

NEWS KIDS CAN TRUST

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR*



First News



Issue 971 £2.95 24 – 30 January 2025

2.6M READERS*

5 16



TRUMP IS BACK

THE THINGS HE HAS SAID – OR WAS IT ELON MUSK?

NEWS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT INTERVIEWS PUZZLES COMPETITIONS



Three Israeli hostages were released by Hamas, the first of several exchanges due to take place over the next six weeks

GOING HOME

AS PEOPLE RETURN TO SEE WHAT'S LEFT OF THEIR HOMES IN GAZA, WE ASK "IS THE WAR OVER?"

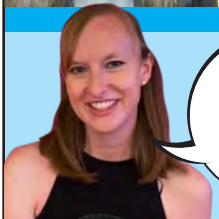
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* Newspaper Awards 2023, Niche market Newspaper of the Year. First News readership is 2,626,625. Source: Opinion Matters 2020. First News is the widest-read of all children's publications audited in the UK. First News supports children's charities.

MEET THE TEAM



Editor in Chief
Nicky Cox



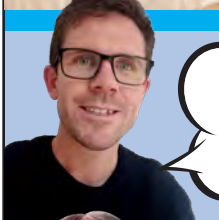
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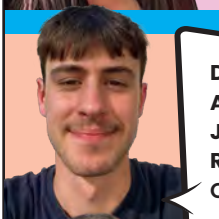
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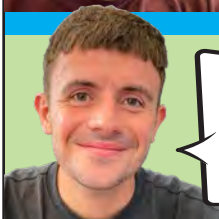
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HAVE YOU HEARD?

Snappy stories to get you talking!



YOUNG MUSICIANS MEET THE KING

On 13 January, members of the National Youth Music Theatre gave a special performance at Buckingham Palace for King Charles, to highlight Holocaust remembrance through music. They performed songs including *Wiegala*, written by Ilse Weber, who was killed with her son in the Holocaust. The event was part of the Echo Eternal programme, which helps young people learn about the Holocaust through creative projects.



BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH BEGINS

The RSPB is encouraging people across the UK to join its annual Big Garden Birdwatch this weekend. Running from 24–26 January, the project aims to get members of the public to spend just one hour counting birds that visit their gardens or local green spaces. Find out how to take part by going to [rspb.org.uk/whats-happening](https://www.rspb.org.uk/whats-happening).

THEY SAID THAT!

"[People] who want to post videos of their cats or dancing – that doesn't seem like a national security threat to me."

– Cabinet minister
Darren Jones

'NO PLANS' TO DITCH TIKTOK IN UK

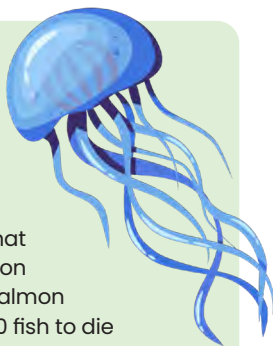
The British government has confirmed the UK will not follow the US in banning TikTok, despite growing concerns over the app's security. A UK minister explained that the app hasn't been allowed on government phones since 2023 "because there's sensitive information on those devices", but there were "no plans right now" to do the same for everyone else.

CONCERN OVER REGIONAL ACCENT BIAS



A new study has revealed that some people think that certain accents sound "guiltier" than others. Researchers asked 180 participants to listen to male accents from different parts of the UK and rate them as friendly, kind, working class and other traits, as well as whether they sounded morally good or bad. The results showed that people with non-standard accents were more likely to be associated with criminal behaviour. The report's lead author, Alice Paver from the University of Cambridge, said that "voices play a powerful role in the criminal justice system," and that "as things stand, listeners think some accents sound guiltier than others and we should all be concerned about that".

JELLYFISH ATTACKING SALMON



A dangerous species of jellyfish that has killed millions of farmed salmon in Norway has reached Scottish salmon farms, causing more than 230,000 fish to die near the islands of Skye and Muck. Scientists say warmer sea temperatures are bringing the string jellyfish to Scottish waters. Fish farmers are now watching their farms more carefully to protect their salmon.



WRITING COMPETITION LAUNCHES

A historical fiction competition for young writers aged 11-19 is set to launch its 2025 edition this spring. The Young Walter Scott Prize challenges young authors to write stories between 800 and 2,000 words set in the past. The competition offers winners £500 towards travel, festival tickets and their work published in a special book collection. Enter from 19 March at walterscottprize.co.uk/young-walter-scott-prize.



MOON BECOMES HERITAGE SITE

The moon has been added to a list of threatened heritage sites, because experts worry that future space tourists could damage historic things like astronaut footprints. The World Monuments Fund, which usually looks after Earth's historic places, says the moon needs special care because more countries and private companies are planning to visit it in the next few years.



FOREVER CHEMICALS FOUND IN FARM SOIL

Scientists have found 'forever chemicals' on farms across the UK, raising concerns about food safety. The chemicals, also called PFAS, were found in sludge that was being used as fertiliser. They come from everyday items like non-stick pans and waterproof clothing, and can stay in the environment for thousands of years. They have been linked to serious health problems, including cancer. Experts are concerned that the rules we have aren't strong enough to protect farmland from these harmful substances.



TEENS TALK SMARTPHONE SAFETY

Ten teenagers aged 13-17 have met with Labour MP Josh MacAlister to share their views on making smartphones and social media safer for young people. They visited Parliament with the children's charity the NSPCC to talk about the new Safer Phones Bill, including online dangers like stranger contact and addictive scrolling. They also explained how phones help them learn and stay safe. The Bill might also raise the digital age of consent from 13 to 16.

NHS TESTS NEW BRAIN DEVICE



Scientists are testing a new device that could help people with mental health problems by using sound waves to change brain activity. The NHS is running a £6.5m trial where a small device will be placed under the skull of 30 patients to map their brain activity and send tiny pulses to specific areas. If successful, this technology might help people with depression, addiction and other conditions that haven't improved with regular treatments. Tests on the device, called Forest 1, will start in March.

RICH STILL GETTING RICHER



The wealth of the world's billionaires grew by £1.6 trillion in 2024, while nearly half the world still lives in poverty, a new report from the charity Oxfam shows. It says there are now 2,769 billionaires in the world, with their combined wealth reaching £12 trillion, and that the wealth gap between rich and poor is growing faster than ever before. Experts say this growing gap is unfair and are calling for new laws to make wealthy people pay more taxes to help those in need.



UK'S FIRST SPACE LAUNCH APPROVED

A German rocket company will send the first ever rocket into space from UK soil. Rocket Factory Augsburg (RFA) will launch its 30-metre-tall rocket from the Shetland Islands. The UK Civil Aviation Authority gave RFA special permission after checking that the launch would be safe and would not harm the environment.

● BURNS NIGHT

25 JANUARY

Scotland pays tribute to one of its national heroes, the famous poet Robert Burns.

● HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

27 JANUARY

A chance to remember the six million Jewish people and others who were killed in the Holocaust during the Second World War.



CALENDAR DATES



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



WAR IS OVER?

Israel and Hamas agree to a ceasefire



Gazans return to their homes

Israeli hostage Romi Gonen is back home

The three **Israeli hostages** released by Hamas are Romi Gonen, aged 24, Emily Damari, aged 28, and Doron Steinbrecher, aged 31. The country was glued to the news as the three returned to Israel by helicopter and were reunited with loved ones.

ISRAEL and Hamas, the terrorist group that runs Gaza, have agreed a six-week ceasefire – a pause in their war.

As part of the deal, both sides exchanged prisoners. Hamas released three female hostages who they had held since the war began on 7 October 2023, and Israel let 90 prisoners return to Gaza.

The plan is for a further 30 Israeli hostages and 1,800 prisoners from Gaza to be released over the next six weeks. Israel's army will begin to withdraw from Gaza, too. The final stage would see the rebuilding of Gaza begin – although this could take years.

People who were forced to flee the fighting in Gaza have begun returning to their homes, but the United Nations says that more than half of all Gaza's buildings have been damaged or destroyed. This means that many will have to continue sleeping in temporary shelters.

94

Hamas still has 94 Israeli hostages. Israel thinks that only 60 of them are still alive.

Is the war actually over?

The war broke out 15 months ago, when armed fighters from Hamas invaded Israel, killed around 1,200 people and took 251 hostages. Israel responded by attacking Gaza with rockets in the air and soldiers on the ground. It's thought that 46,700 people in Gaza have been killed.

Charities are hopeful that they can start to get more aid and supplies of medicine into Gaza during the ceasefire.

Israel's aim in the war was to destroy Hamas – but it hasn't done so yet. Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, said that he's "reserving the right" to resume fighting if needed, and that he's got the USA on his side.

It's hoped that the ceasefire could lead to an end to the war, and to lasting peace. However, it's important to remember that it's very complex and could easily collapse – like similar deals have done in the past.

EDITOR'S COMMENT



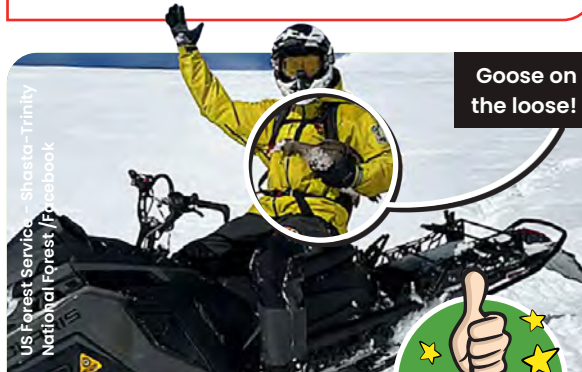
Nicky Cox MBE

LET us dream of a world where every child in Gaza, Israel – and worldwide – wakes up to laughter, not fear.

May schools be places of learning, not hiding, and streets echo with play, not the sounds of bombs and gunfire.

Peace means neighbours holding hands, sharing kindness and hearts filled with the understanding that there is more that unites us than divides us.

Let us believe in a future where compassion grows stronger than division and every voice joins in harmony and hope for all.



Goose on the loose!

A lost goose

IT'S unclear exactly how a goose found its way 10,000ft (3km) up the snowy Mount Shasta in California, but two park rangers were on hand to rescue it and take it back down to a local pond. "The climber (flyer?) was neither prepared for the temperature nor overnight camping!" the team joked on social media.





Slippery stowaways!

EXOTIC animals like lizards, snakes and frogs are hiding in pot plants and sneaking into European countries like the UK!

They include a tree frog found in a flower shop in Sheffield and Italian wall lizards discovered in olive trees that had been shipped to the Netherlands.

Researchers at the University of Cambridge have warned that foreign species pose a risk to nature, because they can invade and upset existing ecosystems, and destroy crops too.

"If they're getting through, what's the chance of us spotting small insects and fungi – the things that really cause the problems?" asked Professor William Sutherland.

He and the other researchers want to see better production standards to stop this happening.

OMG!

Hop it! A rare blue tree frog

Apple AI sent **false** news alerts

APPLE is trying to fix an AI feature that has been sending false news headlines to iPhone users.

The feature used AI to analyse headlines on news websites, then turn them into pop-up notifications on people's phones. However, the AI kept reading the news incorrectly, so the notifications were littered with mistakes.

The BBC and Sky News were among the media companies to complain to Apple about their articles

being misunderstood by the AI.

Vincent Berthier, from the journalism body Reporters Without Borders, warned that tech companies shouldn't rush out new features until they work properly. "This feature shouldn't be rolled out again until there is zero risk it will publish inaccurate headlines," he said.

Apple says it's suspended the feature. Once it's fixed, it'll be released again in a future software update.



Just plane wrong?

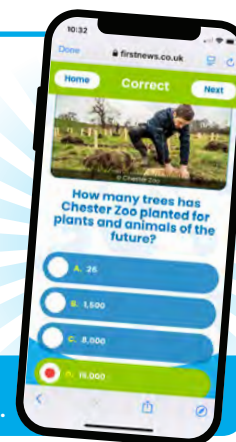
Twerving

ALASKA Airlines flight attendant Nelle Diala got the sack after posting a TikTok video of herself having a little boogie in the aisle of an empty plane while waiting for the pilots to board. "I didn't think it would cost me my dream job," Diala said. "What's wrong with a little twerk before work?"



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.



HE'S BACK

DONALD Trump is, once again, the president of the USA – and he's promised a "golden age" for America.

The 78-year-old, who was last president between 2017 and 2021, is back in the White House after his inauguration (the handover of power) ceremony on Monday.

The ceremony is usually held outside the US Capitol building in Washington, DC. However, at -4°C, it was the coldest inauguration day since 1985, so Mr Trump requested to hold his indoors instead.

After taking the presidential oath and being sworn in, he gave his victory speech. He dodged two shooting attempts last year, and said: "I was saved by God to make America great again."

Good news or bad news?

On his first day, Mr Trump signed lots of 'executive orders' to put his ideas into action. They included tough orders on immigration at the border between the USA and Mexico, a pause on sending aid to countries like Ukraine and cancelling a number of promises to protect the climate.

