

ISSUE 14

Southport's

Journey

MAGAZINE

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Local Love- Spring
Home Interior Edit

Launchpad - Helping people
find their confidence

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Community, conversation and the life in between

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Editor's Note

SOUTHPORT'S JOURNEY

Hello — and welcome to April.

There is something about April that always feels like a turning point. The light stays longer, mornings begin with a little more promise, and the town starts to wake up. Chairs appear outside cafés, coats are carried rather than worn, and there is that familiar feeling that things are beginning to move.

But April also has a way of reminding us that progress rarely arrives neatly.

Plans change. Weather interrupts. Events do not always unfold exactly as imagined. A week can feel slower than expected. A conversation can land differently than hoped. Sometimes something you looked forward to does not quite become what you pictured. Humans keep inventing calendars as if life has signed a contract to cooperate. It never has.

Yet one moment is never the whole story.

One difficult day does not define a month. One cancelled plan does not undo momentum. One setback does not cancel the work already done, whether that is in business, in family life, in friendships, or quietly within yourself.

That feels true of Southport too. This town continues to evolve through all the ordinary stops and starts that come with real life. There is still energy here. New ideas forming. Familiar places finding fresh rhythm. People continuing to build, show up, and contribute, even when not everything goes smoothly the first time.

This issue reflects that spirit. A collection of voices, ideas and stories that remind us growth is rarely perfect, but it is often happening anyway, just beneath the surface, in ways we only fully notice when we pause long enough to look.

Thank you, as always, for reading and for continuing to support Southport's Journey as it grows with the town around it.

Here's to April.

Editor-in-Chief



About Southport's Journey

We're an independent magazine celebrating the people, places and projects that make Southport proud—sharing warm, useful stories across print, digital and events. We champion independents, share what's on, and make it easier to discover something good every month.

Get involved

hello@southportsjourney.com
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Want to be featured in the magazine?
We're always looking for stories big or small!

Inside This Issue

Issue 14 | March 2026

A place-led magazine documenting the people, ideas and momentum shaping Southport. This month: culture, community and a town raising its own standards.

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Welcome. Your *Journey* starts here.



A CHANDELIER VERSUS THE WEATHER



Cristal Palace was meant to be one of Southport's defining moments this spring. A suspended chandelier, aerial performance, music and spectacle were set to transform Town Hall Gardens into an open-air stage as part of the Elegantly Eccentric programme. Instead, high winds forced organisers to make a late safety decision, first affecting Friday evening's main performance and then cancelling Saturday's showcase

entirely. For many, the disappointment was immediate. Months of planning had gone into bringing the French production to Southport, with performers travelling in, crews working behind the scenes, and local young dancers rehearsing for weeks to be part of it. Yet even with the main aerial element unable to go ahead, local performers still took to the stage. Young dancers from three Southport schools and volunteer performers involved in the finale were still given the chance to perform in front of a hometown audience, which mattered more than it may have looked in that moment.

What remained noticeable across the weekend was that people had already come into town. Restaurants and bars were busy on Friday evening. Lord Street had movement, anticipation and conversation, even if the full production never arrived as planned.

Outdoor events are always vulnerable to conditions no one controls, particularly when they rely on scale, height and precision. That does not lessen the disappointment, but it does place it where it belongs, as part of staging ambitious public events rather than evidence that the effort was misplaced.

If anything, the response afterwards showed why that effort still matters. People had wanted it to work. They had made plans around it, arrived early, stayed in town and spoken positively about what these events continue to bring. Southport's calendar this year remains strong, with major cultural moments still ahead, and weekends like this serve as a reminder that one disrupted evening does not cancel the wider momentum now building across the town.

What's On!

Your overview of events!

14-16 February 2026
Lightport

21 March 2026
St Patrick's Day Irish Beer and Music Festival
Victoria Park

3-4 April 2026
Cristal Palace, Lord Street

18 April 2026
Sausage and Cider Festival,
Victoria Park

18 April 2026
Spring Beer Festival
Victoria Park

2-3 May 2026
Big Top Festival
Victoria Park

29-31 May 2026
Southport Food and Drink Festival, Victoria Park

12-19 July 2026
The Open Championship,
Royal Birkdale

20-23 August 2026
Southport Flower Show

29-30 August 2026
Southport Air Show

26-27 September 2026
British Musical Fireworks Championship

2-18 October 2026
Southport Comedy Festival,
Victoria Park

24-31 October 2026
Books Alive Festival

December 2026
Christmas in Southport -5

LAUNCHPAD



merseyside EXPANDING HORIZONS

Merseyside Expanding Horizons and The Big Onion have been running a government funded programme called Launchpad, designed to support young adults aged 18 to 21 across Sefton as they move closer to employment.

Delivered over 12 weeks, the programme forms part of a wider youth employment offer that recognises something often overlooked, that many young people are expected to enter interviews, workplaces and new environments already knowing how to communicate well, manage pressure and present themselves confidently, despite never having been taught how to do that in any practical way.

Launchpad has been designed to close some of that gap through structured sessions that build practical skills alongside self belief. Across the programme, participants have taken part in workshops covering communication, creativity and workplace readiness, each one aimed at helping confidence grow through repetition, conversation and shared experience. Ben Towell has led sessions focused on communication and mindset, while Emmy Oranges from Art Ease introduced creative work designed to encourage expression and ease within the group. Tim Short recently delivered a workshop exploring open and closed questions, a simple concept that becomes highly relevant in interviews, workplace conversations and first impressions.

The value of that kind of learning sits in how transferable it becomes. Knowing how to keep a conversation open, ask clearly, respond thoughtfully and stay present under pressure can often shape how a young person is received long before qualifications are discussed.

Schemes like Launchpad matter because they recognise that employability is rarely just about technical readiness. It is often about helping young adults feel able to enter spaces that may previously have felt out of reach.

That impact is already visible, with some participants securing work during the programme itself. For many, that reflects more than employment alone. It signals a shift in how they see their own capability and what feels possible next.

Across Sefton, where conversations around opportunity, aspiration and access continue to matter, programmes like this offer something practical. They create space for confidence to be built before it is tested.

This is usually the difference. People do not suddenly become confident because an interview date appears in the diary. They become more ready because someone took the time to help them practise what confidence actually looks like in real life.

“My favourite part of Launchpad was the escape rooms. The way we worked together showed that five brains really can be better than one.”

“I learned a lot from hearing people’s stories and understanding more about yourself just by listening to others talk.”

“I’ve learned that in an interview process it helps to think of it as daily dialogue rather than becoming intimidated by the formal setting.”

“I came into the sessions very closed off and not really feeling able to speak to anyone, but by the end I felt completely different. I am trying to become a more confident person, and I think it is working.”

“At the start, I did not really know what to do and I was very closed off, because that is how I had been for most of my life. But the people there were extremely helpful.”

“I’ve really enjoyed the last 12 weeks. It has taken me back to my school years in some ways, and I’ve really enjoyed that. Learning new things and meeting new people.”

“It has been great for my self-confidence and I have met so many new people.”

“I have enjoyed the whole experience of expanding my skills and making friends.”

For some, the barrier to work is not a lack of willingness. It is unfamiliarity. Interviews can feel intimidating, first conversations carry pressure, and stepping into adult working life often demands confidence before confidence has had a chance to develop.

