

BURNLEY MATTERS

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE HOPE NOT HATE CAMPAIGN

HOPE
HATE

HOPE IS COMING TO TOWN



The “Park Play” scheme in Scott Park is just one of the many brilliant community groups in Burnley today. Free every Saturday, it is only possible because of the volunteers who help make it happen.

So often we forget the small but inspiring work being done across the country, but in May this year community and faith groups, plus charities big and small, will come together to celebrate and inspire **A Million Acts of Hope** across Britain.

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BURNLEY MATTERS

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Watching the news or looking at your social-media feed, it's easy to believe that the UK is more divided than ever. The voices of those who seek to spread hate, harm our communities and separate us are loud.

But the reality is that millions of people across the UK show up for each other, their neighbours and their communities every single day. From litter-picking in parks to donating stuff to food banks, coaching our kids' football teams to working together to make our streets safer – acts of hope and kindness happen all the time.

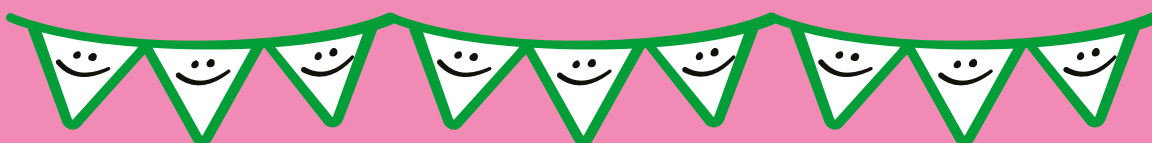
These stories are too often left untold. So, in May 2026, community and faith groups, plus charities big and small, will come together to celebrate and inspire A Million Acts of Hope across Britain. There is far more that connects us than divides us.

We hope you'll join us.

Scan here for a digital copy of your local HOPE not hate paper



Email us:
campaigns@hopenothate.org.uk



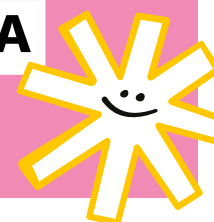
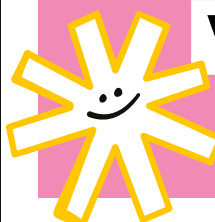
A MILLION ACTS OF HOPE COMES TO BURNLEY!

What? CELEBRATING HOPE FUN DAY

When? FRIDAY 29 MAY, 1.00 pm - 4.00 pm

**Where? WEST END COMMUNITY CENTRE,
Venice Street, Burnley BB11 4BA**

How much? FREE!



We are thrilled to announce that Burnley will be hosting its own celebrations as part of the **A MILLION ACTS OF HOPE** campaign. We want to celebrate everyone and everything that makes Burnley a better, more hopeful, kinder place... and hopefully inspire some more!

We'll be having a full afternoon of **music & dance** at the new performance area in Hargher Clough Park. Everything will be free. There will be something for everyone! We are proud to include a diversity choir, drumming performances and young dancers from Basically Cheer, stars of cheerleading and street dance.

The outdoor programme will also include an **arts & crafts marquee** providing activities for the whole family. We are partnering with the engagement programme of the town's Year Of Culture 2027, celebrating diversity at its heart.

Meanwhile, indoors at the West End Community Centre, there will be a **bouncy castle, face painting and fairground games**.

We will also be hosting a **T-shirt printing workshop**, where young people will be creating "Hopeful Tees" printed (for free!) onto a cotton T-shirt.

Food is being provided by New Neighbours Together, a group supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Burnley. The delicious treats on offer will be inspired by cuisine from all over the world.

There will also be a series of engagement stalls where we can all express our views on local priorities to help the South West Burnley Community Action Network. This includes the **launch of the "Together We Can" Fund** enabling local people to put forward their ideas for small projects that benefit our community. A panel of local people will then make decisions on how the available funds should be allocated. Come and ask how you can get involved.

