



Tree-lined roads such as this one in West Hampstead, London, bring a wealth of benefits, according to a new report by Create Streets

Green light for urban planting

THE Prime Minister should declare a national mission to ‘regreen’ Britain’s towns and cities, according to a think tank called Create Streets. In a new report titled ‘Greening Up’, the think tank also urges the Government to give people the right to plant and grow trees, flowers and other greenery in public spaces as part of the levelling-up strategy, which should include specific provisions for urban greenery.

The report highlights four benefits of urban greening, which are: planet, place, people and value. It proposes that the Government should ‘create a new right to grow and right to plant, giving individuals and local communities the legal right to plant in existing public green spaces in their neighbourhoods, and [making it] much easier to plant in streets’. At the moment, it is illegal for many people without gardens to plant trees or flowers in local spaces.

According to research cited by Create Streets, urban trees can help to both mitigate carbon emissions and reduce the urban heat impacts of global warming. They provide benefits for places and communities, and are better for our mental health. All of these factors combined for a cost-benefit analysis showed a positive impact of

almost £6,500 per person, when living within 1,500ft of a small park in an urban area, with savings created from less depression, reduced mortality, higher house prices and less crime.

Other recommendations in the report include launching an ‘urban greening task force’ to coordinate government budgets and targets, cutting red tape to make planting easier, improving funding and challenging ‘unconscious bias’ against greenery that has become

‘Nicholas Boys Smith said that street trees are “a wonder drug”’

‘baked into standards regimes and principles of legal liability’. One ‘promising’ practical approach suggested by the report includes the ‘3-30-300 rule’, which says that everyone should have sight of three trees, every neighbourhood should have 30% canopy cover and that everyone should live within 300 metres (1,000ft) of a park or green space. According to the Committee on Climate Change, between 2001 and 2018, ‘urban greenspace’ in England declined from 63% to 55%.

Create Streets is chaired by Nicholas Boys Smith, who heads the Office for Place at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which is run by Michael Gove. He said that street trees are ‘a wonder drug’ and that ‘what was once a ripple of conjecture is now a storm surge of evidence’. ‘For the first time this report examines the hidden wiring of incentives, regulations and outdated policy which prevents tree-planting and lifts the lid on why strategic statements of intent are not translating into sufficient “greening up” on the ground,’ he adds. ‘We make detailed and actionable recommendations for how national and local government could slice through this Gordian knot so that trees not tarmac, and living in verdant and tree-lined streets and squares, could once again become the natural condition for us all.’

‘Little can be more important to the web and weave of our neighbourhoods than re-planting millions of street trees up and down the land,’ adds broadcaster and former Conservative MP Rory Stewart. ‘This important report shows why we aren’t planting street trees and how to fix it. I hope that every politician, from north and south, left and right, reads it and acts on it. Britain would be the better for it.’



Unlocking York: Bishopthorpe Palace is one of several landmarks that will be open to the public

Freedom of the city

THIS weekend, 70 of York's more remarkable buildings and open spaces will fling open their doors to visitors free of charge, for the second edition of York Unlocked. The two-day event will offer visitors the chance to peek behind the often-locked doors of many of the city's most notable sites, such as Bishopthorpe Palace, the Archbishop's Walled & Pleasure Garden, Duncombe Place Masonic Lodge, the Terry's Factory Clock Tower and the Minster Refectory. This year's edition also features a special 'Architecture of the Ouse' cruise and a drawing competition.