Launchpad
Class of 2026

SOUTHPORT ON SCREEN

THE PIER

What makes any landmark a tourist attraction? Blackpool is famous for its tower. Paris is known for its equally famous tower. Whether it's an establishing shot to let the viewer know we're in Blackpool or if it's appeared on the news or in magazines to represent France. Being shown something frequently makes it recognisable and representative of a town or country.

Southport is famous for its pier. The second longest pier in the country. We know they're in Southport when there's a shot of the pier. When Timothy drives across the sand in *What's Good for the Goose*, towards the pier, it reminds us that the action is very much in Southport.

It had been made clear at the end of series 2 of *Tin Star* (which started in Canada) that they were going to Liverpool. So in series 3, when we saw Tim Roth arrive at one of the concession units for his wedding on the Pier train (which also featured very briefly in *Mr Love*), we knew without a doubt that they were in Southport. The scenes that took place in the arcade also get a shout here, with arcades at both ends of the pier, filming took place in Silcock's Funland and the vintage arcade next to the café.

Southport pier has appeared on screen in a few shows, but it doesn't always set the scene.

For example, in *Perfectly Frank*, Lily takes Frank to the pier to get a good look at the stars, and the pier provides a wonderful stage for a song and dance number.

The café at the end of the pier featured in the final scene at the end of Series 1 of *Time*, when Sean Bean's character, Mark Cobden meets with Mrs Warren, played by Anna Madeley.

For scenes that aren't set in Southport, it's thrilling to see the pier on screen for those of us that recognise it. Perhaps it's these glimpses of the pier on screen that makes it a famous Southport landmark!

Tin Star series 3 was filmed in 2020.

Time series 1 was filmed in 2021 both are available on Now TV and Amazon Prime.

What's Good for the Goose (1969) is available on Amazon.

Perfectly Frank (2022) is available on Amazon Prime.

Follow my set jetting adventures at filmsethunter.co.uk or on instagram @filmsethunter





EAT

FROM CASUAL BITES TO
PROPER PLATES,

A DAY OF EATING ACROSS SOUTHPORT

There is something quietly satisfying about treating your own town like a staycation, building a day around good food and moving through Southport one plate at a time.



Start in Cove in Birkdale Village, where breakfast feels worth lingering over. Their black pudding Benedict arrives rich and comforting, the poached eggs soft enough to spill into every corner of the plate, giving the morning a stronger start than toast ever could.

By lunchtime, cross the railway and settle into Nista for something quicker but no less satisfying. A pulled pork baguette, warm, generous and full of flavour, feels exactly right in the middle of the day, especially when paired with coffee and a brief pause before heading on.

Then shift to the other side of town for dinner at Botanic Eatery, where the herb crusted cod brings a slower pace to the evening. Light, carefully balanced and beautifully presented, it rounds the day off with the kind of dish that makes staying local feel like a very good decision.

Sometimes the best staycation is simply seeing your own town differently.





TAPPER'S CAFE

Tucked on the corner of Union Street and Castle Street, just one turn away from Lord Street, Tapper's Cafe Bar has that rare quality of feeling central while still quietly removed from the rush of town.

Lunch there last week felt like a small pause in the day. I chose the warm goat's cheese tartine, layered with onion marmalade, fresh rocket, balsamic drizzle and roasted hazelnuts, a combination that managed to feel both rich and light at once. Across the table, avocado, brie and rocket arrived with cranberry and port sauce inside one of their freshly prepared bagels, a reminder of how well they balance simple ingredients with just enough detail.

A side of sweet potato fries quickly became the standout extra, crisp and generous enough to compete for attention with the main plates.

Their cakes were difficult to ignore, especially a freshly baked fruit scone sitting within easy reach, but coffee won in the end, smooth and strong enough to finish lunch properly.

With afternoon tea, mini bagel selections and an alcohol licence, it feels like a place ready for longer afternoons, especially once the outdoor tables fill with warmer weather.



The Forget Me Not Café

Where Dementia Support Feels Human

The Forget Me Not Café at Southport YMCA is quietly filling a gap that many families know exists long before they know where to turn. Designed for people living with dementia, and for the relatives, carers and friends alongside them, it offers something that formal services often cannot: a place to arrive without explanation, without paperwork, and without feeling that every conversation has to begin with what is wrong.

Held each Wednesday morning from 10.30am until 12.30pm, the café creates a steady, informal environment where tea is poured, conversations happen naturally, and people are free to stay for as long or as little as they need. There is no pressure to participate in anything structured, no expectation to present a version of yourself that feels composed, and no sense of being assessed. That matters more than many people realise.

Dementia changes everyday life in ways that are often difficult to explain to those outside it. Families can find themselves caught between medical appointments and long stretches of isolation, managing practical realities while also carrying the emotional weight of watching someone they love change. What often sits missing in that space is somewhere ordinary enough to feel safe, but supportive enough to ease the strain.

That is where the Forget Me Not Café has found its purpose. Created through Southport Community Sports, led by Steve Haworth and volunteer Jenny Bowles, it was shaped by direct understanding of how dementia affects households beyond diagnosis itself. The aim was not simply to provide an activity, but to offer continuity, familiarity and connection in a way that feels natural.

It is another example of how Southport often responds best when it notices where life has become difficult and quietly builds something practical around it. Not every important service arrives with fanfare. Sometimes it begins with a warm room, familiar voices, and the knowledge that for an hour or two, nobody has to explain why they needed to come.



EDUCATION

IDEAS, SKILLS, AND INSIGHTS YOU
CAN ACTUALLY USE

THE BIG PICTURE WITH



Emotional regulation becomes harder when concentration has been sustained for long periods.

Children often manage discomfort differently in structured environments than in familiar ones.

Delayed emotional release is common after social effort, even on ordinary school days.

BUBBLING OVER

Why children often save their hardest moments for home

A child can hold themselves together all day and still fall apart over something very small at home.

For many parents, that contrast can feel hard to understand. A teacher describes them as settled. They leave school smiling. Then twenty minutes later there are tears because the wrong plate was used, a sibling spoke too loudly, or a simple question lands badly.

What often sits underneath that is not contradiction, but timing.

School asks for steady effort that adults do not always see. Listening carefully, managing noise, following instructions, reading friendships, coping with disappointment, staying within routines, and adjusting repeatedly across the day all require emotional energy.

Even children who seem outwardly fine are often using a great deal internally.

Home is usually where that effort loosens.

That is why a child may react most strongly where they feel least watched. Not because home causes the distress, but because it is the place where holding everything together no longer feels necessary.

This can make ordinary moments feel bigger than they are. Hunger, tiredness, noise or a small frustration often arrive on top of what has already been carried quietly.

It helps to remember that children do not always release feelings where they begin. Often they release them where they feel safest.

Sometimes that means the day's smallest moment receives the day's biggest reaction. Human beings, even very small ones, remain strangely committed to collapsing just as the shoes come off.

WHAT TO SAY & WHAT NOT TO SAY

What to say

- You have had a full day. It might all feel bigger now.
- It does not have to make sense straight away.
- You can be tired and cross at the same time.
- We can talk when it feels easier.

What to avoid

- You were fine a minute ago.
- Why are you upset over something so small?
- Stop being rude.
- Tell me right now what your problem is.

