

PROPERTY NEWS



FESTIVE MEAL WITH A TWIST

ADD SOME LUXURIOUS TOUCHES TO YOUR FESTIVE MEAL

NEW YEAR TRAVEL
CHOOSE THE PERFECT
DESTINATION FOR 2022

HAMPER GIFT GUIDE
WE HAVE A SELECTION OF
SIMPLE DIY HAMPERS

FOOTBALL TRANSFERS
CLUBS SET FOR ANOTHER
MONTH OF TRANSFERS

PLAN AHEAD
STEPS TO HELP YOU MOVE
HOME IN THE NEW YEAR

CONTENTS

COVER STORY

- 8 | **Festive meal with a twist**
Add some luxurious touches to your festive meal

PROPERTY

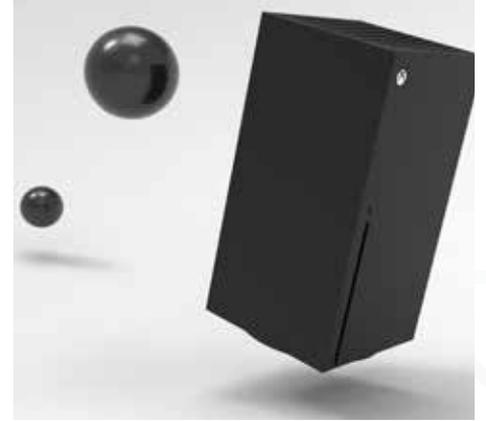
- 15 | **Plan Ahead**
Steps to help you move home in the new year
- 16 | **Our latest instructions**
Take a look at a selection of our latest properties on the market
- 21 | **About us**
Get to know us a little better and see why we are your agent of choice
- 24 | **Your home move**
Your guide to help you every step of the way on your home move

LIFESTYLE

- 4 | **New Year Travel**
Choose the perfect destination for 2022
- 6 | **Health over the festive period**
Find a balance over the festive season on how to keep healthy
- 7 | **Hamper gift guide**
We have a selection of simple DIY hampers
- 10 | **December gardening guide**
Your garden needs a little preparation ready for next year
- 12 | **Festive films**
We have a list of festive films for you and the family

SPORT

- 13 | **Football transfer window**
Premier League clubs set for another month of transfers



STAR TECH

Gift ideas for the gadget lover in your life

It's that time of the year when, even more than usual, we stare blindly at laptops hoping for inspiration. What do you buy that special someone at this special time of the year? Clothes? Drinkables? Jewellery? Let's face it, they're all a bit passé ... you can put a hole in one and it's in the bin; a significant hole in another and it's on the way to the bin; while the other could just fall in the bin.

But tech is a different matter. Tech evolves, tech is useful... and is always gratefully received.

For instance, nothing says 'I love you' more than a **PS5** or the **Xbox series X**. Admittedly, both launched last year but



WELCOME TO THE DECEMBER ISSUE!

Welcome to the December edition. 'Tis the season to be merry, and this month were hoping to do just that. Being the festive season, on pages 2&3 we look at some of the hottest tech and appliances for your home. Keeping with the Christmas theme, on page 7 we look at some fantastic Christmas hamper ideas.

On pages 8&9 we have you covered for Christmas dinner with all the trimmings by putting together a guide with recipes for every course. And if you've over indulged, on page 6 we have a feature to help you keep fit and healthy during the Christmas season.

If you're already looking ahead to the

new year, on pages 14&15 we look at how to plan ahead with steps to take to move home in 2022. If you're looking further afield and already craving some sun, on pages 4&5 we have a feature on some of the hottest travel destinations for next year.

Alongside this we have our usual monthly gardening guide, a look at the January transfer window in the Premier League and a selection of festive films to get stuck into both at the cinemas and for streaming.

So get cosy, snuggle down, and enjoy this month's magazine.

Jonathan Wheatley
Editor



But tech is a different matter. Tech evolves, tech is useful... and is always gratefully received.

they remain scarcer than Arsenal fans after a defeat in the North London derby – to be precise, the PS5's Digital Edition console is like gold dust. However, the Xbox may be more accessible and has an expanding catalogue of games to investigate.



While that's okay for solitary gamers, the new **Nintendo Switch OLED** should dominate the family and kids' market. It's a significant and more robust upgrade for Switch devotees with a bigger screen, improved kickstand and enhanced speakers. Best of all, it only launched in October so they might be still available. Smartwatches, on the other hand, have been around for some time but the new

kid on the block, the **Samsung Galaxy watch 4**, is quite elegant, very sophisticated and has enough biometric sensors and health-tracking features to embarrass a health farm. And it tells the time.

Similarly, the Amazon Echo is no stranger to our homes but the latest addition to their stable – the **Amazon Echo show 8** – is rammed with features, including an ambient sensing display, a home-monitoring feature, an upgraded processor plus an improved 13MP camera with less intrusive panning and zooming tracking features.

The gift of sound is always worth receiving and **Bang & Olufsen's Beosound Explore** is the perfect Bluetooth speaker for those who love the great outdoors. As well as looking classy, it's very rugged, waterproof, sandproof and goes for days between charges. The alternative for a Sonos fan is the **Roam**, their smallest and cheapest speaker which is as small as a plastic water bottle but packs a punch with features such as sound swap and auto trueplay, and hefty bass make it perfect for indoor and outdoor use.

Wireless earbuds are a safe bet and Sony's latest offering – the **WF-1000XM4**, launched in the summer - is really worth

investigating. As well as sounding good, they have noise cancellation features which phase out the din of public transport while on your commute but capturing the noise from car engines while walking to the office. And when you speak, the earbuds will pause the music



and tune into voice frequencies. They look good too, even though you'll want them in your ears for most of the day.

But if you want to push the boat out, take a look at the new **Apple AirPods max** headphones. They are wireless and have soft knitted earcups and a knitted headband, which is nice. But what is important is the 40mm dynamic driver which has a rich output that really delivers in spatial audio, where the feeling of your favourite pieces coming from all directions has been described as "absolutely mindblowing". As is the price tag, but it is Apple.

