SPEN VALLEY MATTERS

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE HOPE NOT HATE CAMPAIGN

Sponsored by Babelfish

FUTURE'S GOOD FOR BIRSTALL



"IT'S A PRIVILEGE to be able to help." So says Helen Raines, the co-founder of Birstall-based youth club, The Game Changerz.

She and co-founder Tony Aubrey both work full-time jobs while also running the club as volunteers. It runs every Monday and Tuesday for children aged 4 to 14. "There's a need for places like this in this area... children need somewhere to come that's for them that's not school." The effects of the club can be seen in the confidence of the kids who attend, and the reduction of anti-social behaviour.

We want to celebrate the Game Changerz and all the inspiring work being done in Spen Valley.

READ PAGES 2 & 8 FOR MORE DETAILS.

GO TO PAGE 7 FOR THE GAME CHANGERZ

INSIDE



P2 CLECKHEATON FOOD BANK



P4-5 A TRIBUTE TO JO COX



P7 ZACH'S AN INSPIRATION

SPEN VALLEY 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, this year community and faith groups, plus charities big and small, came together to celebrate and inspire A Million Acts of Hope across Britain. It was the start of something amazing that we hope continues for years to come. 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



DELIVERED BY THE COMMUNITY!

CLECKHEATON FOOD BANK FEEDS 450 HOMES A YEAR

"WE ARE helping our community with our own community." This is the mantra of the 50 volunteers who keep Cleckheaton Food Bank running!

The food bank was set up in 2020 after two local church ministers noticed there was a growing demand in the area. "The ministers were having to drive people to food banks some distance away because there wasn't a local one," says Dilys Beaumont, a volunteer and administrator for the foodbank.

Over the past year, the team of volunteers have delivered food parcels to 450 homes in the local area. "You don't have to have a referral from an agency to be a beneficiary," Dilys explains. "We accept self-referrals too." This allows the food bank to reach anyone who is in need.

The food bank is entirely volunteer-run. "Everyone works really hard," says Dilys. "Every week there is a reason to keep going, like when people who have moved on come back to thank us. Even when the volunteers have positive feedback it keeps me going."

Dilys has reflected on how the food bank has become a place of community for the volunteers too. "It's a way of giving back through getting out of the house and spending time with people. That's our community."



A picnic for the food bank volunteers will be held in June as part of National Volunteers Week to celebrate their hard work.

If you would like to volunteer at, or donate to Cleckheaton Food Bank please go to: cleckheatonfoodbank.weebly.com

THE BEATING HEART OF SPEN'S COMMUNITY



THE BAITUL ATA Mosque is home to Spen Valley's Ahmadiyya Muslim community. In the spirit of their motto, "love for all, hatred for none", the local Muslim community hosts a range of regular community outreach programmes.

Arif Ahmad, the president of the mosque, says, "We want everyone to feel welcome at our mosque, so we go out into our local community in the hope that we make people feel that way."

Arif has led a number of programmes which for him all comes back to looking after one another. "It's important to be a good neighbour to people. You can't do that when you don't know who your neighbour is."

In recent years, Arif has hosted Q&As about Islam, for local non-muslims to come down and learn more about the faith.

"The local rotary club invited me to give a presentation about Islam. People asked me about scripture and what Sharia law actually is. I gave them free copies of the holy Qur'an so they could read the passages for themselves. There was great dialogue."

The Baitul Ata Mosque also hosts open days where local people are invited to be shown around the mosque. "People often come and watch our Friday prayers, they can ask us questions and take photos.

"We organise for schools to come down too, which is wonderful because children aren't afraid to ask questions!"

From selling remembrance poppies to commemorate the Indian and Pakistani men who fought in World War II, to supporting the Humanity First food bank in Mirfield, Spen Valley's Ahmadiyya Muslim community are there for their neighbours.

■ **To get in contact or to arrange to attend one of the Baitul Ata Mosque's open days, contact president.spenvalley@ahmadiyyauk.org**

BLOOMING ACROSS GENERATIONS

MIRFIELD IN BLOOM was born from residents' love for Mirfield. "'Love where you live' has become our motto," says Christine Sykes, the group's secretary. And that dedication to making Mirfield a beautiful place to live has expanded across generations.

"We reached out to various parts of the community and wanted to make it known that people could do as much or as little as they wanted to," says Christine. Now, Mirfield in Bloom regularly works with schools and preschools to teach children their green-fingered ways!