WRITTEN BY I CAN EDUCATION



CHILDREN DO NOT ALWAYS FALL APART WHERE THINGS HAPPEN. THEY OFTEN FALL APART WHERE THEY FEEL SAFEST



YOUNG VOICES

Writing from Meols Cop High School in partnership with Southport Learning Trust

This month, the voices returning to these pages from Meols Cop High School carry a different kind of weight. The writing remains young, but the themes are anything but light. What stands out increasingly is the willingness to move towards harder edges, difficult emotions, sharper observations, and subjects that ask more of both the writer and the reader. That matters. Because young people are often spoken about more than they are listened to, particularly when the subjects become uncomfortable or complex.

Through this ongoing collaboration with Southport Learning Trust, students from Meols Cop are not being asked to write safely. They are being trusted to think, shape, question and express what sits beneath the surface. The result is writing that often carries more honesty than expected. Strong themes. Clear imagination. Sometimes difficult ground. Always something real enough to deserve space on the page. This is exactly why giving young writers a visible place in print continues to matter.

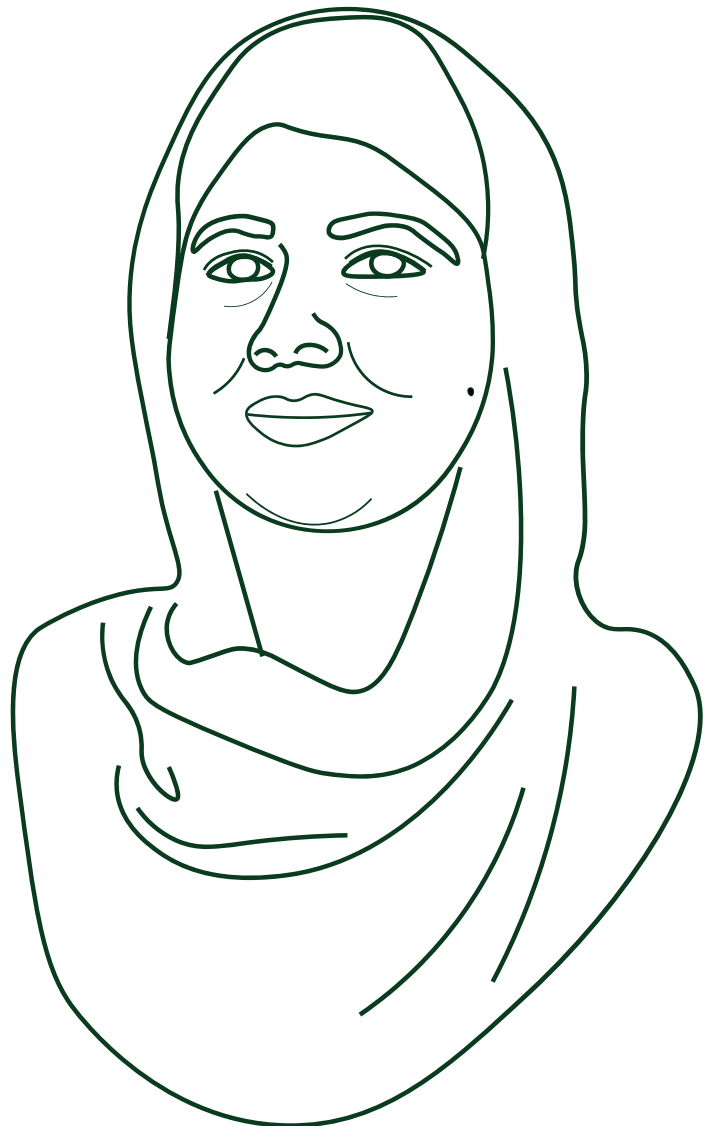
MALALA YOUSAFZAI

Speaker of the Year 2026 winner (by Daniel Lightbown)

It was an ordinary day in the Swat Valley in Pakistan on the 9th of October 2012. The Taliban was no longer ruling and everyone was coming home from school but not all.

BANG! A 15-year-old girl was shot for going to school. Would you want to be shot for going to school? Probably not. This girl was called Malala Yousafzai. And the Taliban had shot her. Miraculously, she survived the attempt to kill her after receiving life-saving treatment. The Taliban had failed to silence her and it created a huge scandal. But why would a group that is made of tyrants want to kill a schoolgirl?

Here's why... The Taliban saw Malala as a threat. To clarify, they thought girls shouldn't go to school. There are not a lot of reasons why they wanted her dead. She was an activist; she wanted education for girls which, in the Taliban's eyes, was wrong. When Malala continued and continued her work, the Taliban thought enough was enough and sent a gunman to kill her. But really, don't you think killing someone is wrong? But despite this, Malala continued her work and she made a speech to the UN, created the Malala Fund with her dad and won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in 2014. The attempt to kill her just made her voice louder. This act had cemented the Taliban's legacy; as bloody tyrants who would do anything to protect themselves, even trying to assassinate a schoolgirl. They sent Malala a letter, quiet down and we won't attack you again. Do you think she listened? Of course not! But the threat was fake. It's been about 13 years since that letter on Malala's doorstep. But maybe also because she lives in England now. Malala is very inspirational. To clarify, she is an activist to grant education. There are a bunch of reasons for this: she won the Nobel Peace Prize aged 17, she told the UN to give as many children an education as possible aged 16 and she survived an assassination attempt aged 15. Don't you think they're quite some achievements?



THOUGHTS ON BULLYING

By Jocelyn, Meols Cop

Good afternoon, everyone my name is Jocelyn and today I will be talking about how I would change today's society and the world and why. I would like to talk about my thoughts on bullying and how we deal with it as a word wide community. Bullying is often treated as a usual thing growing up. People normally saying, "be the bigger person" or "just ignore it". However, bullying can seriously impact on a persons whole entire perspective on life, especially in younger people. It truly can affect somebody's self confidence, their mental health and how they carry themselves in the future. The bullying could lead to severe measures with young people even taking their own life due to the severity of bullying. In the UK, statistics suggest that 1 in 3 people from 10-15 year olds have experienced bullying; physically mentally and online.

Although it happens so often, it still does not give it the right to make it okay. Many younger people feel that it isn't properly understood or taken seriously. Due to this, many victims of bullying stay silent as they believe that they are embarrassed, scared of making things worse or worried that no one will believe what they are saying.

Cyberbullying is another big issue in today's society. Social media has created this huge impact on young people and although the bullying happens at school it could follow them home, onto their phone, into their safe space and personal