NEW YEAR TRAVEL DESTINATIONS

WHAT'S HOT FOR 2022

Whether you're pining for some sunshine by the pool- sipping a cocktail, a brand-new adventure or simply exploring somewhere new, there's one thing for certain – everyone is ready for a holiday by now. Choosing the perfect holiday destination for you will ensure you get the break you want so read on for some travel inspiration.

NEW ZEALAND

The most beautiful of destinations. Tropical beaches, caves twinkling with glow-worms, bubbling mud pools, geysers, white-tipped mountains and glaciers bordered by rainforests – what more could you want? New Zealand is a perfect choice if you wish to immerse yourself in unspoiled landscapes and natural spectacles. Wildlife lovers will find themselves in paradise here as they can watch humpback whales in Kaikoura or hunt down kiwis after dark in Zealandia.

THAILAND

Whilst renowned for being a party destination, Thailand has more to offer than its legendary Full Moon parties. If you've been hankering for freshly made cocktails and a tropical retreat, Thailand will have a beach for you. Why not explore one of the many secluded coves or take a dip in the warm waters full of stunning coral? Once you've worked up an appetite, why not stroll down the beach to one of the plethora of cafes

serving freshly grilled fish? If you're not into seafood, venture into the capitol and taste the delights of Bangkok street-food. Trust me – you've never tasted pad thai like it.

JAPAN

Take advantage of the recent economic boost the Olympic and Paralympics brought to Japan. With hotels having just been revamped, attractions refurbished, and new English signage being produced, now is the perfect time to visit Japan. There is something for everyone from Okinawa's white-sand beaches and Kyoto's grand palaces to the futuristic experience of Tokyo.

SCOTLAND

A little closer to home are the magical lochs, rugged wilderness, and dramatic coastlines of Scotland. Scotland offers an endless amount of adventures for outdoor enthusiast. Whether you're into sailing, hiking, abseiling, or kayaking you can find all sorts of activities to get your

adrenalin pumping. Whilst you're there, take some time out to explore the rich history of medieval castles, ruins, and city streets.

THE MALDIVES

If you're ready to sip cocktails out of coconuts whilst gazing at sapphire waters and want the most taxing decision to be just which stretch of sugar-white sand will create the most instagrammable shot, then the Maldives could be the destination for you. Set in the heart of the Arabian Sea, the Maldives are home to vivid, crystal-clear waters, luscious palm trees and luxury cabins on stilts. This dream-like destination is perfect for families, friends and couples and is both soothing and awe-inspiring all at once. Rather than being once island, the Maldives is spread over hundreds of smaller islands and caters to over 1 million visitors every year. If you're watching your budget, the capital of Male is a great place to explore a vibrant city.



What are you waiting for? Book your little slice of heaven and have a well-deserved break.



PROVENCE

Provence in France is the perfect holiday destination for so many reasons, the climate being just one of them. Provence has mild winters and hot summers. With an average of 2900 hours of sunshine per year and less than 80mm of rainfall, it is the ideal choice even during winter months. If you're a foodie, Provençal food will not disappoint. If you're self-catering, why not whip together a simple ratatouille? Purchase colourful vegetables straight from the market, selecting rich, purple aubergines, juicy

tomatoes, and vibrant peppers. The spice stalls will showcase hundreds of herbs in earthenware bowls - you will need basil, thyme, marjoram, and rosemary. Next, stop at a chateau and choose some locally made wine (why not Cotes de Provence rose?) and enjoy your evening meal whilst watching the sun set.

KOS

For a sense of calm and relaxation, why not vacation in Kos? The idyllic Greek island sits just off Turkey's south coast and

is awash with beautiful white beaches. Kos has a vivid and varied history dating back to pre-Roman times, a deliciously diverse cuisine, and endless postcard-perfect towns. Make sure you see the Venetian Castle of the Knights, the Ancient Agora and the old Christian basilica.

So, what are you waiting for? Book your little slice of heaven and have a well-deserved break.

Keep up to date with COVID travel regulations on the government website



KEEPING FIT OVER THE FESTIVITIES

The festive period is just around the corner. And alongside cheesy songs, classic movies, and cringey jumpers, a major focus is indulging ourselves. So, with so many temptations around, here are some of our tips about how to keep healthy into the New Year.

PLAN AHEAD

Often, one of the consequences when prioritising food and drink at Christmas, is the habit of impulse buying. We've all done it. Whether it's a box of chocolates, or bottle of bubbly, there's always a voice in your head that says, 'It's Christmas'. This year, plan your meals and drink ahead, to help you sustain some semblance of a regularity this Christmas - although, that's easier said than done! In food terms, meal-planning will help you to resist the delights of the treat isles at the supermarket. With regards to drinking, think about alternating between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. If you ration your drinking somewhat, you'll not only appreciate every drink all the more, but you'll also feel better in the morning!

GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK!

However, the most important thing to remember about this period is that it only comes around once a year! Yes, it won't harm you to be aware of your health and fitness levels. But it won't do you any good to calorie count, or give yourself a hard time over what you may, or may not be doing. The festive season is universally seen as the time of the year when everyone is allowed to kick back and relax, so be realistic, and rather than undertake wholesale sacrifices, make small changes to help you through this season.

EMBRACE THE WEATHER

One of the most simple things you can do to keep tabs on your health, is to continue to exercise. And that doesn't mean you have to hit the gym. By going out for one substantial walk per day, this can help you to maintain a routine. But another major reason you should be getting outdoors is because of the weather! As the temperature drops, now is the perfect opportunity to get wrapped up, and enjoy the frosty bite which comes with Winter.

If you want to go one step further, then take a look at some of the most effective High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) workouts. These are brilliant at burning calories, and most importantly, only take up a tiny portion of your day, meaning that you don't have to sacrifice the enjoyment of the festive period. Or if you're not keen on workouts, then just getting out of the house, perhaps to play with the kids, will help to burn calories, and get your muscles working.



HAMPERS GALORE

Give a unique gift this Christmas, with these fantastic hamper ideas

Hampers are a great DIY gift for friends and family and are so simple to make. Most supermarkets, gift and card shops, and discount shops store ready-made hampers that you simply need to fill with goodies.

Here we look at some simple hamper ideas perfect for everyone.

