

# Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



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Editors: Berkley Driscoll, Teresa Read

# TickerTape - News in Brief

## South Western Railway

Altered train services and buses replace trains in the Virginia Water area **Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 February**

The lines in the **Virginia Water** area will be **closed all weekend** due to maintenance work.

### Saturday

- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will terminate at **Staines**.
- **Buses** will run between **Staines and Reading**. (These **buses** will **not** call at **Longcross or Sunningdale**).
- **Buses** will run between **Virginia Water, Sunningdale and Ascot**. (These **buses** will **not** call at **Longcross**).
- **London Waterloo to Weybridge via Staines** services will be diverted after **Staines** and will terminate at **Windsor**.
- **Buses** will run between **Staines and Weybridge**.

### Sunday

- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will terminate at **Staines**.
- **Buses** will run between **Staines and Reading**. (These **buses** will **not** call at **Longcross or Sunningdale**).
- **Buses** will run between **Virginia Water, Sunningdale and Ascot**. (These **buses** will **not** call at **Longcross**).
- **London Waterloo to Woking via Staines** services will be diverted after **Staines** and will terminate at **Windsor**.
- **Buses** will run between **Staines and Woking**.



**The Tree Agency**

darryl parkin

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Teddington, Middlesex TW11 9LY  
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# Local Picture Postcard Column - Part 288

## Bushy Park In 1908- The Great Hurricane

By Alan Winter

My thanks go to John Sheaf who has over the years researched the stories behind many of the local postcards that were published at the beginning of the last century (20<sup>th</sup>). Much of today's column is made up from work John did on the subject of "The Great Hurricane" some 20 years ago. He has very kindly given me his permission to use it so thanks John, I owe you a beer!

There were several postcards published covering the so-called Great Hurricane of 1908 and it seemed that they were nearly all centred on Bushy Park.

All three of today's postcards were published by Teddington High Street based photographers Richard Young & Co. They show the damage to the Lodge and the effects of felled trees in Bushy Park'

So, was it a hurricane, a tornado or a whirlwind which received much local press within a day or two of a great storm in this area on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1908? Over to John now for his summary.

### ***John Sheaf's comments***

'Memories of the hurricane of October 1987 remain fresh in many minds – but over one hundred and fifteen years ago, on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1908 a great storm ravaged Bushy Park and the surrounding area.

It seems apparent from the number of postcards relating to this storm and the damage portrayed that this was no ordinary event.

The brief paragraph in the following days daily papers was the first intimation most people had of the terrible havoc wrought at the Teddington end of Bushy Park at about five minutes to ten on Monday night by a whirlwind which in a few minutes uprooted no fewer than sixty-one trees, principally limes.

The chestnut trees in The Avenue are not damaged very greatly, only a limb here and there having been broken off but the limes on the left hand side of The Avenue, on entering through the Teddington Gate, have been uprooted, and now lie strewn about the ground, completely spoiling the view of this part of the Park. Trees abutting on Sandy Lane met with a similar fate.

At the same time some of them in falling knocked over an old brick wall here and interfered with vehicular traffic. One tree fell on top of the keeper's house, but the damage done was not very great and was confined to the roof. (see first postcard).

Several men were engaged by the district council in clearing away the topmost branches of trees in Sandy Lane and in temporarily repairing the damage to the old brick wall.



On the grounds of Bushy Lodge, the residence of Mr Fred Raby, which is on the opposite side of Park Road, eleven more trees were uprooted, whilst damage to trees is also reported from the Strawberry Hill golf links. The damage to the district was obviously not just confined to Bushy.

Twickenham was not quite in the centre of the storm, but it was well within the circle, and shortly after nine, with a deluge of rain, the full fury burst over the district, the southern and western parts suffering most. One of the first trees to go was in a garden next to the Crown Hotel. This was split in



twain by the lightening and the greater half of it fell across the tram lines, blocking the traffic in Richmond Road for some time.

In the Kneller Road, a huge elm on Mr Poupart's land came down in Waldegrave Road a tree was split in the grounds of the mansion.

Opposite the Tower, three huge elms came down side by side on the Strawberry Hill golf ground, whilst in Waldegrave Park some two-dozen branches, varying in size up to the width of a man's

body, strewed the roadway. At the top of Grotto Road big pieces came down, and in Waldegrave Park a giant elm succumbed.