Further activities will be announced... westendburnley.co.uk

Could your community group take part and create an Act of Hope? Go to millionactsofhope.org to sign up



CELEBRATING HOPE PARTY

Friday 29 May, 1.00 pm - 4.00 pm

WEST END COMMUNITY CENTRE, Venice Street, Burnley BB11 4BA

FREE FOR ALL!



ANYONE FOR TIG?

FAMILIES COME TOGETHER TO MAKE THE MOST OF PARK PLAY SATURDAYS

PARENTS, KIDS and carers are getting sporty and enjoying the outdoors thanks to a “Park Play” scheme in south-west Burnley.

The free initiative takes place in Scott Park every Saturday – giving families a chance to socialise and have a go at new activities and games.

Hot and cold drinks and a massive range of sports equipment, including footballs, rugby balls and tennis kits, are all provided and there are organised games for children under 16 to try too.

As volunteer Amey Brooks,

40, who takes part with five-year-old son Lucas, explains, the scheme is a high point in their weekend – something she and other parent carers all look forward to.

“Having this on our doorsteps is brilliant,” she says. “Everyone who comes lives pretty locally.

“I don’t drive so having something we can walk to is a big bonus.

“It’s not just about the kids having fun – it’s great for the adults too. We get to play different sports with our children and they get to meet other kids and try new things.

“In winter it’s good to have



a reason to get out and in the fresh air. Knowing there is somewhere you can come to and meet other people is fantastic. It’s become a really important part of our weekend.

“We started taking part

when it first got going about a year ago, I think we were the first people to come. Now I’ve become a volunteer, helping others get involved.

“I’d recommend it – we’re a friendly bunch so come and

find us!”

Sign up via the Burnley Park Play Facebook page to take part or volunteer, or meet at Scott Park Tennis Courts, 11am on Saturdays.

■ www.facebook.com/ParkPlayBurnley

STAR TURN! CHEERLEADING TEAM STORMS DEBUT TO SCOOP TROPHY



A COG LANE cheerleading team is celebrating after wowing the judges in its debut competition.

Unity Stars, a squad made up of adults with additional needs and their carers, won first place after entering the Blackpool show – their first ever public performance.

They impressed the judges with a series of energetic pom-pom routines performed to a Lady Gaga soundtrack.

Now the nine-strong team, which trains at the Basically Cheer CIC centre on Cog Lane, is building on its success by preparing for another dance-off in November.

Team member and community centre volunteer, Vic Keast, 31, said it had been a fantastic day – and a brilliant showcase for everyone’s talents.

“We’re all very, very proud,” she smiles. “It’s the first time this team has competed but

everyone had practised really hard.

“It was an amazing experience. It’s what we’re about – giving people in our community a chance to spend time together, enjoy movement and music and really shine.”

As she explains, it’s just one of the many activities taking place at the centre.

Since opening its doors in 2024, the “health and wellbeing hub” has been providing a welcoming space for residents across south-west Burnley, offering a wide range of craft, music, dance and exercise classes and sessions for adults, young people, parents and babies, and adults and children with additional needs.

■ **Find out more on the Basically Cheer CIC Facebook page or pop into the Cog Lane centre.**

'A VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE CULTURE FOR BURNLEY'



EXCITING PLANS have been revealed for the **Burnley 2027 Year of Culture** – including new roles, apprenticeships and a massive selection of inclusive community-art projects.

Artists and community groups are now being invited to shape the initiative ahead of its launch next year.

Organisers want to “create a vibrant, inclusive cultural future for Burnley” that that will include everything from big-name shows to grassroots get-togethers. And they’ll be looking for a

panel of “Culture Makers” to have their say about how things should work and share ideas.

Residents have already been flexing their artistic skills in a handful of colourful preview projects.



The “In the Frame” initiative invited people to submit photographs and artworks, to celebrate their vision of Burnley.

A selection of images are on show in installations across the town – including in Scott Park – displayed on giant, three-sided billboards.