FOR THE FOODIE

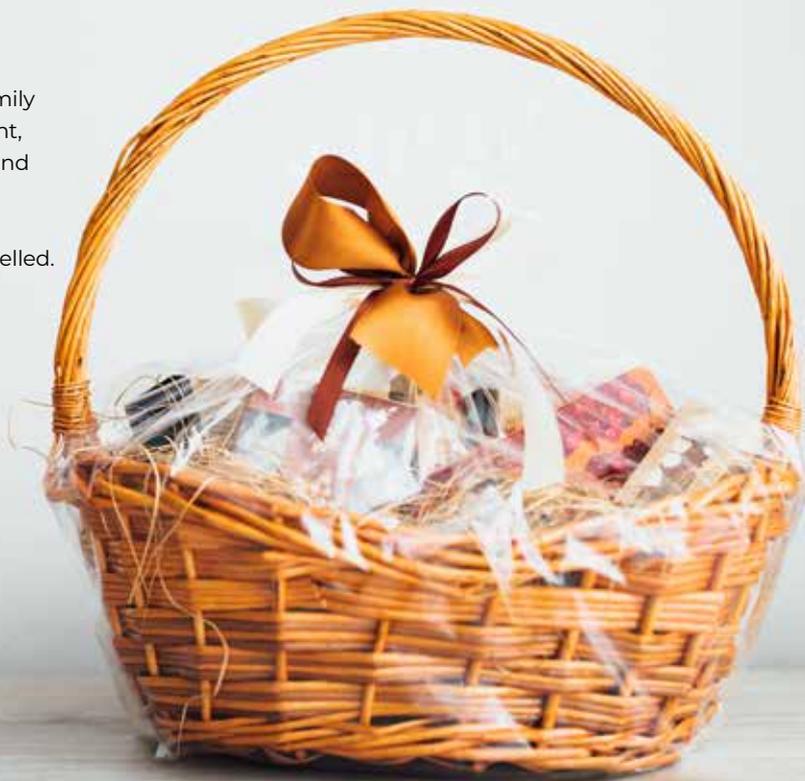
Food hampers are great for couples, friends, and family members and most of the items can be shop-bought, unless you have managed to make your own jams and chutneys, which make a great addition.

- 📦 Homemade jams and chutneys – sealed and labelled.
- 📦 A selection of cheese, crackers and biscuits
- 📦 Mini panettones
- 📦 Pickled onions, chillies, or other vegetables
- 📦 Mini bottles of wine or port

FOR THE GAMER

Young or old, with the continuing joy of computer games, why not create a hamper perfect for the hardcore gamer in your family.

- 📦 A stress ball or fidget spinner for those hard to complete levels
- 📦 A docking charger for a controller
- 📦 A special gaming cup with straw and lid
- 📦 A new computer game or download voucher
- 📦 A gaming headset



FOR THE HOMER LOVER

Treat a couple with a selection of wonderful homeware all in a beautifully decorated hamper full of goodies for the home.

- 📦 Custom watercolour house portrait
- 📦 Scented candles
- 📦 Furniture paint and bespoke handles for upcycling
- 📦 Matching tea towels
- 📦 New cushion covers

FOR THE DIY-ER

Wherever you live, there will always be a need for DIY. With this DIY hamper, full of those little bits and bobs which tend to get used the most, ensure your significant other always has the tools they need.

- 📦 A new measuring tape
- 📦 A selection of drill bits, screws and nails
- 📦 Marking pencils and pens
- 📦 Brand new spirit level
- 📦 A folding, metal ruler



TIME FOR LUNCH

Add some luxurious touches to your festive menu

To call Christmas lunch “just a glorified Sunday roast” will incur the wrath of millions of home chefs who, willingly or otherwise, stake their hard-earned reputations on their festive menu. In fact, to paraphrase a well-aired TV commercial: This is not a normal meal, this is stress on a plate.

For days, weeks, or even months, they have whittled over the finer details, deliberated over the guest list for the feast, and made allowances for every curveball life – and a semi-ransacked supermarket – can throw at them.

Yet their standing among family and their peers can be shredded by a split-second lapse of concentration, a sneaky swig of sherry, or a seldom-seen relative Facetimeing from the other side of the world. No-one wants to be remembered as the cook who ruined Christmas by leaving the plastic bag containing the giblets inside the turkey.

The key is preparation (much of the veg can be prepared in advance) and sticking resolutely to your schedule, while the meal can be made that bit more memorable by luxurious touches.

Such as a mouth-watering starter like quick gin-cured salmon with horseradish and parsnip on toasted pumpernickel bread. Heat butter and olive oil in a saucepan over medium heat until hot, then add 250g of grated parsnip and season well with salt and pepper. Cook for five minutes, then add 25ml of milk and simmer for a further five. Transfer to a blender and add a tablespoon of horseradish sauce and two tablespoons of crème fraiche and blitz until smooth.

Slice the salmon as thinly as possible across the fillet (against the grain, as it were), lay it in a shallow dish, mixing in rock salt and orange zest together, and rubbing it into the fish. Leave for 10 minutes, add 25ml of gin and leave for a further 10 before rinsing the salmon under cold running water.

Cut the pumpernickel bread into small rectangles, toast, spread the parsnip cream on it and lay a piece of salmon on top, finishing with chopped dill.

As for the main course, the star of the show deserves special treatment. Most top chefs have their own little twists and additions, but the traditional way to cook the turkey is still the best: 6oz of softened butter spread



over the bird with 8oz of streaky bacons rashers on top, seasoned with black pepper and salt and cooked on its back for around 40 minutes to get the heat into the bird and stuffing.

Then turn it right way up, basting regularly, and cook for the time recommended for the weight. Uncover for a further 40 minutes to give it a final browning and it's cooked if the juices run clear when you pierce the thickest part of the leg with a skewer.

But if all that seems a bit of a bind, Fortnum & Mason have a Christmas Pie, tipping the scales at 1.36kg. It's chock full of turkey, tart cranberries and herb stuffing ... in a pie.

For stuffing, try a chestnut, bacon and cranberry mix with the dried cranberry soaked in ruby port just to give it a bit of a kick. Best of all, it can be prepared on Christmas Eve and cooked in balls or inside the bird.

