

ISSUE 15

Southport's Journey

MAGAZINE

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The Book Project,
Our town, our stories

What's happening
in the community
in May

BIG CONVERSATIONS

New writers, perspectives & ideas

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Editor's Note



SOUTHPORT'S JOURNEY

Hello — and welcome to May.

Have you noticed the birds properly yet? The way they seem louder at this time of year, as though the mornings arrive with their own soundtrack. The blossom too, swirling across pavements and sticking to car windscreens overnight, as if the town has quietly changed while everyone was busy doing other things. May always feels like movement.

The lighter evenings return, outdoor plans start filling the diary again, and suddenly everyone is debating whether it is finally T-shirt weather or whether taking a jumper is still the safer option. Beer gardens begin to hum again. Events appear every weekend. The town feels brighter, fuller, more awake. I think this time of year also makes many of us reflect a little. The projects we finally started. The things we nearly talked ourselves out of. The confidence we have slowly built without fully noticing it. Even the quiet panic that summer is approaching and January's "new me" plans may have drifted slightly off course. A very human tradition.

For me personally, this season has brought new opportunities I did not expect at the start of the year. I have recently started hosting my own Saturday morning show on Dune Radio, while the Day in the Life podcast continues to grow online too. One of the most rewarding parts of all of it has been supporting people with their social media and helping them feel more confident sharing what they do.

That same feeling continues through Southport's Journey. New writers keep joining us, bringing fresh perspectives, knowledge and stories into the magazine, helping us all see the town through slightly different eyes. And with another part of the Southport Elegantly Eccentric programme arriving this month, there really does feel like there is something exciting building across the town. Thank you, as always, for reading and continuing to support local voices, local ideas and the people brave enough to keep trying new things.

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
www.southportsjourney.com
[@southportsjourney](https://www.instagram.com/southportsjourney)

Want to be featured in the magazine?
We're always looking for stories big or small!

Inside This Issue

Issue 15 | May 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.



ROLL UP!

The circus came to town, but what Southport really rediscovered was its confidence.

Step right up, Southport brought the circus back to town and in doing so, reminded people exactly who it is.

The Big Top Festival Southport was more than a weekend of performances. It felt like a town reconnecting with its own identity. Seaside entertainment, curiosity, spectacle, families filling the streets, people moving from one act to the next with maps in hand trying not to miss anything. It had nostalgia running through it, but it never felt stuck in the past.

Across five locations, crowds gathered around aerial performers, acrobats and interactive walkabouts, while giant flamingos wandered through the town centre like they'd always belonged there. And somehow, that playful chaos worked perfectly. Children stood open-mouthed watching stunts unfold while older generations sat smiling nearby, soaking it all in. There was movement everywhere. Real energy. The kind that cannot be manufactured through a marketing slogan and a few deckchairs.

What surprised many people was the quality of it all. These were not throwaway filler acts. The performances were sharp, engaging and genuinely impressive. But beyond the entertainment itself, it was the crowd that told the bigger story. People wanted to explore. They wanted to stay. They wanted to see what was around the next corner.

Down by the artisan market, the atmosphere became part of the show itself. Tables full from early on, queues forming naturally, cakes and pastries selling out, businesses visibly busy. You could barely move through parts of it on Saturday afternoon, but nobody minded. It felt exciting. It felt alive.

And perhaps that is why this mattered so much.

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



FUN PRIDE BUZZ

For a long time, conversations around Southport have often focused on what has been lost, what needs fixing, what could be better. This weekend shifted the tone. It showed what happens when investment, creativity and community support meet in the middle. Businesses benefited. Visitors arrived. Locals reconnected with the town centre again. There was pride in it.

The Big Top Festival did not solve every challenge Southport faces. No single event can. But it proved something important. When Southport leans into what it has always historically done well, bringing people together, creating experiences, embracing entertainment and giving people reasons to return, the response is there immediately.

And with more events planned across the rest of the Elegantly Eccentric 2026 programme, this no longer feels like a one-off success story. It feels like momentum.

Southport has always had something special at its heart. This weekend simply reminded people that the town is still worth believing in, still worth investing in, and still capable of drawing a crowd when it opens its doors with confidence. Human beings. Forever needing a reminder of what was sitting in front of them the whole time.



SCENIC ON SCREEN

WHERE ARE THE FILM SET HUNTERS THIS MONTH?



A monument or a tourist attraction, a street name or a shop front – sometimes a scene provides little clues that make it easy to identify a filming location. Some of the most difficult locations to identify are natural environments where trees and plants grow and change over time. And it's almost impossible to identify the exact spot on a Beach - unless it has a recognisable structure on it of course.

In *What's Good for the Goose*, Timothy drives his car across the beach towards the pier, which is slightly easier to identify than the exact spot on the sea wall where the girls are seen sunbathing. Underneath the pier, was a scene from the Jimmy McGovern BBC

film *Common*, about a teen who finds himself accused of a crime under common purpose/joint enterprise.

Music videos for Black's *Wonderful Life* and *The Rutles All You Need is Cash* were also filmed on the beach. Somewhere.

In *Perfectly Frank* there's a moving scene between Frank and his Grandad on the beach at sunrise. And not too far away, Frank & Lily pass through the beautiful Marine Lake Gardens and Kings Park on route to the Pier to look at the stars.

There is a scene in *What's Good for the Goose* when Timothy and his wife are seen walking along the bloom-filled grass verges of Rotten Row.

And it would be remiss of me not to mention the 2021 release of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr Hyde*, filmed entirely in Southport and produced by Ginificent, starring Liam Scott, Nathan Scott and Ken McConnell. Scenes were filmed somewhere in Hesketh Park, Victoria Park and Duke Street Cemetery.

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

Perfectly Frank (2022) and *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* (2021) are both available on Amazon Prime.

Common (2014) is available on BBC iPlayer

Follow my ongoing film set hunting journey at www.filmsethunter.co.uk



EAT

FROM CASUAL BITES TO
PROPER PLATES,



ROXY'S

**Winners Café of the Year People's Choice
Award at the 2026,
Your Southport Stars Awards**

There is something reassuring about a café that genuinely wants to become part of a town, not just trade within it. We have featured Roxy's Cafe before in Southport's Journey, so it was such a joy to see them recently win the Café of the Year People's Choice Award at the 2026, Your Southport Stars Awards. After another visit, you could immediately understand why people have taken to the place so warmly.

Roxy and the team have worked hard to create somewhere people genuinely enjoy spending time in. It is not just about serving coffee. It is about creating somewhere people actively want to return to. Somewhere familiar. Somewhere welcoming. Roxy herself is such a gracious host, and there is a warmth to the café that feels genuine rather than forced. A surprisingly difficult thing for humanity to achieve, considering how often "friendly service" now arrives with the emotional depth of a parking meter.