Charlotte Steels, Head of Culture at Burnley Leisure and Culture, is spearheading the project. “Part of what we’re trying to do is to create that narrative of what Burnley is for the future,” she says. “Young people need

to know what the opportunities are – apprenticeships through Lancashire Skills Pledge, access to organisations such as Blaze Arts and Burnley Youth Theatre. “We want to hear from people in all wards and we want what happens next to be felt by people in their neighbourhoods, including South West Burnley.”

■ **If you would like to take part by volunteering, hosting an event, sponsoring an activity or just finding out more, contact @CultureBurnley on Facebook.**

WE'RE THE BEST!



BURNLEY COOK NAMED UK'S TOP CURRY CHEF IN RESTAURANT LOVED BY GENERATIONS

IT'S OFFICIAL – Burnley is home to the country's best curry!

He's been serving up amazing food to people across East Lancashire for decades... and now Muhammad Munir has been named the UK's top curry chef.

Muhammad Munir has been the head chef at Burnley's popular Aroma Asian restaurant for 23 years and has just scooped the number one slot at the Nation's Curry Awards.

He was awarded the prestigious accolade in recognition of his work at the family-run business and Burnley institution.

Speaking at the event, Nation's Curry Awards boss Yasmin Mahmood said: "We're proud to once again celebrate the finest in the UK's curry scene, recognising the creativity, innovation, and exceptional service that have become synonymous with this beloved cuisine."

Muhammad said he was delighted to have been recognised – and to have helped put Burnley on the map.

"I'm really pleased and also humbled to have won," he says. "It's an honour for us but also for the town. It's good to be representing Burnley on the national stage – showing the rest of the UK what we can do."

The restaurant's owner, Abdul Majeed, 67, echoed Muhammad's sentiments.

As he explained: "We are very happy and very proud, and it's a huge privilege we have earned for the whole town."

The national award comes after the much-loved Church Street restaurant was also named Curry Restaurant of the Year (North West) at the English Curry Awards.

Abdul – who was presented with a

Lifetime Achievement Award at the English Curry Awards in 2023 – and his team have been keeping the people of Burnley well-fed for more than 40 years.

He came to make a life in East Lancashire when he was just 21, opening his first restaurant, the Kohinoor, in partnership with his uncle in 1979.

After branching out and going it alone, in 1987 he launched the Shalamar Tandoor, later refurbished and renamed the Aroma Asian.

Since then it has become a regular fixture on Burnley's culinary scene, known for its amazing food – including Muhammad's trademark chicken, spinach and mint dish, Murgh Harabara – and service, but also its commitment to fund-raising for local charities.

In 2022, Abdul was also awarded a Mayor's Medal for his good work.

Speaking at the town hall ceremony

he said: "Incredibly, I am now serving generations of the same families who have been so loyal to me over the years.

"I am proud to receive this award because Burnley is my home and my town.

"When I came to Burnley, I was new in the town, new in the trade. You can imagine how things were at that time; how people's attitudes were towards curry houses then."

He explained how food had provided a positive way to foster greater understanding and tolerance.

"There was a communication gap, and a lack of knowledge about our cuisine, our lifestyle, our traditions, our customs," he explained.

"Eventually though, our relationship, our bond, built up and became stronger over time.

"I feel like I am part of a very large family here in Burnley."

STRONGER TOGETHER SHARING STORIES OF HOPE

WHEN ZARYAN, a teacher in her 20s, arrived in Burnley she was traumatised and exhausted.

She'd almost died coming to England by boat after her family were bombed and threatened in Iraq because of her father's work as a judge. Now she's preparing to retrain as a special needs teacher as she makes a new home here with her family – supported by the New Neighbours Together project.

Their emotional stories are just two of those

highlighted in a new Stories of Hope project – sharing people's journeys to promote understanding and acceptance.

It was shared as part of an exhibition at Burnley Youth Theatre in March of this year.

Project leader, Ruth Haygarth, who runs the project in partnership with SW Burnley Community Action Network, explains: "Our aim through this project is to support the growth of community wellbeing through building cohesion and integration in Burnley."