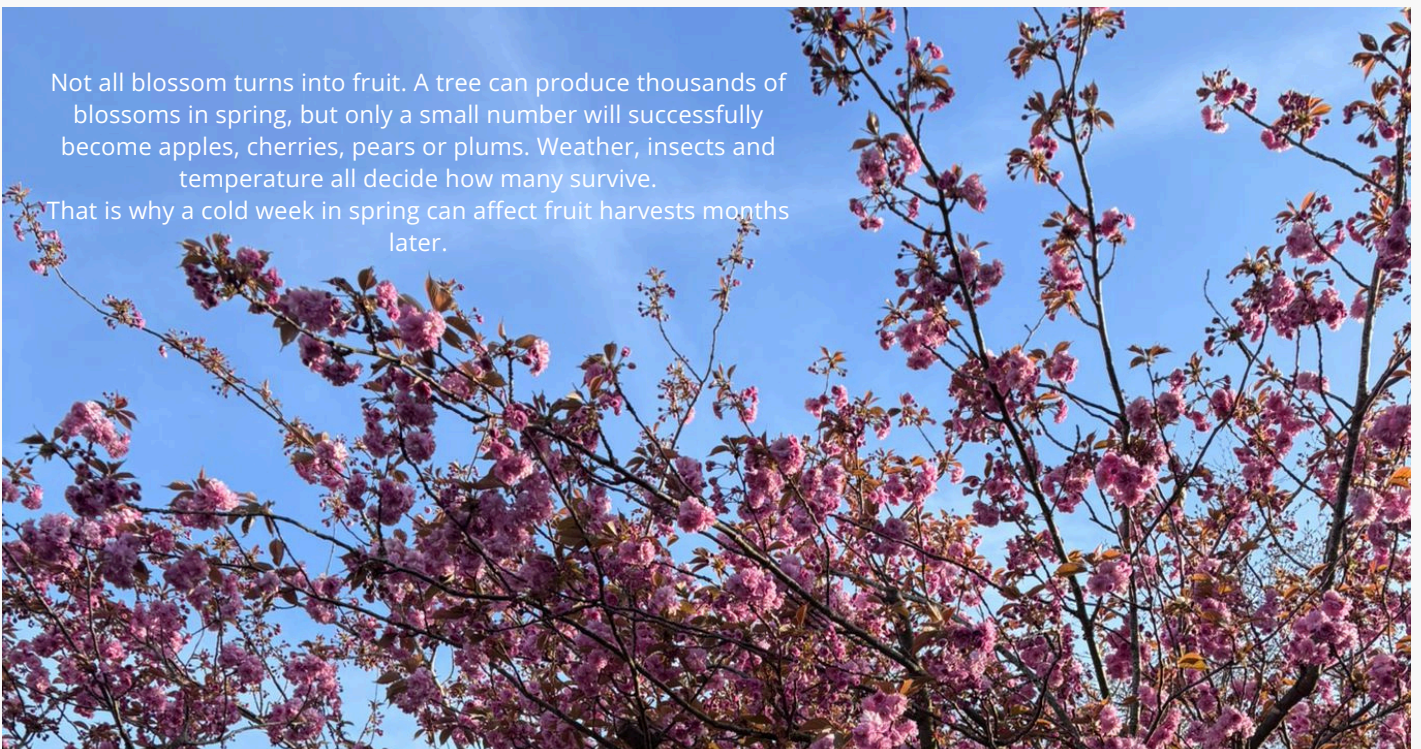
life. If I could possibly change the world, I would start by changing how people view bullying. Instead of treating it like a normal part of school life, as a community we should treat it as a serious issue that needs action immediately.

Changing the world doesn't mean solving every problem around the world. It can start with the smaller things around us. Changing the way we treat others. If we can make schools safer, kinder places where bullying is no longer seen as the norm. Then we will already be taking a big step into changing the world. Thank you for listening.

DID YOU KNOW?

Not all blossom turns into fruit. A tree can produce thousands of blossoms in spring, but only a small number will successfully become apples, cherries, pears or plums. Weather, insects and temperature all decide how many survive.

That is why a cold week in spring can affect fruit harvests months later.



The Woman In White

The gates were towering over his head, crows screaming at him to leave. To turn back. But he was dared to do it by his friends, he had to do it.

He just had to.

Bookwood castle was all over the news almost every day of October and every Halloween.

The Woman in White' comes out to haunt anyone stupid enough to go inside the manor...

SOUTHPORT A LEARNING TOWN

Placing learning at the heart of our community

What are you going to learn this year? How will you find the right opportunities? If you had been in the right place in Southport in the last few months you could have discovered why the sky is blue, the grass is green and the sand is yellow as well as the links between art and music, the poetry of John Donne and where the Romans built their forts in Lancashire. There is a wealth of learning opportunities in and around Southport but sometimes they are hard to find. The Southport A Learning Town (SALT) project aims to place learning at the heart of life so that anyone can access learning that helps them to develop and contribute to the wider community.

If you have read this far then 'well done', you are a curious person. Curiosity is the first step to understanding the world we live in and enriching your life through learning. In a rapidly changing world, we face an abundance of information and know that much of it will be out of date in a few years. The most valuable qualities that you can develop to successfully navigate life rely less on acquiring masses of information (although this is useful) and more on maintaining curiosity, flexibility, emotional intelligence and the courage to keep learning throughout life.



Website: www.southportlearningtown.org

The SALT project started in 2025 and is a collaboration between traditional educational providers, local societies and voluntary groups, and is funded by donations and the National Lottery Community Fund. You may have encountered us as the organisers of the Learning Festival at the Atkinson last June. This year we are promoting our website and Facebook as places where organisations can share the learning opportunities that they offer and where you can easily identify activities and resources for you and your friends and family. We will be running pilot projects during the year to demonstrate how community groups can develop local activities, a Stories for Southport project and there will be a Learning Fayre at Southport College in September.

How can you help? Commit to learning something new this year. Visit our website and follow us on Facebook to find the right opportunities for you. If you belong to an organisation that would like to share learning activities, ask someone to contact us and we will explain more about our work.



My child walks through the door from school and suddenly seems irritated by everything. Is something happening there?

Not always. For many children, the effort of holding themselves together through a full school day only becomes visible afterwards. They may have managed noise, instructions, friendships, disappointment and concentration without outward difficulty, but that effort still builds internally. Home is often where the nervous system loosens, so irritation can appear quickly even when the day itself was ordinary.

with I CAN Education

My teenager barely speaks after school, then becomes argumentative later in the evening?

Teenagers often need more decompression than adults expect. Silence straight after school is not always withdrawal, it can be recovery. By evening, when tiredness and delayed reactions catch up, conversation can feel harder and patience thinner. What looks abrupt is often emotional fatigue rather than deliberate resistance.

Why does my child cry over tiny things after school when they seemed completely fine earlier?

Small moments often become the point where a full day finally catches up. A forgotten pencil, a busy classroom, waiting their turn, social uncertainty, even concentrating for long periods can all sit quietly in the background. By the time they are home, something minor can carry far more weight than it appears to deserve.



THE STRENGTH WE CARRY

Exhibition by girls from Greenbank High School

At The Atkinson, an exhibition created by Year 7 students from Greenbank High School is now open to the public, offering a thoughtful and striking reflection on confidence, resilience and creative self-expression.

The Strength We Carry is the result of three months of work delivered through Shine, a creative wellbeing programme now celebrating its twentieth year. Funded by Elsie's Story, the project gave students space to explore identity, emotion and personal strength through conversation, teamwork and design.

Founded by Hayley Coggins, Shine was built on the belief that creativity can help young people understand themselves more clearly, express what they may not yet have words for, and recognise that their ideas and feelings matter. Over two decades, the programme has developed a distinct approach that combines creativity, wellbeing and self-belief, using practical creative work as a route into confidence and connection.

At Greenbank, that process took shape through upcycled materials including reused fabrics, broken jewellery and plastics, transformed by students into individual bags carrying their own meaning. Each piece became a symbol of courage, hope and identity, while also reflecting Shine's environmental values through creative reuse.

The exhibition marks International Women's Day through the perspective of young girls learning what strength means in their own lives. For some, that strength is quiet persistence. For others, it is speaking up, supporting those around them, or recognising qualities they had not previously seen in themselves.

What gives the exhibition its weight is that it reflects a process rather than a single outcome. Through guided sessions, discussion and making, students explored emotions, built resilience and uncovered strengths that may otherwise have remained unnoticed.