The coffee was exceptional, rich without feeling heavy, but the pastries completely stole the show. The Nutella-filled croissant arrived perfectly crisp on the outside while the filling practically oozed out of the sides with every bite. Completely impossible to eat neatly. Entirely worth it.

In a town filled with independent cafés all trying to find their place, Roxy's Cafe feels like somewhere that truly cares about becoming part of the community around it. Seeing Southport get behind them in the way it has feels genuinely deserved.

Bali Morning Bowl

COCONUT YOGURT, BERRY
GRANOLA AND NUT BUTTER

Breakfast bowls are having their moment—and global flavours are leading the way. This Bali-inspired bowl brings together creamy coconut yogurt, juicy berries, crunchy granola and nut butter for a morning that's nourishing, beautiful, and ready for anything. Made for slow mornings and big adventures.

INGREDIENTS

SERVES 2

- 250 g Greek yogurt or coconut yogurt
- 80 g granola
- 2 tbsp peanut or almond butter
- 100 g strawberries, sliced
- 80 g blueberries
- 1 tbsp honey or maple syrup
- 1 tbsp toasted coconut flakes
- 1 tsp lime zest



WHY IT WORKS

- High in fibre
- Protein from yogurt and nut butter
- Fast, colourful, and satisfying



TASTE NOTES

- Creamy
- Crunchy
- Bright





EDUCATION

IDEAS, SKILLS, AND INSIGHTS YOU
CAN ACTUALLY USE



SKILL CHANGE

The Quiet Rise of Practical Learning

For a long time, practical learning sat just outside the centre of the education conversation. It was supported, encouraged, even praised, but often spoken about as an alternative rather than a first choice. University remained the default ambition in many households, not always because it was the right fit, but because it still carried a certain weight.

That balance is beginning to shift. Across schools, colleges and adult learning, there is a more open acknowledgement that not every strength shows up first in a classroom. Some young people think through doing. They understand by building, testing, fixing, speaking, and applying. Those skills have always existed, but they are becoming harder to ignore. Part of that change is being driven by reality. Employers are asking different questions. Skills shortages are no longer abstract. Sectors like construction, healthcare, engineering and digital roles are looking for people who can step into work with practical understanding, not just theoretical knowledge.

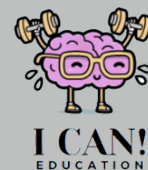
Apprenticeships, technical courses and further education routes are becoming more visible, and in some cases, more direct.

But the shift is not entirely comfortable. There is still a quiet hierarchy in how success is spoken about. Academic routes are often described with certainty, while practical ones are explained. Parents can find themselves navigating unfamiliar territory. Schools are balancing league tables with the responsibility to guide young people towards what genuinely suits them. And young people themselves are increasingly aware that the decision is not just about interest, but about how that choice will be perceived.

The rise of practical learning is not loud. It is not a sudden overhaul. It is a gradual shift in how skills are valued, how routes are discussed, and how success is understood.

And for many, it is starting to feel less like a second option, and more like a different starting point.

THE BIG PICTURE WITH



32%

A third of young people now say they are considering apprenticeships alongside or instead of university

41%

Over two in five adults have taken part in some form of learning or retraining in the past three years

60%

Around six in ten employers say school leavers lack practical workplace skills, increasing demand for vocational pathways

WHAT IS CHANGING, SLOWLY?

There is a growing confidence in how people are approaching education choices, but it is coming through quieter, more practical questions. Young people are increasingly asking what a pathway actually leads to, how it fits into real working life, and whether it reflects how they prefer to learn. At the same time, more adults are returning to education, often choosing practical retraining that feels more aligned with how they want to work, rather than what they felt expected to do earlier on. Together, these shifts are changing the conversation, moving it away from how a route sounds, and closer to what it actually offers in real terms.

WRITTEN BY I CAN! EDUCATION



From The Counselling Room

Less Pressure, More Support: Parenting Through Exams

Exam season has a way of quietly moving into your home and rearranging the emotional furniture. You might notice doors closing more often, shorter tempers, or a tension that seems to buzz in the background. For many teenagers, GCSEs and A-levels can feel like a verdict on who they are, not just what they know.

As a therapist, I can understand how easily parents can get pulled into this pressure. Your intentions might be to motivate, reassure, and keep things on track. But what teenagers tend to need most right now isn't more reminding, it's steadiness.

Think of yourself as the emotional anchor. Your calm matters more than the perfect revision schedule. Simple things can help: keeping routines predictable, protecting downtime without guilt, and resisting the urge to fill every silence with questions about revision.

Try to listen more than you advise. When your teenager says, "I'm going to fail," it's rarely a request for correction, it's an expression of fear. Meeting that with, "That sounds really stressful," can go further than logic in that moment.

At this time of year, it's natural for thoughts to drift towards results, but your child is more than a set of grades. Noticing their effort, persistence or how they get through a difficult day can help them feel seen for who they are, not just how they perform. Holding a gentle sense of the bigger picture can also help- exams matter, but they are only one part of a much longer story. Teenagers often take their sense of proportion from the adults around them.

“ Think of yourself as the emotional anchor. Your calm matters more than the perfect revision schedule. ”

Finally, look after yourself too. Stress is contagious—but so is calm. The atmosphere you create at home can become the quiet support your child leans on, even if they never quite say it out loud.





Autistic Teens 'Grow For It!' project

A new initiative, aimed at creating better outcomes for autistic teenagers in Sefton, has proved a roaring success thanks to local funding.

The Grow For It! project, created by Autism Ventures and run from their 'We Grow' site in Southport, provides much-needed school holiday activities for autistic teens. Tailored to meet autistic differences in communication, behaviour, interests, and sensory processing, its aim is to level the playing field for autistic teens by offering a programme that builds confidence, skills, independence and wellbeing.

Focussed on horticultural activities, the programme features work experience in We Grow's market garden, learning to grow food; time on rewarding project work, such as creation of raised herb beds; wildlife garden development; outdoor cooking workshops and even time to get to know We Grow's resident chickens!

The initial phase ran from late July 2025 up to spring 2026 and offered provision across all school holidays during the period, plus special sessions on Mischief Night, Halloween, and Bonfire Night.



The Autism Ventures team are delighted with how roll out has gone. Overall, 23 young people have benefitted directly so far, and parent surveys estimate that a further 63 people, such as other family members, also benefitted indirectly too. Outcomes to date based on daytime participants include:

- 76% of participants experiencing a reduction in isolation
- 41% of participants rating their employability skills as increased
- happiness of the young people rated by parents jumping from an average score of 5.5 to 9 out of 10 following participation.
- A 41% reduction in screen time being achieved
- 100% of parents saying they either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that attendance had increased their child's confidence.