Church House Pre-School has worked with Mirfield in Bloom to create the Little Bloomers, who spend lots of time learning about nature. "The Little Bloomers plant flowers, make compost and litter-pick as well as lots of other projects. They even grow their own vegetables, which teaches them where their food comes from."



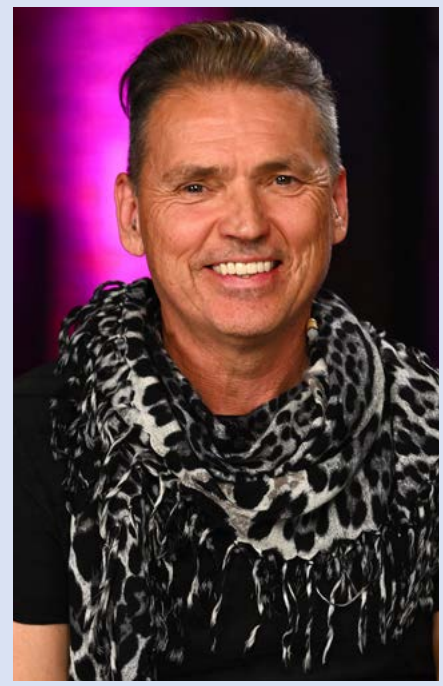
This July, at the Yorkshire in Bloom competition, all three of the preschool groups and two Mirfield neighbourhoods will be competing for gold! If they do anywhere as near as well they have in past years, they are set to dazzle the judges with their commitment to their town.

Mirfield in Bloom are also encouraging young people and teenagers to join. Whether that's through the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme or as a volunteer, Mirfield in Bloom will be happy to have you.

■ **If you're interested in volunteering please head to their Facebook page: search Mirfield in Bloom.**

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**

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF JO COX

by KIM LEADBEATER MBE & MP

FROM A DILIGENT schoolgirl in Heckmondwike to a committed public servant, Jo Cox's life was marked by resilience, compassion and an unwavering belief in others. In her short time as the MP for Batley and Spen she made a huge impact and gained respect across politics. She campaigned passionately on a range of issues, including tackling loneliness, improving support for children with autism, protecting civilians in conflict and achieving a 50:50 Parliament.

Jo's life and work came to a devastating and abrupt end on 16th June 2016, when she was murdered in her constituency by a far-right extremist. It was an act of violence that shocked the entire nation and much of the world beyond.

Her death was not only the loss of an MP but of a mother, a daughter, a wife, a sister, and a friend. Those closest to her were left not only grieving their loss, but grappling with the knowledge that her life had been taken because of the values she stood for: compassion, inclusion, and unity.

Tributes poured in. Many reflected on her belief, as it was expressed in her maiden speech to Parliament that: "We are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us," a message that resonated even more powerfully following her death. The tragedy became a moment of reflection, prompting conversations about tolerance, extremism, and the kind of society we want to see.

Carrying forward a Vision: The Jo Cox Foundation and More in Common

In the weeks and months following her death, those who had known and worked alongside Jo sought a way to honour her life in a manner that reflected her values. A national charity – The Jo Cox Foundation – was established by her family, friends and colleagues, and in her constituency a group of volunteers came together to build a powerful local legacy.

At the heart of this work is The Great Get Together – a weekend of community events taking place across the country every year on Jo's birthday in June – street parties, picnics, music events, coffee mornings and simple acts of togetherness.

Locally, the annual "Run For Jo" takes place at Oakwell Hall Country Park in Birstall. Every year hundreds of people come together to run or walk either 6.5km or 2.5km and enjoy live music, food and entertainment. It is not about competition but about about coming together – families,



friends, and strangers alike.

The atmosphere is one of warmth and inclusivity, where remembrance is combined with celebration. This year's event will be the last one, but it promises to be bigger than ever.

REMEMBERING JO: THE 10th AND FINAL RUN FOR JO

THIS JUNE will be the 10th and final Run For Jo, a local event set up in memory of Jo Cox. Dave Hawksworth and Joolz Smith, two of the founders, remember Jo and reflect on the incredible past runs.

Dave and Joolz had the idea for Run For Jo the weekend after Jo was killed. "We had never organised anything like this before in our lives, but we asked local organisations who had done running events before for advice.

"We decided to do a running event because of how keen of a runner Jo was.