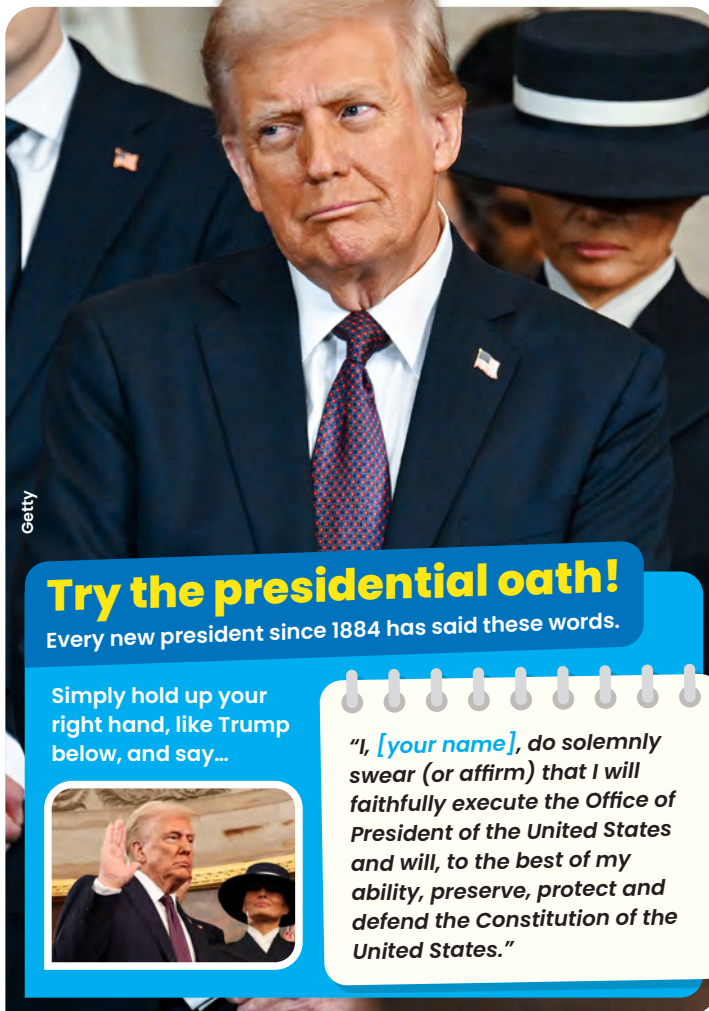
He also announced that the USA would only recognise two genders – male and female. He began withdrawing the USA from the World Health Organization, too.

Trump promised to put "America first" every day that he's in office, and a lot of European countries are concerned about what he'll do as president. However, other parts of the world are excited by his return.

In a big international poll, more than eight in ten people in India voted to say that they think Trump's return to power is good news for their country and the world. Many in Saudi Arabia, China, Russia and Brazil agree, too.

Do you think that Trump being president will be good news for the world?

Vote at [first.news/polls](https://www.first.news/polls)



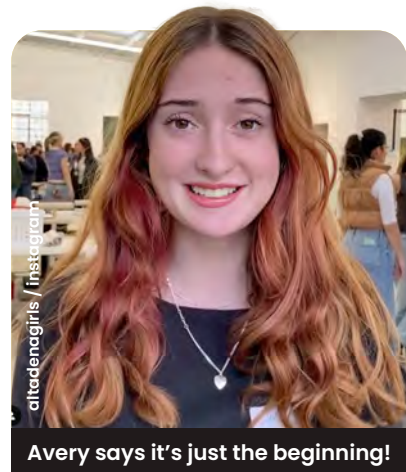
Try the presidential oath!

Every new president since 1884 has said these words.

Simply hold up your right hand, like Trump below, and say...



"I, [your name], do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."



Avery says it's just the beginning!

Girl helps LA victims

A 14-YEAR-OLD girl set up a group to help young victims of the Los Angeles (LA) wildfires – and it's gone viral!

Avery Colvert, from Altadena, launched the Altadena Teen Girls Fire Recovery group with her dad on Instagram after her friends lost their homes to the fires. Even her school, the Eliot Arts Magnet Academy, was ruined.

Her neighbourhood was already offering victims food, water and basic essentials. However, Avery wanted to

get things that would "help my friends feel like themselves again – clothes, personal items, beauty and hair care."

In no time, lorry-loads of donations were being dropped off to Avery.

The page exploded when LA celebrity Paris Hilton shared it on social media. Prince Harry's wife, Meghan Markle, stopped by to make a donation, too.

Avery told *Time* magazine: "I couldn't even think about how big this would be... Altadena is amazing."

Schools struggle to pay the bills

RESEARCH has shown that just one in 20 secondary schools will be able to afford all their bills next year.

The news isn't great for primary schools either, with only one in four being able to pay for what they'd like.

These stats come from School Cuts, a campaign run by the National Education Union (NEU) to push for better school funding.

In December, the government recommended that

teachers should get a small pay rise (2.8%), but School Cuts says that no extra funding has been provided to help schools do this.

It says that the government would need to increase its yearly funding for schools by £700 million to help them to pay for teachers' pay rises.

Instead, schools might have to cut back on activities, or try to raise money in other ways, like fundraising events.



School Cuts says that the amount of money that most schools have to spend on each pupil is set to drop to its lowest since 2010

The United Nations says that CO₂ levels are at their highest in two million years

CLIMATE SETBACK

What's the story here, then?

The Earth has suffered a setback in its fight against climate change, as a Met Office study has found that carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels around the world rocketed in 2024.

Why is that bad?

CO₂ is the main planet-warming gas in our atmosphere. It's produced when we burn fossil fuels, like coal, oil and gas. Trees absorb CO₂, which helps to slow the effects of global warming – but they struggled to do this in 2024 due to drought and wildfires.

Why does this matter?

Ten years ago, nearly 200 nations signed something called the Paris Agreement. This was a pledge to stop Earth's average temperature rising any more than 1.5°C above what it was in around 1850, before the Industrial Revolution. Richard Betts, from the Met Office, said: "Limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require the CO₂ rise to be slowing, but in reality [it's getting faster]."

What's expected to happen this year?

The rise in CO₂ isn't expected to be as extreme as it was last year, but it's still due to rise too quickly to keep us on track to meet the 1.5°C target.



Newly-planted trees!

NEARLY half a million new trees are being planted around England this winter!

It's part of a government-funded project by the National Trust to create new woods, boost nature and give wildlife more space to live.

The 416,000 new trees, planted at 20 sites from Devon to Yorkshire, will give humans more green spaces to enjoy, too.

800 Altogether, the new woodlands being created will be as big as 800 football pitches!

THEY SAID THAT!

"We cannot see another generation of children failed. Urgent investment in our schools and colleges must be a priority for this government." – **Daniel Kebede, NEU General Secretary**



Cape Town, South Africa



Sebastian Marko/Red Bull Content Pool

IS this the stunt of the century? Kitesurfer Lasse Walker completes a world-first jump over a low-flying plane off Dolphin Beach. The Dutchman's timing had to be perfect as he soared more than 15m (49ft) into the air. Watch a video of the jump on the *First News* app!

Macau, China



Instagram/@philipcolbert

GIANT inflatable lobsters are making waves in Macau. British artist Philip Colbert's *Lobster Submarine* is 15m (49ft) high and will be displayed until mid-March.

Nanjing, China



Getty

PEOPLE shop for decorations ahead of Lunar New Year on 29 January. The Chinese zodiac says that the coming year will be the Year of the Snake. This time of year is all about removing the bad and the old, and welcoming the new and the good. People celebrate with colourful activities, such as dragon dancing, and have a big dinner with their family.

Yuncheng, China



Getty

ICE flowers form in cold weather on the surface of a salt lake.



Texas, USA



CONFETTI comes down on Jaylen McClain of the Ohio State Buckeyes. His team won the Cotton Bowl, an American college football game.

London, UK



A WOVEN roundel has been unveiled at Hackney Downs station to celebrate the opening of one of London's new overground lines. The Weaver line was one of six lines given a rebrand last year to make the capital's network easier to get around. The name celebrates the historical significance of weaving and textile industries along the line, and it has inspired communities in east London to get creative.



Melbourne, Australia

SPANISH tennis star Carlos Alcaraz loses his racquet as he dives to reach a ball at the Australian Open.



Ávila, Spain

PEOPLE dress up in costumes for the tradition of Las Toras, which translates to 'the bulls'. Watch out, their main mission is to scare anyone who crosses their path!



BRADFORD

Opera fans wanted

Bradford City fans will swap singing in the stands for performing on stage in a choir in a new BBC show called *Bantam of the Opera* (the Bantams is the club's nickname). As part of the Bradford 2025 City of Culture celebrations, the fans will be taught to sing, with their progress being followed by BBC Radio Leeds. The show's title is a pun on composer Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1986 musical *The Phantom of the Opera*. He'll join the Bantams, soprano Lesley Garrett and club legend Chris Kamara in the show. Fans can apply to join the choir at bbc.co.uk/cityofculture.

The Bantams will belt out classical tunes



EDINBURGH

New dawn for haggis

People in the US could be getting their first taste of traditional haggis in more than 50 years. The dish was banned in 1971 because US authorities said humans shouldn't be eating its main ingredient – sheep's lung. But Scotland's largest haggis maker, Macsween of Edinburgh, is aiming to get around this by swapping the lung out for sheep's heart. This move could be boosted by Donald Trump (inset), who has started his second term as US president. He has said before how proud he is of his Scottish roots, as his mother was born and raised on the Isle of Lewis.



Haggis is the national dish of Scotland but, since 1971, people in the US have eaten non-meat versions

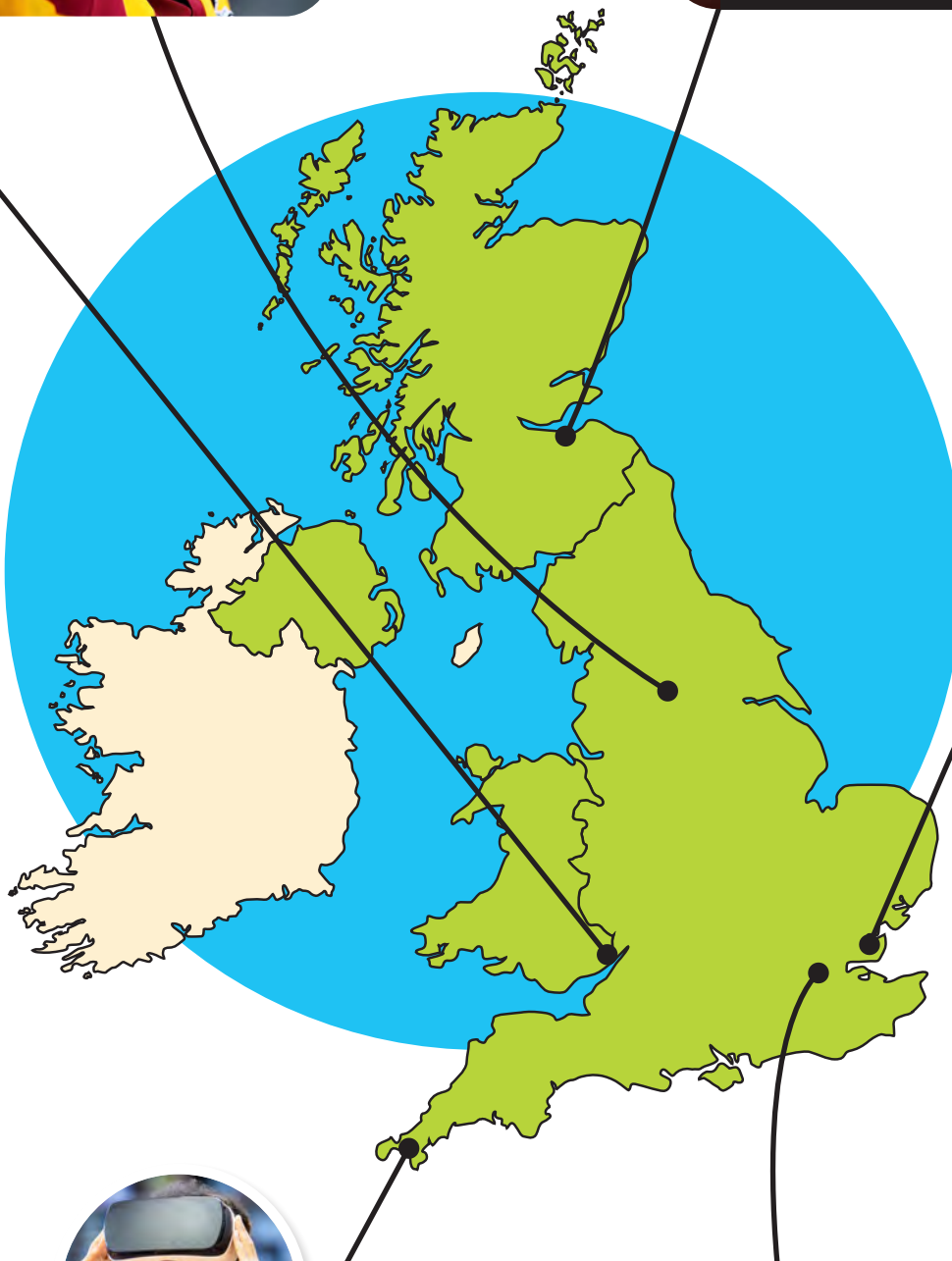
CHEPSTOW

Horsing around

Is this the most unique New Year's tradition of them all? Welsh and English people come together for Mari Lwyd – or Grey Mare – which sees a real horse's skull mounted on a pole and carried around town. The Mari figure is taken from door to door by dancing groups, and a singing battle then begins, as the Mari tries to persuade a householder to give them food and drink. The tradition became popular in South Wales in the 19th century. One of the events this year took place by Chepstow Castle, on the border between Wales and England.