And although braised red cabbage with cider and apples is becoming quite popular as a side dish, it wouldn't be Christmas lunch without sprouts, particularly when accompanied by bacon and a garlicky cream. So delicious it would tempt even the most fervent brussels hater.



VEGETARIAN

Who needs meat when winter brings such a rich supply of gorgeous vegetables. After a light, fresh salad starter, try a beetroot and red onion tarte tatin or a parsnip gnocchi with a walnut crumb coating and a drizzle of olive oil. Or for larger gatherings, how about an incredibly tasty root vegetable tatin with candied nuts and a punchy blue cheese.

VEGAN

A vegan lifestyle doesn't mean you have to restrict your Christmas menu. For starters, have a luxurious celeriac, truffle and hazelnut soup with an elegant burnt leek bruschetta and romesco sauce. Then for mains, a flavour-packed cranberry and lentil bake crammed with herbs and spices followed by a Christmas pud packed with spices and more than a hint of rum.

GLUTEN-FREE

Here's proof that GF menus don't need to be a headache. Start with fresh and smoked salmon rillettes or a warming butternut soup with crispy sage and apple croutons, followed by a roast turkey with mustard and honey glaze with a sprinkle of five spice, followed by a ginger cookie sandwich with lemon mascarpone.



No-one wants to be remembered as the cook who ruined Christmas by leaving the plastic bag containing the giblets inside the turkey.

DECEMBER LEADING GARDENING

It's cold, dark, and probably wet, but if you want a showstopper of a garden next year, the work starts now...

In December the garden tends to look quite sad. The last of the autumn colour has gone and it all looks, well, a bit bleak... But that doesn't mean there aren't jobs to do...

PROTECTING TERRACOTTA POTS AND PLANTS FROM FROST

As the frosts start to arrive and the temperatures start to dip below 0c, tender plants such as begonias, dahlias, salvias, some palms, and ferns will need to be looked after. Tender plants don't like temperatures over the winter and can die. If you have a greenhouse, heated or unheated, they should be okay except for the freakiest of cold weather. Alternatively, if they're quite large and already in pots, you can cover them in fleece outside. Don't forget the pots though, as these are liable to crack as the temperature drops.

RAKE UP FALLEN LEAVES

Slugs and other pests absolutely adore a pile of fallen leaves. These slugs will then reproduce and attack your beautiful garden in Spring and Summer. Rake up any fallen leaves and, if possible, put them in a composter over the winter. The result will be a two-fold win; Lots of nutritious compost for your garden

next year, and a barrier so slugs and other pests can't ruin your plants.

PLANT BARE-ROOT ROSES AND OTHER DECIDUOUS SHRUBS

Deciduous shrubs are simply woody plants that offer berries, fragrant flowers, and foliage during the summer and wonderful autumn colour when the seasons change. Planting these now, when the plant is still dormant, gives them the best change to establish roots because the soil is moist. What's more, by planting them now, there are more varieties on offer than at your garden nursery come Spring.

GET FESTIVE

Cut stems of berried winter shrubs, seasonal flowers, and evergreen leaves to create spectacular, seasonal wreaths and decorations in time for Christmas. Homemade decorations like these brighten up your home over the festive period and are a great way to use any excess foliage or flowers from when you have





cut back certain plants ensuring they don't go to waste. Holly and mistletoe are the most obvious plants to use, however, you could also use other berries, grasses and even conifer leaves for that Christmas tree effect.

PRUNE CLIMBING ROSES

Climbing roses look incredible in the Spring and Summer, and to ensure they keep neat and tidy, now is the best time to prune them. The plant should now be dormant which is the perfect time to give them a tidy and tie them in ready for the next growth spurt in Spring. With climbing roses, unlike rambling roses, you only want to remove the side shoots. This will gradually build up a framework for the plants for next year. If you don't prune your rose, you're likely to end up with a jumbled mass of weak, twiggy stems, which can dominate in expense of flower production.

MULCH

Mulching simple entails laying straw, compost, or bracken around the base of your plants in borders. This works three-fold; a good, thick (1 inch) layer of mulch will deter pests and slugs from munching their way through plants over winter. A mulch

will also insulate the roots of tender plants helping them to stay warm in the colder temperatures, and finally, a layer of mulch will re-invigorate your border as it breaks down, allowing lots of good nutrients to sink into the current soil.

PRUNE CHILLIES

If you've grown a bumper supply of chillies and peppers this year, why not give yourself a helping hand and instead of throwing them onto the compost heap, prune them back hard and get a step ahead of the game come Spring? It's quite a harsh job. Try not to shed a tear as you cut back the plants you've cared for the past nine-months, right back to the stem, so there's only 10cm left. Cut off all side shoots, stems, and fruit still on, and then keep them somewhere where temperatures will be between 5c and 12c over the winter. Come Spring, they should come back to life.



FESTIVE FILMS TO FEAST UPON THIS CHRISTMAS



There is little more heart-warming than sitting down to watch a timeless Christmas film. But if you find yourself bored of the classics this year, then take a look at some of the newest festive offerings to feast your eyes upon.

A BOY CALLED CHRISTMAS

This widely-anticipated movie focuses on the modern re-telling of the story of Father Christmas, during which a young boy goes out in search of 'the big man'. And this festive treat is not short of big names, featuring Jim Broadbent (*Bridget Jones' Diary*), Maggie Smith (*Downton Abbey*), and Kristen Wiig (*Bridesmaids*). The movie, which has been produced by Netflix, will be available on Sky on November 26th, although Netflix themselves are keeping their cards close to their chests regarding its release on their platform.

SILENT NIGHT

Who says Christmas films should be cheery? This new movie, which will be available in cinemas from December 3rd, is centred around an extended family Christmas dinner, whilst chaos and destruction is only moments away. The film will star Keira Knightley (*Pirates of the Caribbean*) and Matthew Goode (*The Crown*), who will reprise their collaboration, having previously appeared together in *The Imitation Game*, and *Official Secrets*.