Shine has been clear that this work is never simply about producing art. It is about creating conditions where young people feel heard, capable and valued, while giving creativity a genuine role in wellbeing and personal growth.

The Shine programme has also extended its thanks to all those who helped bring the project to life. Particular gratitude has been given to Elsie's Story for funding and supporting the work at Greenbank High School, alongside thanks to families, school staff and the local partners who helped shape the final exhibition.

That includes Andrew Brown, Patrick Hurley, Southport's Journey, David Tetlow and the team at The Atkinson, June Florist, Booths, A Little Bit Printed and Home Bargains for helping make the exhibition possible for the students involved.

The exhibition is now on display at The Atkinson and remains open until the end of April, giving visitors the chance to see work that speaks not only to creativity, but to the quieter ways young people build confidence when given the right space to do it.



The Strength We Carry is now on display at The Atkinson and open to the public until the end of April



SPRING WELLBEING

A SEASONAL RESET FOR MIND, FAMILY AND CONNECTION



CLOCK CHANGE CHAOS

Just when you start to believe life is becoming slightly more manageable, mornings feel a little less brutal, waking up no longer feels like a personal betrayal, the clocks change and suddenly everything is off again.

One minute you are thinking, finally, I might actually be getting somewhere with sleep. The next, the alarm goes off and it feels as though someone has quietly removed part of your personality overnight.

It is only an hour, which sounds harmless until you are standing in the kitchen wondering why everyone needs something from you before you have even located your own brain.

The strange part is how quickly one hour can undo that fragile feeling of being on top of things. You had just reached that point where mornings felt almost respectable. Maybe even refreshed once or twice. Then BANG. Back to waking up bleary eyed, chasing your tail, wondering why breakfast feels emotionally demanding. Children, of course, do not care that the clocks have changed. Pets are equally unimpressed. The school run still arrives with the same energy as ever, except now everyone feels slightly confused and mildly offended by daylight.

Sleep experts say even a small time shift can affect mood, concentration and routine for several days, which feels obvious when you find yourself checking the microwave clock against your phone as though one of them might offer emotional support.

What usually follows is that odd April period where your body catches up but your patience takes slightly longer.

The answer is rarely some dramatic new routine. It is usually just accepting that for a few mornings, everyone feels a bit out of sync. Earlier nights help. Morning light helps. So does not pretending you are naturally cheerful before coffee.

The clocks change quickly.

Most of us take a week to stop resenting it.



Tim Short

North and South Education CIC



NATURE & NEW EXPERIENCES

Last month I slightly cheated by touching on more than one thing that helps wellbeing. Although we spoke about spending time with friends and family, nature was part of that too, and for good reason.

A great deal of research continues to show how much the natural world can affect how we feel. Even watching scenes of nature for a few minutes can help settle the mind. Having plants indoors, opening a window, or looking out onto a garden can all make a difference in ways we often underestimate.

If you have access to a garden, take a moment to notice what is there. Birdsong. The movement of leaves. The sound of water. Even looking up at the sky, watching clouds move or planes pass overhead, can create a small sense of perspective and calm.

Modern life often pulls us towards quick distractions. A phone in hand, endless clips, headlines designed to provoke reaction. Those things offer a fast hit of attention, but they do not always leave us feeling better. Very often, quieter things do more for us in the long run.

A short walk can be enough. Five minutes outside at the start of the day. Looking properly at the green around you, the changing colours, the detail in trees and open space. Around Southport we are fortunate to have so much nearby. The beach, parks, gardens and nature reserves all give us opportunities to step out of our routines for a while. Take the dog, go with someone else, have a proper conversation, or simply enjoy the space.

Another important part of wellbeing is allowing room for new experiences.

That does not have to mean doing something dramatic. For some people it may be trying a new class, visiting somewhere different, going to a live event, or finally doing something that has sat on the list for years. A meal somewhere new, a theatre visit, bowling, yoga, a local talk or community event. Often the hardest part is simply deciding to go.

Southport has plenty happening if we pay attention. Lightport recently brought people together in a different way, and Cristal Palace will soon do the same. There are also smaller things that matter just as much, local theatre, independent cinema, nearby nature spots, and events that can quietly break the pattern of an ordinary week.

Money remains a real consideration for many people, so being selective matters. But not everything that helps wellbeing has to cost much. Sometimes the simple decision to do something different, or step outside for a while, can shift a day more than we expect.

LOCAL LOVE



Interiors Edit

Easter interiors are all about freshness, softness and renewal, bringing a sense of spring into the home. Think light, uplifting colour palettes soft pastels like blush pink, sage green, butter yellow and sky blue—paired with natural textures such as linen, rattan and light woods. Styling can include delicate florals like tulips and daffodils, layered table settings and subtle decorative touches like ceramic bunnies or hand-painted eggs. The overall look should feel effortlessly curated, calm and welcoming, capturing the essence of new beginnings while still reflecting a refined, design-led aesthetic



1 T.X.MAXX- CANDLE HOLDER 2. M&S ARTIFICIAL MOSS& SWEETPEA 3.M&S- CERAMIC VASE 4. M&S WOVEN BASKET 5.DUNELM- SAGE TABLECLOTH

MILLS
INTERIORS



THINGS ARE LOOKING UP!

There's something quietly transformative about looking up. Not in a grand, dramatic sense, but in the small, everyday moments we usually rush past without a second thought.

Recently, I was walking into our 'Little Theatre' in Southport where I'm currently vice-chair, and just before I stepped through the front doors, I happened to glance upwards. And there it was, the theatre sign, which had been broken for ages, finally fixed. A small thing, really. But it made me smile. And it made me wonder... how many people would actually notice?

That moment was a great reminder and since then, 'looking up' has become a bit of a practice. Now, as I walk around Southport, be it Birkdale, Ainsdale, Churchtown or the town centre, I find myself pausing, lifting my gaze, and noticing things I've passed hundreds of times before. Beautiful brickwork details. Intricate tiles. Old signage. Little figures and creatures tucked into the architecture. Colours that catch the light just so. There's a whole layer of quiet artistry above eye level that most of us simply miss as we go about our day.

Of course, there is a slight hazard to all this. Looking up while walking does occasionally bring you perilously close to bumping into a lamppost, or another person. I've had a few near misses. But it's a small risk for such a rewarding shift in perspective.

What's fascinating is that this isn't just a pleasant habit, it actually has a deeper impact. When we look up, something changes in us. Physically, our posture opens: shoulders

relax back, our chest lifts. It's what is sometimes called a 'power pose' and it can subtly lift our mood and mindset.