Dressing up for the Grey Mare (inset)



Birds will thrive

WALLASEA ISLAND

All aboard the nature train

Rare and threatened birds such as lapwings, redshanks and avocets will be supported by a 100-hectare extension to a nature reserve. RSPB Wallasea Island in Essex is already the home of Europe's largest coastal habitat restoration project. Now, natural grasslands and a freshwater lagoon will be created to provide food for birds that don't feed in salt water. Restoring marshlands is a big part of containing rising sea levels, and the reserve was created using three million tonnes of soil. But where did it come from? It was all dug up during the creation of London's newest tube route, the speedy Elizabeth line!

LONDON

SEN visit to Tower

Children with SEN (special educational needs) can visit the Tower of London once again without the long queues. Relaxed Hour of the Tower is back this Sunday 26 January for neurodivergent and learning-disabled children aged five to 16. They can walk around the 1,000-year-old grounds for free with their families and see the iconic Crown Jewels without the stress of queuing. The Tower was built by William the Conqueror, the first Norman King of England, in the 1070s. It was his royal fortress and a prison. Now it attracts more than three million visitors a year.

CORNWALL

Reviving Cornish

The Cornish language is being brought to life for young people with virtual reality (VR). A £2.5m project called REVIVE will focus on two endangered European languages – Griko, which is spoken in parts of Italy, and Cornish, or Kernewek, which has seen a comeback after becoming extinct in the 18th century. It is thought there are now around 500 fluent Cornish speakers, but REVIVE looks to boost the county's heritage further. Immersive digital content will be created and displayed in community venues with the help and stories of local people.



The UN says that a language dies out every two weeks



Take in the historical sights



Check out the daily news on the *First News* app to see the video of Xuanbin Peng and the robot strutting their stuff, plus some of the robot's other moves that it copied from humans

SHALL WE DANCE?



Xuanbin Peng

ONE of the coolest things we've seen in the past week is this robot that can copy a human's motions, allowing it to walk, run and dance more like humans do.

The AI (artificial intelligence) that allows the robot to do this is called Advanced Expressive Whole-Body Control (ExBody2). Videos show the robot copying a wide variety of actions, from squats and punches, through to jogging and even dancing a waltz with a partner (pictured). Fans of *Strictly* will be pleased to hear it can do a cha-cha as well!

Although we're used to seeing human-like robots in films and on TV, even getting a two-legged robot to balance and stay upright is quite a tricky engineering problem.

For that reason, Xuanbin Peng (pictured cutting some rug with the robot) and his fellow researchers concentrated on upper body movements rather than things like jumps.

Football focus

You might have read in our year ahead issue (968) about the RoboCup tournament, which aims to develop a team of humanoid robots that are good enough to beat the football World Cup

holders by 2050. We asked Peng whether something like ExBody2 could make that happen.

"I believe humanoid robots have enormous potential as technology advances," he told us. "With improvements in hardware, control systems and especially AI, we could see major progress in agility, perception, field awareness, tactical decision-making, and teamwork... but there is still a significant gap between their current abilities and what's needed to beat top human athletes."

He says that he's "cautiously optimistic" that robots could beat the World Cup holders one day.

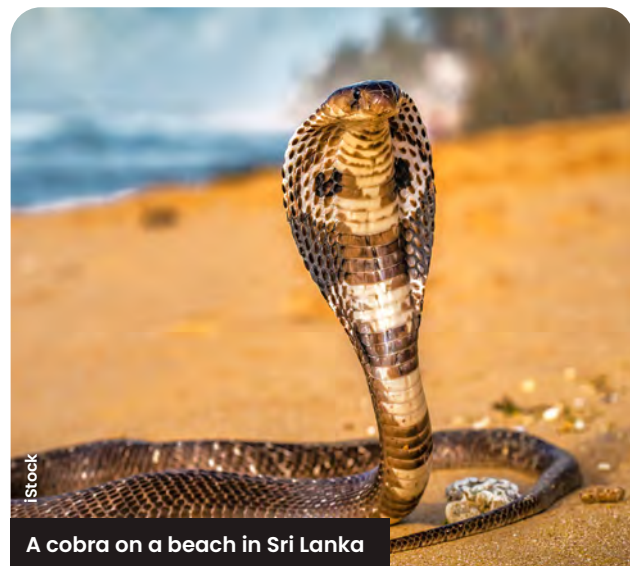
"It's certainly a challenging goal, yet it's also an inspiring one that continues to drive innovation. We're eager to see how far the technology can go."

ExBody2 was developed by scientists at the University of California, Berkeley; the University of California, San Diego; and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

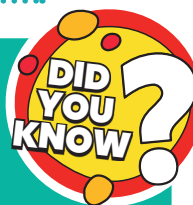
AI tackles snakes

ANOTHER clever use of AI was in the news this week, after scientists used it to create proteins that can protect against deadly snake bites.

A report in *Nature* reveals how AI identified proteins that can neutralise the deadly 'three-finger toxins' found in the venom of elapid snakes, which include things like cobras and mambas.



A cobra on a beach in Sri Lanka



THERE'S only one native snake in the UK that is venomous, but an adder bite is rarely fatal. Since 1876, there have only been 14 human deaths and the last one was in 1975. The main danger in the UK is from pet snakes. Between 2009–2020, there were 321 reports of bites from exotic snakes, but only one death, of a man who was bitten by a cobra.

The work could prevent many deaths, as snakes kill around 100,000 people every year, especially children and farm workers. One study found that nearly 46,000 people had been killed by snakes in India alone in 2005.

Even if a snakebite doesn't kill, it can cause paralysis, kidney failure or the need to amputate (cut off) an arm or leg.

At the moment, snakebite treatments come from the plasma of immunised animals such as horses, which is complicated and expensive. They also need to be refrigerated, but the treatments developed by AI could probably be kept at room temperature.

The report says the work could also help to treat a range of neglected tropical diseases.

This report is from the Science Museum in London



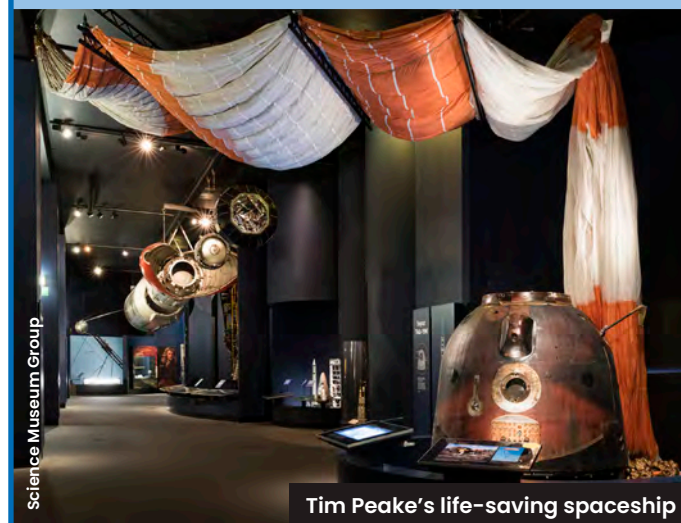
THIS is Soyuz TMA-19M, a Russian-made spacecraft that took astronauts Yuri Malenchenko, Tim Kopra and Britain's Tim Peake up to the International Space Station in 2015.

It also returned them safely to the Earth the following year. Tim was the first British astronaut to visit the ISS, and his journey to the station was his first spaceflight. It was also the first time that two Tims had shared a space mission!

Their spacecraft flew through Earth's atmosphere at 17,000mph (27,360km/h) and temperatures of more than 1,500°C, leaving its outer surface melted and burnt – look carefully and you can see scorch marks!

When talking about Soyuz, Tim said that astronauts "become very attached to [their] spacecraft because it definitely does save your life".

You can get up close to Tim Peake's spacecraft in Exploring Space at the Science Museum.



Science Museum Group

Tim Peake's life-saving spaceship



WORLD'S DEADLIEST SPIDER JUST GOT **BIGGER**

A **LARGER** and more dangerous species of one of the world's most venomous spiders has been discovered in Australia.

It was first found by spider expert Kane Christensen in the 2000s, but scientists have just confirmed it as a

new type. It's been given the scientific name *Atrax christenseni* after him.

Nicknamed 'big boy', it can grow to 9cm, nearly twice the size of the more common Sydney funnel-web spider – considered one of the deadliest in the world. It also has larger venom glands

and longer fangs.

The Sydney funnel-web spider's venom is fast acting and highly toxic, and big boy's venom is even more dangerous. But experts say the same anti-venom used for the funnel-web can be used with the new spider.

Welsh nature in decline

A **NEW** report has criticised the Welsh government for failing to stop an "alarming" decline in nature in Wales.

The report, from the Welsh Parliament's environment committee, said the government lacked "a plan, action and investment". Llyr Gruffydd, the committee chair, said: "Wales's nature is in trouble. One in six Welsh species are threatened with extinction."

Animals like water voles and birds like curlews are in danger, and experts say the government needs to work faster to save them.

A Welsh government spokesperson said that they "welcome the findings" and are "committed to tackling the nature emergency".



A water vole



Early frogspawn found in UK

WILDLIFE experts have spotted the jelly-like collection of frog eggs appearing earlier than usual in parts of the UK, showing how warmer weather might be changing nature's calendar.

A wildlife watcher in the Isles of Scilly reported the find on 21 December, instead of early spring, with more sightings later in Cornwall and Devon

Scientists say these unusual winter discoveries are helping them understand how climate change affects wildlife.

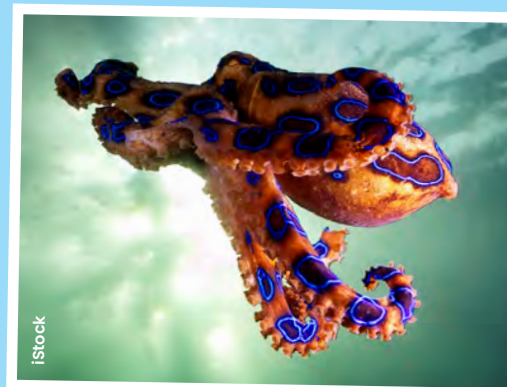
The findings are part of a UK-wide survey where anyone can help by reporting when they see frogspawn in ponds and streams.



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...

BLUE-RINGED OCTOPUS



HABITAT:

Coral reefs in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

FUN FACT:

Like most octopuses, the blue-ringed octopus has blue blood and three hearts!

SPECIAL SUPERPOWER:

Beautiful but dangerous, it has enough venom to kill 26 adult humans within a few minutes.

CONSERVATION STATUS:

The International Union for Conservation of Nature has listed three species as of least concern, but doesn't have enough data to say for certain about a fourth species.



Aneeshwar's blue-ringed octopus 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.



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R A D X M K M Q H E
X J W K G E F R E V
H Q R Y C L J M D C
N G F W N E U C D A
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O L C U D O J V R C
R L O R G N J E M I
G T X M N H P A A T
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Can you find all of these words?

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- Cox
- Cave
- Skeleton
- Gorge
- Limestone
- Calcite
- Gough



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Facebook/John Williams

WELCOME TO POTHOLE LAND!

FRUSTRATED residents in a Welsh village turned their damaged road into a mock tourist spot to focus their council's attention on dangerous potholes. Locals in Pontfadog, near Wrexham, put up signs

advertising "Pothole Land", joking about having the "deepest, longest, widest potholes in Wales." The creative protest worked, and the council has now started fixing the road.