A peculiar feature of the way some of the trees came down was they appeared to have been twisted right round and the roots dragged forcibly from the ground.' This would appear to support the 'hurricane/whirlwind' description by some of the storm.

A large willow on Eel Pie Island fell upon several punts belonging on Mr Charles Shore and many others were sunk. Gardens suffered rather badly. The flood water was admirably dealt with by the new pumping machinery at the sewerage works, which worked without the least trouble all through'.

Thanks John.

We have reached a point in the year where we are only a month or so from the first Postcard Fair of 2025 which

will take place at the Teddington Baptist Church in Church Road between 10.00 and 4.00 on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March. With over a dozen dealers and tens of thousands of postcards for sale priced from pennies to pounds. With stamps and coins also for sale and light refreshments available all day, it's one of the most interesting ways of spending a few hours that you can imagine. Stick it in your diary!

With nearly 300 weekly columns behind me in the Tribune I am beginning to run out of postcards of our local area that I haven't already written about. So, my search for old postcards continues. I am always looking for old postcards and old photograph albums etc. The postcards can also be British or Foreign, black and white or coloured and of places or subjects.

If you have any that are sitting unwanted in a drawer, in a box in the loft or in the garage or under a bed, please contact me on 07875 578398 or [alanwinter192@hotmail.com](mailto:alanwinter192@hotmail.com) I would like to see them and I pay cash!



# CrusaderTravel

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# Social Care Blackhole Widens to £4.2 million

By James Knight

11 February 2025 - Richmond Council is facing increasing financial pressures due to rising social care costs and persistent challenges in meeting housing targets, as reported to councillors during the latest meeting of the **Adult Social Services, Health, and Housing Committee**. Chaired by Councillor Piers Allen, the committee examined a range of issues confronting the borough, including the surging costs of care, a significant shortage of affordable housing, and the performance of local housing associations. It appears that the committee mainly engages in discussions without taking substantial action, merely noting reports or endorsing decisions made in private, rather than utilising its executive powers effectively.

## Spiralling Social Care Costs:

Richmond's adult social care and public health services are on track to overspend by **£4.2 million**, contributing to a total committee budget deficit of £5.4 million.

Councillors heard from Sarah Evans, Head of Finance, who attributed the financial pressures to rising demand, increasing care costs, and workforce shortages. A surge in the complexity of care needs has driven costs beyond projections, with home care packages exceeding 10 hours per week rising by 9% between April and November 2024.

Councillor Richard Bennett of the Green Party raised concerns about the lack of clarity around 'complex needs,' urging a more detailed breakdown to ensure adequate resource allocation. He said we need to know what we're dealing with – vague terms won't help us fix the problem.

There were some positive signs in the council's approach to integrating digital care technology. The number of service users benefiting from remote care solutions has increased from zero in April 2022 to nearly 900 in early 2025, offering hope that innovative solutions may help mitigate some cost pressures.

## Housing Crisis: Missed Targets and a Shortage of Social Homes

The borough's inability to meet housing targets became a focal point of the meeting, with Councillor Jim Millard, deputy leader of the council, acknowledging that only 154 homes per year have been delivered since 2021, which is drastically short of the government's goal of 2,513 homes per year. Public speaker Pam Murram, a resident and Labour Party member, criticised the council's housing strategy, underscoring the direct impact of Richmond's Right to Buy losses. She suggested a standing item on the agenda that tracks the number of completions to focus the minds on councillors.



In response, Councillor Millard defended the council's efforts by pointing to initiatives such as the purchase of former Right to Buy homes, the identification of six council-owned sites for affordable housing, and modular housing projects. However, he acknowledged that external barriers, including planning challenges and financial constraints, continue to impede progress.

Councillor Clare Vollum raised a pressing concern: the shortage of large family homes within the borough's social housing stock. She said the council needed to incentivise housing associations to prioritise refurbishing voids for larger families, rather than just easier-to-let one- or two-bedroom units.

### **Housing Associations Scrutinised Over Poor Performance**

A review of four largest housing associations operating in Richmond—Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP), PA Housing, Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (MTVH), and London & Quadrant (L&Q)—revealed stagnating tenant satisfaction rates and alarmingly high maladministration findings.