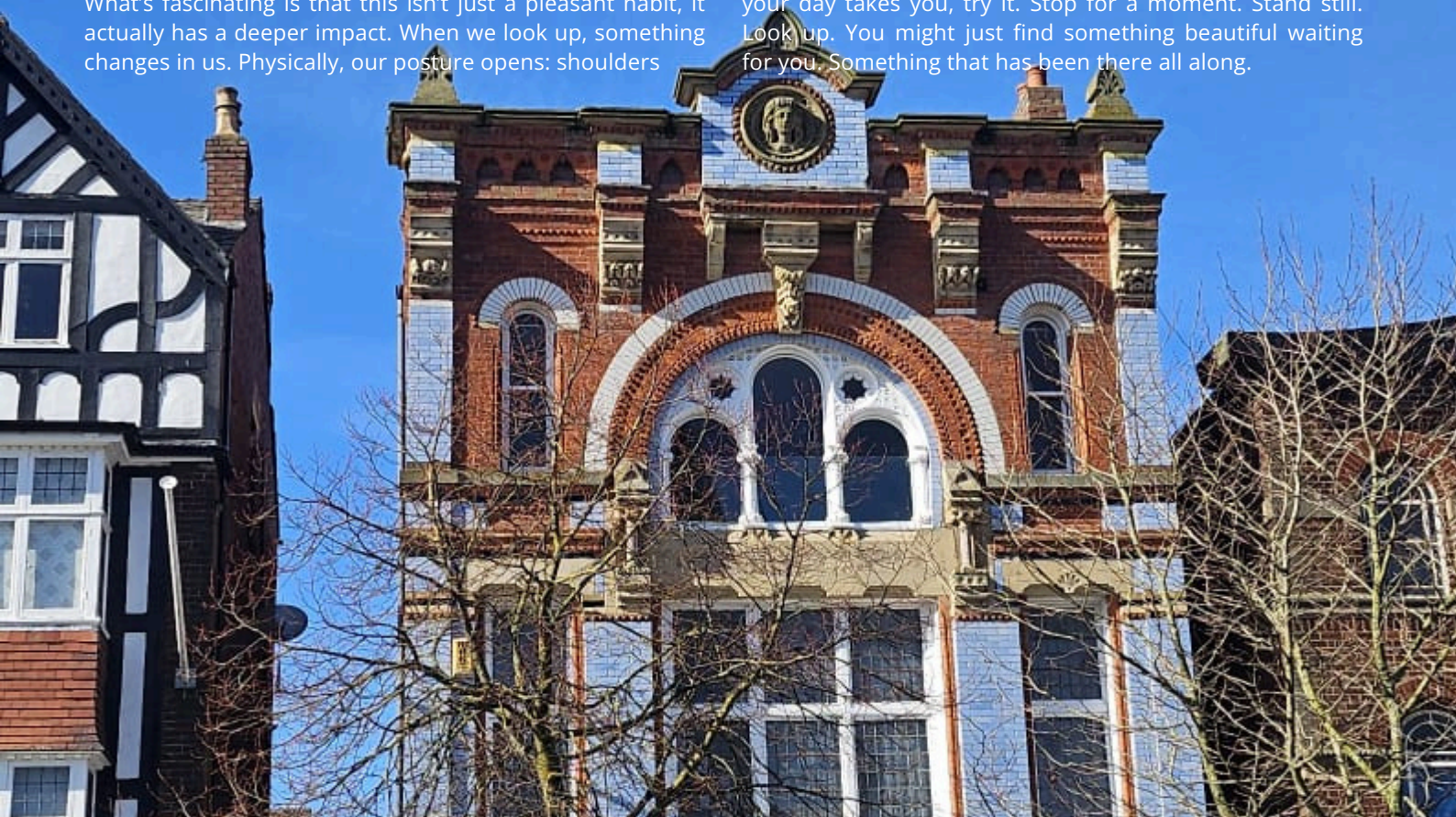
Mentally, it creates space. By shifting our focus away from the busy, often overwhelming visual noise at ground level, we give our minds a chance to breathe. There's room for reflection, for curiosity, for creativity to creep back in. It also makes room for a sense of awe [which brings me full circle back to my article in last month's magazine]

I recently read a line on Substack by Dru Jaeger, that I loved: "Up, for me, is the realm of possibility and wonder. Birds fly, and my heart soars with them." I am in total agreement, there is something about looking skyward, or even just above our usual line of sight, that invites that feeling. A quiet reminder that there is more to the world than what is directly in front of us.

In many ways, looking up becomes a gentle reset. In the world of theatre it's an 'interval'. A pause, a way to step out of habitual thinking and reconnect with a sense of discovery.

But perhaps the most meaningful part of this practice is the question it leaves behind. What else are we missing, not just above us, but around us, because we assume we have already seen it all?

So next time you're out and about in Southport, wherever your day takes you, try it. Stop for a moment. Stand still. Look up. You might just find something beautiful waiting for you. Something that has been there all along.





Travel Near & Far

Staying close. Looking Further



Dolce Vita Dreams on the Amalfi Coast

Along Italy's Amalfi Coast, life slips into a gentler rhythm, scented with sea salt and sun-warmed lemons. Terraced groves of sfusato amalfitano lemons cascade down the cliffs, their perfume drifting through the piazzas and cobbled streets of Positano, Amalfi and Sorrento.

Here, days unfold slowly: espresso on a balcony above the harbour, a private boat skimming past hidden coves, a swim in water the colour of blown Murano glass. Lunch lingers under vine-draped pergolas, where lemons brighten just-caught seafood and feather-light desserts.

As evening falls, cliffside terraces glow with candlelight and the coast blushes gold and rose. More than a postcard-perfect escape, Amalfi is an invitation to savour simple pleasures and live, briefly, inside your own dolce vita dream. Late April to early June as well as September and early October are the perfect times to visit and offer gorgeous warm sunshine, without the intense heat and crowds of the main summer season.

And with convenient flights from the North West, you can be swapping British drizzle for sunshine and lemon-drenched terraces in just a few relaxed hours of travel.

I can tailor your dream with every detail planned to 'Lemon Scented - Dolce Vita' perfection...

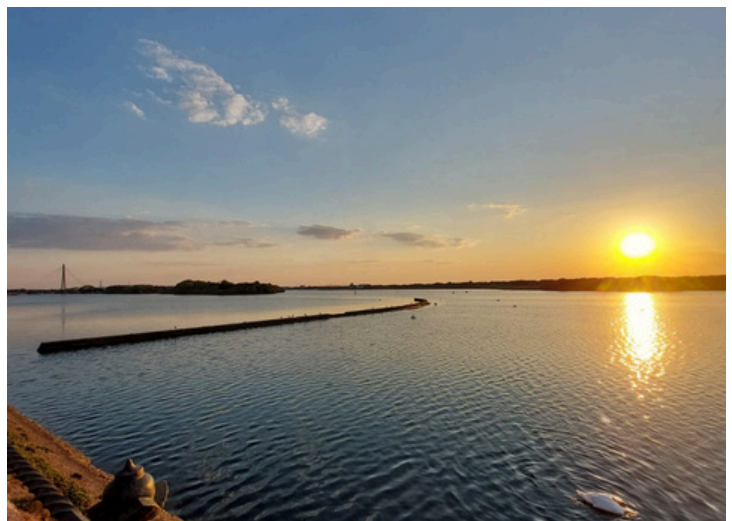
Staying Close

If you are staying in Southport this month, treat it like a short staycation.

Pick somewhere you do not usually go, even if it is only ten minutes from home. Leave your front door and turn left instead of right. Try a coffee shop you have never stopped in before. Walk a route you normally pass by. Start on Lord Street, take your time through the side streets, then head towards Marine Lake or carry on to the Prom.

If you usually stick to one part of town, swap it. Spend an hour in Birkdale Village, walk through King's Gardens, or head out towards Ainsdale and take in the quieter stretches near the dunes.

You do not need a full weekend away to feel refreshed. Sometimes seeing your own town differently is enough. This month is a good excuse to act like you are visiting.





