and our futures, and I want to ensure that important issues are taken seriously. One of the areas I'm particularly passionate about is protecting animals. For instance, the cruel animal tourism act has still not been enacted, and it's crucial that we move forward with the legislation to put an end to animal cruelty caused within tourism.

I feel incredibly lucky to have the mentorship of Baroness

Uddin, who is helping me with this journey. As a Muslim woman in politics, she's a role model who shows me that women from any background and faith can have a meaningful impact. Coming from a diverse background has taught me to value different cultures and make sure everyone feels included – it's taught me to value kindness, fairness and equality, and it's helped me understand the importance of listening to others and being fair. I believe that when we celebrate what makes us unique, we can do amazing things together!

Naila



Baroness Uddin



NEWS CLUB SHOUT-OUT!

THIS WEEK WE'RE GIVING SHOUT-OUTS TO... St Wilfrid's Church of England Primary School, Summerhill School, Five Elms Primary School, Dairy Meadow Primary and Nursery School, and Anglo Singapore International School!



Why everyone should learn basic sign language

ALICE wants to get more people to learn British Sign Language (BSL). Find out what BSL is, how you can help deaf people when you communicate, and learn a bit of sign language by reading her article!

by Alice Jones

BSL (British Sign Language) is a visual language used by deaf people in the UK. Different countries have different sign languages, just as they have different spoken languages. In the UK, there are around 151,000 BSL users out of our population of around 68 million. Sign language is an important language for people to learn because not many know it and few people can effectively communicate with deaf people. I wanted to write this article to raise awareness for deaf people so that others can be aware of the struggles they face and to let you know how you can help. Deaf people face a number of different challenges in communication – challenges that can be made easier by following these tips!

- Don't over-exaggerate words, as this makes it hard for a deaf person to lipread what you are saying.
- Use a gentle tap on the shoulder when you need the person's attention.

- Be patient and take the time to communicate both respectfully and effectively.
- Use facial expressions. They are both an important part of grammar in BSL and add context to the conversation.
- Find out how the person likes to communicate. Deafness is a spectrum, and every person will have a preference in communication, so they may use speech, BSL or both.
- Reduce background noise so those with cochlear implants, or hearing aids, are able to focus on your voice, as it takes a lot of effort.



Alice



HERE'S Alice signing the letters to BSL. Why not give it a try?



Laugh out loud at The UK Kids' Comedy Festival



Comedian Marcel

THE UK Kids' Comedy Festival is the only comedy festival in the UK dedicated to children, young people and their families. The event takes place alongside the Leicester Comedy Festival, the largest and longest-running comedy festival in Europe. Emrys and Fflur went to The Kids' Gala Preview show at The Y Theatre and wanted to tell you all about it!

by Fflur and Emrys

When we arrived at The Y Theatre on a dark, busy night in Leicester, we had a warm welcome. The entrance area was busy with children colouring in The UK Kids' Comedy Festival brochure. Have you seen



Fflur and Emrys LOL at the festival

it? The front is a colouring sheet with ducks!

We sat in our seats, and we could see the whole stage. We ate our treats and we felt pumped for the start of the show! The first person who came on was called Marcel Lucont and he was funny. He pretended not to like children but we didn't think that was true so we were all laughing a lot. If you like interesting but gross facts about pirates, dinosaurs and poo, then Iszi Lawrence is the one for you! She made us laugh with her big facial expressions and funny stories.

Ask your grown-ups to take you to The UK Kids' Comedy Festival, which runs from 5–23 February! Find out more by visiting ukkidscomedyfestival.co.uk.

WIN! A SLIME'PRESSO MACHINE!

THE So Slime DIY Slimelicious Slime'presso Machine lets you make your own slimy drink creations from home!

Each kit comes with all the tools and decorations you need to make a variety of slimes in whatever colours you want!

Pull the lever to mix the powder and water, then add your pre-made slime and decorations. Put your concoction inside your cup to make a colourful bubble tea, smoothie or intense drinks creation. Let your imagination go wild!