"We wanted to have music, food, goody bags for the runners and fun activities. We couldn't have done it without loads of great volunteers. One volunteer, Penny, even went up to buskers in town to ask if they would play around the course as people ran," says Dave.

"In the morning of the first year of Run For Jo I went and looked at the finish line. I could see all of the foodstalls, the course set up and all of the volunteers and I just couldn't believe we'd actually done it, we'd just made everything up as we went on," says Joolz.

Over the years, well over 1000 people have attended each year. Dave and Joolz say this is why the event was created – to be together as a community in celebration of Jo. "It's amazing, it's such a positive, warm, special feeling."

Joolz recounts one of her favourite memories: "One year there was a particularly hilly part of the course, and a school choir were singing 'climb every mountain' as people ran past. People really loved that."

Dave says every year he thinks of Jo – "At the runs she is always in our thoughts" – and Joolz says she always thinks "'Jo, look what you've made me do!'"

"She was so warm and full of energy. She had the ability to really connect with people and remember them.

"We are so thankful to Jo's family, her sister Kim Leadbeater and her mum and dad for their support too, they're amazing," Dave and Joolz say.

As this is the tenth year, Jo's family and the organizing team have decided now is a good time to stop, but they anticipate doing lots of other things in Jo's memory in the future!



"Organising the event starts in November and the run isn't until June so it's a huge amount of work. We will really miss it in the meantime," they say.



Dave and Joolz with Kim Leadbeater MP and her parents, Gordon and Jean

"What has always been special about Run For Jo is that everyone came, regardless of political beliefs or background and it is about seeing the community together.

"The amazing volunteers really take ownership of the event, making it the best day out it can be, and that's the very best part."

The 10th Run For Jo will happen on the 21st June, with a fun run, a cross-country challenge and a mascot race. You can join in the virtual 10K too. For more details, see: facebook.com/runforjocox.

150 TREES SPONSORED IN JO COX COMMUNITY WOOD!



“PLANTING TREES is a vote for hope and the future,” says Erica Amende, the Spen Valley Civic Society’s secretary and longstanding member.

The Jo Cox Community Wood, planted and looked after by the Civic Society, launched a tree-sponsorship scheme that led to all 150 of the available trees being sponsored!

The Civic Society launched the scheme to help fund the maintenance of the wood, which was created in 2020 to celebrate the life of Jo Cox.

Erica says, “When Jo was murdered, everyone was shocked and horrified. Our idea was to create an outdoor space for people to come together, where children could play and explore. We’re honouring Jo’s belief that we have more in common than what divides us.”

Erica explains how the trees have been sponsored to celebrate births, anniversaries, community groups and to commemorate loved ones.

One oak tree is dedicated to Jo that has been sponsored by her family. Erica recalls, “Jo had said if she were to be reincarnated, she would come back as an oak tree, the best species of tree for supporting surrounding wildlife.

“The wood is now a place where people come to reflect, sit on a bench, and enjoy the calming effect of nature.”

The wood is made up of 1000 trees, wildlife hedges and a biodiverse pond which is even home to dragonflies!

With so much hard work having been done, the Spen Valley Civic Society are determined the wood will continue as a place of unity, refuge and remembrance of Jo. They would love more volunteers to help them sustain it.

Please email spenvalleycivicsociety@gmail.com if you’re interested in volunteering.



FORGET THE LOUVRE!

HECKMONDWIKE PHONEBOX GALLERY SHOWCASES NEW EXHIBITION

A COMMUNITY gallery housed in two disused red telephone boxes is displaying an exhibition of work by a creative writing charity.

The telephone boxes were transformed four years ago by two community groups, Keep Hecky Tidy and Rainbow Baby Bank. “The telephone boxes weren’t treated nicely and we wanted to do something about it,” says Pam Lonsdale, the deputy chair of Keep Hecky Tidy.

Keep Hecky Tidy had the idea to transform the phone boxes into a community gallery. “It makes them look nicer, but more importantly, it gives people a reason to come down and have a look. If schoolchildren have made something to go in there then they can bring their parents down to show them.”

The phone boxes have hosted work by many different groups already, such as local schools, a local poetry group, adults with learning disabilities, and most recently a creative writing group.





“Having it there makes a point of community,” says Pam.

Keep Hecky Tidy has been very busy with other projects this spring as well. “A project we are very proud of is our transformation of Sparrow Park. It’s a small community garden that we completely transformed and replanted,” says Pam.