COMMUNITY

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND YOU,
AND WHY IT MATTERS

HEALING WITH HOPE



Grief rarely arrives in a way people expect. It can hit like a wave, sudden and overwhelming, even in the middle of ordinary moments, making tea, walking through town, hearing a song you had not thought about in years. For some, it softens with time. For others, it remains raw far longer than they imagined, changing shape but never fully leaving.

That understanding sits behind Healing with Hope, the weekly bereavement group run by Hope Funeral Care, created as a gentle space for anyone who may need company, comfort, or simply somewhere to sit among others who understand.

Held every Saturday morning from 10am for around an hour, the group welcomes people at every stage of bereavement. For some, loss may be very recent. For others, it may be something they have carried for years. There is no expectation, no set way to take part, and no

requirement to have used Hope Funeral Care's services. The door is open to anyone who feels they may benefit from being there.

The setting is intentionally calm and informal. A warm welcome, a cup of tea, biscuits, and time to talk if wanted, or simply listen if not. What matters most is that people do not feel they have to explain why they have come or how they are feeling.

Alongside the comfort of shared space, professional guidance is available where needed, with support and signposting into wider services if someone feels they need further help. Sometimes grief needs conversation. Sometimes it needs quiet company. Sometimes it simply helps to know there is somewhere local that understands both.

Healing with Hope asks only for a small donation, but offers something many people often struggle to find, a place where grief is met gently, without judgement, and where support remains available long after the funeral itself has passed.



WALKING NETBALL

Have you ever thought about returning to a sport you once loved, but wondered if the moment had passed?

On a Thursday morning inside YMCA Southport, walking netball is giving women the chance to step back onto court in a way that feels welcoming, structured and enjoyable. Led by Lynne Barnett, who brings more than twenty years of netball coaching experience, the weekly 10am session brings together women who still value the game, whether they played years ago or simply want to be part of it now.

Each session is designed to keep the body moving while supporting confidence on court. Balance, stability and coordination are all part of the morning, alongside passing drills, footwork, reaction work and the small technical skills that make netball so engaging. The pace is adapted, but the thinking behind the game remains the same, with players staying aware of positioning, communication and timing.

What makes it work is that there is no pressure to arrive feeling ready. Women join at different stages, quickly settling into the rhythm of the group and finding that the structure of the session helps confidence return naturally. Afterwards, many stay on and head together to The Hoghton Lounge for coffee, where conversation continues long after the final whistle. The ladies are always looking for new players. They look forward to seeing you on the court soon.



YOUR HOLIDAY PREP GUIDE

Feel Confident, Energised & Truly You



01

Confidence First

Confidence doesn't come from hitting a certain weight or size, it's built through what you do daily. Instead of focusing on how your body looks, focus on what it can do. Getting stronger, feeling fitter, and showing up consistently builds real self-belief.

This is something I see all the time with my clients. Whether through group fitness classes or one-to-one coaching, there's something powerful about pushing yourself in a supportive environment.



02

Nutrition Fundamentals – Keep It Simple

You don't need crash diets or extremes to feel your best.

Stick to the basics:

- Prioritise protein
- Eat balanced meals
- Stay hydrated
- Focus on consistency, not perfection

If you want to feel more "toned," strength training alongside good nutrition is key. Building lean muscle helps shape and define your physique in a sustainable way. It's something I focus on closely with clients—helping them fuel their body properly while still enjoying their lifestyle.



03

Mindset Reset – This Changes Everything

You won't suddenly feel confident when you reach a goal...you build it now.

Shift your focus:

- From looks → to how you feel
- From perfection → to presence
- From comparison → to appreciation

Your holiday isn't about having the "best body" on the beach. It's about making memories, relaxing, and enjoying yourself.

And you don't need to change a thing to deserve that.

because that's the real goal



Networking

Southport has no shortage of ways to meet people, share ideas, and build connections. From relaxed coffee chats to structured business groups and walking meet-ups, these regular networking sessions offer different formats to suit different working styles. Whether you prefer informal conversation or something more organised, there's likely a seat, or a step, for you.

Konnexus network walk

First Thursday of every month
9:30am

Various outdoor routes
A walking-based networking format focused on conversation, movement, and connection.

SANDGROUNDERS

Second Tuesday of every month
5.00pm
Southport Football Club
Free

A long-standing local networking group with a broad mix of businesses.

SHOUT NETWORK

Fortnightly Tuesdays
9.30am
The Grand
Paid

A structured, supportive networking group with regular meet-ups.

GROW NETWORK

Thursday 19th March
12.00pm
Hurlston Hall
Paid

A lunchtime networking event in a more formal setting.

COAST BIRKDALE

Last Wednesday of every month
6.00pm
Coast
Free

A relaxed, local business meet-up with a coastal crowd and easy conversation.

THAT WOMAN RISING

Dates vary
Online and in person
Paid
A women-led network



BIG ONION RADIO

finds it's feet

Big Onion Radio has continued to grow steadily since its launch in December, moving from a small team of three into a wider group of five, shaped by the same idea that sat behind it from the beginning: creating something local, conversational and genuinely rooted in community life across Sefton.

Backed by the The National Lottery Community Fund, and supported through The Big Onion and Merseyside Expanding Horizons, the programme now records across locations in Bootle and Southport, including the pavilion space on Lord Street, giving the project a strong local base as it develops.

What continues to define the programme is its tone. Big Onion Radio does not chase noise. It gives space to thoughtful conversation, humour, local stories and the kinds of discussions often missing from faster media. Alongside regular features such as the quiz and Famous Seftonians, each episode brings together guests whose work reflects different parts of life across the borough.

Recent conversations have included Living Well Sefton speaking about health and wellbeing, contributors linked to the Launchpad initiative supporting young people into work, and representatives from Salt and Tar discussing how major live events are helping shape Sefton's cultural offer.

Business has also remained part of the conversation. Lewis Nickson spoke openly about building PolyUp while protecting wellbeing, while Nando from Nando's Guitars reflected on passion, connection and the value of finding work that feels personally meaningful.

Mental health remains one of the strongest recurring themes. Recent episodes have welcomed The Hurt Locker Podcast to discuss mental health and suicide, with Sean's Place and Sefton Early Years also set to feature in upcoming conversations around men's mental health and early support for young people.

Across business, wellbeing, place and people, Big Onion Radio continues to build something simple but increasingly valuable: local conversation with substance, and a clear sense that there is far more happening across Sefton than often gets recognised.

You can find Big Onion Radio on Spotify and YouTube.

“ Local voices, real conversations, and Sefton stories worth hearing. ”

SARAH & SERENA ON THE AIR



The Thursday Night Sleep Over

Thursday nights have become a little more fun on Mighty Radio, with Serena Silcock-Prince and Sarah McEntee now behind the microphones for The Thursday Night Sleep Over. Airing from 7pm, the show brings music, conversation and the kind of relaxed back-and-forth that feels natural rather than forced. There is a lightness to it that suits the time of day, giving listeners something easy to settle into as the evening begins.

Both presenters bring strong local personality, helping the programme feel warm, familiar and close to home. At a time when so much audio competes for attention, local radio still works best when it sounds genuine, and this new addition to the schedule does exactly that. It adds a brighter note to Thursday evenings and reminds listeners why community radio still holds its place in everyday life.