A CASTLE FOR CHRISTMAS

For those who don't fancy leaving their sofa this Christmas, Netflix's *A Castle For Christmas* may be right up your snow-lined street. This plot is based around an American author who ventures to Scotland, with dreams to acquire a castle, but is faced with a prickly owner. The pair, portrayed by Brooke Shields and Cary Elwes, begin to butt heads, guaranteeing comedy, and perhaps the slightest bit of romance, along the way. This is sure to be one of the favourites over the winter period, and will be on our screens from November 26th.

HOME SWEET HOME ALONE

Christmas just wouldn't be complete without the *Home Alone* franchise. Well this year, there's a sixth film to add to the collection. This instalment differs from the original slightly, in that ten year-old Max Mercer attempts to foil the attempts of the infamous burglars, who are looking to steal a precious family heirloom. Among the cast will be established funnyman Rob Delaney (*Catastrophe*), as well as Ellie Kemper, who has hit TV show *The Office US*, on her CV. This wild ride can be experienced on Disney+, and you won't have to wait long, as it is to be released on November 12th.

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

Premier League clubs set for another month of wheeling and dealing



The New Year Sales – also known as the January transfer window – are looming, and football managers up and down the country will be re-evaluating their shopping requirements in the hope that owners and chairmen will remain benevolent after a good Christmas and splash the cash to revive flagging fortunes or strengthen for a glory-laden finale to the season.

Opening on New Year's Day, the winter window is often seen as the poor relation to its more famous big brother which runs through the closed season and into the opening weeks of a new campaign. But while there is a measured build-up to Deadline Day in late summer, the same cannot be said of the midwinter version which can easily see a maelstrom of business conducted before the window closes on January 31st.

Because this is make-or-break time, a month where seasons can be saved or scuppered.

Much of what happens will be governed by two factors: Whether a club has dumped their manager and needs to spend to adapt the squad to the new man's needs, or how deep they are into a relegation battle or a title race.

Logic says most of the deals conducted during the month will be loan arrangements as players might be reluctant to commit to a team at the wrong end of the table, while clubs might want to ship players out for some game time as they ponder their options for next term.

However, logic and football do not go hand in hand. If you recall Chelsea paid Liverpool £50million for Fernando

Torres in 2011 with Andy Carroll moving from Newcastle to Anfield for £35million. Not exactly money well spent, while Philippe Coutinho's protracted £142million transfer from Merseyside to Barcelona soon went sour after its completion in 2018.

But for every Carroll there is a Virgil van Dijk, an Aymeric Laporte or a Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, who all made significant impacts for their new clubs.

The most activity next month is expected to be in the North-East, where Newcastle's new Saudi owners will be anxious to start their Geordie revolution. They have boldly stated they want to win championships, not the Championship, so expect a significant number of loan deals in and out of the club as they try to put distance between themselves and the rest of the strugglers.

For that reason, they – and perennial yo-yo club Norwich – may inspect Tottenham's roster for short-term deals. Spurs, who are making a ham-fisted attempt at a rebuild, could do with farming out some players to either revitalise their careers at Hotspur Way or give them a nudge to find another club. Certainly Dele, Harry Winks and Matt Doherty fall into that category, while the luckless Joe Rodon is wasting his time on the bench.

At the top end, both Manchester City and Chelsea have the necessary financial clout to pull off a big-money deal – the former may feel the need for a striker should they fall behind in the title race – while Manchester United might test the resolve of resurgent West Ham with a move for Declan Rice in an attempt to reset their season.

PLAN AHEAD PREP TO SELL YOUR HOME

What to do in
the New Year
to get ready

A common misconception is that winter is one of the worst times of year to sell your home. Many assume the property market is generally quiet during the colder months with fewer properties on the market and less people looking to buy. In fact, the first few weeks of the New Year are a fantastic time to put your home on the market. Following the Christmas lull, there is a spike in demand as buyers enter the market searching for a property to start afresh in in the New Year.

Rightmove's Director of Property Data, Tim Bannister confirmed this buying boom: "January is usually one of our busiest months of the year as people start to make new year plans to move. Agents have already spent months working in a covid-secure way and creating a number of property videos, so buyers and renters starting out on their search this year will find that, alongside the safe viewing protocols, more agents are offering virtual viewings to help buyers and renters better shortlist the properties they want to go and see."

The New Year buying trend looks set to stay as 2021 saw Rightmove record its busiest ever start to a new year, with visits to the site up 30% on the same period in 2020. People contacting estate agents about a property to buy was 11% higher at the start of 2020, and those enquiring about a property to rent was up by 22%. So, what can you do to get ahead of the curve and get ready to sell your home in the new year?

If you're looking to move, it's best to get things moving quickly so you can get to the market ahead of your competition. Having your home ready to list on the 2nd of January puts you at a real advantage. Contact a local agent to conduct a free home evaluation so all the paperwork can be completed quickly, and your property is ready to list.





To give yourself the edge when selling your property, there are a couple of quick fixes you should consider. First up, clean up any Christmas clutter. When you're ready to start arranging viewings for your property, take down Christmas decorations and tidy away any festive debris. This will help to make your home look spacious, neat, and well-kept. Create a cosy atmosphere as it's likely buyers will be looking for a warm, cosy place to shelter during the chilly winter months. Use warm lighting such as lamps and candles, light the fire or log burner if you have one, and keep the house warm if there's a viewing. If your house seems cold, potential buyers will assume it is either very expensive to heat or that the existing heating system isn't fit for purpose.

Another top tip is to remove personal items. If you have a lot of family photos on the wall or several pieces of your child's artwork on the fridge, you should take them down and store them out of sight. This will help buyers to see your home as a clean slate they can make their own. You could also consider getting a home inspection. Whilst buyers usually have the home inspected, having an inspection prior to putting your home on the market

Contact a local agent to conduct a free home evaluation so all the paperwork can be completed quickly, and your property is ready to list.

will make you aware of any potential issues that could arise during the sale.

It might also be worth your while to carry out any last-minute repairs. Are there a couple of cracked tiles in the bathroom or kitchen that you have spares of in your garage? Have you been meaning to repaint that scuffed wall? Now is the time to do so, a lick of paint can make all the difference to the look or feel of a room.