Tenant satisfaction across providers hovered between 59% and 68%, a figure that councillors and public speakers deemed “deeply unsatisfactory.” The most troubling revelation came from the Housing Ombudsman's maladministration data, which ranked Richmond as the worst-performing borough in London in terms of upheld complaints.

Community ambassadors expressed concerns about repair delays, accessibility issues, and poor communication from housing associations. Nancy McCora, a resident of an MTVH property, reported that a lift essential for a wheelchair user in her building had remained broken for over a month. She noted that he could not leave his flat and questioned where the accountability was.

### **Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy 2025-2030:**

The meeting also approved the draft Richmond Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy 2025-2030, a five-year plan designed to enhance access to contraception, STI prevention, and support services for gender-based violence. Although it was generally welcomed, concerns were expressed regarding funding gaps. The strategy, informed by a 2024 needs assessment, prioritises high-risk groups, including young people, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those encountering socioeconomic barriers to healthcare.

### **Conclusion: A Borough at a Crossroads**

Richmond Council's meeting painted a mixed picture of the borough's future. On one hand, there is a recognition of the challenges facing housing, social care, and public health services, with some promising initiatives in place. However, the scale of overspending and the slow pace of housing delivery remain deeply concerning.

With national funding uncertain and demand only set to increase, the coming months will test whether Richmond's council leaders can turn commitments into meaningful change—or whether residents will continue to pay the price in ever higher council tax levels.

To read the committee papers or watch the webcast, please follow the link [HERE](#).



# News from Holy Trinity Twickenham

## Noisy Church - This Sunday

On this 3rd Sunday, we welcome you to our Noisy Church service at 4pm. A fun and lively service for the younger members of our church to enjoy with their family.

## Foodbank Focus: February

A list of items currently being requested by the local foodbank can be found by clicking [HERE](#).

Donations can be deposited in the foodbank tubs outside the vicarage, 7:00am to 8:00pm.



## THE GREEN POP UP CAFE

THURSDAYS

10.30-12.00

The Green Room  
Holy Trinity Twickenham  
Twickenham Green  
TW2 5TS



A community space where  
everyone is welcome to pop in  
for refreshments, friendly chat and activities



HOLY TRINITY TWICKENHAM

# Council Loses Control of Key Planning Policies

By James Knight

11 February 2025 - During Tuesday's **Environment, Sustainability, Culture, and Sports Committee** meeting, councillors approved policies regarding domestic retrofitting, climate resilience, tree management, leisure investment, and budgetary issues, while facing scrutiny over housing delivery concerns and street cleaning. The key takeaway from the meeting was that planning applications now have a **'tilted balance'** favouring developers over provisions in the local plan – a change that could permit large and incongruous developments throughout the borough.

## **Coval Passage: Addressing Littering and Fly-Tipping Concerns**

Councillor Julia Cambridge expressed concerns regarding the persistent littering and fly-tipping in Coval Passage, East Sheen. This passage, often used by pedestrians, has become a hotspot for illegal waste dumping, creating an unsightly and unsanitary environment for local residents. The committee recognised the problem, and the Director of the Environment, Paul Chadwick, agreed to visit the site and take charge of the matter.

The council has identified a significant problem with outsourced refuse collection and street cleaning, which frequently fail to meet the statutory standards in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. To address this issue, £300,000 has been allocated to recruit inspectors to ensure that contractors deliver the service for which residents are paying.

## **Domestic Retrofit Strategy:**

One key policy was the adoption of 16 recommendations from the Domestic Retrofit Task and Finish Group, which aimed to lower barriers for homeowners seeking to improve energy efficiency. A Retrofit Hub will be established to centralise information, while planning policies will be evaluated to ensure they facilitate sustainable home improvements rather than obstruct them. This arose from concerns expressed by members of the public who stated that the expense of obtaining planning permission and covering the associated reports was discouraging those who had intended to install heat pumps from proceeding.

During discussions, Councillor John Coombs raised concerns that there would not be a financial payback from retrofitting for older homeowners like himself. He noted that, at his age, he would likely be gone in 10 years, or 15 if he's lucky, making long-term energy savings less relevant for retirees. This intervention underscored the need for the council to consider how retrofit schemes could be tailored to different demographic groups, particularly those who may not see direct financial benefits from such investments.