The initial phase of the project was made possible thanks to funding through The Youth Empowerment Scheme, which was created in partnership with the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner and Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership. Facilitated through The Community Foundation for Merseyside, the fund aims to unlock the potential of thousands of young people across the region by providing safe, positive opportunities.

Youth Empowerment Scheme funding also helped refurbish a key piece of site infrastructure – one of We Grow's polytunnels – which is critical to activities and will ensure We Grow is in great shape to welcome future delivery phases.

Following the successful initial roll out a further phase has now been confirmed thanks to the support of the Sefton Mental Health and Wellbeing Small and Large Grants Fund through Sefton Council and Sefton CVS.

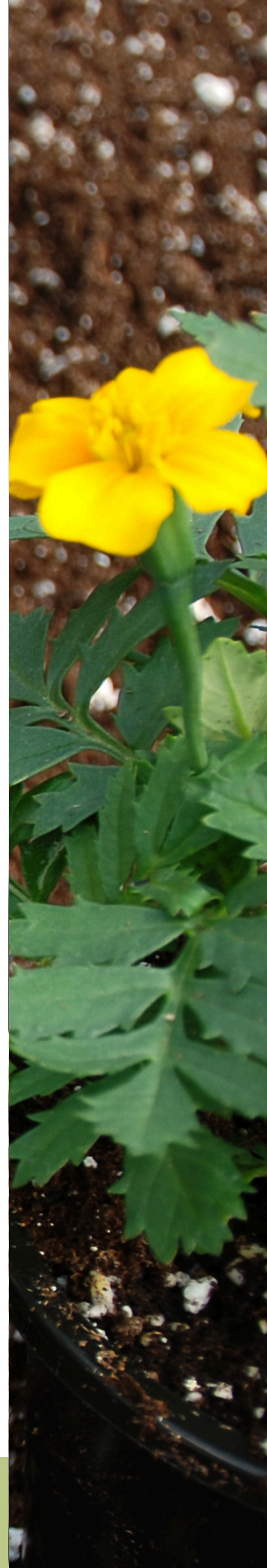
Speaking about the success of the project so far, We Grow's manager, Daniel Curle, said, "We're delighted to have been able to build on our term-time offer for young people and add school holiday provision to our offer thanks to this funding.

The progress of the young people taking part has been incredible. The team and I have seen confidence grow, new friends being made and skills being built that will support the ambitions these young people have. Meanwhile, reduced time spent online and immersion into a supportive community for our participants really adds to the protective factors they benefit from by taking part in the programme.

We can't thank our funders enough for making this possible.

Future delivery ambitions have already been mapped out for the next 12 months and beyond. So, anyone interested in funding future rounds of this exciting project can get in touch with holly.budgen@autisminitiatives.org

To find out more about Autism Venture's work go to <https://autisminitiatives.org/service/social-enterprises/>



Q&A

www.icaneducation.uk



with I CAN Education

Why does my child suddenly hate reading when they used to enjoy it?

Often reading changes when it becomes associated with pressure, speed, comparison, or correction. Sometimes children still enjoy stories but begin resisting what feels like performance around reading. Small shifts, such as reading together without correction, letting them choose material that genuinely interests them, or removing the sense that every page has to lead to progress.

My teenager says university is not for them. Should I push back?

This is where vocational routes, apprenticeships, and practical pathways become highly relevant. The key is not reacting to the rejection of university itself, but understanding what they are moving towards instead. A useful conversation often begins when young people are asked what kind of working life they imagine for themselves, because that usually reveals far more than simply asking what course they do or do not want to take.

My child is bright but does not seem motivated. Should I be worried?

Not all disengagement means lack of ability. Sometimes children understand more than they are showing, but motivation is being affected by tiredness, social pressure, fear of getting things wrong, or simply not feeling connected to how they are learning. The useful question is often not "why are they not trying?" but "what has changed around how they feel about trying?"

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THE BOOK PROJECT

OUR TOWN, OUR STORIES

Someone, somewhere in Southport, is always telling a story. It happens in kitchens, on dog walks, across café tables, in passing conversations that carry more weight than they first seem. Most of them are never written down. They just sit quietly in people's lives, half remembered, retold, or lost altogether.

Southport A Learning Town is trying to catch some of those moments before they disappear.

As part of the upcoming Books Alive event, they are inviting people to submit short pieces, around 300 to 500 words, each with some connection to Southport. It does not need to be dramatic or perfectly formed. It might be something your grandmother used to say, a memory from growing up here, or even the story of how you arrived. The connection can be small. The meaning rarely is.

The intention is simple but considered. Each story will be illustrated by a single artist, creating a quiet thread that links them together.

Different voices, different experiences, but something shared running underneath.

There is no expectation of polish. Spelling and grammar are not the focus here. The voice matters more than the finish. For those who would rather talk than write, there is also the option to meet for a coffee, tell the story in conversation, and have it written and returned for approval.

Southport has always been a place shaped by people as much as place. Behind familiar streets and routines sit lives that are joyful, complicated, funny, difficult, and often unspoken. This project leans into that. Not to tidy it up, but to notice it.

Stories can be sent to projects@southportlearningtown.org, with a suggested deadline of 15th June.