Finally, prep your paperwork. The better prepared a seller is for a home sale, the easier and smoother the process will be. Renew your Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), particularly if the EPC was done some time ago, some agents will be able to arrange this for you. Other paperwork to get ready includes HM Land Registry title documents, gas and electrical checks, FENSA or CERTAS certificates for windows and planning permission for any major work carried out.

Preparation is key to making sure your sale goes smoothly. So, what are you waiting for? Call today for a free valuation and get the ball rolling ready for your new year sale.





Oaks Drive, Swaffham

£450,000



Very spacious period linked detached five bedroom bungalow situated within easy reach of Swaffham town centre. Some of the original building is said to be part of the old work house and dates back to approximately 1836 and boasts sizable rooms throughout. CHAIN FREE!

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Litcham Road, Great Dunham

£230,000



CHAIN FREE! Very well presented, recently modernised semi-detached cottage situated in the popular Norfolk village of Great Dunham. Oozing character and charm the property benefits from modern bathroom and kitchen with original features a plenty, en-suite, separate garden and garage.

The Avenue, Necton

£275,000



CHAIN FREE! Well presented spacious detached two bedroom bungalow with generous gardens, parking, UPVC double glazing and gas central heating, situated in the well serviced popular, sought after Norfolk village of Necton. Viewing is highly recommended!

Brandon Road, Watton

£225,000



Three bedroom end terrace character cottage with flintwork frontage conveniently situated within easy reach of Watton town centre. The property boasts a kitchen/dining room, garden/utility room, freestanding garage to rear, gardens and parking. Viewing highly recommended.

Kendle Road, Swaffham

£249,995



Modern, well presented three bedroom end terraced house situated on a popular development on the outskirts of Swaffham. The property boasts garden, allocated parking, en-suite shower room, kitchen/dining room, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing. Viewing highly recommended!

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Castle Acre Road, Swaffham

£675,000



CHAIN FREE! Fantastic, recently fully refurbished to a high standard throughout, substantial detached four bedroom house. The property has much to offer including gated access, three reception rooms, en suite shower room, gym/garden office/studio, two garages, sizable gardens and much much more...

Newfields, Sporle

£240,000



CHAIN FREE! Very well presented detached two bedroom bungalow situated in the popular Norfolk village of Sporle. Located towards the end of a cul-de-sac with open countryside views to the rear, the property offers parking, car port, gardens and UPVC double glazing.

Adastral Place, Swaffham

£295,000



An immaculate three bedroom link-detached bungalow in a popular residential location with good access to Swaffham town centre and it's amenities. The property benefits from a superb modern kitchen/ diner, updated bathroom, conservatory, two driveways, one with access to the rear garden.

Giffords, Newton By Castle Acre

OIEO £500,000



Very well presented, detached four bedroom bungalow situated in a riverside location with the River Nar flowing across the bottom of the garden in Newton near Castle Acre. The property offers an en-suite shower room, kitchen/dining room, double garage and parking for several vehicles.

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Barrows Hole Lane, Little Dunham

£395,000



NO CHAIN! A non estate detached bungalow set on a generous plot within a sought after location. The property boasts three double bedrooms, kitchen/dining room and detached garage. Viewing is highly recommended!

Jubilee Way, Necton

Offers Over £300,000



A very well presented detached three bedroom house situated in the sought after and well serviced village of Necton. This superb property offers a garage, parking, gardens, gas central heating and UPVC double glazing. Viewing is highly recommended.



Gayton Road, East Winch

£290,000



Semi-detached three bedroom character cottage situated in the Norfolk village of East Winch. Originally built circa 1852 and since extended, the property offers garage, gardens, parking, conservatory, open fireplace and UPVC double glazing. Viewing highly recommended.

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MEET YOUR BROKER DAVID ALLEN



David has many years of experience in the Mortgage & Protection industry.

If you would like more information or to setup an appointment, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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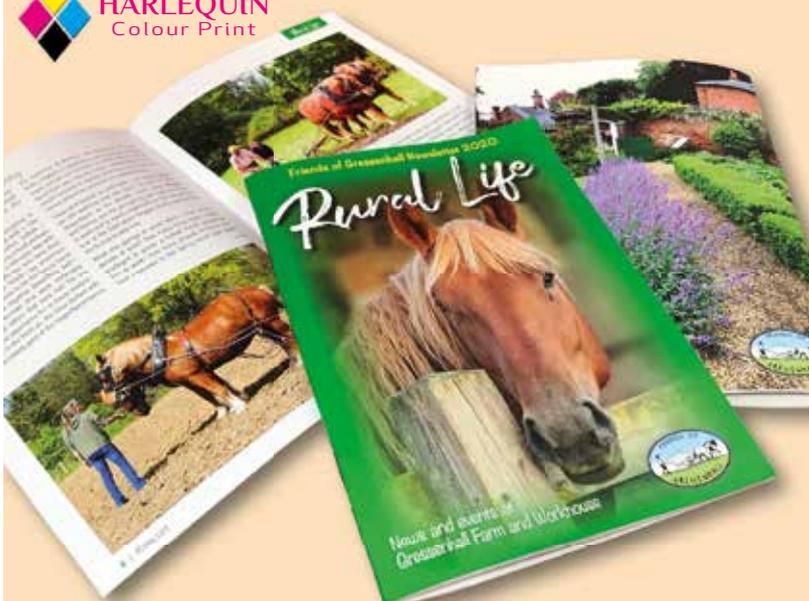
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Present your house for sale by de-cluttering...

Maximise your home's potential and create spacious rooms enticing potential buyers – simply by de-cluttering!

“ De-cluttering allows you to... maximise your space, emotionally prepare you to move, and will allow you to focus your buyers on what is important ”

If you are looking to sell your house, or have had your home on the market for a while now, then you probably want to get the maximum sale price in the quickest time. There are a few things you can't control – but the one thing that is in your control, is the look and feel of the interior and exterior.

While it's worth spending time fixing and cleaning your house before potential buyers come and view, it's also important to de-clutter. This creates spacious rooms and also allows you to decrease and organise your personal items before you move yourself. Of course it's understandable that you don't to want spend money, time and energy on a home you are about to leave, however, a lot of people are looking for a house in which they can move straight into. Maintaining your

property might even save you thousands of pounds; it could even reduce added expenses of living in your home whilst waiting for a sale. And it might even help avoid possible reductions in the asking price.