'York is blessed with a rich diversity of building gems and open spaces that all have amazing stories to tell,' says Kathy M. King, the founder of York Unlocked. 'Maybe you've walked past for years on your daily commute and wondered what lies behind the door, or you are new to York and want to learn more about its rich history. This special event enables you to see familiar places through fresh eyes and explore these hidden treasures across one fabulous weekend.' (www.york-unlocked.org.uk)



I will return: the iconic Sycamore Gap tree on Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland, which was felled last week. It's hoped that the stump can be coppiced, and that the tree will regrow

Good week for

Tailor swift

Natural England has awarded Leicestershire County Council a £77,000 grant to fund a two-year project to tailor swift nesting sites and help the declining species

Riders on the storm

A record-breaking number of rare North American songbirds, such as the Canadian warbler (*pictured*), have been spotted in the UK after high winds from Hurricane Lee blew them off their usual migration routes. Their arrival has been marked as one of the 'most memorable' days in birding history, but experts warn that few of the birds are likely to survive



Get your kit on

Dorset Wildlife Trust has welcomed two beaver kits at the Dorset Beaver Project site for a second year running. The male and female adult beavers were introduced in 2021 and produced the first beaver born in the county in 400 years

Protecting Holyrood

A network of new pathways and further vehicle restrictions could be introduced to Holyrood Park in Edinburgh. The plans will allow vegetation and wildlife to recover after decades of decline due to the number of visitors

Bad week for

First impressions

A study commissioned by Amazon Books UK found that 43% of Brits say that the first few lines can make or break a novel, with 64% saying they have stopped reading a book if the initial wording didn't grab their attention

Curtains for trigger warnings

Sir Ian McKellen has criticised the use of trigger warnings in theatres as they ruin the element of surprise contained in a play. The actor called the warnings 'ludicrous' and said he quite enjoyed the shock of 'loud noises and outrageous behaviour on stage' **AEW**





A classic country scene: *The Season Heralds* by sporting artist Daniel Crane

A sporting canvas

WITH two rangy bay horses' conker-brown coats glistening in the dawn sunshine, warm breath emanating from their nostrils into the cold air like puffs of smoke and mist wreathing the parkland behind, two elegant tweed-jacketed and peak-capped members of hunt staff escort a pack of hounds on their morning exercise...

This is the typical countryside scene—with a nod to the classically cut attire worn in the 1920s or 1930s—that the sporting artist Daniel Crane captures so well.

Known for his hunting, racing (a detail of his painting *Gladiators* appeared on the front cover of the August 30 issue), military and pastoral scenes, Mr Crane is based in Louth, in Lincolnshire. But, last Saturday morning he and his wife, Ali, were autumn trail-hunting with the South Devon on Dartmoor, ahead of an exhibition hosted by the Earl and Countess of Devon at Powderham Castle, Exeter, that evening to raise funds for the 213-year-old pack.

Although Mr Crane's evocative work is often compared with that of Sir Alfred Munnings, his true mentor is another great British artist, Lionel Edwards. 'I love Munnings, his palette and his brushstrokes are wonderful, but there isn't one Edwards that I don't

like,' he enthuses. 'The way he could evoke such realistic scenes in a few strokes is awesome and timeless.' Having grown up as the youngest son of a Norfolk farming family, Mr Crane began by drawing the dogs lying on the kitchen floor. However, he fell in love with hounds at the age of 16 and followed them on foot for two to three seasons before riding to them at 21. Since then, he's ridden with numerous packs—including the formidable Scarteen, where he was a joint master for eight seasons—and is a regular with the Brocklesby and the Belvoir. 'I'm not Sir Mark Todd, but I am handy enough,' he smiles.

For South Devon joint master and Royal Army Veterinary Corps officer Dan McRink—who worked with Mr Crane when he was undertaking commissions for The King's Troop, The Royal Horse Artillery and The Household Cavalry—his friend's skill lies in recording often unseen moments. 'I most enjoy the artwork that depicts the behind the scenes of a day's sport, in kennels and stables before and after hunting or between seasons,' explains Maj McRink. 'We love our hounds and horses, and affording them the best possible care is a source of great pride and satisfaction. Daniel not only captures this bond, but it's plain to see that he shares this love, too.' PL



It's October, which means that spooky season is now officially upon us. To celebrate, Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire will be creating a 'spook-tacular' new trail during half-term (October 20–29) where you might discover demons and find fire performers, ghosts, ghouls and witches, as well as the scary spider tunnel. Visitors should also keep their eyes peeled for the cloaked horseman lurking in the mist (www.blenheimpalace.com/halloween)

Landmark labrador

WHEN Spencer the labrador and his family arrived at Folkestone terminal on September 26, they likely assumed that their journey through the Channel Tunnel on board LeShuttle would be uneventful. Instead, they were greeted personally by Guillaume Rault, director of operations at LeShuttle, as it was revealed that Spencer was the four-millionth pet to cross the Channel on the train since the Pet Travel Scheme launched in 2000.