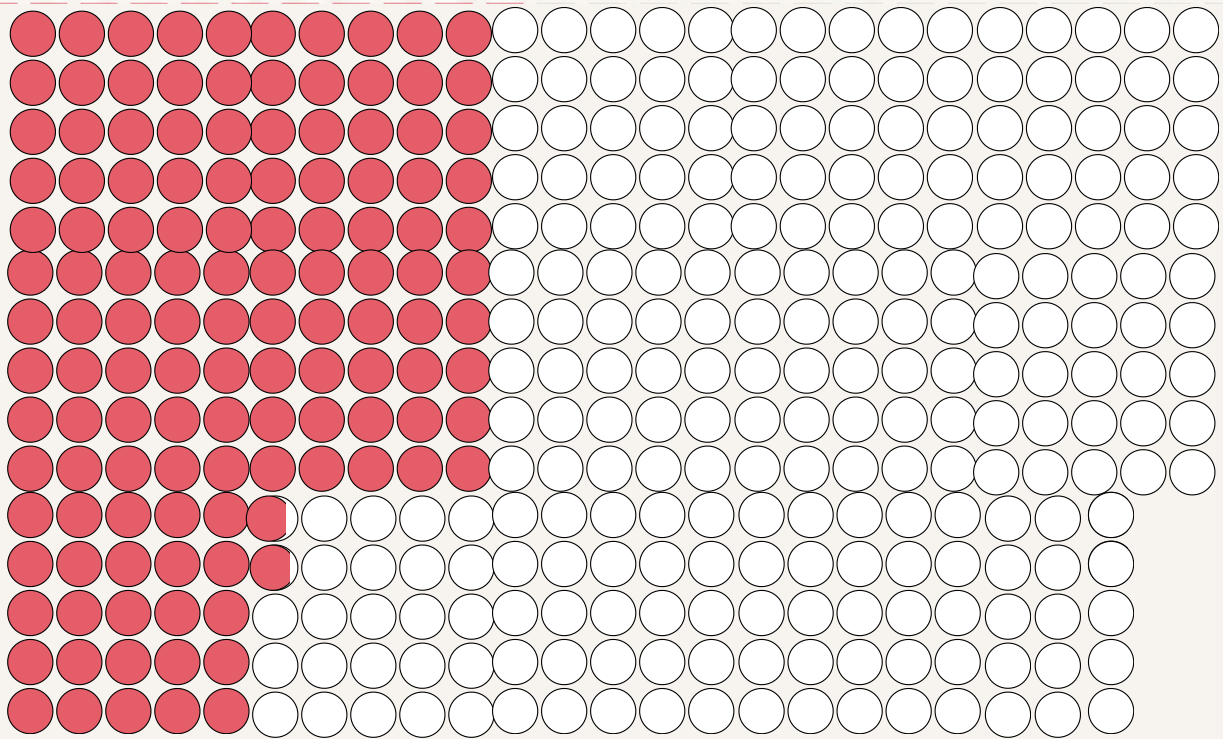
SPRING WELLBEING

A SEASONAL RESET FOR MIND, FAMILY AND CONNECTION

HALFWAY *TO THE* YEAR

YOU THOUGHT *YOU* WERE GOING TO HAVE

365 DAYS. YOUR YEAR.



127

DAYS HAVE GONE.

238

STILL REMAIN.

Look at how far you've come.
Now look at everything still ahead of you.



BARE LEGS, BIG DOUBTS

There is a very specific point in the year when the weather turns just enough to make you question everything hanging in your wardrobe.

One afternoon I am perfectly content hidden inside jumpers, coats and forgiving layers, and then suddenly there is sunlight, a mild breeze, and the uncomfortable realisation that last summer's clothes still exist and are waiting for me to make a decision.

It is never quite hot enough to commit fully, but warm enough to notice that my arms have not seen daylight in months, my legs feel slightly unfamiliar, and somewhere in the background sits the faint memory of all those January promises that quietly disappeared before the daffodils arrived.

Every year I act surprised by this, as though spring has caught me out personally. For about ten minutes I consider becoming the sort of person who responds decisively. More water. Longer walks. A sudden devotion to structure.

Then somebody mentions ice cream, someone else opens a packet of crisps, the evening light stretches a little longer across the garden, and somehow I am sitting there

with picky bits on a plate thinking perhaps tomorrow feels more appropriate.

Which, honestly, feels familiar to most of us.

Because this time of year always seems to arrive carrying two voices. One says I should have prepared better, moved more, sorted myself out before lighter evenings and shorter sleeves arrived. The other says the air is warmer, somebody has brought strawberries, and there is no sensible reason to ruin a perfectly good afternoon by overthinking my upper arms.

The second voice usually sounds kinder.

And perhaps more truthful too, because nobody really arrives at this season fully ready. We all emerge slightly unfinished. A bit pale, a bit hopeful, debating whether it is warm enough for sandals while still keeping a cardigan nearby just in case Britain remembers itself by teatime.

I suspect that is part of why this stretch of the year feels so relatable. Nobody is polished. Nobody has fully become the version they thought they might be now. We are just gradually stepping back outside, blinking into brighter evenings, pretending we meant to get here exactly like this.

So if the thighs wobble a little, if the arms are not quite where I imagined they would be, and if the ice cream keeps winning, perhaps that is less failure and more proof that life carried on in the meantime.

Which, inconveniently, is still a very good reason to enjoy the picnic.



On Scarisbrick New Road, the latest post box topper by the Southport Hookers has brought colour and character to the street, featuring the Queenscourt Hospice bee mascot alongside the Star Trek walkers. Such a thoughtful reminder of the community support surrounding Queenscourt, a local charity hospice that continues to rely heavily on fundraising, donations and public support to provide care for families across the area.



INVESTING IN YOUR MORNINGS!

There is a quiet idea that turns up across different schools of thought, including the Stoics. They were less interested in controlling the day, and more in how they met it. The belief that a beginning, however small, has a way of carrying forward.

That lands in a practical way. Mornings are not just symbolic. They are one of the few points in the day where your mind is still relatively open. Before messages, before noise, before everything starts competing for attention.

A little preparation the night before can help. A bag packed, shoes by the door, something already decided. It removes friction from a moment that is rarely anyone's clearest. Not life-changing, but quietly helpful.

Mornings themselves are uneven. Some feel clear. Others feel heavy before anything has even happened. That is often less about mindset and more about biology. Your body is waking up, cortisol rising, thoughts arriving quickly. It can feel like urgency before there is anything urgent.

A simple routine can steady that. Not as something to get right, but as something familiar to return to. A few quiet thoughts. A slower start. A cup of tea without interruption. Something that signals the day has begun on your terms, even briefly.

What you let in first tends to linger. News, messages, other people's urgency. Early inputs have a way of shaping what you notice for the next few hours. A gentler start does not fix the day, but it often softens it.

Movement can help, even in small amounts. A walk, a stretch, a few minutes of something physical. Less about discipline, more about shifting state. The same with light. Stepping outside, even briefly, can change how awake you feel in a way that coffee sometimes cannot.

And then there is the mind. It will plan, worry, replay. Some mornings it is louder than others. Noticing that, rather than following every thought, can take some of the weight out of it.

None of this needs to be done perfectly. Some mornings will slip. Others will land well. The point is not to optimise every hour, but to reduce resistance where you can.

Because most days do not fall apart or come together in big moments. They are shaped in smaller ones, often early, often unnoticed.

And the morning is one of the few that is still yours, before the rest of the world arrives.

LOCAL LOVE

Interiors Edit

In a town shaped by coastline and changing light, Southport's palette offers an effortless interiors guide for both homes and businesses. Soft sand tones, muted sea greys, washed blues and dune inspired neutrals echoing the landscape around Royal Birkdale Golf Club can be layered through paint, wallpaper, textiles and natural materials to create spaces that feel calm, cohesive and distinctly local. These colours allow the community to bring the essence of the seaside indoors, in a way that feels both timeless and quietly contemporary.



1. PAINT & PAPERS-ARAMI- FARROW & BALL WALLPAPER
2. MEDUSA GEMS GIFT SHOP- QUAIL CERAMICS
3. THE RANGE- TABLE LAMP
4. HABITAT SAINSBURY'S- OLIVE CUSHION- 5. GREEN PLATE-
6. RHUBARB & ELDERFLOWER DIFFUSER
7. ETSY- SOUTHPORT POSTER

MILLS
INTERIORS



Don't Look Sideways

The idea for this article arrived in the most ordinary way — scrolling through Facebook. I saw a post from a friend celebrating her husband's retirement. He's younger than me. My reaction was complicated: I felt genuinely pleased for him... and then, almost instantly, I found myself glancing sideways at my own life.