## **Richmond Climate and Nature Strategy:**

The council has also approved its Climate and Nature Strategy 2025-2030, which sets ambitious targets for achieving a net-zero borough by 2043. This policy covers various sectors, including building decarbonisation, sustainable transport, biodiversity protection, and waste reduction. However, implementing these policies when evaluating planning applications will prove challenging for the time being, as the council can now only refuse planning applications if there are compelling reasons after failing the housing delivery test.

## **Council Loses Key Planning Powers:**

Richmond has the lowest housebuilding rate in London, having only achieved 60% of the targets outlined in the London Plan. As a direct result of this shortfall, the government has penalised the borough by invoking the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' (known as the **'tilted balance'**) clause in the National Planning Policy Framework. This clause 'tilts' the balancing exercise for planning applications from a neutral position to one where compelling reasons must exist to refuse permission.

Explaining to the electorate why the council lost control of key planning policy measures could be politically damaging. Therefore, Councillor Julia Neden-Watts sought to downplay the implications of this serious situation. Speculative developers will undoubtedly exploit this, securing permission for taller and denser developments than previously permitted.

## **Over-60s Gym Discounts Axed:**

A member of the public, Carina Cristoforo, submitted a written question regarding the removal of discounted gym memberships for individuals over 60 at council-run leisure centres. The resident emphasised that many older people rely on these discounts to maintain their health and well-being and that the policy change could discourage participation in fitness activities, potentially leading to negative public health outcomes. She

highlighted that the monthly cost of attending the gym twice a week for someone aged over 60 had increased from £24 to £52.

Committee members defended the decision, explaining that it was part of their Fair Access Scheme. This scheme aimed to ensure that discounts were targeted at those receiving benefits while freeing up funds to pay for free access for those seeking asylum as part of the Borough of Sanctuary programme. Furthermore, many people over 60 were affluent in this borough and did not require subsidised fees.



The background is that the Labour Government introduced free swimming for children under 16 and adults over 60 as part of the Olympics Legacy programme in April 2009. However, the incoming coalition government, formed by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, abolished this initiative in July 2010 due to their decision to adapt austerity to tackle the fallout from the financial crisis.

Locally, Richmond Council maintained some form of discounts for these two groups until last year when the Liberal Democrats decided to phase them out and shift from universalism to means testing. Critics note how the Liberal Democrats' priorities are changing as they reposition themselves more to the left of the political spectrum, where championing free access for asylum seekers takes precedence over offering discounted entry for those over 60. Prioritising asylum seekers and others they perceive as the most marginalised (along with transsexuals and sex workers) over and above pensioners is one of the flagship policies of the radical left – a bandwagon the local Liberal Democrats have climbed aboard.

#### **Leisure Infrastructure Plan:**

A £2 million investment in leisure infrastructure was also approved, focusing on improving Pools on The Park and Teddington Sports Centre. The funding forms part of a broader £6.7 million capital programme to enhance facilities over the next five years.

However, while the funding was seen as a step in the right direction, it was acknowledged that additional investment will be needed. The committee confirmed that further contributions will be sought from private sector leisure operators, which has raised concerns over potential increases in usage fees and the accessibility of council-run sports facilities for lower-income residents.

#### **Arboriculture Contract:**

Richmond's tree management contract is due for renewal in 2026. The committee has approved plans for a joint procurement strategy with Wandsworth Council to reduce costs and improve efficiency. However, Green Opposition member Councillor Chas Warlow requested that the contract be returned in-house, as this would expedite the adoption of battery-powered tools and vehicles. Richmond's previous tree maintenance contracts have been criticised for slow response times, and some councillors have called for more local oversight in the new agreement.

#### **Financial Strains Emerge: £1.46 million overspend:**

The committee received a budget monitoring report indicating a projected overspend of £1.467 million across environmental and leisure services. The primary cost pressures arise from increasing waste disposal costs, enforcement expenses, and sustainability initiatives. Despite the overspend, the committee approved the 2025/26 budget, arguing that additional revenue from revised waste collection fees and planning charges would assist in balancing the finances.