"By using arts and culture and the stories – written and spoken – of people's journeys to seek sanctuary, we aim to create mutual understanding and find common ground between different groups of people. "We believe strongly that by creating unity in diversity, grounded in hope, nurtured by community, we can build Burnley stronger together. "We're not asking people to be sympathetic, we're asking people to look at the humans, the skills and talent that they bring, that will help us build a better Burnley."



DIVERSITY IS OUR DESTINY! MORE EVENTS PLANNED FOLLOWING FESTIVAL SUCCESS

THE ORGANISERS behind Burnley's Diversity Festival say they're building on the event's overwhelming success to launch a raft of inspiring new projects.

Last year's initiative offered families, residents and groups across south-west Burnley the chance to get together, eat, listen, watch and create.

Highlights included the Faces of Burnley exhibition by artist Rizwan Iqbal – showcasing volunteers, refugees, and community members who all make a contribution to the town – a signing (and singing) choir, a Lancashire folk music evening, a lantern parade and a world music night. Quilts created by a textile

group made up of women from the West End Community Centre and Chai Cafe proclaiming, "Diversity is our Destiny" was another highlight.

Now plans are being made for another free, family-friendly outdoor concert at West End Community Centre in late May, featuring a host of local performers.

Organiser Anna Hewitt said: "We're excited to see what comes next and we'd love people to get involved, especially in things like our Community Choir. There's a lot going on in this area – and we're really happy to be part of it."

Contact West End Community Centre for more details.
westendburnley.co.uk

YOUNG VOICES TAKE THE STAGE

Four young playwrights are being given the chance to see their work performed on stage as part of a new initiative from Burnley Youth Theatre.

The Step Up! programme launched at the start of this year with the aim of finding fresh young voices from the town.

From entrants aged 15–17, four artists made the final cut and have now seen their work selected

and workshopped – ahead of live performances at the theatre later this year.

For CEO and Creative Director David Allen, the scheme – which he hopes to run again next year – is part of his team's ongoing work to engage with and provide meaningful artistic opportunities for young people in the town.

The theatre has been serving the people of Burnley since

1953, boosting the hopes and aspirations of young people in the town and attracting support from famous alumni including Sir Ian McKellen and Julie Hesmondhalgh.

"Burnley is a brilliant place," David explains, "there's so much passion and creativity."

"And there is an amazing level of co-operation here. People want to do stuff for the benefit of the town."



'BURNLEY IS OUR HOME, TOGETHER WE MUST KEEP IT CLEAN, UNITED AND SAFE'

MEMBERS OF a local mosque have been giving up their time to lead a community clean up campaign.

Attendees from Ghausia Mosque decided to take action after noticing a rise in litter and fly-tipping.

They worked with Burnley Council to launch the Burnley Clean Up and Street Champion Projects in November,

Since then they've been joined by dozens of volunteers keen to keep their neighbourhoods safe and tidy.

As one of the organisers, Shaykh Abd Al-Rahman explained, being a good neighbour is an important part of Muslim identity:

"As British Muslims, we are forever committed to being good neighbours and fostering peace in our diverse community," he explained.



"Burnley is our home; together we must keep it clean, united and safe.

"Council teams do their best, but the mess often returns. Real pride in our communities and environment comes when we all take ownership. Every small action makes a big difference."

■ **Anyone who would like to take part in the project or become a Street Champion can contact Ghausia Mosque on 07367 347 144.**

TREEMENDOUS!

IT'S BEEN another successful planting season across south-west Burnley – with schoolchildren and volunteers pitching in to make things greener.

More than 50 new trees and two native hedgerows, made up of 800 trees, have been installed in the last few weeks – part of 1,000 trees planted in Burnley

as a whole – and many handcrafted bird boxes have been installed. Thanks to the Trees Outside Woodland Fund, Going Green Team and helpers from the Calico Group, trees across south-west Burnley will be springing into leaf soon.

