Birlingham News online

Published on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month

No. 371 Wednesday 28th January 2026

Editorial

As well as all the usual village news, this edition contains information about local policing changes, Worcestershire's Young Poet Laureate, the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan, Music Box, digital connectivity and a TV show.

However, this issue begins with the sad news of the death of Wally Wood, one of Birlingham's greatest characters. We will all miss his wonderful tales of life in the village over many decades.

Meanwhile, on the back two pages is news of an application to build between five and nine houses on a plot of land adjacent to Eckington Road. While this is a tiny number of dwellings in relation to the expansion that has happened in other villages, nevertheless it would be the largest development Birlingham has ever seen. No doubt the District and Parish Councils would be interested to hear your views – as would we at news@birlingham.org.

Wally Wood

We are very sorry to announce that Wally Wood died at his home in Elmley Castle on 14th January.

Wally was born at 3 Church Street, Birlingham, which was the Wood family home for several generations, and lived there until 2013. He was much loved in the village, a wonderful character who will be greatly missed. Our thoughts are with his family.

His funeral will take place on Thursday 19th February at 11.30am in St James' Church.

Cuppa & Chat

Wednesday 4th February *by Sue Hermon*



The next Cuppa & Chat will be held on Wednesday 4th February from 3.00pm to 4.30pm in Birlingham Village Hall. Everyone is most welcome to come along. While you're here do pop over to the churchyard to see the snowdrops, which are stunning at the moment!

There will be tea, coffee and a selection of cakes and the cost is still only £3.00 per head, which includes a chance to win the mystery prize!

For more information, or to request transport, please contact me on 01386 750096 or email sue.hermon@me.com.



Early lambing at Gooseham Close Farm, 16th January
(Photo: Jane Phelps)

St James' Church



Churchwardens: Pat Chinneck & Adrianne Woodward (Tel. 01386 750936)

* A big thank you to those that attended, made the church look beautiful, took photographs, donated wine, made canapes and performed in the **Candlelight Concert** . . . all of those things combined to make it a very enjoyable and successful evening. A total of £500 was raised for St James'. (An article with more detail and pictures will appear in the Spring *Bystander*.)
* The **Bulb Sunday Service** is on Sunday 22nd February at 3.00pm. Refreshments in the Village Hall afterwards.
* We are planning on having a **bric-a-brac stall** in church during February to raise extra funds. If you have any unwanted gifts or smallish items you no longer need, we would be happy to receive them. Please leave them on the trestle table at the back of the church.

Dates for your diary:

Sunday 22nd February: Bulb Sunday Service, 3.00pm

Sunday 8th March: Fairtrade Coffee Morning (details to follow)

BULB SUNDAY

St James' Church, Birlingham



SUNDAY 22 FEBRUARY

15:00

A warm welcome awaits everyone at this annual service.

Revd Canon Claire Lording will be leading the service, supported by Upton Parish's Director of Music, John Holloway, as organist and members of the Upton Parish Choir.

Refreshments will be available in the Village Hall afterwards, with proceeds raised going towards the upkeep of the church.

Invitation
TO HELP

FRIENDS OF ST JAMES' CHURCH, BIRLINGHAM

SNOWDROP TEAS 2026



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Birlingham Village Hall

Every Saturday and Sunday, 11am - 4pm
31st January to 22nd February

The annual Snowdrop Teas support the maintenance of Birlingham's Church and Churchyard, the exquisite centrepiece of our village. As we welcome people from far and wide to see the snowdrops & crocuses, the sale of snowdrops and of teas & cakes make a vital contribution to keeping St James' safe and sound.

If you can bake us a cake (or cakes!)
or do a stint in the kitchen, please
email Julia Luff at luffjulia@hotmail.com
or ring Sue Hayward on 07766 318901

Bulb Sunday Church Service,
February 22nd at 3pm

Parish Council Report

by Ian Yates

Birlingham Parish Council held its meeting Wednesday 21st January in the Village Hall. A summary of agenda items follows:

- **Addressing concerns over speeding, residential disruption and pedestrian safety**

  Work continues. Following the meeting with Red Star on 7th November, the company has been in contact with their hauliers to explain villagers' concerns and we now wait to see if this makes a difference. Red Star explained that lorries typically make several pickups so are not only coming to Birlingham. This means that their time of arrival varies. The key point we made was that regardless of how they are scheduled, they should not enter the village until the farm is open and ready to service them. They should park up somewhere outside the village and only enter just before the farm's opening time (6.00am in summer and 7.00am in winter). There is no excuse for them entering in the early hours of the morning, disrupting residents and then parking up in the village.