#### **Committee Work Programme and Future Planning**

The committee also agreed on its work programme for the upcoming year, ensuring ongoing oversight of Richmond's environmental and infrastructure priorities. Key topics for discussion in April 2025 include waste minimisation strategies, while the final approval of the Richmond Climate and Nature Strategy is anticipated in June 2025.

With housing targets still unmet, infrastructure requiring ongoing investment, and climate measures needing clear funding pathways, the coming year will challenge the council's ability to transform strategic aspirations into tangible progress. Whether Richmond can fulfil its green and housing ambitions while ensuring financial sustainability remains an open question—one that both residents and policymakers will be observing closely.

To view the committee papers, or view the webcast, please click [HERE](#).



# We need your help to monitor Water Voles in London

A number of sites in London, along the Roding, Crane, Cray and Hogsmill rivers have recently been added to the National Water Vole Monitoring Programme. We need your help at these sites to conduct the annual surveys along a 500m stretch of river, to look for evidence of the endangered water vole.



## What is required to take part in the surveys?

- Attend a training session to learn how to identify water vole fields signs
- Take part in the practice survey following the training session.
- Carry out your own survey during the survey season 15th April - 15th June



Scan the QR codes for information on Dates and Locations of the training sessions



You can also find more information & details on how to sign up to the training session on the ZSL Volunteer for London's Rivers web page:

<https://www.zsl.org/what-we-do/projects/volunteer-londons-rivers>



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MAYOR OF LONDON

# Join the fun at Twickenham Repair Café

From Twickenham Repair Café

On Saturday 15 February, local group Twickenham Repair Café is offering free repairs at St Margarets Church Hall.

All residents are welcome to bring along any broken items for repair, such as iPads, clocks, coffee machines, bikes and even garden shears. Come along to fix your old items, enjoy sweet treats and nice coffee, and have fun!

Event details:

- **Date:** Third Saturday of each month
- **Time:** 10.30am to 12.45pm
- **Location:** St Margarets Church Hall, Twickenham, TW1 1RL

The [Twickenham Repair Café](#) is a non-profit community interest company aiming to promote sustainable living through providing free repair services.



If you're looking to explore your passion in repairing and crafting, the [Library of Things](#) in Twickenham can be very useful. You can borrow over 30 useful household DIY tools and items rather than buying new, for as little as a few pounds a day. First time borrowers get 10% with code TWICKENHAMLOT10.

## Local charity expands offerings with new mattresses and bed frames

From Richmond Furniture Scheme

Richmond Furniture Scheme (RFS) has added new mattresses and bed frames to its range of affordable reused furniture, making the re-use scheme a one-stop shop for all home needs.

[Richmond Furniture Scheme](#) provides good quality bargains, with donated furniture and refurbished appliances sold at reasonable prices. It offers discounts for people on low incomes and provides information on grants.

Partnering with a bed supplier, top-quality new mattresses and new bed frames are now available from RFS's online shop and at its warehouse.



*"A bed is an absolutely essential requirement, but an expensive one. We are delighted that we can now offer brand new mattresses and bed frames at very reasonable prices and with a 25% discount for those in need,"* said Richmond Furniture Scheme CEO Simon Westgarth.

*"We are always looking at new ways to help people and this is a big step for us. We already sell fantastic, donated furniture and refurbished appliances like washing machines, so this is the next piece in the jigsaw."*

# POLICE LIAISON GROUP MEETING

COME AND MEET YOUR LOCAL POLICE AND SHARE YOUR CONCERNS

THURSDAY 20TH FEBRUARY 2025  
7.30PM

BULLEN HALL  
BENNET CLOSE  
HAMPTON WICK  
KT1 4AT

HAVE  
YOUR SAY!



**Crime** - If you see a crime being committed call **999** for an immediate response.  
This would be you if you are witnessing harm to a person or property.

Low level crime or anti-social behaviour call **101**.  
An example of this may be you find some graffiti outside a building.

**SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS**  
LOCAL POLICE, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE



**METROPOLITAN POLICE**

Richmond Safer Neighbourhood Teams  
41 London Road Twickenham, TW1 3SY  
Safer Neighbourhoods Teams  
Teddington / Hampton Wick / South Teddington  
Email: [HamptonWick@met.police.uk](mailto:HamptonWick@met.police.uk)  
[Teddington@met.police.uk](mailto:Teddington@met.police.uk)  
X: [@MPSHamptonWick](https://twitter.com/MPSHamptonWick) [@MPSTeddington](https://twitter.com/MPSTeddington)

# Half term activities at Barnes Common Ltd

From Barnes Common Ltd

Looking for half-term activities with your children? Join Barnes Common Ltd for a series of outdoor activities that connect you with nature.

## Monthly Yaffles Nature Club

Family groups of adults and young people aged 3 to 9 years old are invited to join this monthly club getting out and about exploring the wonderful outdoors at Barnes Common. Join the group to learn about the wildlife around us, how to recognise it, how it changes over the year, how we can protect it, and more.

- **Date:** Saturday 15 February 2025 (on the third Saturday of February, March, April and May)
- **Time:** 10.30am to 12pm
- **Price:** £2 for children - accompanying adults can attend for free
- **Location:** Vine Road Recreation Ground, Barnes, SW13 ONE

[Book yaffles club tickets](#)

## Free family-friendly growing session

All residents, including younger children, are welcome to this free event. Participants will have the opportunity to get their hands dirty with lots of different gardening activities. All tools and equipment are provided – just wear suitable clothing for the weather.

- **Date:** Monday 17 February 2025
- **Time:** 10am to 12pm
- **Location:** The Polytunnel at Vine Road Recreation Ground, Barnes, SW13 ONE

[Book growing session tickets](#)



## Bird box building workshop

Designed for older kids aged 10 and above, this workshop provides a great opportunity to try their hand at some DIY while also helping wildlife. Come along and build your own bird nesting box in time for this year's nesting season.

- **Date:** Tuesday 18 February 2025
- **Time:** 10.30am to 12.30pm
- **Price:** £15 for 1 young person and 1 adult, includes all materials
- **Location:** Vine Road Recreation Ground, Barnes, SW13 ONE

[Book bird box workshop](#)

**Barnes**  
**Common**

# 2025 Royal Parks Half Marathon



If you missed out in the Royal Parks Half ballot, don't worry as we have charity places!

Run and fundraise for The Royal Parks charity through the most scenic half marathon! This stunning race takes place on closed roads through four Royal Parks and past world-famous landmarks.

The famous Royal Parks Half Marathon takes you through some of the world's best known and loved Royal Parks, including Hyde Park, The Green Park, St. James's Park and Kensington Gardens. You'll need to apply and if you're successful, you'll join Team Royal Parks.

Find out more, [HERE](#)



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HALF MARATHON  
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FOR £30



THE  
ROYAL  
PARKS



# Next week at Richmond Council

On Tuesday morning, the **Licencing Sub Committee** will meet virtually at 10.30 am to discuss the contested application for Raver Tots to sell alcohol at music events planned at Old Deer Park, Twickenham Road, Richmond.

For full details, please follow the link [HERE](#)

For guidance on how to participate at Licencing Sub Committee meetings please click [HERE](#)

## Enjoy songs and arias from international ensemble at Mayor's Friendship Concert

From Mayor of Richmond

On Sunday 27 April, attend a charity concert at St Mary's Church in Twickenham, in aid of the Mayor of Richmond's chosen charities Home-Start and Richmond Borough MIND, celebrating Richmond's connections with our twinned towns of Fonatainebelau in France and Konstanz in Germany.

Hosted by the Richmond in Europe Association on behalf of the Mayor, the concert will feature an international ensemble of musicians from the Royal Academy of Music - Regina Gössel, Milette Gillow, Clara Orif and Elinor Popham, accompanied by pianist Jack Redman - who will perform songs and arias sung in French, German and English.



In addition to supporting the Mayor's chosen charities, the concert celebrates Richmond upon Thames' connections with our [twinned towns](#) of Fontainebleau, France, and Konstanz, Germany. In this spirit, all of the pieces performed will be themed around friendship, and specifically the sense of belonging and connection that music can provide. Refreshments will be served during the interval.