As Assistant Tree Officer Neil Jackson, 38, explains: "This project was made possible with support from The Tree Council and Defra's Trees Outside Woodland Fund.

"It's been a really successful season and we've enjoyed seeing people getting involved and giving up their time to make a difference."



REFORMING ENERGY? KER-CHING!

**By DALE VINCE
OBE, GREEN
INDUSTRIALIST**



WE NEED to reform our energy market: it's out of date, out of purpose, and every time there's a global crisis, it's out of control.

Before privatisation it served the nation, now it serves a handful of large companies, mostly foreign-owned, too often based in tax havens.

There are **three big but simple** changes

we could make to restore the public service ethos.

■ The first is to "Break the Link" – the pointless link between the price of gas and the price of electricity made from our own wind and sun. History is repeating itself with the Iran war sparking the latest energy crisis – and it won't be our last. In the last five years breaking the link could have saved us £9 billion a year and a grand total of £43.5 billion. **Ker-Ching!**

■ The second is to "Protect the North Sea" – using a tried and tested green energy mechanism to fix prices and protect jobs and investments as our North Sea fossil fuel industry completes its decline (which started in 1999). Over the last five years this could have knocked almost £10 billion a year from our bills on average and a grand total of £48.5 billion. **Ker-Ching!**

■ The third is to "Control the Networks" – the almost completely foreign-owned networks of pipes and cables that deliver energy from the national grid to our homes and businesses. **Ker-Ching!**

These total monopolies, with captive customers and guaranteed profits, despite being regulated, make massive 40% profit margins and ship billions of our cash out of our economy every year – while failing to invest enough in our networks, and then jacking our bills to pay for that. Over the last five years this could have knocked approaching £5 billion a year off our energy bills, or £25 billion in total. **Ker-Ching!**

These are serious sums of money that we could have, in our pockets and in our economy.

The wider economic impact we modelled, just from breaking the link – would be three times bigger if we do all three things.

And there would be no fiscal 'black hole'. We can fill it in, boost our economy and nail our energy bills to the floor.

Ker-Ching!

■ **Follow Dale Vince, publisher of Babelfish News at: www.babelfish.news**



BURNLEY FC's Poppy-Jo Llewellyn is getting ready to impress after being called up to represent Wales.

The 14-year-old had already been selected for the Under-15s training camp and has now been picked for the squad. Poppy-Jo is a familiar face at Turf Moor – she's an integral part of the Under-16s side and a frequent Player of the Match.

As Becky Aldred, Burnley FC's Female

Football Development Manager, says: "To be recognised and enlisted on a national scale in the WFA is a testament to her hard work, determination and dedication to the game.

"We are incredibly proud of Poppy-Jo and what she has already accomplished in her short football career. Players like Poppy represent the future of the women's game and we can't wait to see her progress."

BURNLEY'S RAYAN CHOSEN AS PREMIER LEAGUE COMMUNITY CAPTAIN



A BURNLEY teenager has been selected to be a Community Captain in the Premier League's More Than A Game campaign.

Rayan Al-Bakali, 18, was given the exciting news at a ceremony in March.

He's been a part of Burnley FC Community's Premier League Kicks development programme – which helps young people aged between eight and 18 develop – for several years and has gone on to become a volunteer himself, helping others train and use football as a force for good.

His local coaches told the national judges: "Rayan has developed into a positive role model, taking on leadership responsibilities, supporting new participants and young refugees, and engaging in wider youth opportunities.

"His progression from participant to volunteer highlights how the programme has built his confidence, responsibility, and desire to give back, while his continued involvement has had a positive influence on both participants and the overall delivery of Premier League Kicks."

Lewis Helps, Youth Engagement Coordinator, said Rayan was a shining example of what the programme and young people could achieve. "Rayan has been nominated because his journey captures what Premier League Kicks is about," he says. "He doesn't just benefit from Kicks, he actively makes it better for everyone involved."