In a collaborative project with other community groups and lots of volunteers, Keep Hecky Tidy contributed to the planting of 20,000 daffodil bulbs in Sparrow Park!

Keep Hecky Tidy is a small team of volunteers who are dedicated to taking care of Heckmondwike and would appreciate more volunteers.

If you’re interested in volunteering, get in touch via keepheckytidy@aol.com

JASPER’S JOURNEY HAS SCREENED NEARLY 400 PEOPLE’S HEARTS!



“THE MORE money we can raise, the more screenings we can do, and the more lives we can potentially save.”

These are the words of Kim Cook, who lost her son Jasper to a sudden cardiac arrest when he was just eight years old, and attending primary school in Birkenshaw.

Kim set up Jasper’s Journey in memory of her son to fundraise for heart screenings. Because of Kim’s incredible work in her son’s name, Jasper’s Journey has screened nearly 400 people’s hearts between the ages of 14 to 35.

“When Jasper died four years ago it absolutely devastated us,” says Kim. “Young people and children aren’t meant to die. Fundraising in the name of Jasper is our way of getting through and being able to make that difference.”

Jasper’s Journey has a local focus. “We’re encouraging people to make a difference in his name.”

As a result, Jasper’s family have received their towns’ full support. “Our local community has been brilliant, it shows Jasper really means something.

“Next year would have been Jasper’s 14th birthday. It’s an important year because it means that Jasper’s friends and year group will be able to have their first screening once they turn 14.”

Kim is organising for two screening opportunities to take place in 2027.

If you would like to donate to Jasper’s Journey, please use the QR code above for details on their Facebook page.

TOGETHER IN BATLEY: THE POWER OF LOVING WHERE YOU COME FROM

“I TOOK some copies of Together in Batley to a coffee morning where a man approached me and asked me what they were. I told him they were copies of a community magazine that I put together to share people’s good news in Batley and I offered him one.

“He said, ‘I can’t read’, and I said there are lots of pictures to look at and I asked him what area he was from. It turned out he was from an area where someone had written four articles about it over four issues.

“So I gave him a copy and soon enough he returned and said to me ‘I have never been able to read before but I could read that’. I gave him the three other issues with the articles in and again he came back having read all three.”

“‘What cake do you like, love?’, he asked me. I said to him, ‘Don’t be ridiculous, it’s free,’ and he said, ‘I didn’t think I could read and now I can,’ and returned with cake. That was really important to me.”

Together in Batley is a community magazine set up by Celia Moorhouse, 82. Celia recalls how she felt after a period of divisiveness in the area: “I didn’t sleep at night for a while but then I thought to myself, don’t be angry, just do something.”

With the support of a local councillor, Celia was able to access some funding. She created a 24-page magazine, which she creates and distributes every two months! Together in Batley has now been running for four years.

“It’s a community paper, written by the community, for the community,” says Celia. Together in Batley is a “good news” magazine to highlight all of the incredible people, projects and history there is in Batley. “It is so lovely that people are writing in to celebrate what they’ve done, I just love it all.”

The reason that Together in Batley exists is simple for Celia. “If people feel positive about themselves, it gives them the resilience to not get sucked into negativity.”

Together in Batley has had an incredible impact locally. “People have told me that when they read a normal newspaper they can only manage a couple of articles. But when they read Together in Batley they could read it all in one go.

“I try to show people there is always good news.”

Celia even won the BBC Make a Difference award, but she felt strongly that the award should belong to everyone who contributes to the magazine, rather than herself. “My paper is special but I am not special. I don’t wake up thinking about how I’m going to be special today, I just want to get on with it.”

Celia plans that one issue of the magazine a year will be dedicated to a different estate in Batley. “I want to show people the value in where they come from.”



Together in Batley: Celia Moorhouse with her award

Together in Batley is run by Celia and five volunteers, if you are interested in helping, please contact togetherinbatley@gmail.com



THE BIRSTALL CLUB CHANGING THE GAME

"THEY CAN all be themselves here, that's why it works and that's why I love it," says Helen Raines, the co-founder of Birstall-based youth club, The Game Changerz.

The Game Changerz runs every Monday and Tuesday for children aged 4 to 14, with 50 to 60 children attending on both days. "There's a need for places like this in this area. It's a deprived area and children need somewhere to come that's for them that's not school."