Should I be thinking about retirement too? Am I behind? Have I made the wrong choices? Should I be heading towards a neat, well-defined finish line too?

It reminded me of something Steve Peters said in a talk about his brilliant book, *The Chimp Paradox*: "Don't look sideways." Such simple advice, and yet it stopped me in my tracks, and it's something that I've remembered ever since.

Comparison is rarely helpful because it pulls our focus away from our own path. We compare our ordinary Tuesday mornings to someone else's milestone moments. We measure our messy reality against carefully

curated announcements and wonder why our lives don't look as polished. It can leave us feeling behind, when in reality we may simply be walking a different road.

For many people, retirement represents the destination they've worked towards for decades. And that's wonderful. But I've realised I don't tend to live life in a destination-focused way. I feel like I live my life in a way that is more expansive than linear. It's less about reaching a fixed destination point, and more about filling the years with friendship, challenge, purpose, laughter and love.

A cancer diagnosis 13 years ago sharpened that perspective. It taught me that life is fragile and precious, and that tomorrow isn't guaranteed. Since then, I've become far more interested in maximising the moments I have now rather than pinning all my happiness on some future milestone.

So, when you catch yourself looking sideways, why not keep to hand this pocket checklist for a quick reset:

Pocket Checklist, Don't Look Sideways:

- One Thing: What's the single action that matters most today?
- Own It: Is this goal or pressure actually mine?
- Control the Controllables: Am I focusing on what I can influence right now?
- Check Comparison Triggers: Did something just make me compare? Pause and reset.
- Measure Backwards: Am I better than yesterday by even 1%?
- Protect Your Inputs: Am I consuming more than creating?
- Micro-Gratitude: What is one thing going right today?
- Forward Step: What's the next tiny step on my path?

When you look sideways, at what others have, what they're achieving, how fast they're moving, you're not looking forward.

So instead, I choose Eyes forward. Heart steady. Keep going.

Travel with Confidence When the Headlines Feel Loud

Planning a holiday now often comes with a quick check of the news. When headlines focus on unrest, it is easy to assume the worst. In reality, many destinations continue as normal, with flights running and resorts unaffected.

What matters most is staying informed without letting the noise take over. Having the right support around your booking can make a real difference. If plans shift or routes change, working with an experienced travel professional means you are not left trying to figure everything out alone.

With years of experience helping people travel with confidence, Cath understands how quickly situations can change and how important calm, clear guidance can be when making decisions around a trip.

It is also worth checking official travel advice before travelling and making sure you have the right insurance in place for disruption, delays or cancellations. Most travel continues without issue, even when headlines suggest otherwise. The key is staying aware, prepared and calm.

Cath Reese
Travel Consultant



Always protected,
prepared, and
personalised to you.

If you would like reassurance around your plans or help understanding your options, Cath is always happy to help guide you through it.

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Open Days & Spring Fete

Friday 15th &
Saturday 16th May

10:30AM - 3:00PM

Join us for our Open Days and Spring Fete (Saturday) discover what makes our home unique. Meet our dedicated team and residents, and discover what life is like at Parklands. Join us on Saturday for our Spring Fete with local stall holders, crafts, refreshments and more!



Scan Me For
More
Information



01704 771111

enquiries@sandstonecare.co.uk

sandstonecare.co.uk

Parklands Care Home, 80 Park Road,
Southport, PR9 9JL



PART OF THE



SANDSTONE
CARE GROUP

By E.Nesbit
adapted by Dave Simpson

SDC
**LITTLE THEATRE
SOUTHPORT**

The Railway Children

Heartfelt Family Drama
8th - 16th
May 2026



SCAN ME



Registered Charity No. 1164398
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This amateur production is presented by arrangement with
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For every stage





COMMUNITY

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND YOU,
AND WHY IT MATTERS

CONVERSATIONS WITH HOPE

***"Why talking about death earlier can be one of
the kindest things we do for the people we
love"***

Most people do not avoid conversations about death because they do not care. They avoid them because they care deeply, and because imagining life without the people we love feels uncomfortable. But during some of the hardest moments families face, Wendy and Claire at Hope Funeral Care often see the quiet difference small conversations can make.

A favourite song already known. A preference shared years earlier. A simple conversation about what somebody would have wanted. These details may seem small at the time, but when emotions are high and families are grieving, they can bring enormous comfort and clarity.

Dying Matters Awareness Month exists to encourage more openness around subjects many people still struggle to discuss. Not to make life feel heavier, but often to make difficult moments feel a little less overwhelming when they eventually arrive.

At Hope Funeral Care, Wendy and Claire believe funerals should reflect the individual, because no life is lived in exactly the same way. That is why listening sits at the centre of everything they do. Families are not expected to fit into a template. Instead, conversations are guided gently and thoughtfully, helping create meaningful farewells that feel personal to the people involved.

For many, the fear around talking about death is really a fear of upsetting the people they love. Yet often those conversations, however small, become one final act of care.

A conversation today can become comfort later.

www.hopefuneralcare.co.uk





Anna McNally

Project Phoenix Gym



REALITY CHECK!

A normal meal, a cheeky wine, and the kind of reality check that quietly shifts how you look at food, fitness, and everything in between.

There is something about a roast dinner that feels like a little win. I had one last night. Nothing over the top. A fairly standard beef roast, bit of everything, gravy poured like it usually is. And, of course, a cheeky wine on the side.

It felt normal. Deserved, even.

Then came the reality check. I actually looked at it properly afterwards. Broke it down. And it landed around 1,800 calories for the plate. Add the wine and I was brushing up against 2,000 in one sitting. Not a blowout. Not a “bad” choice. Just... dinner.

That was the bit that caught me.

Not in a dramatic way, just in that quiet, “oh right” kind of way. Because if you are training, or trying to stay consistent with fitness, you assume meals like that are doing more for you than they sometimes are. It feels like proper fuel. But when you look closer, the protein was not that high, and most of the calories were coming from the extras that you do not really think about in the moment.

It does not mean the meal was wrong.

It just means the picture is slightly different to what I thought. And I think that is where a lot of us sit. Not doing anything wildly off track, just slightly unaware of how things stack up over time. One roast. One cheeky wine. Completely fine. But repeat that a few times across a week, around a few gym sessions, and suddenly things feel harder than they should. The instinct is to swing the other way. Cut things out. Be stricter. But that never really sticks.

For me, it is more about adjusting the thinking.

Not eating because I have “earned it” from a workout, and not training to try and offset what I have eaten. Just letting both sit where they are meant to. Training to feel stronger. Eating to support that, most of the time.