  Members of the parish council met with representatives of Worcester County Council and Highways on 17th December to discuss road markings. It was agreed that the speed roundels in Upper End and on New Barn Road would be repainted in April once the weather improves. Consideration will also be given to painting dragons teeth to highlight the change in speed limit. Residents are invited to provide feedback on whether they think this would be helpful at controlling speed and appropriate to our village setting.

- **Footpath Warden report**

  FP 509 (near Hall Farm) – finger-post pointer replaced.

  FP 510 (off the Avenue) – finger-post re-installed (it had rotted).

  The parish council have also been in touch with GW Revill about crops blocking footpaths 506 and 510. Whereas the village is grateful to the farm for providing permissive paths it is important that when footpaths are blocked by crops that the alternative paths, which may be acceptable to walkers, cannot become permanent without going through the proper legal process.

- **Community Initiatives**

  Village groups have been sent a questionnaire to help the Parish Council understand priorities that might be promoted, supported and subsidised. Councillor David Glover has also written a *Birlingham News* article. A replacement marquee for community use and the Flower & Produce Show has been postponed for now as the Show may be held in the Village Hall this year. Pickle ball equipment for the village hall has also been shelved due to a lack of storage space.

  Ideas under consideration include:

  - ◊ Refurbishment of the legacy signpost which is currently on the main road by the turning to Upper End. This might also be relocated to a more central part of the village as a heritage item.
  - ◊ A sign for the Village Hall. Cost, design and possible planning permission to be researched.
  - ◊ Replacement of some of the rotten finger posts marking rights of way.

- **Report from County Councillor Adrian Hardman**

  See separate item below.

- **Report from District Councillor Paul Middlebrough**

  See separate item below.

- **Lengthsman retirement and vacancy**

  As reported in November, Carl Brassington, our long-standing lengthsman, has decided to retire. We are therefore actively looking for a replacement who might also be able to help out on work around the churchyard.

- **Parish Council vacancy**

  There are two vacancies on the Parish Council. This follows the resignation of Michael Porter at the January Parish Council meeting. The work is not onerous or very time-consuming and it does allow matters that are important to residents to be addressed and dealt with. If you are interested in joining, please contact the parish clerk at birlingham_clerk@yahoo.co.uk for more details.

Full minutes of the Parish Council meeting will be posted on the village website shortly.

Report from County Councillor Adrian Hardman

When I was leader of the County Council and had to lay out a corporate plan, I had a mantra which was vision, direction and order. After 10 months in power Reform have now laid out a vision of one aim which is to cure the financial crisis that the County Council is in. This is no surprise to me, since it is the closest wolf to the sledge. They seem to have forgotten their pledge to cut Council Tax.

Unfortunately, out of this vision needs to come direction, and this is an area where they are still struggling, since they cannot find a way to lower the expenditure that appears to be acceptable to all their members. They need to reduce their capital expenditure, just do statuary duties, and they need to invest in the prevention work. They are applying for exceptional financial support to convert capital into revenue. But what we are seeing is capital projects having their funding replaced with Government grant, like the Structural Road Maintenance Fund being diverted into Hampton Bridge, which means in the division we will have £150,000 less to spend next year on roads. This trick only lasts till you reach the end of your prudential borrowing limit.

I used to think it was down to the officers to bring order. But sadly, I keep hearing all the experienced officers, who had decided to leave the organisation rather than take on the challenge. I am heartbroken that some of our Highways, Waste, Accounts, Children's and Adult Social Care team think in that its in their interest to move to Birmingham, Hereford or Gloucestershire. I suspect the Local Government Reorganisation does not help.

Just on to more local issues, I feel the gritting has gone well, and while the Eckington Bridge closure is a great annoyance, because of the way the rains came it was not as long as it could have been. The bridge across the Bowbrook must have been well under!

Report from District Councillor Paul Middlebrough

Key issue for residents:

Finances

At the time of writing Wychavon has not determined its level of council tax for 2026/27.