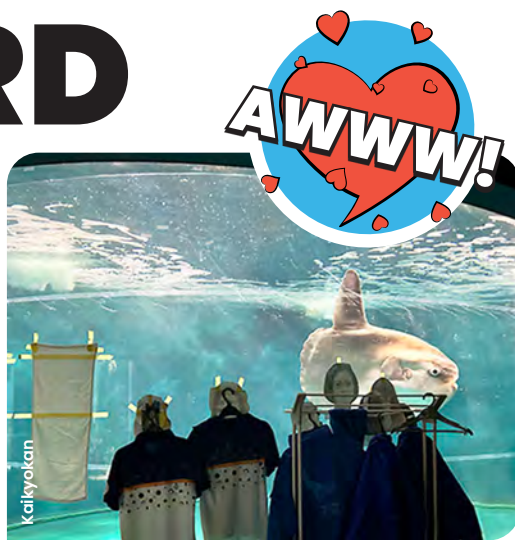
LONELY FISH GETS CARDBOARD FRIENDS

A JAPANESE aquarium has found a creative solution to help a lonely sunfish who was missing its human visitors.

After Kaiyokan aquarium closed for renovations in December, the fish had stopped eating its jellyfish food and began to show signs of distress.

Staff thought it was missing seeing visitors, so they set up a row of uniforms and attached cardboard faces to them.

The next day the aquarium posted a picture of the sunfish swimming happily in front of its new audience and moving its fins again.



kaiyokan

Record-breaking skipper



A CHINESE university student has broken the world record for the most skips in one minute, completing an incredible 388 jumps.

Alapati Yimaier, 23, claimed the title at Changji University in front of more than 100 spectators.

The sports student, who started his hobby in school, managed more than six jumps every second!

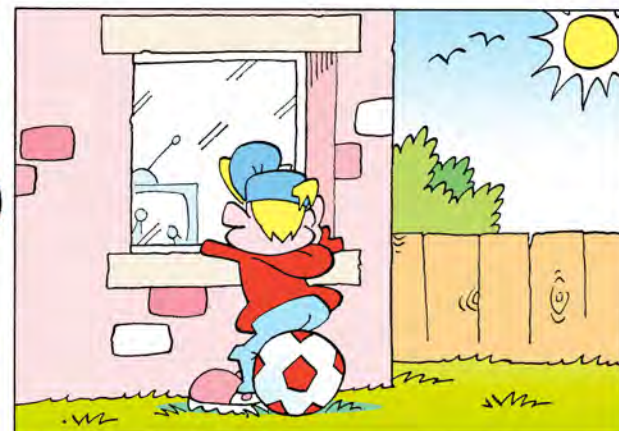
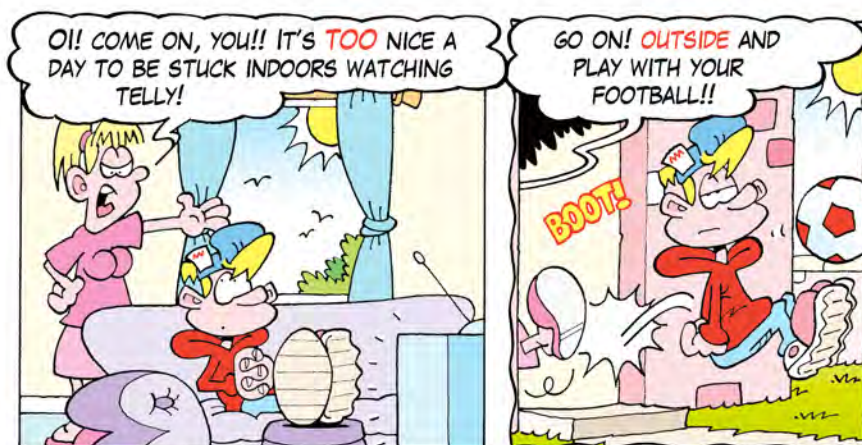
"When the timer stopped, I didn't even have the strength to celebrate – I was completely spent," said Yimaier.

He now plans to become a skipping rope coach.



Paper Boy!

Written and illustrated by Paul Palmer





Getty

Meta founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg

Want some help spotting fake news? Try these:

- www.bbc.co.uk/news/reality_check • fullfact.org
- www.reuters.com/fact-check • first.news/fakeorfact
- And this great video: first.news/spotfakenews

Or even better, get yourself a free copy of our updated 28-page special edition, all about making sense of the news, how to spot bias, fake news and much more! Just go to first.news/fake-news



META, the company that owns Facebook and Instagram, was all over the news recently, after making the decision to stop fact-checking on its sites in the US. Some people think that it's a victory for free speech, while others are worried that it'll lead to a huge surge in fake news and hate speech. We took a closer look...

What has Meta done?

The boss of Meta, Mark Zuckerberg, announced that the company was ending its 'third-party fact-checking programme' in the US. The scheme involved independent organisations checking whether posts were true, to try to cut down on viral hoaxes and fake news.

Instead, users of Facebook, Instagram and Threads in the US will see Community Notes attached to some posts instead. These have been used on X for a while, and involve users of the site working together to call out fake news and lies, and explain why the post is wrong.

Meta said that it plans to "phase in Community Notes in the US first over the next couple of months", which suggests that it'll be happening in other countries too.

The company said it would instead concentrate on illegal behaviour, such as terrorism, fraud and scams.

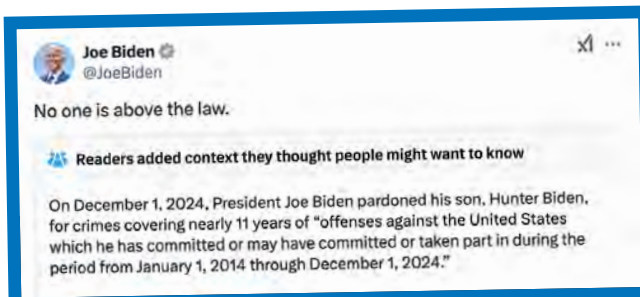
One organisation that does fact-checking for Meta is Full Fact, which said that its mission was "to protect and promote free speech" and added that "it's possible to strike a balance by promoting the facts without resorting to censorship."

When talking about using Community Notes instead, Meta said that it has "seen this approach work on X".

However, researchers and users of X say that after X owner Elon Musk got rid of the site's moderators (people who monitor content), fake news and hate speech went through the roof. A year later, the European Commission (EC) found that X had the largest proportion of disinformation of any social media site. The EC is now investigating how effective Community Notes are.

A report by the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) already has an answer to that, saying that "most Community Notes are never seen by users, allowing misinformation to spread unchecked".

The reason is that users in the Community Notes scheme have to reach an agreement, but on controversial topics, they rarely do. "As a result, Community Notes fail precisely where they are needed most," the CCDH says.



A Community Note on X that was very popular with opponents of US President Joe Biden, who were angry that Mr Biden stopped his son going to jail

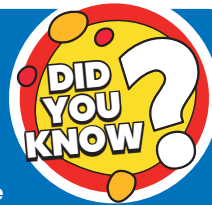
And why now?

Meta said that in trying to keep on top of dodgy posts, it was "making too many mistakes" and being "too slow to respond" when people's posts were incorrectly flagged as being fake news.

However, many think that the decision is about politics, and the fact that Donald Trump is president again. Mr Trump and his supporters have often claimed that they're the subject of more fact checks than other people, and he said that Zuckerberg would "spend the rest of his life in prison" if he interfered in the 2024 election. Trump was also angry that he was banned from Facebook and Instagram after his supporters attacked the US Capitol building, an incident that led to several deaths.

Recently, Trump was asked if Meta was making the changes in response to his threats. "Probably," he replied.

ONE thing that didn't get as much attention is the changes Meta made to its 'hateful conduct' guidelines. The latest version now says users are allowed to say that LGBT+ people are "mentally ill" or "abnormal".

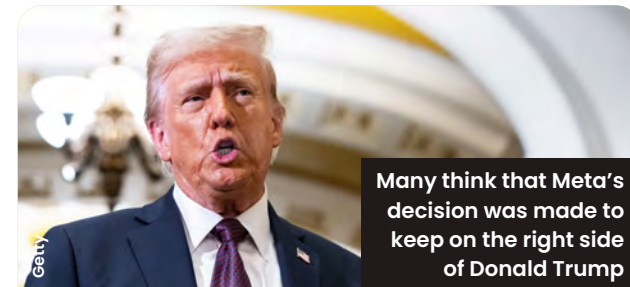


It was way back in 1973 that the American Psychiatric Association stopped classifying being gay as a mental illness, so this is both scientifically incorrect and deeply offensive to gay people.

Meta's rules now also say that you can insult someone's appearance based on things like their race, religion or disability. Experts say this is bound to lead to an increase in hate speech.

"Allowing hate speech and harmful content online has real-world consequences. Regulating such content is not censorship."

– Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights



Many think that Meta's decision was made to keep on the right side of Donald Trump

Does fact-checking work anyway?

That depends who you ask, but experts generally agree that it does help to reduce the spread of fake news, even if it's not as big an effect as some would like. One downside is that those who see the fake news often aren't the same people who see the fact check of it.

Another problem is that a viral bit of fake news will spread much further than the fact check, which confirms the old saying that a lie can travel halfway around the world before the truth has even got its boots on.

Some good news is that even for people who don't trust fact-checkers, fact-checks do still have some effect. A study published in *Nature Human Behaviour* last year found that these people would still be less likely to believe or share a post if it had a fact-check warning label on it.

MISINFORMATION: information that is incorrect, but is shared by someone who thinks it's true.

DISINFORMATION: information that is false, and was deliberately created and shared to fool people.





 USA

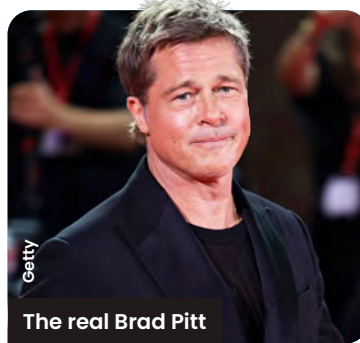
Starbucks says US visitors have to buy something

Starbucks has told customers in the USA that, from Monday (27 January), they'll have to buy something if they want to sit in its cafés. In 2018, the company announced that people could use its internet and toilets without making a purchase. However, it's dropping that policy in the hope of boosting struggling sales. Starbucks told BBC News that it's part of a plan "to enhance the café experience" for its paying customers. It's also going to start offering a free refill for coffees bought in its stores. People here in the UK can still sit in Starbucks cafés without buying anything.



 FRANCE

Woman conned out of £700,000 by fake Brad Pitt



A French woman has revealed that she was conned out of £700,000 by a fake, AI version of the film star Brad Pitt. Scammers pretending to be Pitt messaged Anne, aged 53, on Instagram, and tricked her into believing that he was in love with her. Anne was later sent fake, AI-generated photos of Pitt in hospital, and messages asking her to send money for his medical bills. "Like a fool, I paid," she told TV channel TF1. Anne was cruelly mocked for her ordeal, but the real Brad Pitt has defended her. His spokesperson said: "It's awful that scammers take advantage of the strong bond between fans and celebrities."

 SPAIN

Homes made more pricey for foreigners



Spain is planning to make homes more expensive to buy for people from outside the European Union (EU). Foreigners bought 87,000 homes in Spain in 2023. However, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said that, instead of living in them, many are renting them out as holiday homes to make money.

He said that Spain "obviously cannot allow" that, because it makes it harder for local people to find a home to live in. To stop the problem, non-EU buyers may have to pay a huge 100% tax on homes, which would double the price that they're sold for. The UK left the EU in 2020.

 BRAZIL

Mayor begs for boats



Heavy rainfall turned roads into rivers in southern Brazil last week, including in cities like Itapema. On Instagram, (top right) the city's mayor, Alexandre Xepa, asked for anyone with a boat to help.

"The water is almost up to our necks. Civil Defence, the fire department and City Hall are all conducting rescues, but we're asking for help from anyone who has boats, as there are many people in need of assistance."