The roast stays. The wine probably does too.

But maybe next time I look at the plate slightly differently. A bit more awareness of what is actually fuelling me, not just filling me. And maybe mixing in other ways to switch off and reward myself that do not always revolve around food.

Nothing drastic. Just enough to keep things moving in the right direction. Sometimes it takes one of those reality check moments to bring it back into focus. Not to change everything, just to see it a bit more clearly.

BIG ONION PODCAST

Big Onion Podcast is quietly becoming part of Sefton's local fabric. Built around conversation rather than commentary, it focuses on the people, places and everyday experiences shaping life across the borough, offering space for stories that are often overlooked or hurried elsewhere.

The podcast continues to evolve, with a new partnership forming with Dune Radio, marking a natural next step for the programme. Alongside Lizzie's own weekly show on the station, the podcast itself is set to be introduced to radio audiences in the near future, extending its reach while keeping its local focus intact.

What remains consistent is the kind of conversation the podcast creates space for. Recent episodes have centred on people navigating real experiences across Sefton. Debbie Rogers joined to speak about the loss of her brother, Sean, and the work behind Sean's Place, offering an open and grounded perspective on men's mental health and the importance of accessible support.

There has also been a focus on early years and family life, with Liz Devey from Sefton Early Years sharing insight into the support available as children approach school age. Elsewhere, Andrew Roberts reflected on building a branded pub business, speaking candidly about the pressures involved and the role simple routines, including walking, have played in maintaining balance.

Looking ahead, upcoming conversations will include Marine in the Community and Liverpool John Moores University, alongside further local groups and charities. The podcast will also revisit the Launchpad initiative, a project led by The Big Onion supporting young people aged 18 to 21 into education, employment and training.

Across each episode, the thread is consistent. Real people, local context, and conversations that allow space for both challenge and perspective, without being rushed.

Listen on Dune Radio
Wednesday evenings 6pm



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

Second 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

SOUTHPORT COMMUNITY TO HOST NATIONAL EMERGENCY BRIEFING SCREENING

The Hearth Network CIC brings the landmark climate evidence film to Ainsdale on Thursday
21 May — free and open to all Southport residents.



The Hearth Network CIC is bringing a community screening of the National Emergency Briefing film to Southport on Thursday 21 May, as part of a nationwide series of public screenings taking place across the UK. The event will take place at MeCycle Community Café, Ainsdale, from 6:30pm to 9:00pm, and is free and open to all. The venue has step-free access and a disabled toilet.

The National Emergency Briefing brought together leading scientists and experts in November 2025 to present the latest evidence on climate, nature, and ecological breakdown to politicians in Westminster. The film makes that evidence accessible to local communities, and screenings are now taking place in towns and cities across the country — with residents and decision-makers invited to hear the evidence together and discuss what it means locally.

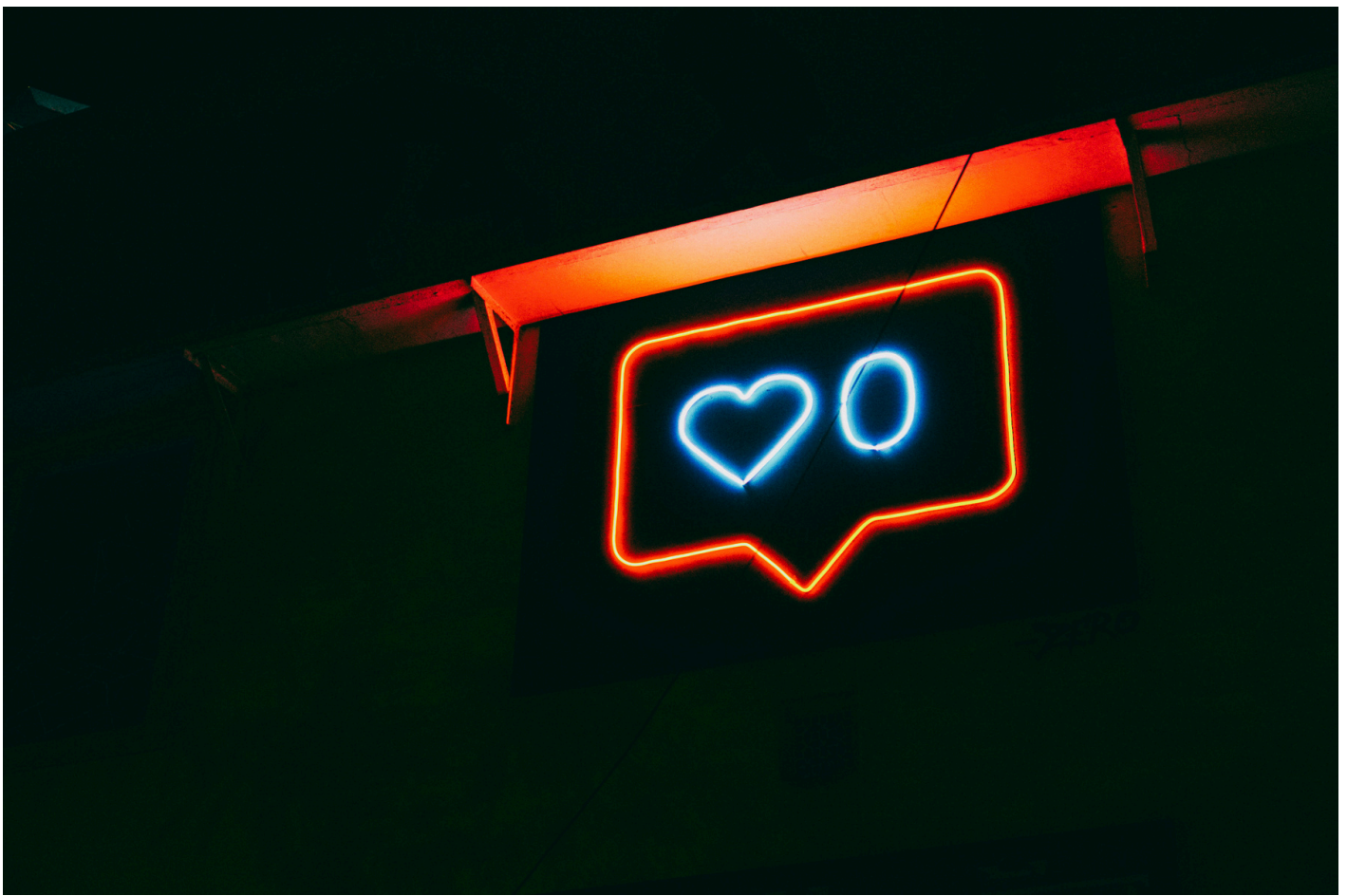
The evening will include a screening of the film, followed by a structured community discussion facilitated by The Hearth Network, and an opportunity to join the Parliamentary Call for a government-staged national briefing.