Wychavon unlike the County Council, Fire Authority and Police, will definitely have no increase in its share of the Council Tax. Whilst other organisation are cutting services, there will be no cuts at Wychavon and a programme of Wychavon Community Legacy Grants is being developed.

Local Government Reorganisation

Wychavon and four other districts proposed creating two unitary authorities – North and South – in Worcestershire and submitted the proposal to government. The County Council along with Wyre Forest submitted a plan for a single unitary authority.

The government is holding a public engagement on both proposals in early February 2026 giving you the chance to have your say. Details will be released in the local media, on our social media channels or sign up to our resident newsletter at www.wychavon.gov.uk/lgr.

A final decision is expected in July this year with the new council or councils taking over running services from 1st April 2028.

Parish council elections are scheduled for May 2027. If unitary proposals go ahead, shadow authority elections will also occur then. Wychavon elections will likely be postponed, as the Council is set to be abolished in March 2028.

South Worcestershire Development Plan Review

Residents have a final chance to have their say on the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review before it is officially adopted. A six-week public consultation runs until 5.00pm on 17th February 2026, to allow residents and other interested stakeholders to review proposed changes to the document put forward by Planning Inspectors.

Following a series of public hearings in 2025, inspectors recommended changes to the Plan – known as main modifications – to ensure it meets legal requirements and national planning policy. The consultation will allow people to review and comment only on the modifications, raise any new issues specifically caused by the changes, or question the evidence base for a proposed alteration.

Some of the modifications strengthen policies for the major strategic sites. They include setting out the need for key infrastructure to be delivered at Wychavon Town (known in the Plan as Worcestershire Parkway).

One of the most significant changes is the removal of Throckmorton as a proposed allocated site for housing and employment. This is now identified as an 'area of search', meaning more work is needed to demonstrate development is appropriate on the site. This land will be considered for allocation through the next review of the Plan.

Visit www.swdevelopmentplan.org to take part in the consultation.

Other projects

Work continues to find a solution to develop the refurbishment of the sad and unloved shopping centre in the centre of Evesham.

The owners of the Raven site in Droitwich have made no progress in bring forward plans to reinstate and develop the area. Wychavon is taking action to ensure public safety and protection of the listed parts of the building. The owners are being charged.

At the Valley shopping site in Evesham (formally the country park) David Lloyd have put in plans for a new leisure and sports gym complex.



Sheep grazing in Lower End, 6th January

(Photo: Peter Luff)

Local Policing Changes

by Dave Wise,
West Mercia Police, Inspector,
Evesham and Pershore

Hello, I'm Inspector Dave Wise of the Evesham and Pershore Safer Neighbourhood Team and I'd like to tell you about some positive changes we've made to the organisation of West Mercia Police.

On Monday (19 January) the force changed the way it organises and delivers local policing to make sure services continue to meet the needs of local communities.

As part of these transitions, Herefordshire and Worcestershire has gone from being two local policing areas to a combined one (Herefordshire & Worcestershire).

This new structure is designed to strengthen resilience, improve coordination and ensure resources are focused where they are needed most.

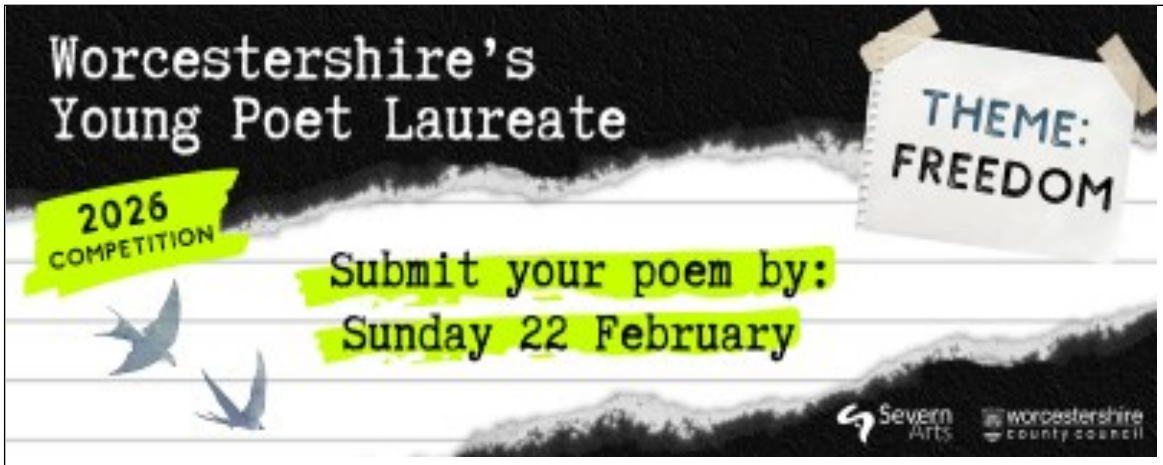
Evesham and Pershore communities will continue to receive the same level of service from their Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT), where we have recently seen an uplift in officer numbers.