— Mayor Alexandre Xepa

 PERU

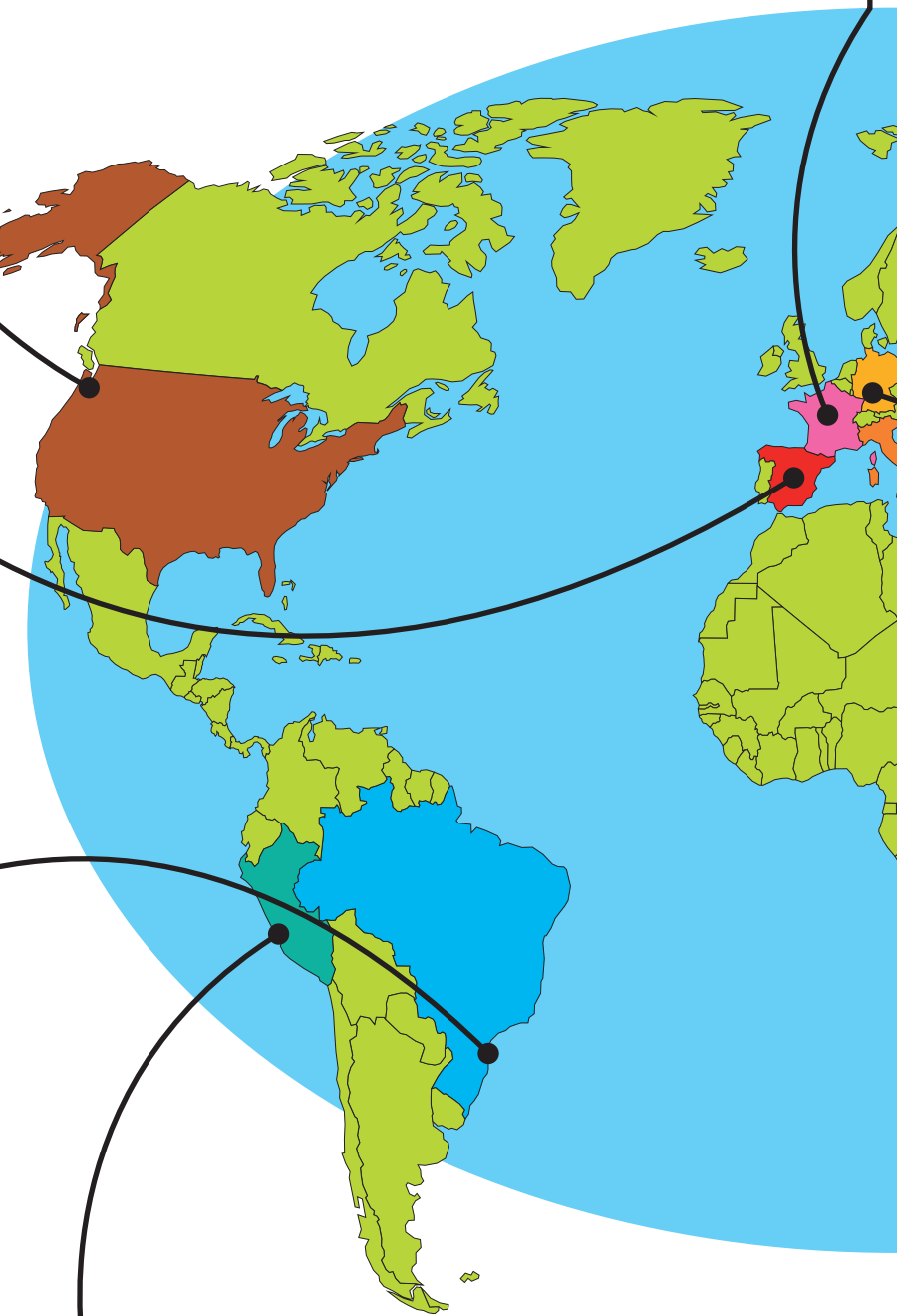
The statue had been removed in 2003



Statue returns to Lima in time for its 490th birthday

A statue of Francisco Pizarro, a Spanish conqueror who defeated the Inca Empire in the 1500s, has been put back on display in Lima for the first time in 22 years. In 1532, Pizarro led 167 men into South America and captured and killed Inca emperor, Atahualpa. He stole gold and silver from the Inca city of Cusco and founded Lima, Peru's capital city 490 years ago, in 1535. At last week's unveiling of the return of the statue, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, a visiting politician from Madrid in Spain, said that Pizarro's actions "forever transformed the world".

In response, unhappy protesters shouted: "Out with Pizarro!"





POLAND

Musk invited to buy a castle

A town in Poland has invited Elon Musk, the world's richest man, to come to buy its castle – and use it for his European headquarters! After hearing that the billionaire was on the lookout for a base in Europe, Piotr Bujak, the mayor of Głogówek, wrote to Musk on X and sent letters to his companies. He said: "The castle has a very good vibe and is a perfect location for great things... we have a perfect climate and this is the best place on Earth." The castle (right) dates from the 13th century. It has rooms for business and private living, plus room for a helipad!



Głogówek has a rich history



GERMANY



Getty

Germany is suspicious of Russian spying

German army told to shoot down drones

Germany is giving its army permission to shoot down any suspicious-looking drones that hover too near to its military sites. Drones have become popular with content creators who want to make cool aerial photos and videos. However, on the evening of 12 January, around ten drones

were spotted hovering above Manching Air Base in Ingolstadt. Others have been seen flying near to a US air base near Kaiserslautern. Germany's interior minister Nancy Faeser said that "espionage [spying] or sabotage are considered as a possible reason".



NEPAL

PM says there are too many tigers

The prime minister of Nepal says the country has too many tigers. Nepal, which is in the Himalayas, has tripled its tiger population in ten years. This has delighted animal groups, because tiger numbers across Asia have plummeted. However, the government says that, between 2019 and 2023, tigers killed nearly 40 people in Nepal. "In such a small country, we have more than 350 tigers... we can't have so many tigers and let them eat up humans," said KP Sharma Oli. He thinks that 150 tigers is enough.



Getty

100,000 tigers roamed Asia 100 years ago. Now, there are just 5,600.



ITALY

Posh private baths uncovered in Pompeii

A spectacular thermal bath has been found among the ancient Roman ruins of Pompeii. Its owner lived in a rich part of the city, and it's thought that the baths would have been used to try to impress rich guests. Up to 30 people at a time would have stepped inside the spa to relax after feasting in the home's banquet hall, which was discovered in April last year. Pompeii was destroyed and buried under ash when Mount Vesuvius volcano erupted in 79 CE.



Getty

It's one of the biggest bath houses ever found in Pompeii



INDONESIA

Free school dinners for 60 million children

Indonesia has begun rolling out its plans to provide more than 60 million pupils with free meals, to tackle poor nutrition and promote healthy eating. It's a major project of the new president, Prabowo Subianto, who took over in October. He's now hoping to expand the plan to 83 million people (a quarter of Indonesia's population) by the end of the year. However, Dadan Hindayana, who helps to run the programme, warned last week that this will cost the government another 100 trillion rupiah (£5 billion). The scheme also got off to a bad start, as there were several reports of pupils getting food poisoning from the free meals.



Getty

More than 500,000 meals were served on the programme's first day

WHO SAID IT: TRUMP OR MUSK?

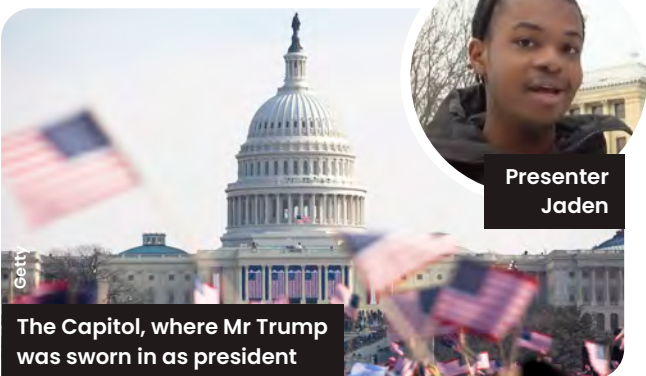


DONALD Trump is president of the United States of America again and his new government includes billionaire Tesla boss Elon Musk! But how did he become president, and what's Musk got to do with it? Presenter Jaden reports for our partner TV show, FYI.



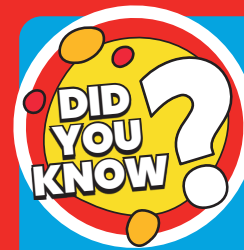
Trump's inauguration

History was made on Monday 20 January as Donald Trump was sworn in as president of the United States of America in what's known as inauguration day. An inauguration is a big ceremony where the president officially signs up for the job. It's all about the peaceful transfer of power from the old president to new president. The tradition started all the way back in 1789 when the first ever US president, George Washington, was sworn in. Donald Trump took his oath of office (promise to fulfil presidential duties) in the Capitol, a famous building in Washington, DC, where Congress meets, like Parliament in the UK.



CAN YOU GUESS WHO SAID IT, DONALD TRUMP OR ELON MUSK?

TRUMP and Musk are known for saying some pretty odd things. But can you guess who said it – Trump or Musk? Give it a go and then check your answers at the bottom of the page!



ONE of Trump's most-used phrases is 'fake news'. He blames news companies for spreading misinformation even though he is well-known for making up things that are untrue.

Musk joining Trump's team



You probably know who Elon Musk is – he's the billionaire behind big tech companies like SpaceX, Tesla and now X. But you might be wondering what on Earth he has to do with US politics. Musk joined Trump's election campaign as a special advisor, and his role was controversial (caused disagreements). He made headlines for his outspoken support for, and big money donations to, Trump and also for his views on issues like tech and AI (artificial intelligence). His loyalty to Trump has paid off, though, because he's been given a role in Trump's government – to lead the new Department of Government Efficiency, which means that his job is to find ways of making the government run faster and smoother at a lesser cost.

- 1 "I hate Taylor Swift."
- 2 "Where are the aliens?"
- 3 "In most cases, the word 'homeless' is a lie."
- 4 "Time to clean up this humongous mess!"
- 5 "You can't lead America if you don't love Americans."
- 6 "AI will be smarter than all humans combined."
- 7 "The McDonald's ice cream machines will work great again."
- 8 "The world is spinning out of control."
- 9 "My tweets are literally what I'm thinking at the moment."
- 10 "I will restore peace in the world."

Answers:
1 Trump 2 Musk 3 Musk 4 Musk 5 Trump 6 Musk 7 Trump 8 Trump 9 Musk 10 Trump



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.

WIN! BUILD YOUR OWN KITS!



BUILD Your Own amazing creations with these innovative kits.

Get ready for an awesome dinosaur adventure with Build Your Own's new *Tyrannosaurus rex*. An impressive 38cm once built, this mighty *T rex* is almost as fearsome as the real thing! This kit also comes with a press-out *Tyrannosaurus rex* Fact Stand for you to learn more about this dinosaur favourite.

Build Your Own's Microscope Kit encourages you to discover and explore. This super cool microscope is easy to assemble using slot-together techniques – no glue, no mess, no fuss. Everything you need is provided, simply follow the instructions: press out the pre-cut parts, then add the lenses and mirror to build your fully functioning microscope. Awesome for examining garden minibeasts, leaves, feathers and more – you'll be amazed at what you can see with the 30x magnification.

We're giving away five bundles, complete with a Build Your Own *Tyrannosaurus rex* Kit and Build Your Own Microscope Kit.

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



What do you call someone who studies fossils?

- a) Astronomer
- b) Palaeontologist
- c) Zoologist

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first.news/comps or see page 20. The closing date is 7 February.

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

WIN! A COPY OF THE WILD ROBOT BLU-RAY™ & BOOK!



To celebrate the release of *THE WILD ROBOT* on Blu-ray™, 4K UHD and DVD, we are giving away 3 copies of the Blu-ray™ and the illustrated book by Peter Brown.

The epic adventure follows Roz, a robot shipwrecked on an uninhabited island who must adapt to harsh new surroundings. Eventually, Roz befriends a clever fox and adopts an adorable orphaned gosling named Brightbill! Heartwarming and action-packed, the movie explores the clash between nature and technology.



ENTER NOW! MARK YOUR ENTRY THE WILD ROBOT

To enter: first.news/comps or see page 20. The closing date is 7 Feb

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THE BAFTAS LOWDOWN!

THE nominations for this year's BAFTA film awards have been revealed. Here's what you need to know ahead of the official ceremony next month.

● **What are the BAFTAs?**

The awards honour the best British and international movies from the past year. A host of actors, directors and creative people from the film industry will be awarded.

● **Best of the Brits**

This year, we'll be rooting for *Wallace and Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl*, which has picked up an impressive three nominations! The Aardman movie is battling it out against nine others for the title of Outstanding British Film.

● **Animated magic!**

Four top films are in the running for Best Animated Film. They are *Flow* (which scooped the surprise win at the Golden Globes), *Inside Out 2*, *Wallace and Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl* and *The Wild Robot*.

● **Family favourites**

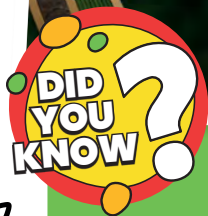
Meanwhile, these family faves have been nominated for Best Children's and Family Film: *Flow*, *Kensuke's Kingdom*, *Wallace and Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl* and *The Wild Robot*. Which one do you think deserves the top title?

● **A Wicked streak!**

Wicked continues to dazzle this awards season, receiving a whopping seven nominations. Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande are up for Best Leading Actress and Best Supporting Actress.



It's *Wicked* news for Ariana and Cynthia



THERE are 42 films up for awards at this year's ceremony!

● **The highest honour**

Harry Potter star Warwick Davis (pictured, right) will be presented with this year's BAFTA Fellowship Award. This is BAFTA's highest honour and is being given to Warwick for his services to acting and his charity work.

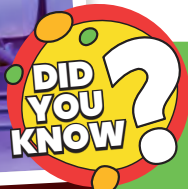


● **The big ceremony**

The awards ceremony will take place at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall in London on Sunday 16 February. Expect plenty of famous people and dazzling outfits on the red carpet!



Wallace and Gromit for the win!



THE winners are selected by BAFTA members – a selection of people from the entertainment industry. The only award voted for by the public is the Rising Star award for an up-and-coming actor.



