

## Town is ranked second in UK for caravan holidays in new research

A north Shropshire town has been ranked second in the UK for caravan holiday destinations.

New research has shown Whitchurch ranks second in the UK's top destinations for a caravan holiday this summer, with a score of 7.3/10.

Experts at Moneybarn carried out the study to reveal the best destinations for a caravan holiday in the UK. The study looked at factors including: the cost of caravan site rental for a week in July, road safety, reviews, attractions and the weather in July.

Whitchurch topped the charts on average reviews with a perfect score of 5/5. The town also scored highly with weather, averaging a temperature of 18 degrees – the highest temperature in the top 30.

Steve Coffin of Bramblewood Caravan Park in the town wasn't surprised to hear the news, and said Shropshire's natural beauty was one of the top draws to the area: "Shropshire is a hidden gem, people tend to come and realise what they've been missing. It's peaceful, it's quiet and the countryside is beautiful. There's plenty of places to see and things to do.

"We're very lucky in North Shropshire because of our location, it's very easy to commute from places like Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. A lot of visitors come from the shorter journey times and it's very easy to pop over the border into Wales.

"The staycation boom has definitely had an effect. Some people are trying it for the first time, and some are rediscovering camping."



Staff and volunteers preparing the Severn Hospice gardens to welcome visitors over the next two weekends

## Hospice gardens being opened to public

A hospice is opening its award-winning gardens to the public in Telford and Shrewsbury for the first time since the pandemic.

For the tenth year, Severn Hospice's grounds at its two main sites will hold open garden events for people to explore their beautiful surroundings.

The 17-acre site in Bicton, Shrewsbury and the four-acre site in Apley, Telford are maintained by 40 volunteers and two gardeners all year round.

Severn Hospice's Kay Britton, who is managing the events, said:

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"It has been ages since we have been able to properly welcome people back to our hospices and we cannot wait.

"From volunteers that help maintain our glorious surroundings to the Shropshire traders who will be here on the day, everyone is doing their bit to make the events extra special.

"We are encouraging people to bring their family, friends and even

dogs to come and appreciate our stunning grounds." At the events there will be children's entertainment, refreshments, craft and plant stalls, yoga, storytelling and alpacas. In both gardens there are sunset walks, plentiful wildlife, sunken gardens, bug hotels and hidden treasures.

Severn Hospice's Open gardens are held tomorrow in Telford, and Sunday, July 17 in Shrewsbury.

Entry costs £3.50 on the gate, under 16s are free and dogs are welcome. For more information visit [www.severnhospice.org.uk](http://www.severnhospice.org.uk)

## £145k on offer to local groups

Communities are being encouraged to apply for a share of £145k.

ChangeX, an online platform encouraging community action, and the LEGO Foundation, have unveiled a £145,000 UK fund. The UK Community Play Fund will be open to applications from community groups, and is focused on giving children the opportunity to learn through play.

The fund aims to support up to 60 teams across the UK to start new community projects. Groups or schools can apply for funding to start one of the organisation's ideas in their own community. These ideas include transforming a public space into a learning opportunity, teaching children how to grow their own food, or starting a STEM programme.

Applications for the fund are now open, to view the projects available and to apply visit [changex.org/gb/funds/community-play-fund-uk](http://changex.org/gb/funds/community-play-fund-uk)

## Baker is named festival sponsor

Plans are in place for the sixth annual Ginger and Spice Festival in Market Drayton, including an attraction sponsored by a bakery in the town.

Palethorpes Bakery has been named as headline sponsor of the 'Palethorpes Bakery Children's Cookery Theatre.'

A team of chefs from Palethorpes Bakery, supported by volunteers, will lead a series of cookery workshops for children focused on healthy eating and with an emphasis on the importance of choosing seasonal and local ingredients.

The workshops will take place at the festival on Saturday, September 24 from 10am to 3pm at the Parish Rooms, Church Street in Market Drayton and will be free of charge. The festival is nicely timed to coincide with British Food Fortnight.

## Service head is taking new post

A head of service at Powys County Council is set to leave the authority for a new post in West Wales.

Jan Coles, head of children's services will leave the council to take up a similar role at Carmarthenshire County Council later this summer.

Jan joined Powys County Council in October in 2018 and led the improvement journey for the service following the Care Inspectorate Wales report the previous year. Improvements focused on Early Help services for families, a strengths-based approach and children's rights.

She drew on her previous role as operational manager for Cardiff Council, where she was responsible for developing Child Sexual Exploitation prevention services.

Chief executive, Dr Caroline Turner, said: "We wish Jan well for the future, she has a wealth of experience."

# Train strikes threaten to mar region's image amid Games

**Train drivers could strike over pay as one million expected tourists arrive for the Commonwealth Games.**

Countrywide Post Office workers are also striking this month, hot on the heels of June's Rail, Maritime, and Transport (RMT) strikes – the biggest rail strikes the country has seen in 30 years.

The ballot for strike action is underway among Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (Aslef) members who work for West Midlands Trains Ltd (WMT – the parent company of West Midlands and London Northwestern Railways). If they vote yes, action will begin on July 25 – three days before the start of the Commonwealth Games. In the year March 2020-2021, WMT made £123.9 million in profit after tax and Abellio, the company which owns WMT, paid its highest paid director £597,000

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in the year ending December 2020. The average salary of a WMT driver is £57,044 a year.

Mick Whelan, secretary-general of Aslef said: "Strike action is always the last resort for this trade union, but many of our members have not had a pay rise since 2019. We will fight to maintain the pay, terms and conditions, and the pensions of our members."

Andy Street, mayor of the West Midlands, said: "The eyes of the world will be on our region when we play host to the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games this summer and the sense of excitement and anticipation amongst local residents is building. It would be such a shame if strike action was to disrupt what should be an unbridled moment of collective celebration for us all."

A spokesperson for Transport

for West Midlands said: "There are negotiations to secure coach services for the Commonwealth Games and these will be commercially operated, whether or not there is a strike. Those up front costs will be covered from the Commonwealth Games transport budget, but offset through income from fare paying passengers.

Voting ends on Monday – the same day Post Office workers are striking for the third time this year in a dispute around pay. 97.3 per cent of Communications Workers Union (CWU) members who work for Britain's 114 Crown Post Offices voted to strike.

They faced a pay freeze last year and a pay offer this year of three per cent with a £500 lump sum fee from employers. Inflation in May was at 9.1 per cent and was the highest ever on record; the Post Office made £35 million in profits between 2020 and 2021. On July 14 hundreds of CWU cash and valuables in tran-

sit (CViT) workers and their cash processing and administrative colleagues will also strike over pay.

Andy Furey, CWU assistant secretary said: "Our members feel betrayed and will not tolerate their living standards being smashed by people in charge of a public service that due to our members' efforts made tens of millions of pounds in annual profits. There is more than enough money for a reasonable pay rise."

A Post Office spokesperson said: "We want to assure our customers that the vast majority of our 11,500 branches are unaffected by the CWU decision to strike on Monday July 11 and will be open throughout the day.

"We have received notice that the CWU has called a strike involving supply chain colleagues on July 14. We will have a range of contingency measures in place to minimise any possible disruption to the Post Office network on that day."