The force has operated under its current structure since 2018, and feedback from the public has highlighted several ways to enhance how it functions and meets demand.

The planned investment supports the Police and Crime Commissioner's Safer Communities Plan and contributes to the national Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, helping ensure policing remains visible, accessible and responsive.

The updated operating model is expected to provide a stable, long-term framework that better supports officers and staff, adapts to evolving demands and maintains a high standard of service for the public.

We look forward to engaging with our communities as we continue our duties to protect and serve the people of Evesham and Pershore.



Young Poet Laureate

An opportunity to have your work published, receive mentoring from professional poets and gain opportunities to perform and share your work.

Promoted by Severn Arts & Worcestershire Libraries.

Full details at: https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/libraries/read-and-discover/young-poet-laureate



Snowdrops at St James', 17th January
(Photo: Nikki Hollier)



The Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Management Plan is a statutory plan, which sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the CNL for the period 2025-2030.

In June 2020 the Cotswolds National Landscape Board decided to replace the term 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONB) with 'National Landscape'. All AONBs are now branded as National Landscapes. The area designated as the Cotswolds AONB, which includes Bredon Hill and part of the parish of Birlingham, is now known as the Cotswolds National Landscape.

The plan is available at:

http://www.birlingham.org/docs/cotwswolds_nlmp_2025-30.pdf

Music Box

by Jacqui Dance

I'm writing to see if you would be interested in having our Music Box for a workshop with young people in your parish in 2026. I'm working with Pershore Riverside Centre, to deliver fun, hands-on workshops on the vehicle, fully funded, to support music education in rural areas.

We offer half-day workshops, where the vehicle comes to your local village hall/church hall (somewhere where we could have parking, electric and a toilet) for young people aged 8+. The Music Box has a vocal booth on board, drum machines, synthesisers, keyboards, electric guitar and all software to record music. Our hope is that young people would come along and enjoy a new experience, or if they are musicians, would enjoy some recording time.

If you felt this could work in your Parish, we are looking to deliver these after school, in half term or at the weekend before 31st March. Please do let me know if you are interested in getting involved.



Contact:

Jacqui Dance
07976 608574
j.dance@severnarts.org.uk

Music Box Project Manager
Severn Arts
Unit 11, Malvern Gate, Bromwich Rd,
Worcester, WR2 4BN

Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity Team Newsletter

The first edition of this newsletter this year edition contains updates, insights and opportunities to get involved in shaping Worcestershire's digital future.

The Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity Team is part of Worcestershire County Council.

The team's newsletter (featured on the next page) can be found at: https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/business/digital-connectivity/looking-back-successful-year-2025.



Our Digital Connectivity team has continued to make strong progress in improving digital connectivity across the county in 2025

Are you really getting the internet you pay for?

Your broadband might not be the problem you think it is. We've uncovered simple checks that reveal whether it's your setup, or your provider holding you back.

Gigabit Broadband: ahead of target

Worcestershire is powering ahead of the national curve. Gigabit coverage has surged again in 2025, and we're already beyond the UK's end-of-year target.

A clearer picture of Mobile Connectivity

Dropped calls? Patchy signal? You're not alone. We've been gathering real-world mobile data across the county to expose what coverage really looks like.

Boosting mobile signal where it matters

What if poor indoor signal didn't have to be "just how it is"? We've trialled smart solutions that transform mobile connectivity inside buildings, with real results.

The digital switchover is coming

Landlines are changing - but not disappearing. Most calls will soon run over broadband, and the switch is already underway in parts of Worcestershire.