Could it be joy for *Inside Out 2*?



● **Timothée fined!**

Actor Timothée Chalamet recently arrived at a movie premiere in London on a Lime bike. While lots of us enjoyed the actor's unusual mode of transport, he later claimed he was fined £65 for parking the public bike on the red carpet. D'oh!



● **Jack's back!**
Comedian Jack Whitehall is returning as the host of this year's BRIT Awards. This is the fifth time the star will be presenting the ceremony, as Roman Kemp and Maya Jama step down. Jack said: "It is my favourite night of the year." The BRITs will take place at London's O₂ arena on 1 March.



SPIDER-MAN SWINGS IN!



COMIC-BOOK fans will love the new animated series of *Your Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man* coming to Disney+ this week.



● **The plot**

Follow Peter Parker on his way to becoming a hero, with a journey unlike anything we've ever seen before!

● **A stylish entrance**

The series celebrates Spider-Man's early comic book roots, with a vintage look and feel on screen.

● **Cool music**

Listen out for the super cool soundtrack, which is set against the busy city streets!



Catch *Your Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man* on Disney+ on 29 January



THIS DONKEY HAS A KICK!



DONKEY Kong is back for a rapid remastered adventure!

While this is the third version of the 2010 Wii platformer, *Donkey Kong Country Returns HD* feels fresher and more fun than ever.

Players are flung straight into the jungle for the first of 80 levels in nine vibrant worlds. You discover that the evil Tiki Tak Tribe have made off with Donkey Kong's precious banana hoard, and it's up to DK and his best bud Diddy Kong to track them down.

Right from the off, the platformer's action is really fast-paced and testing. Items like puzzle pieces and 'KONG' letters are hidden in every possible corner, and they unlock unique levels.



Even if you were hoping for a brand-new *Donkey Kong* adventure, you won't be disappointed with this remake

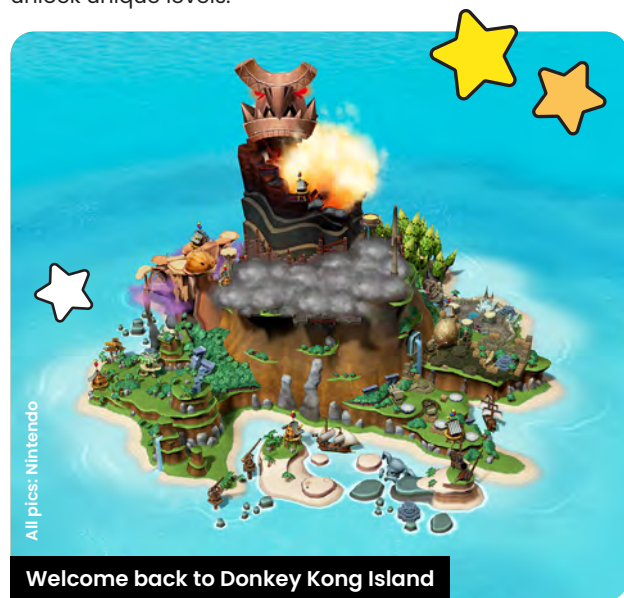
A range of enemies and bosses keep you on your toes, including angry Awks and the hideous Mugly! Enemies or not, all characters look fresh with updated visuals making the experience very enjoyable.

Another sweet feature is that players can team up with a friend or family member. They can take control of Diddy, whose trusty peanut popgun lends a useful hand against those pesky enemies.

Those looking for a harder experience that reflects the original Wii release can play in Original mode, whereas Modern mode adds extra hearts to DK and Diddy's health. You have the freedom of Donkey Kong Island!

Once you get going, the rewarding nature of this game means it's really hard to put down. We love it!

Donkey Kong Country Returns HD is out now on Nintendo Switch.



All pics: Nintendo

Welcome back to Donkey Kong Island



Deep dive into *Animal Crossing*

SEA Life UK has partnered with *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* for a new live, interactive experience.

The Nintendo Switch game sees players head to their very own paradise – a deserted island where exciting opportunities await.

Now, even more discoveries are ready to be made with Sea Life's marine world alongside some of the game's characters.

This February, the experience will tour the UK. Visitors will explore the Sea Life Islands with Tom Nook, a beloved character of the *Animal Crossing* series.

Discover the tour locations at visitsealife.com.



2 NINTENDO SWITCH™



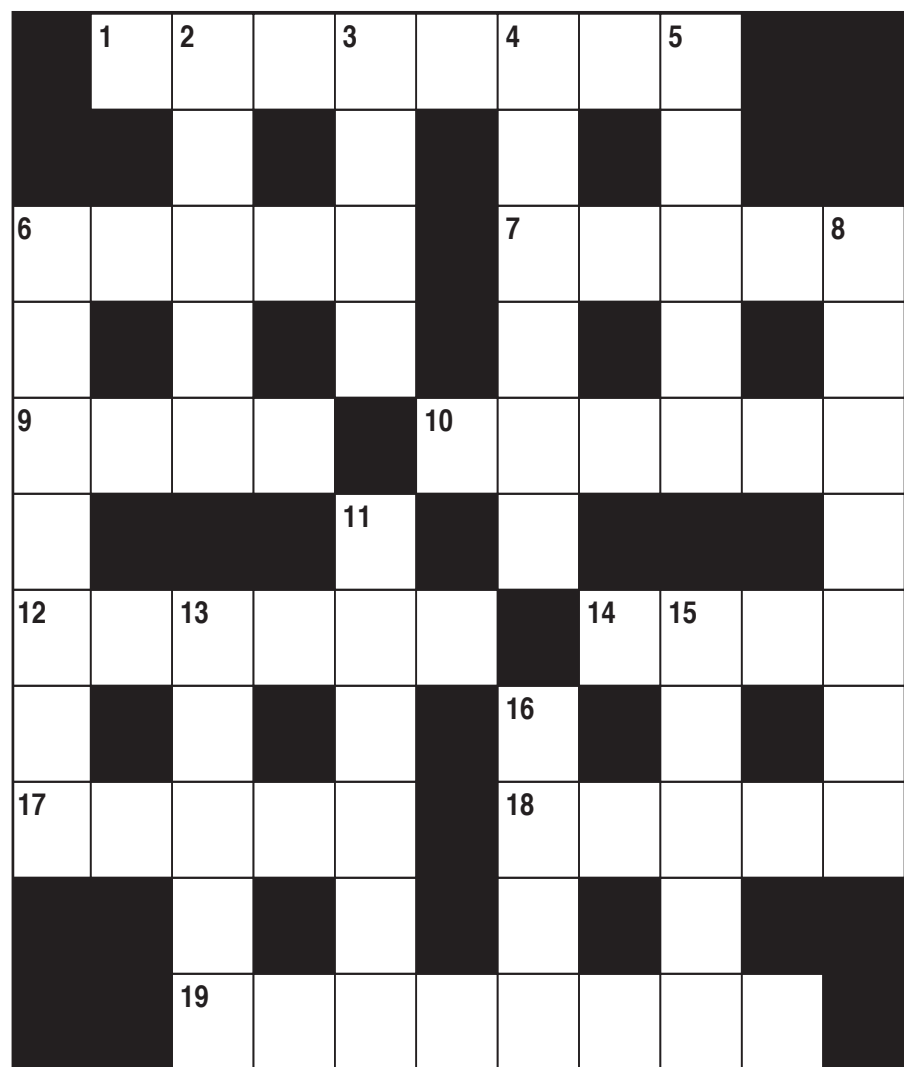
IT'S finally here!

Nintendo has announced the eagerly-anticipated Nintendo Switch 2, due out later this year. One of the most exciting bits of news is that physical and digital games from the first Switch console will be playable on this new hardware. Another teaser we got from the release trailer was gameplay from a new *Mario Kart* game! Gamers can get their first hands-on experience of the new console when Nintendo holds Switch 2 Experience events around the world. The London event takes place from 11-13 April.



CROSSWORD

CAN you solve our crossword puzzle using the clues below?



ACROSS

- 1 Got ready for (8)
- 6 Slithering reptile (5)
- 7 Removed the moisture from (5)
- 9 Roald _____ : children's author (4)
- 10 Foot joints (6)
- 12 Soft rubber stationery item (6)
- 14 Opposite of under (4)
- 17 Tennis stroke (5)
- 18 Group of lines in a poem (5)
- 19 Smallest (8)

DOWN

- 2 Stretch out an arm to grab something (5)
- 3 Remove skin from a fruit (4)
- 4 Creature such as a rat or mouse (6)
- 5 Hole-making tool (5)
- 6 Unhappy feeling (7)
- 8 Merit (7)
- 11 Choose (6)
- 13 Fourth month of the year (5)
- 15 Tiny living thing that causes flu (5)
- 16 Egg-shaped (4)



Sudoku

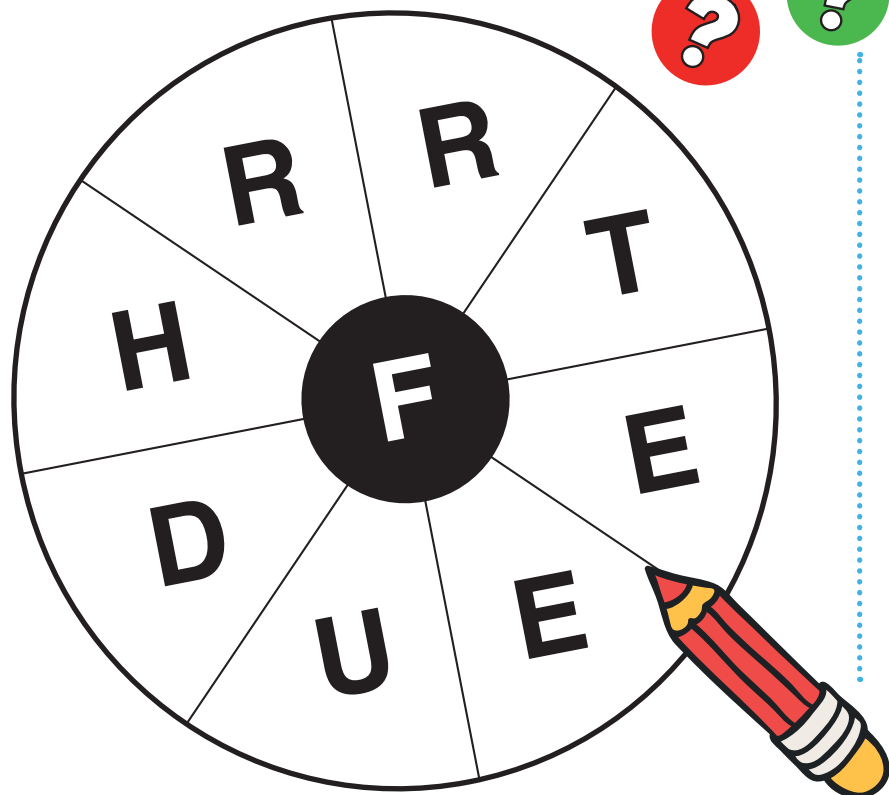
CAN you complete our sudoku puzzle, filling in the numbers one to nine?

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

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.

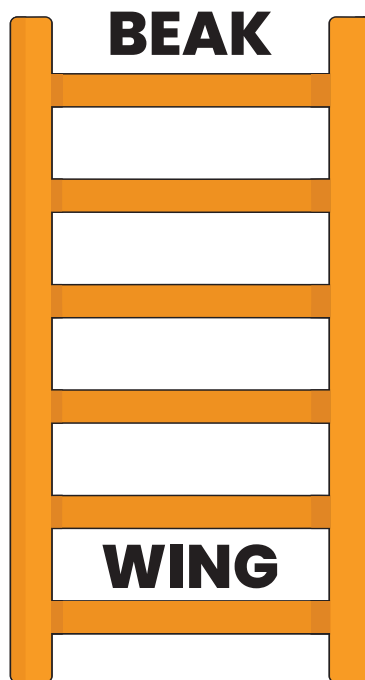
Word wheel

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

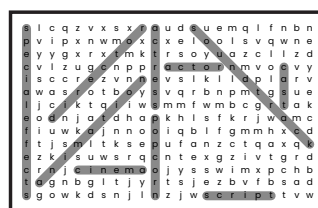
SEE if you can get from the top of the ladder to the bottom by changing one letter at a time to make a new word.



ISSUE 970 ANSWERS:

- Word wheel: extremely.
- Word ladder: ride, rode, rose, rosy, posy, pony.
- Spot the difference: 1) Missing boat 2) Sun in sky 3) Dog is a different colour 4) Two rabbits instead of one 5) Missing football 6) Missing mum and son 7) Aeroplane going the opposite way 8) Extra bush near deckchairs 9) Extra bird in tree 10) Bench missing a leg.