We're giving away five So Slime DIY Slimelicious Slime'presso Machines.

All you have to do for a chance to win is answer this question:

Which actor plays Tracy Beaker?

- a) Dani Harmer b) Zendaya
c) Margot Robbie



ENTER NOW! MARK YOUR ENTRY SLIME

first.news/comps or see page 20. The closing date is 31 January.

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 Wildlife experts have criticised the illegal release of which species in Scotland?

2 Dani Harmer is back to play which character in *The Dumping Ground*?



3 Edinburgh has ruled out using what for this year's Hogmanay celebrations?



4 A traveller was arrested at an Indian airport after being found with a skull of what animal?

5 What has videogame creator Notch "basically announced"?

6 Which US city is experiencing devastating fires?



7 How many postboxes did record-breaking crafters in St Albans decorate?



8 In which country does the world's largest religious gathering take place?

9 Who is the boss of social media company Meta?

10 Bradley and Barney Walsh are on presenting duties for which returning TV show?



11 Belgians have been told not to eat what festive decoration?

12 Who returns to the White House as president of the USA on 20 January?

13 Amber and Roary are the mascots of which English football team?



14 This Saturday (18 January) is a day celebrating which character created by AA Milne?

15 Which species of whale has been spotted swimming off the Kent coast?

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

FirstNews WEEKLY NEWS QUIZ!
Check out our new online Quiz!

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Answers:
1 Lynx 2 Tracy Becker 3 Drones 4 A crocodile
5 *Minicraft* 6 Los Angeles 7 102 8 India
9 Mark Zuckerberg 10 *Gladiators* 11 Christmas trees
12 Donald Trump 13 Hull City 14 Winnie the Pooh
15 Humpback



All pics: Getty

THE Hull City mascots get in on the action during their team's FA Cup match against Doncaster Rovers. Amber and Roary look like they're having fun, but the day ended in disaster for Hull, as they were knocked out on penalties by a team who are two divisions below them.

BUTLER Blue IV, the mascot of Butler University in the US, rides out onto the basketball court ahead of a game. The 'Good Dawg' instead of Goodyear on the tyres is a nice touch!



SYDNEY Thunder batsman David Warner might want to see if he can get a refund for this bat, which snapped during a game against Hobart Hurricanes.



BRISTOL Rovers' Poppy Warren lifts a tinfoil FA Cup on the shoulders of her team-mate George Hunt, although Rovers suffered a 9-0 thrashing at the hands (or maybe feet) of Aston Villa.



OOOF! That might hurt a bit in the morning, after Toronto Maple Leafs forward Matthew Knies checks Vancouver Canucks' Noah Juulsen into the boards.



A SURREAL snap of Cairns Taipans star Dillon Stith during a basketball match against the Sydney Kings.



DESERT DISASTER

As well as lots of sand, drivers have also had to cope with something unusual in Saudi Arabia – rain!

ORGANISERS of the Dakar Rally had to apologise to teams this week, after a map mistake led to drivers veering off the route and getting lost in the desert.

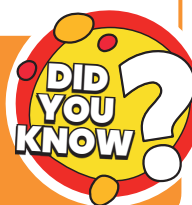
Belgian driver Guillaume de Mèvius said that he had “50 minutes of going round in circles” until organisers sent a helicopter to guide competitors back on track.

Race officials scrapped everyone’s times on the section that went disastrously wrong, although it was only a small section of the epic race, which lasts for two weeks and sees cars, jeeps, trucks and motorbikes

travel nearly 8,000km (5,000 miles) across sand dunes and other punishing terrain.

The race is due to end today (Friday 17 January).

ALTHOUGH the Dakar Rally is held in Saudi Arabia now, it began its life as the Paris-Dakar Rally, which saw teams drive from France then down through Africa to Dakar in Senegal.



Australia celebrate taking England’s final wicket in the second match

England have had a dreadful start to the Women’s Ashes in Australia, losing the first two one-day internationals (ODIs). They got themselves in a good position in the second match, but a batting collapse saw their hopes fade. The third ODI was due to be played yesterday (Thursday), with the rest of the series made up of three T20 matches and one Test.