Working with communities to fix mobile blackspots

From loan equipment to live trials, we're helping communities test real solutions to poor signal. Small cells, shared infrastructure, and practical fixes - no guesswork.

If you want to read more on any of these good news stories - use the camera on your phone to scan the QR Code below and click the link. This will take you to our online article with links to further information for each article.

www.worcestershire.gov.uk

worcestershire county council


TV CASTING CALL FOR COUPLES
ARE YOU & YOUR PARTNER CHILDHOOD SWEETHEARTS?
ARE YOU READY TO TEST YOUR RELATIONSHIP?
ITV STUDIOS ARE LOOKING FOR CHILDHOOD SWEETHEARTS AGED 21+ FOR A NEW TV SERIES. THIS POTENTIALLY LIFE CHANGING SOCIAL EXPERIMENT WILL GIVE YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO REDISCOVER WHO YOU ARE, REIGNITE WHAT BROUGHT YOU TOGETHER AND PROVE THAT ABSENCE REALLY CAN MAKE THE HEART GROW FONDER.
COUPLES MUST HAVE CHILDREN OVER 16 OR BE CHILDFREE
IF YOU AND YOUR PARTNER ARE UP FOR A ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY, THEN PLEASE GET IN TOUCH NOW!
CALL/TEXT/WHATSAPP/EMAIL
07919 659572
CASTING@POTATOTV.CO.UK
ALL APPLICANTS MUST BE 21 YEARS OR OVER AND HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE AND WORK IN THE UNITED KINGDOM. FURTHER ELIGIBILITY AND TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY. YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION WILL BE COLLECTED AND PROCESSED IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR PRIVACY NOTICE: HTTP://ITV.COM/STUDIOSPRIVACY

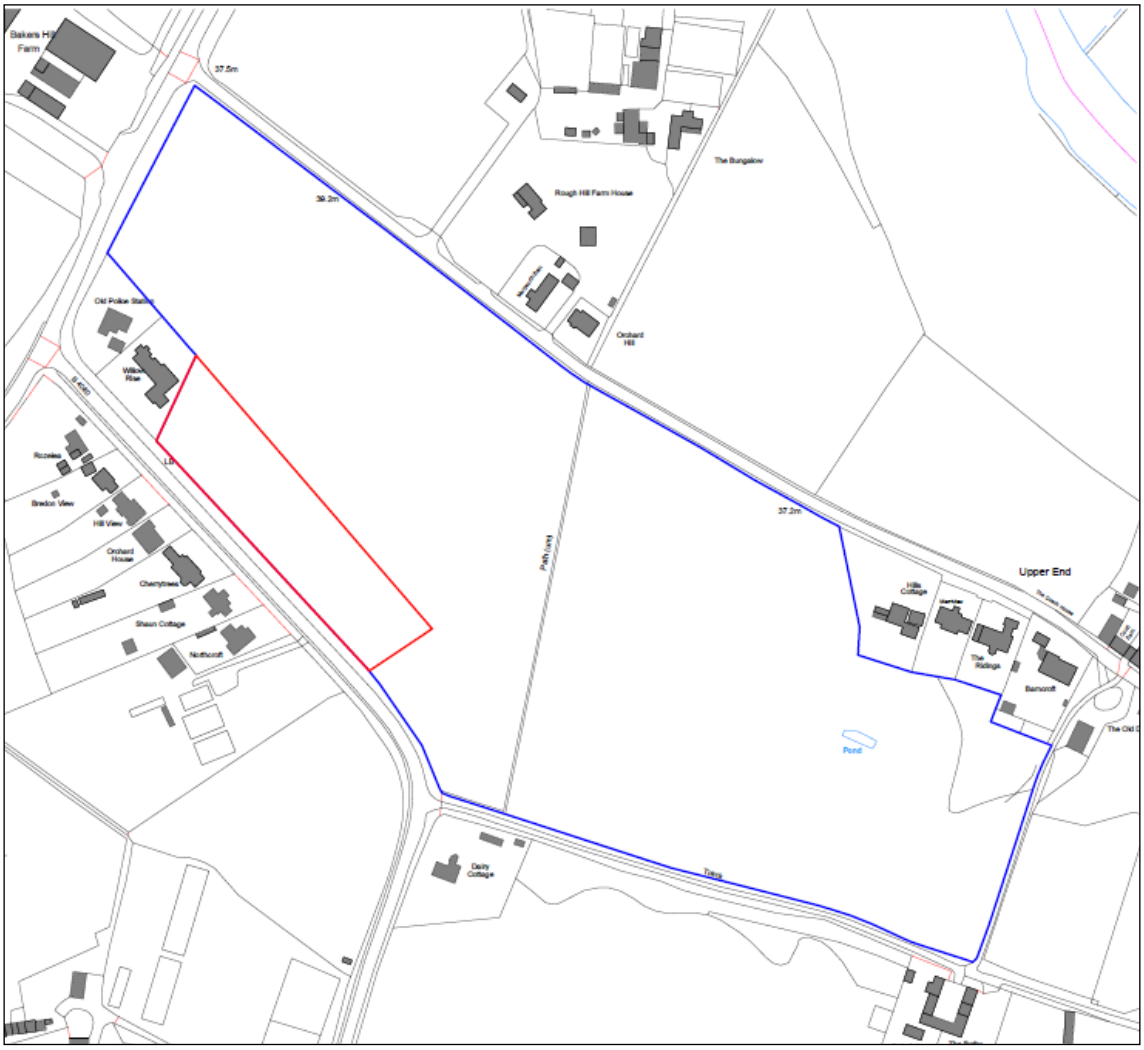
Planning Application: Land Adjacent to Eckington Road