L	A	D	Y	B	I	R	D	O	9	6	8	7	1	3	2	5	4	
U	R	R	A	D	I	A			5	1	4	6	8	2	7	9	3	
X	R	A	Y	E	N	S	U	R	E	7	3	2	5	9	4	6	1	8
U	M	A	P	X					6	8	9	2	3	5	4	7	1	
R	O	A	S	T	E	L	E	C	T	4	7	5	1	6	8	3	2	9
I	H				A			R	1	2	3	9	4	7	8	6	5	
O	C	E	A	N	C	Y	C	L	E	2	4	7	8	5	1	9	3	6
U	M	H			H			M	3	5	6	4	7	9	1	8	2	
S	I	M	P	L	E	B	I	T	E	8	9	1	3	2	6	5	4	7
C	O	A			N			L										
E	O	R	D	I	N	A	R	Y										



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 Chinese New Year scene?



A

B



Wordsearch



Can you find all of these birds in the wordsearch? Tick them off as you go!



- Sparrow
- Starling
- Pigeon
- Blackbird
- Robin
- Owl
- Swan
- Buzzard
- Cuckoo
- Pheasant



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



BITTEN BY THE EGYPT BUG!

BUG-LOVING book author MG Leonard tells *First News* about how an amazing trip to Egypt helped her to write her new time-travelling tale, *Hunt for the Golden Scarab!*



● **So, *Hunt for the Golden Scarab!* What's it all about?**
Our hero, Sim, knows that all his life, his mum has had secrets. The book starts when he finds out that those secrets are quite dangerous. He realises his mum has this amazing ability to use music to open doors in time! I had that idea and thought, if I could go anywhere in time, where'd be the first place I'd go? One was Ancient Egypt.

● **Was Ancient Egypt a favourite topic of yours at school?**
I'd always been fascinated by it, but in a non-educational, touristy way! I was big into the Indiana Jones films and love that style of story. I got the bug from doing homework with my kids, and learning about Tutankhamun, and I became slightly obsessed with Nefertiti – a pharaoh, and an incredible, powerful woman. I immediately booked myself a cruise down the Nile!

● **So go on – tell us all about your amazing trip!**
It was a complete eye-opener! We flew to Luxor, which used to be Thebes, the old capital of Egypt. Then we boarded a boat up the Nile, visiting all the temples, then back down the other side. The trip finished with a visit to the Valley of the Kings, and the tomb of Tutankhamun. It's an extraordinary experience, to be in that tomb and to see the 3,000-year-old mummified remains of the boy king, Tutankhamun. I was astonished. If you ever get a chance to do it... best trip of my life!



The Valley of the Kings, and writing on the boat!



● **Your first book was *Beetle Boy*, and it's no secret that you really like beetles! Do you have a scarab beetle?**

I do! I'm weird, I apologise! I have around 200 beetle species in my house. I take them into schools. The kids call me the beetle lady! I have a golden scarab (left). They're not found in Egypt; they're from rainforests in Brazil. They look like they're made out of solid gold. But the 'golden scarab' in my book is a 'heart scarab' – a piece of jewellery used in the mummification process. I've imagined that Nefertiti's would have been stunning.

● **Why did you feel like you needed to go to Egypt?**
There are certain duties a writer has. When you're writing about a culture that isn't your own, you need to make sure that you're describing it accurately. A lot of things I think I know about ancient Egypt are nonsense – things from Hollywood movies! We had a guide who took us to the temples, and I was able to talk to him about my ideas for the story and whether it was possible... so I'm describing modern Luxor and Ancient Egypt in the best way that I can. There was no way I could have written about Egypt without going.

● **And this is just the first book in what will be a Time Keys series – that's exciting!**
My publisher has agreed to four books, but I'd like there to be more. If kids enjoy it, there will be more! The second book comes out in September – *The Legend of Viking Thunder*, set in Viking times. I've been to Norway several times. The third one, out in a year's time, is *The Impossible Gladiator*, a Roman adventure. I've been to the Colosseum and Rome before, but I want to go again. In the fourth book, I'd like to explore Queen Elizabeth and Shakespeare.

Hunt for the Golden Scarab is out now.

Recommended reads

in partnership with Peters



Under the sea

DID you know that well over two-thirds of the Earth's surface is covered by water? That means there's a huge world of wonders to explore under the waves. Dive in with these splashing, smashing reads!

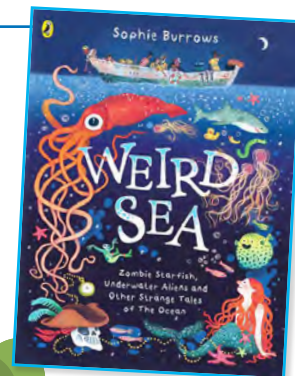


Alex Neptune: Dragon Thief by David Owen

Set sail on Alex's next adventure as he fights to stop his pirate nemesis from raising an all-powerful, world-ending monster from the ocean deep.

Weird Sea by Sophie Burrows

Mega sharks, zombie starfish, psychic sea serpents and more – impress your friends with facts and stories about the sea's weird and wonderful side!



A Coral Reef Story by Jane Burnard, illustrated by Kendra Binney

Swim through the seasons and discover the beauty of the coral reef and its creatures, from great white sharks to graceful green turtles.

The Storm Swimmer by Clare Weze

Ginika's dead-end summer crashes into adventure when she makes friends with a boy who lives under the sea.



Lore of the Deep: Folklore & Wisdom From the Watery Wilds by Claire Cock-Starkey, illustrated by Stacey Rozich

Discover the mythical world beneath the waves in this treasury of folklore from the ocean depths.

"What do you read, prime minister?"

THE prime minister, Keir Starmer, has revealed that his favourite books all have one thing in common... "I love football, so all my books are about football," he told schoolchildren on a visit to Ukraine. "My favourite book is *Roy of the Rovers*."

That's a comic book about a fictional footballer that used to come out during his childhood. The last prime minister, Rishi Sunak, once said Roald Dahl was one of his favourite authors. Fun books like these must make a nice change from the mountains of meeting notes and reports they need to read as part of their job each day!

DON'T MISS IT!

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE!







CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

SIX NATIONS

GRAMMY AWARDS

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AWESOME PUZZLES

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PLAY OUR WEEKLY NEWS QUIZ!

VIDEOS



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App Store | Google Play



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

There are some great reports this week on Your News! I'm particularly jealous of Jasmine, who recently went to Nairobi in Kenya, Africa, and saw some incredible animals! It's so important that we protect animals, and that's exactly what Eliza is doing – good for you!

Don't forget, you can feature on these pages, too! If you have a news story that you want to share, write in to let me know by asking an adult to email yournews@firstnews.co.uk.

SAVE THE VAQUITA!

ONE thing that we know you really care about is animals, and Eliza is no exception. She wants to raise awareness for the critically endangered vaquita.

by Eliza

Hi! I am Eliza Denno, 11 years old and live in Devon. I am deeply concerned about an animal called a vaquita. Some of you may know or have heard of it, but I am assuming most of you haven't. This is because there are only ten left in the whole world and their numbers are dropping dangerously!

A vaquita is a bit like a small dolphin, but has a very big nose and distinct, large dark rings around its eyes. They typically travel in groups of two. Unfortunately, vaquitas are critically endangered because of illegal fishing in the Gulf of California, which is where they live. Vaquitas get caught up in the nets of fishermen who are illegally trying to catch fish called totoaba, because they are around the same size.

I am trying to raise awareness of vaquitas before it's too late and people in the future never get to know or see them! There are many ways we can help vaquitas. Here are some of my tips:

- Tell people about vaquitas being critically endangered. It's important that as many people know as possible, including friends, family and neighbours.
- Make or sign a petition.
- Shop for sustainable seafood. Getting tangled in nets is what is driving this species to extinction. You can help by making sustainable choices when buying seafood, especially avoiding Mexican shrimp.



Eliza and her dog



A pair of vaquitas in the Gulf of California

- Support the Gulf of California by telling the Mexican government to step up its actions.
- Donate to conservation efforts.

THIS WEEK'S POLL!

We asked 3,358 of you:

Should cages be banned for egg-laying hens?



36% of you said NO

64% of you said YES

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

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

Backstage is brilliant!



LEARNING in the traditional way, at school, doesn't suit everyone, and that includes George. He's been learning in a different way. Here's how...

by George

I don't go to regular school. Instead, I have EOTAS (education other than at school), which allows me to learn in ways that fit how my brain works. While I won't be doing GCSE exams, I've discovered something incredible through the National Theatre Young Technicians course at HOME, Manchester. Working with lighting desks, rigging equipment (tools that move heavy equipment from one place to another) and running cables are all part of the job and need someone who can stay active and think on their feet.

I'm really grateful for everything I learned during the Nationwide Young Technicians course. It's opened me up to so many more opportunities and it has also made me more confident. Now, I'm even getting volunteer opportunities with TV production and event companies! It's incredible how skills that some might see as challenges have become my strengths in this industry.

To other young people who struggle in school, your perfect path might not look like everyone else's. Sometimes, the thing that makes you different is exactly what makes you extraordinary. For me, that's theatre tech – and I couldn't be happier.



Dom Moore

NEWS CLUB SHOUT-OUT!

THIS WEEK WE'RE GIVING SHOUT-OUTS TO... Fosse Way Academy, Anglo Singapore International School, St Andrews International School, Silkstone Common Junior and Infant School, and Woodlands Meed!





Singing with stars

DURING the Covid-19 pandemic, siblings Indi, Kale and Johnson started a band called the Stencil Pencils. Since then, they have grown, releasing more music, playing festivals and making friends with stars! Hear from each of them below.

● Indi

Hi, I'm Indi. I'm sassy and the youngest member of our band. I help write songs with my guitar, singing and dancing. We got the band together after me and Kale got homework during the Covid-19 pandemic to write a song or poem. As we all love music, it was a no-brainer and we wrote our first ever song, *Quarantine/Covid-19*.

● Kale

Hello, I'm Kale and I play keys for the band as well as doing technical stuff like sampling [using existing music to help create a new song] and drum machine programming [using an electronic machine to make drum patterns or sounds]. People say I'm the best singer in the band and I even did a sing-off with superstar Sam Ryder! We all write songs, although sometimes I don't know how, as we're always having brother and sister fights!

● Johnson

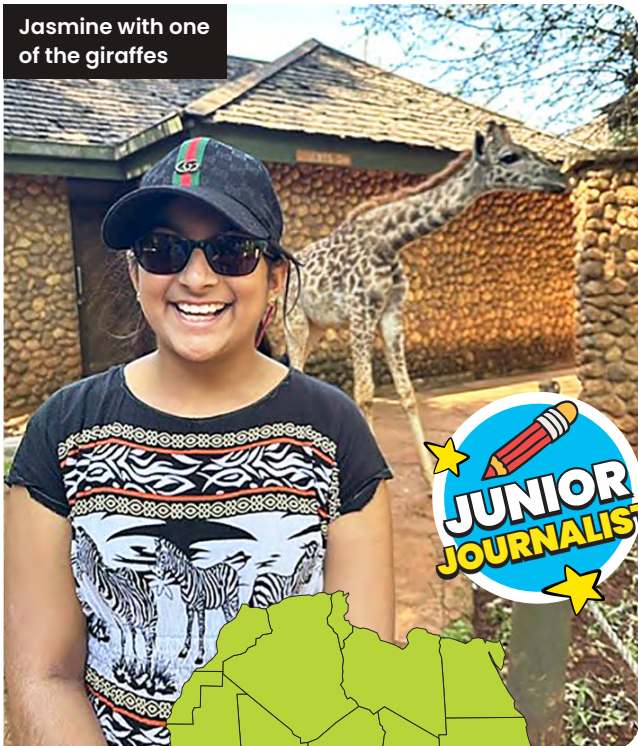
Yo, Johnson here! I'm the biggest and baddest of the group. Only joking, but I am the band leader and main rapper! Since the band started nearly five years ago, we have done radio interviews, stuff for TV and magazines and made friends with big stars like Rudimental, Rag'n'Bone Man, Simon Cowell, Mr Tumble and Sophie Ellis-Bextor. We've just auditioned for *Britain's Got Talent* for the third time and we're being asked to play at major festivals in 2025!



From left to right: Kale, Indi and Johnson



The band with famous singer Sam Ryder, who came second for the UK in the 2022 Eurovision Song Contest



Jasmine with one of the giraffes



Nairobi is a city in Kenya, which is on the eastern side of Africa

An amazing trip to Nairobi

JASMINE recently went to Nairobi in Kenya, Africa, and wanted to tell you all about it!

by Jasmine, aged 12

Nairobi is like no other city. Its vibrancy, colour and smells surpassed all my expectations. It is a modern city with skyscrapers and immense building works everywhere. In the next five to ten years I don't think we will recognise it!

There are so many fun things to do in Nairobi, one of which is visiting Nairobi National Park. I went there with my family and had a lovely walk. We got to see Edward the giraffe (who I petted), white rhinos, baboons, lions, cheetahs and leopards. It was great because all the animals were in their natural habitats.