The main reason in which people move house tends to be because they lack space in their current home. They want a home that is spacious and in which they can grow into. If a potential viewer comes to your home and sees that there is lack of space, then this will turn them away.

De-cluttering allows you to remove any unnecessary items in an untidy or overcrowded place. It will help maximise your space, emotionally prepare you to move, and will allow you to focus your buyers on what is important.



So where should you start?

You need to create a great first impression and focus on the rooms themselves. You will notice that the first things you see in each room are personal items. Where possible you want to create the look of a

them into things you want to keep and things you want to get rid of. You may even find that you have collected a cupboard full of paper work. Get yourself organised! Don't just throw it all away, but file it and go through it thoroughly. This will also make it easier when you move.

De-personalising can also be a great way to de-clutter. Too many personal effects can be distracting to buyers. They want to see a house in which they can make their own memories rather than seeing yours. Again, personal items can be stored away. Remember

“ Where possible you want to create the look of a lifestyle that the potential buyers want ”

lifestyle that the potential buyer want. This usually has a 'show home' feel, rather than a 'lived in' feel. Minimising your things is the quickest way to do this: you want to ensure that potential buyers can do simple things, like, open any doors easily, ensuring that there are no obstacles.

So, what do we mean by clutter? There are two types: genuine clutter, and items that you want to keep but don't work for the sale of your property.

Genuine Clutter:
You need to go through the space and sort out each item, categorising

You also want to focus on little things like DVDs, books and trinkets. These items may have some small value so sell them or donate them to charity. Get rid of any old shoes and coats that are lying about in your porch or hallway. You might want to hide away the coats and shoes you do currently wear. Store them in your wardrobe, while you have viewings.

Items that you want to keep but don't work for the sale of your property:
You may want to consider putting some items in storage while you sell your home. Sometimes items are too large or even too small for some spaces and can make the room look odd. If you want to keep these particular items, then store them until you move into your new home.

that this is only a temporary way of living and hopefully it won't be for long! If you find you are keeping more things than you are throwing out, then think about whether or not it's in the right room or do you even need it now?

As previously mentioned, you can attempt to sell some of the things you have acquired over the years. Use sites like eBay, Gumtree and social networking sites to try and sell items. You may want to even hold a house sale for the remaining items that you can't sell. Failing that, why not donate to charity.

The end goal is still the same and it's important to help potential buyers envision your house as theirs. So remember, de-cluttering will make your home more spacious and entice potential buyers!

Top Tips!



If you are throwing away paperwork, shred anything that is confidential



De-clutter before agents come and take photos of your property. This will help attract more potential viewers online and get that first good impression



Don't spend too long on certain items and don't get distracted. Keep yourself motivated and race against the clock!



Make it fun! Play some music or watch TV while you de-clutter





Your step-by-step guide to the conveyancing process

Once a sale has been agreed and is in the hands of your solicitor, it will go through the following stages. Sometimes additional work will be needed – for example, if the property is leasehold or is yet to be registered with the Land Registry. It is also important for buyers to discuss the availability of their deposit with their solicitor early in the transaction, and we strongly recommend that you contact your solicitor regularly so that they can keep you fully up-to-date with the progress and the latest timescales.

Seller's solicitor's steps

- Obtain a copy of the Title Deeds (or office copies if the title is registered)
- Obtain a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) (if applicable)
- The seller(s) will return a completed Property Information Form and a Fixtures, Fittings and Contents Form to the solicitors
- Copies of the above documents, plus a draft contract – this is known as an 'Information Pack' – will be sent to the buyer's solicitor
- Answer the buyer's solicitor's additional enquiries (for example, specific questions about fixtures and fittings) and obtain copies of any planning consent documents
- Agree the contract and arrange for the sellers to sign it in readiness of the exchange (below)
- All parties agree completion dates and the contracts are exchanged

Between exchange and completion

- Obtain redemption figures from the mortgage lender and reply to requisitions on title
- Approve the transfer and arrange for the seller(s) and buyer(s) to sign
- Receive the agent's fee account and seek the seller's consent to settle this out of completion funds

Completion date

This is the date the ownership of the property passes from the seller to the buyer, and it follows the successful transfer of funds. It's the date that the whole process works towards.

Upon completion

- Receive completion funds and (only when this has been completed) instruct your estate agent to release the keys to buyers. Redeem mortgage and forward the financial statement. Forward any surplus funds (unless these are being used to fund an onward purchase). Ensure all outstanding bills are paid
- Forward transfer documents and deeds to the buyer's solicitors
- Forward evidence of 'discharge of mortgage' to the buyer's solicitors

Buyer's solicitor's steps

- Obtain the Information Pack, including a copy of the EPC (if applicable) from the sellers' solicitor and raise any additional queries
- Initiate any specialist searches (for example: a coal search). Submit local, environmental and water searches and a chancel check. This takes about 10 working days in total, and enquiries are then usually raised from the results
- Approve the contract when all enquiries are satisfactory and complete. (At this stage, a mortgage transfer deed will need to be signed and witnessed)
- Receive a mortgage offer and instructions from the lender and deal with any conditions set out by them. Make sure that life cover and buildings insurance is being arranged
- Request the deposit, report back to the buyer, and arrange for the contract to be signed. Place buildings insurance and life cover in force
- All parties agree completion dates and the contracts are exchanged

Between exchange and completion

- Raise 'requisitions on title' and prepare the draft transfer deed
- Report on title to mortgage lender and obtain funds for completion, including Stamp Duty (if appropriate)
- Prepare accounts, obtain signature to mortgage deed and undertake final Land Registry and Land Charges searches

Completion date

This is the date the ownership of the property passes from the seller to the buyer, and it follows the successful transfer of funds. It's the date that the whole process works towards.

Upon Completion

- Forward to the seller's solicitors the balance of funds - it is only then that they can authorise the release of the keys. Receive from the seller's solicitors, the transfer document deeds
- Stamp the Transfer Deed, register the buyer's ownership with the Land Registry and forward the deeds to the lender or client (where appropriate)

Contract - The agreement that sets out the main terms that have been agreed - for example: price, address, names, etc. Two copies are drawn up, and each party signs one in readiness for the exchange of contracts.