Consultation end date
10th February
Full details on next page

Illustrative Layout



Site Location
(red outline)



Planning Applications

The following planning application has been received by Wychavon District Council:

Land at (OS 9284 4361), Eckington Road: Permission in principle for the rection of between 5-9 no. dwellings (Case No. W/26/00163/PIP). Awaiting decision by Wychavon District Council. (Consultation period ends on 10th February.) Full details can be viewed on the Wychavon DC website at:

https://plan.wychavon.gov.uk/Planning/Display/W/26/00163/PIP

Letters to the Editors

We welcome brief letters to the Editors on any subject relating to Birlingham. The Editors reserve the right to shorten letters and we cannot guarantee that all letters will be printed.

Please send letters to:

news@birlingham.org



Setting out round the village on a bright winter's day 10th January
(Photo: Jane Phelps)



Defibrillator Code

The code to unlock the defibrillator at the front of the Village Hall is:

C1234

Personal Ads

Personal adverts should consist of a maximum of 100 words, and will be included in a single issue of Birlingham News. Please note that advertisement text will be published exactly as received. Personal ads should be sent to news@birlingham.org no later than the Monday before publication. Birlingham News is published on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month.

Dates for your diary

January	
Sat 31	Snowdrop Teas, 11.00am-4.00pm
February	
Sun 1	Snowdrop Teas, 11.00am-4.00pm
Wed 4	Cuppa & Chat, 3.00–4.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Sat 7/Sun 8	Snowdrop Teas, 11.00am-4.00pm
Sat 14/Sun 15	Snowdrop Teas, 11.00am-4.00pm
Thu 19	Birlingham IW, 7.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Sat 21/Sun 22	Snowdrop Teas, 11.00am-4.00pm
Sun 22	Bulb Sunday Service, 3.00pm, St James' Church
March	
Wed 4	Cuppa & Chat, 3.00–4.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Sun 8	Fairtrade Coffee Morning (details to follow)
Wed 18	Birlingham Parish Council, 7.00pm, Birlingham Village Hall
Thu 19	Birlingham IW, 7.30pm, Birlingham Village Hall

Birlingham News online is available at www.birlingham.org. Details of future editions will be emailed to subscribers of *Birlingham News*. These emails are available to residents of Birlingham, their families and friends. If you know anyone who would like to receive these emails, or have any comments or items for inclusion in either the email or online edition of *Birlingham News*, or wish to be removed from the mailing list, please write to news@birlingham.org.

Birlingham News online is open to any organisation or business within the parish to promote events. Inclusion of an event does not imply that Birlingham Jubilee Committee supports either the event or the views of the organisation promoting it.

The copy date for the next edition is Monday 9th February (for publication on Wednesday 11th February). We regret that we cannot guarantee to include any items submitted after that date.

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