Leonard winning 10,000m gold at the under-23 European championships in 2023

Rory Leonard has knocked six seconds off the British 10km record set by Sir Mo Farah back in 2010. The 23-year-old ran the Valencia 10km in 27min 38sec, although that was only good enough to finish in 15th. Sir Mo was a track specialist rather than a road runner though, and he won multiple world and Olympic gold medals in the 10,000m and 5,000m.



Lamine Yamal, 17, got Barcelona’s first goal

The most famous rivalry in football produced a seven-goal thriller in the final of the Spanish Super Cup, with ten-man Barcelona getting the better of Real Madrid. Barça had keeper Wojciech Szczęsny sent off after an hour, but by that time they were already 5-1 up. Real pulled one back to make it 5-2, but that’s how it ended.



Matt Weston slid a bit closer to a second skeleton world title in a row, after winning the World Cup event in St Moritz. With just one race of the season left, he’s in top spot, with his British team-mate Marcus Wyatt in second. Weston only needs to finish 15th or better in the last race to become world champion.

CORIE Mapp started the para bobsleigh season in style at the weekend, winning the first race and taking second place in the next one. It puts him in a great position to defend the World Cup title he won last year. Mapp is a former soldier who lost both of his legs while serving in Afghanistan.



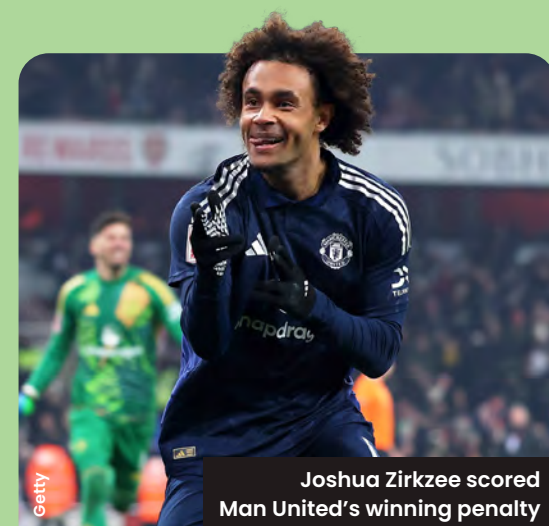
Braydon’s on the ball

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

Non-league Tamworth came close to providing the shock result of the FA Cup third round, as they took Spurs to extra time before eventually losing 3-0. Tamworth can be so proud of their performance and came desperately close to a winner in injury time, but Spurs survived.

In the other games it was pretty much business as usual for the top clubs, with Man City crushing Salford 8-0, Liverpool comfortably beating Accrington Stanley, and Newcastle surviving an early scare to beat Bromley.

I’d say the biggest surprise came at Brentford, where the free-scoring Bees were expected to make light work of struggling Plymouth, but the form book was ripped up – Plymouth claimed a 1-0 win and will face Liverpool in the next round!



Joshua Zirkzee scored Man United’s winning penalty

The big game of the weekend came at the Emirates Stadium, where Man United beat Arsenal to progress to round four. It was a case of missed chances coming back to haunt the Gunners, who had a penalty saved in normal time before eventually going out on spot-kicks. United had Diogo Dalot sent off but defended well with ten men for most of the second half. Maybe they can win the cup for a second year in a row?

The draw for the fourth round was made on Sunday (12 January), with the pick of the games being Plymouth v Liverpool, Villa v Spurs and Doncaster Rovers v Crystal Palace.

Centre Stage this week are Barcelona, who won the Spanish Super Cup by thumping Real Madrid 5-2 in Saudi Arabia (see far left). Barça were 4-1 up at half time in another entertaining game between the Spanish giants, and Barça have now enjoyed two huge wins over their old rivals in the last few months.

Braydon’s Team of The Week: Barcelona.
Braydon’s Player of The Week: Tamworth’s Haydn Hollis. Man of the match, and what a piece of skill he produced – Google it if you can!

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