"This is a chance for Southport residents to hear the evidence directly and talk about what it means for our town. These conversations matter — and we're proud to be bringing this to our community."

Tickets: Free — book at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/southports-national-emergency-briefing-community-screening-tickets-1988477584985>



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



WHEN SILENCE ONLINE FEELS MORE PERSONAL THAN IT IS

“

What feels personal is often just timing, noise, and a crowded space.

”

There is a particular kind of silence that can feel far louder than noise.

A post goes out after more thought than most people realise. Sometimes it has taken an hour to write. Sometimes longer to decide whether to include the photograph, whether to leave your face in the video, whether the words sound natural enough to belong to you. By the time it appears, there has often already been a quiet negotiation behind the scenes between confidence and hesitation.

Then very little happens.

No obvious response, few reactions, slower engagement than hoped, or a sense that the effort has landed into empty space. Even when visibility begins to grow, it can still feel strangely uneven. A post reaches more people but gathers little warmth in return. The numbers shift in one direction while another remains still, and because it involves something personal, it is easy to read that stillness as meaning something personal too.

That is often where people become harsher with themselves than they realise.

Silence can feel like rejection because expression carries vulnerability, even in small forms. If something mattered enough to share, it is difficult not to notice when it seems to pass quietly by.

Yet much of that quiet has very little to do with judgement. People scroll while distracted, save things they never return to, intend to respond later, or simply move through busy days without stopping where they otherwise might have done.

A crowded space does not always reflect value clearly.

Sometimes what feels like being overlooked is simply the ordinary reality of many voices existing at once, each hoping to be met, each occasionally wondering if anyone paused long enough to notice.



Sharon
Kemp

Thrive with AI

YOUR 1ST ATTEMPT

Why one bad result isn't the whole story

You try something new to save time. It doesn't work the first go. So you go back to the old way and tell yourself the new thing wasn't worth it. Meanwhile, the old way is still taking just as long as it always did.

That's the AI trap most people fall into. A client of mine asked AI to write her business bio. It came back polished, generic, and nothing like her. She deleted it, went back to the three-year-old version she'd always used, and wrote AI off as a time waster. What she didn't realise was that one attempt isn't a verdict.

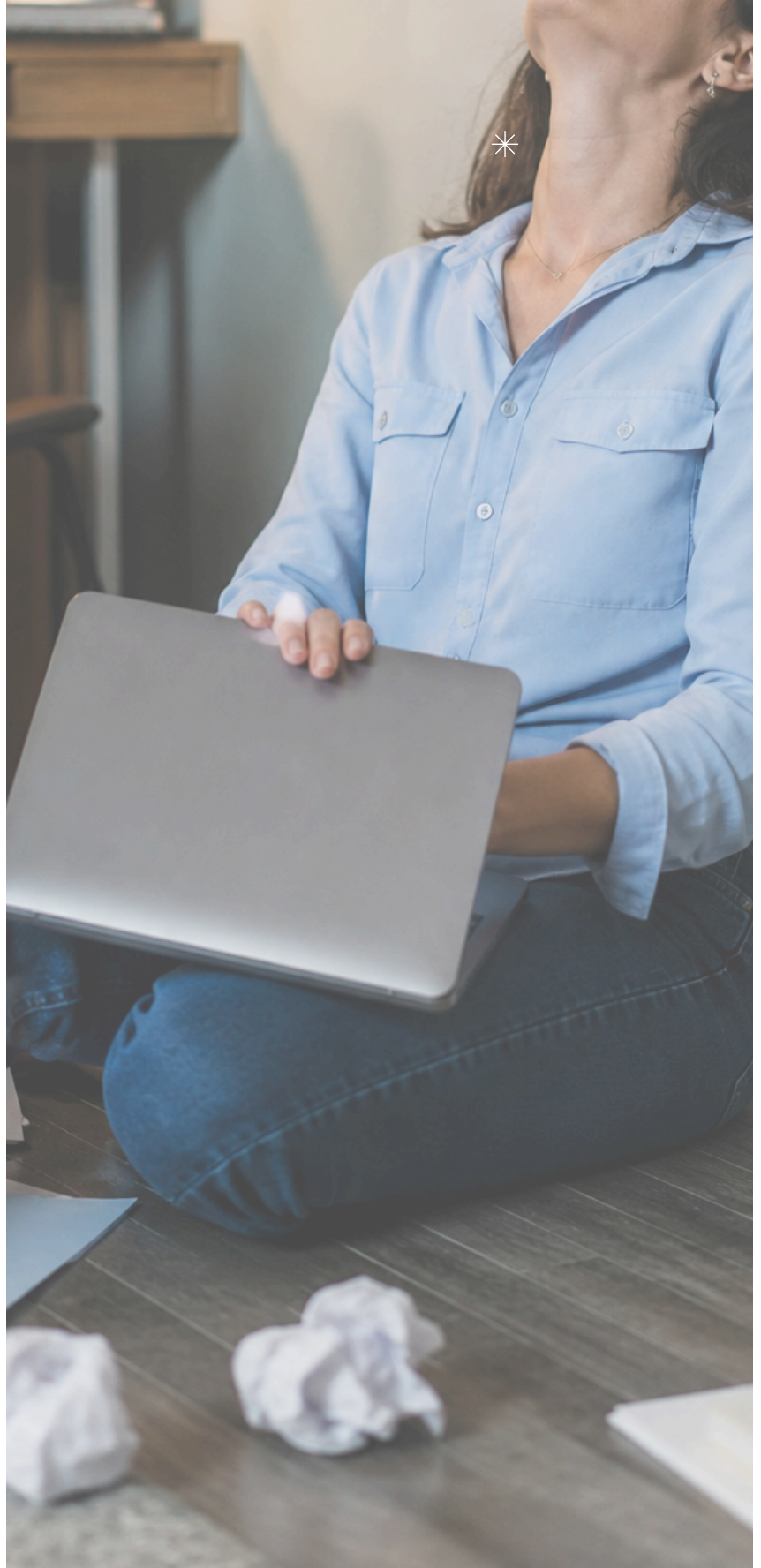
Learning any new skill has a dip before it delivers. The first time you used a smartphone, a sat nav, or online banking, it probably felt slower than what came before. AI is no different. You get better results as you learn to work with it, but most people quit inside that dip and never find out.

Only 28% of UK adults feel confident using AI in daily life, according to a 2026 government survey. The other 72% are mostly not opposed to it. They just haven't stayed with it long enough for it to click.

One bad result isn't AI failing you. It's the beginning of the learning curve.

Try the same task again. Change one thing about how you asked. Do it three times before you decide whether it works.

Sharon Kemp | Thrive With AI



AI 01

One bad result isn't failure. It's attempt one. Try the same task again and change just one thing about how you asked.