NEW NETWORKING WALK
1ST Thursday of every month
9:30am
Email: southportsjourney@gmail.com



BECOMING COMFORTABLE IN YOUR OWN VOICE

“ Sometimes the hesitation is not fear of being seen, but the quiet feeling that the version of you speaking has changed. ”

There are times when the difficulty is not finding something to say, but noticing that the way you used to say it no longer feels quite right.

People often assume that discomfort online means a lack of confidence, yet sometimes it is something quieter than that. Life changes us in ways we do not immediately catch up with. A person can become more thoughtful, more certain, more private, more ambitious, or simply more aware of what matters to them, while still carrying an older voice that no longer fits as naturally as it once did. That can make even simple visibility feel strangely unfamiliar.

A caption, a photograph, a short reflection, even a sentence written in your own tone can suddenly feel as though it belongs to a version of you that is already slightly behind. Not wrong, just no longer entirely current. This is often why people hesitate without fully understanding why. It is not always fear of judgement. Sometimes it is the pause that comes when identity is shifting quietly beneath the surface, and the words have not yet caught up.

There is something surprisingly ordinary in that gap. Most people do not move through life with a fixed voice. We change in response to work, loss, age, responsibility, confidence, disappointment, and new beginnings. It would be stranger if expression stayed untouched while everything else developed around it.

Perhaps that is why returning to visibility can feel uncertain even when nothing dramatic has happened. You are not always starting again. Sometimes you are simply learning how to sound like yourself in a way that reflects who you have become.

And often, that settles gradually, not all at once, until one day the voice that felt unfamiliar begins to feel quietly your own again.



Sharon Kemp
Thrive with Ai

ASK IT BETTER

You type something into Google. The results are useless. You try again, in a different way.

Suddenly, exactly what you needed appears. Nothing changed except the words you used.

That's not a search engine quirk. That's the most important lesson in using AI well. Most people approach AI the way they approach a vending machine. Press a button, expect a result. When it doesn't work, they assume the machine is broken. In my experience, it rarely is. The question is almost always the problem.

AI responds to context. The more you give it, the more useful it becomes. "Write me a message" produces something generic. "Help me reply to my neighbour who keeps parking across my drive, without making things awkward between us" produces something you might actually send. Same tool. Completely different outcome. I've seen this shift change how people feel about AI entirely — from frustrated to genuinely impressed, often within minutes.

The practical shift is simple. Before you type, ask yourself one question: what would I tell a capable friend before asking them the same thing? Your situation, your tone, what you're trying to avoid. Put that in. AI isn't a search bar. It's closer to a conversation.

Think of it less like Googling and more like briefing someone who actually wants to help.

That single habit is the difference between AI that wastes your time and AI that genuinely saves it. Start there, and you'll be surprised how quickly it clicks.

Sharon Kemp | Thrive With Ai



AI - THE MORE YOU GIVE IT, THE MORE USEFUL IT BECOMES

AI 01

Give it context, not just a question. Tell AI your situation before you ask. It changes everything you get back.

AI 02

Think friend, not search bar. What would you tell a mate before asking? Put that in. Then ask.

AI 03

If it's wrong, try once more. Add one extra detail and rephrase. The second answer is almost always better.



FROM KITCHEN TABLES TO HIGH STREETS

In *Navigating the Entrepreneurial Maze and From Survival to Scale*, I explored the journey from idea to early growth across Sefton's start-up landscape. Yet for many of the region's micro businesses, those often run by one or two people, the reality is more nuanced. Survival and scale are not distinct phases, but a constant balancing act. Across the Liverpool City Region, and particularly within Sefton, micro enterprises form the backbone of the local economy. From independent retailers on Lord Street to home-based service providers in Bootle, these ventures bring diversity, resilience and community value. However, their size also exposes them to acute financial and operational pressures. Cashflow remains the most persistent challenge. Rising costs, irregular income and limited access to affordable finance can leave even the most promising ventures vulnerable. Without financial buffers, short-term shocks, a quiet trading month or an unexpected bill, can quickly escalate into existential threats. Operationally, micro business owners face the burden of doing everything themselves. Time becomes a scarce resource, split between delivery, marketing, compliance and administration.

This fragmentation often limits strategic thinking and slows growth potential.

Yet within these constraints lie opportunities. Increasingly, success is shaped by collaboration, visibility and shared learning. Merseyside Expanding Horizons, through its Business Start Up Programme in Sefton, working alongside SAFE and Invest Sefton, provides practical guidance to help micro enterprises strengthen financial management, refine their offer and build confidence in decision-making.

Equally important are the Big Onion Hubs in Bootle and Southport. These spaces do more than offer affordable premises; they create environments where micro businesses cluster, exchange ideas and generate collective momentum. Informal conversations become partnerships, and shared challenges lead to shared solutions.

For Sefton, the future of its high streets and local economy may well depend on how effectively it supports its smallest enterprises. When micro businesses are given the tools, networks and space to thrive, their impact extends far beyond their size.



Advertising Opportunity for March



Bring your story to life on A Day in the Life podcast. This is a person-centred space where real experiences are shared without scripts or spectacle. We explore the everyday realities behind businesses, roles and personal journeys, giving life room to breathe. Honest conversation. No theatre. Just people, as they are.



GET INVOLVED

Southport's Journey is growing, and so is the community behind it.

If you have a story to tell, expertise to share, or a perspective that deserves space, we would love to hear from you. We welcome new writers, contributors and local voices who care about this town and want to raise the standard of conversation within it.

Businesses can also advertise alongside trusted, thoughtful content that reaches a loyal and engaged local audience across print and digital.

Whether you are looking to write, partner, collaborate or promote, this is a platform built on connection.

Email hello@southportsjourney.com

Visit www.southportsjourney.com

Let's build it properly.

MEET THE TEAM

Southport's Journey is built by people who care about this town. With each issue, our network of writers, photographers and local experts continues to grow. Every contributor brings lived experience and professional insight, shaping a magazine that reflects Southport with depth and intention. This is more than a publication. It is a connected platform — a collection of perspectives, expertise and stories, brought together each month to raise the standard of local conversation.

Contributors & Credits

Mills Interiors — Creating beautiful, functional spaces with a curated edit of local interior finds.

www.millsinteriors.com

Sarah McEntee — Communications coach helping people use their voice to change the world.

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Kate Miles-Roberts — Co-Director at The Clear Thinking Partnership; Vice-Chair, Southport Little Theatre — on clear thinking and calm leadership.

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Cath Reese — Our resident travel writer, sharing stories from smart staycations to worldwide adventures.

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Anna McNally — With over 15 years as a personal trainer, Anna specialises in strength training, pre- & post-natal coaching, and building lasting, science-based results — without the fads.

www.projectphoenixignite.co.uk

ICAN Education — Practical advice, support and helpful hints for parents.

www.icaneducation.co.uk

Chris Lewis - Merseyside Expanding Horizons, The Big Onion, Entrepreneur.

Tim Short - North & South Education CIC, Big Onion Radio Presenter.

Sharon Kemp — Founder of Thrive With AI. With 25 years of real-world experience, Sharon makes AI simple, useful, and relevant for everyone. No tech background required.

Southport Learning Trust, Meols Cop High School.

Lizzie Barnett - Studio Nine Group Ltd www.studionine.uk

Photography Credits

A huge thank you to our STUDIO NINE team for photography and to the extend team that have helped along the way.

www.southportsjourney.com



Southport's
Journey

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