We also saw many giraffes in the wild at the Giraffe Centre. We fed them using small bowls and had to quickly place food on their tongues. Little warthogs were below, eating up the leftovers! There is a small museum in the Giraffe Centre where you can learn all about the giraffes.

We didn't just see giraffes in Nairobi, though, we saw elephants, too! The Sheldrick Wildlife Trust operates the most successful orphaned elephant rescue and rehabilitation programme in the world.

Every day, from 11am to noon, visitors can book a space to join the elephants at their midday mud bath and milk feed at the orphanage in Nairobi National Park. This is a unique experience because the David Sheldrick Orphanage do not let visitors touch the elephants, as they want to help them back into the wild. Their programme is all about protecting endangered animals from poachers and they do their work in a way that protects the environment and educates the community.

WANT TO FEATURE ON YOUR NEWS?

FirstNews

FYI

NEWS

CLUB

sky kids

If you want to be a junior journalist for *First News* and go to cool press events or write about a topic that you're passionate about, get in touch by asking a trusted adult to email us at yournews@firstnews.co.uk.

Or, get your teacher to sign up to the *First News* FYI News Club at first.news/fyinesclub.

FirstNews Quiz

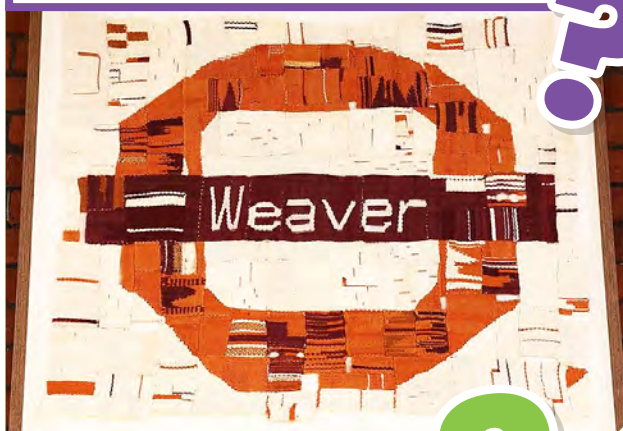
THE answers to all these questions can be found in the pages of this issue. Why not set yourself, or your friends and family, a time challenge to see who can get the highest score in the quickest time? See how well you did by checking the answers at the bottom.

1 Which comedian is returning as the host of this year's BRIT Awards?

2 The Mari Lwyd sees the head of what animal carried around town?



3 In which city would you find the Weaver line?



4 A lonely fish in a Japanese aquarium was given new friends made out of what?

5 What animal had to be rescued from 10,000 feet up the snowy Mount Shasta in California?

6 Posh baths have been found among the Roman ruins of what city?



7 What is the name of this newly-announced Nintendo console?



8 What inflatable animals have been appearing across Macau, China?

9 Has Donald Trump been president before?

10 What is the name of this Scottish food, which could be making its way to the US?



11 The prime minister of Nepal says the country has too many what?

12 A more dangerous species of one of the world's most venomous spiders has been discovered in which country?

13 Which football team does Prime Minister Keir Starmer support?



14 Which coffee company has told customers in the USA that they'll have to buy something if they want to sit in its cafés?

15 Australia thrashed England in which cricket contest?

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!

Answers:
1 Jack Whitehall 2 Horse 3 London 4 Cardboard 5 A goose 6 Pompeii 7 Nintendo Switch 8 Lobsters 9 Yes 10 Haggis 11 Tigers 12 Australia 13 Arsenal 14 Starbucks 15 The Women's Ashes

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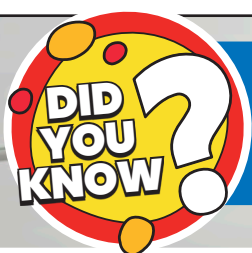
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UNIQUE SCHOOLS WORLDWIDE

AS the world marks the International Day of Education on 24 January, let's explore some of the most unusual educational institutions around the globe...

From schools made of bamboo to classrooms that travel the world, these creative learning spaces are redefining traditional education.



IN the ancient world, education was quite different because there were no schools like today. For example, in ancient Greece, there were spaces for reflection and debate as places of education (like Plato's Academy or Aristotle's Lyceum).



INDONESIA

An eco-friendly school in Bali is transforming education by teaching 400 students in bamboo buildings surrounded by nature.

The Green School, which welcomes children from pre-nursery to high school, has no traditional walls. Instead, its classrooms are housed in stunning structures made entirely from sustainable bamboo.

Students learn about the environment through hands-on activities and special green studies. The school also helps young people develop business skills through real-world projects and mentoring.



Green School Bali

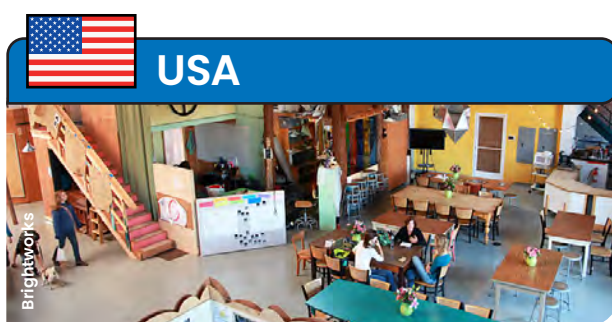


GLOBAL

A revolutionary boarding school with no permanent campus is redefining education by taking students on a worldwide learning adventure.

THINK Global School moves its entire student body of up to 60 teenagers to a new country every semester (term), turning the world into their classroom.

Students from around the world experience immersive education in countries like India, Japan and Sweden. They study local culture, art and traditions while living in each location.



USA

A creative school in San Francisco is turning typical education on its head by replacing standard classrooms with a huge former army barrack filled with art studios and high-tech equipment.

At Brightworks, students learn in mixed-age groups called 'bands' and follow a unique three-phase learning cycle known as 'The Arc'.

Instead of typical subjects, children explore topics in depth through hands-on projects and real-world experiences. The school's motto is "Everything is interesting", encouraging pupils to craft their own learning paths.



INDIA

In the busy train stations of Bhubaneswar, an inspiring educational project is transforming the lives of working children from poor backgrounds.

The Ruchika Social Services Organization has established Train Platform Schools, where classrooms come alive beneath railway platforms and in station corridors. These unique schools use games, singing and dancing to attract young workers and local children, blending education with engagement.

Beyond basic literacy and mathematics, the vital programme also provides essential healthcare, nutrition and life skills training.

The project aims to eventually move its pupils into standard government schools, creating a bridge from the train platform to the classroom!

Ruchika Bhubaneswar/
Facebook



England's Nat Sciver-Brunt watches her balls go flying after being bowled out

ASHES DISASTER

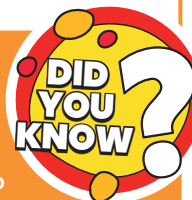
ENGLAND'S hopes of winning the Women's Ashes crumbled this week, after a fourth loss in four games.

Even though Australia lost two players – including their captain – to injury before the first T20 match of the series, they still thrashed England by 57 runs.

England lost all three of the one-day internationals that started the series, so it means they were 8-0 down after losing the first T20. The best England could hope for is to draw the series, but since Australia are the holders, it means they get to keep the Ashes.

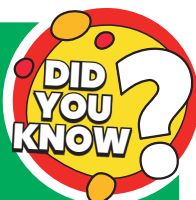
The second T20 was due to be played yesterday, so even a draw could be out of England's reach by the time you read this.

THE best ever innings in a women's T20 international is the 169 runs scored by Argentina's Lucia Taylor in a match against Chile in 2023. She didn't get any sixes, but racked up 27 fours in 84 balls!

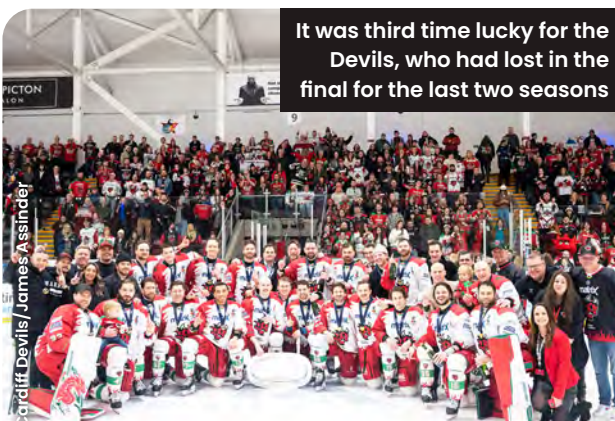


Amorim watches in horror from the sidelines

New Man United coach Ruben Amorim hit the headlines this week after saying that his players are "the worst team maybe in the history of Manchester United". His comments came after his side lost 3-1 at home to Brighton, and you have to go back to 1893-94 to find a season when United lost so many of their opening 12 home matches of a season. But how bad are United at the moment? Well, they're currently in 13th place in the league, and their worst ever finish in the Premier League was just last year, when they ended the season in eighth place. The Premier League only began in 1992-93 though, so you have to go back to the 1930s to find out when United had really hit rock bottom. The 1933-34 season saw United close to relegation into the third tier for the first time in their history, but a 2-0 win over Millwall on the final day saved their blushes. So cheer up, Ruben, it could be worse!



STICKING with United for a moment, there was an interesting stat that cropped up last week when United beat Southampton 3-1. When Amad Diallo completed his hat-trick, it made him only the third player in Premier League history to score three in the last ten minutes of a match. The only other players to have done it were both United players – Wayne Rooney bagged four against Hull in 2010, and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer only came on as a sub against Forest in 1999 but smashed all kinds of records when he scored four goals in an 8-1 victory. Forest manager Ron Atkinson famously joked that fans got to see a "nine-goal thriller"!



It was third time lucky for the Devils, who had lost in the final for the last two seasons

Cardiff Devils made history by winning ice hockey's Continental Cup, their first ever European title. They hammered French side Brûleurs de Loups 6-1 to become only the second British team to win a European trophy, after Nottingham Panthers in 2017.

It was another disappointing week for British tennis at the Australian Open, with only Jack Draper getting past the third round in the singles. A hip injury meant that he had to retire from the match, when he was losing 7-5, 6-1 against Carlos Alcaraz.



THE last week saw some fantastic results for GB's winter sports athletes. Para bobsleigh star Corie Mapp won another gold in the World Cup series and has finished on the podium in all six races so far. Snowboard sensation Mia Brookes also continued her great season, winning her third World Cup event just a day before her 18th birthday!



Braydon's on the ball

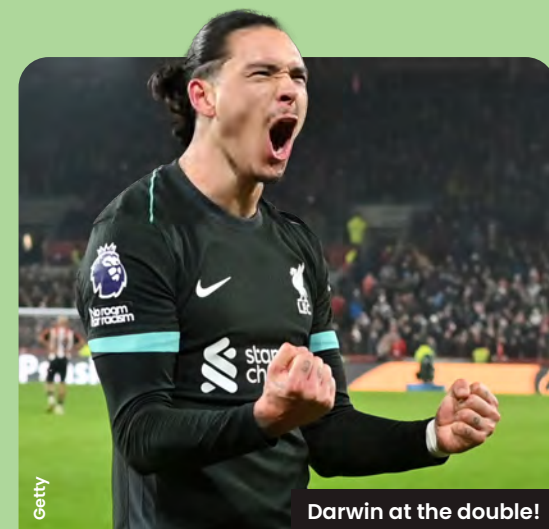


THE FYI presenter takes us through his pick of the week's top footie action.

Two injury time goals from Darwin Núñez for Liverpool and two second-half goals for Aston Villa delivered another twist in the title race, and meant that Liverpool further strengthened their place at the top of the table. The Reds looked to be heading for a goalless draw at Brentford before sub Núñez came off the bench to score twice, while Arsenal were in control and leading 2-0 before Yuri Tielemans and Ollie Watkins levelled for Villa to share the points.

With a six-point lead, a game in hand and just one defeat in 21 games, Liverpool are in pole position and look capable of going all the way.

Ruben Amorim's troubles continue at Old Trafford, with United crashing to another home defeat, this time to Brighton. United are firmly rooted in the bottom half of the table. I don't think for one minute that they'll be relegated, but they are so far off the pace that it may take years for them to recover. Amorim needs time and to be able to bring in his own players, but patience isn't something that we often see in football.



Darwin at the double!

Centre Stage goes to Bournemouth, who are soaring in seventh place and sit just three points off the top four. Cherries manager Andoni Iraola has built a good side and Bournemouth have been fantastic to watch this season. Along with Forest, they have been one of the surprise teams and it's great to see them both doing so well.

In the pick of the rest, Man City continued their improved form with a 6-0 win at Ipswich, with Erling Haaland celebrating his new contract with one of the goals. Spurs' woes only seem to get worse, and they suffered yet another defeat and slip further down to 15th. Could Ange Postecoglou be the next Premier League boss to face the sack?

Braydon's Team of The Week: Bournemouth, probably the best team they've ever had!
Braydon's Player of The Week: Justin Kluivert, with a superb treble in the win at Newcastle.

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