Deposit - The part of the purchase price (usually 10%) which the buyer pays on exchange of contracts.

Exchange of contracts - The swapping of signed contracts by the solicitors (together with the buyer's deposit). After this, the contract is binding.

Energy Performance Certificate - This contains information on energy use, energy performance, carbon dioxide emissions, and fuel bills.

Land Registry - The Government department that records who owns what land, and under what conditions.

Local Authority Search - A list of questions that are specific to the property and intended, for example, to discover if there have been any planning applications on the property, if the road to the house is maintained by the council, etc.

Mortgage Redemption Figure - The amount required to repay the outstanding capital/ interest of a mortgage.

Property information form/fixtures, fittings and contents form - Standard forms about the property that the seller answers for their solicitor (for example: what will be left behind, details of guarantees, etc.)

Title Deeds - Legal documents that prove ownership of land/buildings, and the terms on which they are owned.

Transfer of Title - The document that passes the ownership from the seller to the buyer.

Stamp Duty for buy to let investors and second home owners - An additional tax, paid by the buyer purchasing an additional property that is not their main residence. It includes buy to let landlords and those buying second homes and holiday homes. The higher rates will be 3 percentage points above the current rates of duty shown below.

Requisition on title - An enquiry relating to the completion arrangements.

Seller's Pack - This comprises a Property Information Form, a Fixtures, Fittings and Contents Form, a copy of the title deeds and the draft contract.

Stamp Duty - A tax paid by the buyer purchasing their main residence.

The current Stamp Duty Holiday runs until the 30th June and as such you won't pay stamp duty on purchases up to £500,000.

After this date the nil-rate band will be set at £250k until the end of September.



Moving house?

From meter readings to removal companies, there's so much to remember when moving house. Here's our checklist of what to do and when

First of all, congratulations on your new home! The excitement has probably now kicked in but moving home can also be one of the most stressful and emotionally draining things you can do. However, careful organisation and planning can help decrease the stress and anxiety of moving. This comprehensive and essential checklist will help you do just that.

Eight weeks - Research

Ideally, you want to start packing away any non-essential items as early as possible. This includes any items stored away in the loft, garage and shed. If you are not using it, pack it. Looking into your new area is also important, try to do this around eight weeks before you move. You might need to think about transferring your children to different schools and ordering new uniforms too. At this point, ensure you are also documenting all your important information away: that includes contact details, dates, contracts and information regarding your solicitor.

Six weeks - Removal companies or do it yourself?

Now would be the perfect time to decide on a local removal company. Or if you don't have too much to move, you may want to do it yourself. You could even look into different van hire companies. At this point you've probably started packing away some bits, but if there is anything you decide not to take, then look into selling these items or donating them to charity. This will also give you an idea on the volume of items you have to move.

Four weeks - Notify utility companies

This would be a good time for you to notify utility companies and inform them about your move to switch over. This includes gas and electricity, council tax, internet, phone rental and TV. You should also consider changing any car insurance, tax, memberships, phone contracts and inform your bank about the move. Now's the time to also arrange a date to have your new house cleaned before you move



“ It will be worth packing a night bag each to help everyone settle in, which means you won't have to rummage through everything to find your toothbrush! ”

in, and start ordering any new furnishings for your new property. Start packing away more items, that being, out of season clothes, books, dvd's and even bulky items, like TV's that aren't used often.

Two weeks - Confirm all details

Confirm your move with your removal company or van hire, estate agents and schools. If possible, try to organise someone to look after your pets and children for the day of your move, as this can also be a stressful time for them too. If your removal company doesn't disassemble any furniture or sort out the un-plumbing for the washing machine, then now would be the ideal time to organise these. Remember to also cancel any local services you receive: this could be window cleaners, gardeners and newspaper deliveries. You should now also think about re-registering to vote and getting your post re-directed after your moving date. Continue packing away more furnishings, kitchen appliances and crockery that you won't be using for the next couple of weeks.

24 hours - Final check and walk round

You now have only 24 hours before you move, so double check that everything is packed away and ready for transit. It will be worth packing a night bag each to help everyone settle in, which means you won't have to rummage through everything to find your toothbrush! You may want to create an inventory of your boxes and

furniture to help you keep track of what you have and to help you ensure it doesn't go missing.

Moving day

Today is the day! You need to be ready for when your removal company comes. Ensure that you let them know if there are any fragile boxes that need extra care when handling. If you're moving yourself, then pack up your car or van and work out how many trips it may take. Before you leave, also take note of your final meter readings and send these off to your provider. Don't forget to leave your keys for the new owners!

You have arrived at your new home!

Give your removal company instructions of which boxes go in which rooms and make sure you are happy with everything that has arrived. Ensure you check for any damage before the movers leave. Read your new utility meters and send your readings of to your supplier. Taking photos of them will also ensure you have the correct reading if you need them again in the future. Unpack your essentials such as bed linen and clean towels. Don't worry about the rest, it isn't going anywhere! Order a takeaway, have a cup of tea and enjoy your first night with your family.

Right, so now you're all moved in, it's time to settle down, unpack and enjoy your new place. Remember, planning is essential to ensure your move runs stress free.

Checklist

Eight weeks

- Pack non-essential items
- Research your new area (transfer schools and order new uniform)
- Keep all important documents

Six weeks

- Decide on a local removal company
- Clear out any unwanted items
- Keep packing

Four weeks

- Notify utility companies
- Start preparation for your new house
- Keep packing

Two weeks

- Finalise all details
- Organise pet and child care
- Cancel local services
- Keep packing

24 hours

- Check every room and ensure everything is packed
- Pack a night bag so everything is to hand
- Collect your new keys
- Make sure your phone is fully charged so you can get in touch with the estate agents or removal company

Moving in

- Prepare for the arrival of the removal company and give them directions/your contact details
- Ensure everything is ready to move
- Record meter readings

On arrival

- Give removal company instructions of what goes where
- Check for any damage before they leave
- Read your new utility meters and send them off to your supplier
- Check if the previous owners have left anything behind
- Unpack essentials
- Order a takeaway and sit back and relax!

KEEP COSY THIS FESTIVE SEASON



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