AI 02

Don't go back to the old way after a single attempt. That way was already costing you time. Give AI 3 tries before you judge it.

AI 03

Notice what improved, not just what didn't. Each attempt teaches you something. That's not wasted time. That's how confidence builds.

Source: UK Government, AI Skills for Life and Work survey, January 2026, GOV.UK



BUILDING STRONGER BUSINESS FOUNDATIONS

In my recent articles - Navigating the Entrepreneurial Maze, From Survival to Scale and From Kitchen Table to High Street - I explored the realities facing Sefton's entrepreneurs and micro businesses. From isolation and cashflow pressures to the challenge of sustainable growth, the message has remained consistent: good ideas alone are rarely enough. Long-term business sustainability depends upon strong foundations, trusted support and meaningful networks.

Across Sefton and the wider Liverpool City Region, many start-up founders begin their journey with energy and ambition but limited experience in areas such as financial planning, marketing, compliance and strategic growth. Too often, businesses operate in isolation, unaware of the support available locally or hesitant to step into professional networks.

This is where partnership working across the borough is making a genuine difference.

Merseyside Expanding Horizons and Safe Regeneration continue to play a central role through the delivery of the Business Start Up Programme in Sefton. Together, they provide practical one-to-one guidance, mentoring and tailored business advice designed to help enterprises

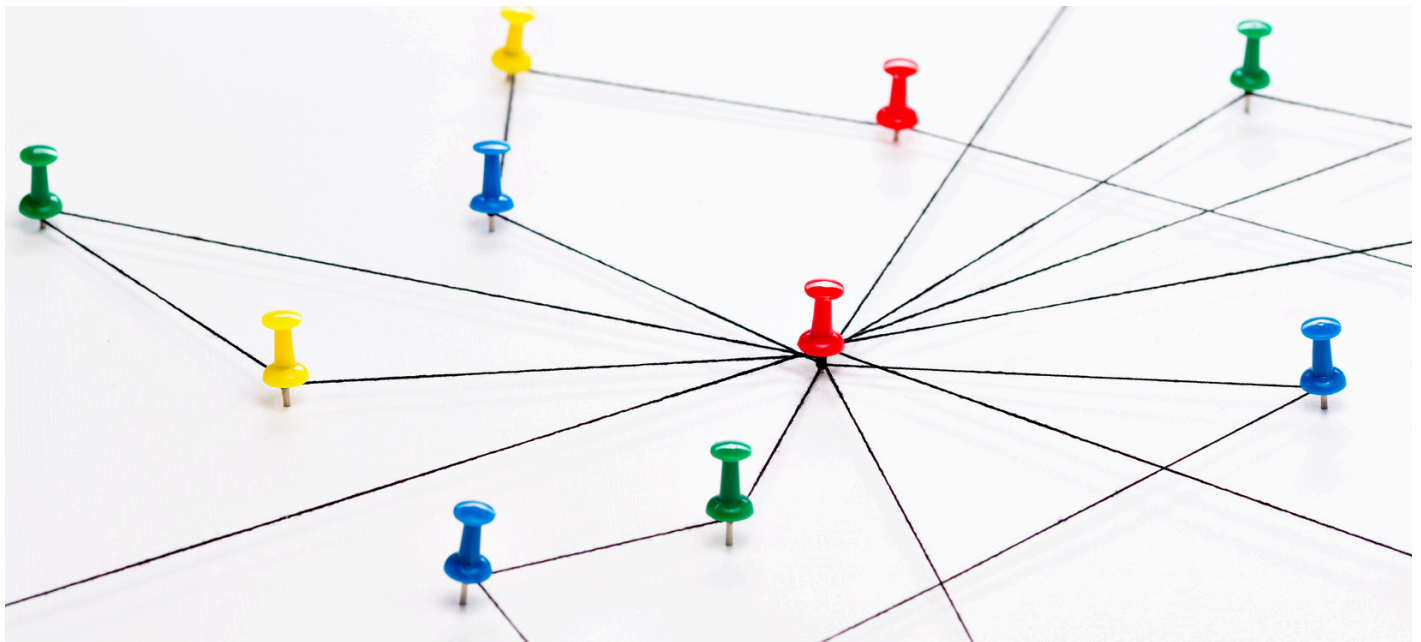
move beyond survival mode and towards stability and resilience.

Alongside this, Invest Sefton — Sefton Council's economic development team — provides an important gateway into wider growth support, funding opportunities and specialist advice. Their collaborative approach with local delivery organisations helps ensure businesses are not simply signposted, but actively supported through different stages of development.

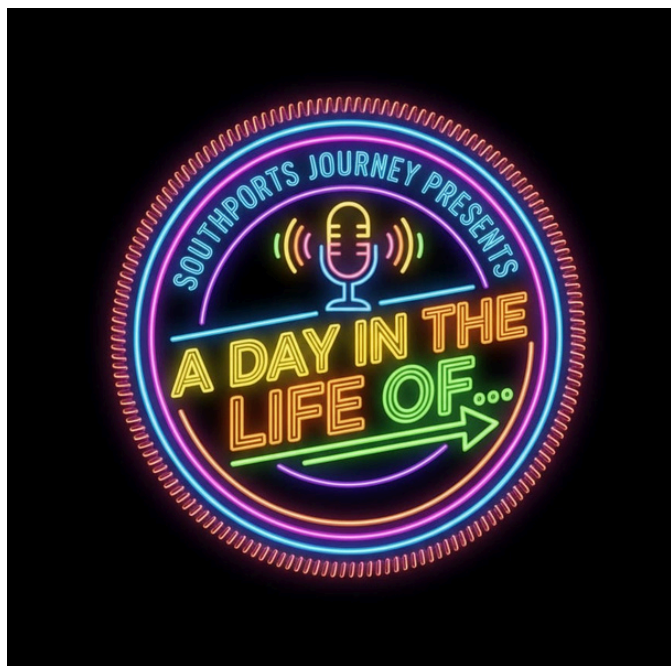
Equally valuable are the informal spaces where relationships and confidence are built. Merseyside Expanding Horizons' monthly business clubs in Southport and Bootle continue to attract growing numbers of local entrepreneurs. These sessions encourage peer learning, collaboration and the confidence to engage with wider networking and business events across the region.

Perhaps one of the most important lessons for any new enterprise is this: sustainable businesses rarely grow alone. Strong networks, shared learning and access to trusted support can often be the difference between standing still and moving forward.

And across Sefton, that culture of collaboration is steadily gaining momentum.



Podcast goes LIVE!



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.

[@comfortably_heard](https://twitter.com/comfortably_heard)

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

kate@clearthinkinguk.com |

www.clearthinkinguk.com

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

cath.reese@travelcounsellors.com

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
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