'I am thrilled to welcome our four-millionth pet traveller,' said Mr Rault. 'This milestone underscores our commitment to providing safe and convenient transport for pets.' At the time of writing, more than 250,000 pets, including dogs, cats, ferrets and rats, had made the journey this year.

Shake on it: Spencer the labrador offers a paw to Guillaume Rault, LeShuttle's director of operations



'I'm looking like a true survivor': Elton is a hand-finished screen print by artist Hannah Gilson, who is taking part in the Affordable Art Fair at Battersea Park this month



Making art affordable

THE autumn edition of the Affordable Art Fair will return to Battersea Park, London SW11, on October 19–22, showcasing ‘the best in contemporary, affordable art from all over the world’, say organisers.

More than 1,000 artists and 112 galleries will be in attendance, with prices for artworks starting at £50. The fair will also be offering a special exhibition to celebrate Black History Month and the return of the annual Recent Graduates Exhibition. On the Thursday and Friday (October 19–20), the Fair is hosting Art After Dark Lates, where visitors can party later into the evening (9pm) alongside live DJs, welcome drinks and workshops. Tickets from £10, under 16s free, booking required. Lates are 18-plus only (www.affordableartfair.com).



'I saw it first, it's mine!' A squirrel and a pheasant get into a scrap in the garden of photographer Ivor Ottley at Hesselst, Suffolk. This photo has been nominated in the Birdlife category at the British Photography Awards, the winners of which will be announced on November 10 at The Dorchester in London



Country Mouse Grape expectations

THE moment has arrived: the pickers are moving into the fields for the annual grape harvest. It is the culmination of a year's work of tending, pruning and caring. This year's weather has been kind to English wine, with good conditions during the flowering period in the spring and a mainly warm summer. Many, such as Nyetimber, the UK's biggest sparkling-wine producer, are predicting a record harvest. Last year, more than 12 million bottles were produced across the country.

The area taken up by vineyards in Britain has grown by 74% in the past six years, to about 4,000 hectares (some 9,880 acres), and it is expected to double in the next decade. English wine has reshaped many of the vistas of the South Downs into neat lines of vines spreading along the south-facing slopes. Today, English wine is also increasingly well made and easily competes with what the rest of the world has to offer, especially our sparkling varieties.

It is a remarkable success, but, similarly, who would have predicted the rise of British cheesemaking? Today, our wine and cheese are among the best in the world and that is not something I thought I would write when I first became a journalist almost 40 years ago. **MH**



Town Mouse Sunshine and storm

A TRIP to Cornwall last week witnessed extremes of autumn weather. It began with a wedding in serene sunshine at St Mawes. To the dismay of the children, there was just time for a visit to the castle beforehand. St Mawes once constituted a notorious rotten parliamentary borough with two MPs. So rotten that, on November 5, 1695, the castle captain and lord of the manor, Sir Joseph Tredenham, was able to organise a spontaneous ballot and return his sons, John and Seymour, to the House of Commons. As a bravura act of nepotism, it's hard to trump.

The wedding itself was a Quaker ceremony—held in silence with members of the congregation speaking as the spirit moved them—and proved exceptionally moving. Everyone witnessed the wedding certificate with babies making their thumbprint in place of a signature. There were Cornish pasties on the pier to follow and then a magical boat trip to the wedding breakfast across a completely calm sea.

That night, the weather turned and we woke up to find our planned journey home overtaken by wind and rain. With all ferries to Falmouth cancelled, we had to take the bus to Truro. The opportunity for a cathedral visit there did not strike everyone in the family as making up for the inconvenience. **JG**