The children play sports, cook and bake, as well doing arts and crafts. They are provided with a hot snack, fruit and pudding too.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Helen worked in a local food bank. She would take the leftover fruit at the end of the day and give it to the children at the youth club.

Helen says, "They don't necessarily get fruit at home, and when I bring it they devour it in seconds."

Six years later, Helen still brings fruit and veg with her, and lots of other ingredients. Every week, she cooks or bakes with the children to encourage them to try new things.

"One week I brought sweet potatoes in and they were all shouting, 'Eww, what's that? It looks gross.' I got them to make them into wedges with me and they absolutely loved them, and



all went home with a bag of sweet potatoes."

Helen and co-founder Tony Aubrey both work full-time jobs while also running The Game Changerz as volunteers.

"Lots of the children will have spent the day in isolation at school, but when they come to the youth club, we say to them, 'We don't judge, just let us know how we can help you.' It's a privilege to be able to give them that bit of 'me time'."

Helen is passionate about providing a place for local children to come and be themselves. She's noticed a massive growth of self-confidence among the children, which has transformed their community.

"Anti-social behaviour used to be a massive problem in the area. We have learned to respect the building together, none of that damage happens anymore because we respect our space."

BEATING THE TROLLS!

LIVERSEDGE'S ZACH IS AN "INSPIRATION"

WHEN ZACH Eagling, of Liversedge, was just eight-years-old, he was sent flashing images online in a horrifying attempt to trigger his epileptic seizures.

In a courageous bid to prevent similar attacks from happening to anyone again, Zach successfully campaigned for new laws to protect people with epilepsy online.

Named "Zach's law", the legislation makes it a criminal offence to troll anyone with epilepsy to intentionally cause seizures. The law carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

Zach is now 14 years old, and despite his parliamentary success, has continued to fundraise for the Epilepsy Society. He has raised more than £20,000! Zach has also started a new campaign for better accessibility on public transport.

His work certainly hasn't gone unrecognised – Zach won the "Teenager of Courage" Pride of Britain award in 2025 for his incredible work!

Kim Leadbeater MP told the Dewsbury Reporter, "I will always remember when Zach visited me in Parliament. So many MPs wanted to meet him and have a photograph taken, and rightly so: he'd inspired potentially life-saving legislation."



PAN-DISABILITY FOOTBALL TEAM AT GOMERSAL & CLECKHEATON F.C.

IT'S BEEN an incredible year! Pan-disability football teams prep for their biggest awards night yet.

Following a huge year for Gomersal & Cleckheaton F.C.'s children's and adult's pan-disability teams, the club are set to throw their biggest awards ceremony yet.

"This year has been huge for us," says Andrew Birkenshaw, the teams' coach. This included the return of a player, Callum Irvine, who played for Gomersal & Cleckheaton as a child. Callum was on his way home from training in 2010 when he was hit by a car and suffered a brain injury limiting his cognitive development.

Callum has returned to football, playing for the adult team. He says, "I like being back at my old club because I am able to kick the football and score goals again."

The team have also featured in promotional material for an England Football campaign with



photos of the players on the website and on posters!

Andrew is planning an awards ceremony for the teams in July, which he wants to be the club's biggest and best yet. The event will feature a red carpet, a disco and various awards to celebrate the players, their parents, carers and the coaches.

"Thursday is like my weekend," says Andrew, who looks forward to coaching the players every Thursday. "I get so much joy from it, it's so rewarding."

The adult team was formed in April last year when Andrew noticed a lack of sport provision for people with disabilities in the local area.

The team are looking for sponsors for their awards ceremony, if you are interested please contact andrewbirkenshaw@live.com



STAR PLAYER SET FOR LEEDS UNITED!



BRADLEY MARSHALL, a junior player on the pan-disability team, has been asked to play for Leeds United!

Gomersal & Cleckheaton F.C. said, "As a coaching team and club, we are so proud of Bradley for leading the way for players of all abilities to follow their dreams and play for the team they have supported their whole life. He is a truly amazing young man and a great role model for other players with disabilities."

Hope happens here.

#MillionActsofHope

Hundreds of charities, communities and faith groups came together to launch **A Million Acts of Hope** – a campaign that will continue for years to come.

We want to thank all the people who prove our communities can be healthier and happier if we pull together, not apart.

A million acts of hope

Get involved

millionactsofhope.org

Promoted, published and printed by Nick Lowles on behalf of HOPE not hate at 167-169 Great Portland Street, 5th Floor, London, W1W 5PF.