Event details:

- **Date:** Sunday 27 April 2025
- **Time:** 5.30 to 7.15pm
- **Location:** St Mary's Church, Twickenham, TW1 3DT
- **Price:** £20 for adults, free entry for those aged 18 and under

[Book your tickets now](#)

The Mayor regularly holds events to raise funds for his chosen charities [Home-Start](#) and [Richmond Borough Mind](#).

Find out more about the Mayor's [charity events](#).

# Switching pint-pulling for pruning - meet the apprentices caring for London's Royal Parks

The charity, which cares for [London's eight iconic Royal Parks](#), takes on up to 10 new paid [horticultural apprentices](#) every year, to pass on expertise to the next generation of horticulturalists, and to help shape and conserve London's green spaces for the public to enjoy.

The scheme prides itself on its accessibility and is open to people of all ages. Many of the charity's apprentices have entered the role after changing careers- such as switching from a career in the hospitality industry or retail, while some have begun the apprenticeship aged 18.

For four days a week, the apprentices work in one of the Royal Parks, including [St. James's Park](#) and [Kensington Gardens](#), and study at Capel Manor College in [The Regent's Park](#) on the remaining day.

The course lasts a minimum of two years, and apprentices will receive a Level 2 qualification in Horticulture Operations. The Royal Parks are recognised as centres of excellence for horticulture and sustainable garden management and learn from gardeners at the top of their game. Apprentices will master valuable skills, ranging from plant identification and soil science to cultivation and landscape design, to parkland management and pest control, with hands-on training in operating horticulture machinery.

Apprentices also have access to the Hyde Park Nursery, which grows 450,000 plants a year, supplying the gardens across all of the Royal Parks. Here, the apprentices learn about propagation, and help to grow plants for the flowerbed displays seen by the parks' 70 million annual visitors.

Rupert Lovibond, 40, from Hanworth, West London, previously worked at a pub before applying for the horticultural apprenticeship at The Royal Parks' Bushy Park, the second largest Royal Park spanning over 1000 acres.



The first-year apprentice said: *"I love education, and I really wanted to be part of parks in general. It's absolutely amazing for your mental health. I cannot even put into words how much I've learned. It's really nice to be able to say that about yourself, even at 40 years old. You get a buzz learning all this new stuff. Even if it's something that you wouldn't necessarily think that you'd be into. I love my football, I love my sport, but suddenly, I love gardening. It's absolutely wonderful. You meet new people, you learn new things, and you're out in the open."*

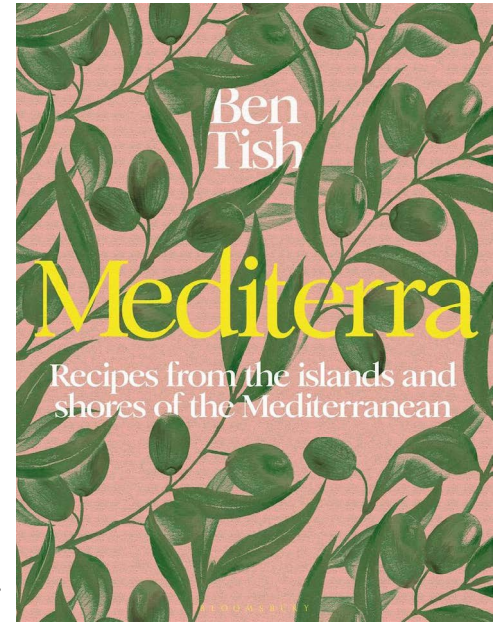
Adam Stoter, Assistant Park Manager at The Royal Parks, who oversees the apprenticeship programme, said: *"The theme of this year's National Apprenticeship Week is "Skills for Life," and this is exactly what The Royal Parks scheme is all about. Our apprenticeship programme is dedicated to fostering enduring skills in horticulture, providing a solid foundation for success in this field. We look forward to nurturing the next generation of passionate horticulturalists who will thrive with the skills they develop through our program."*

Many former apprentices at The Royal Parks have gone on to become park managers, supervisors or contract managers for the charity. Others have taken on roles at other high-profile locations worldwide, such as Kew Gardens, Crystal Palace Football Club, and Buckingham Palace.



## Mediterra - A Taste Of The Med To Cheer Us All Up

I don't know about you, but I need to see some sunshine! Quite a few lucky friends have had the chance to sun themselves in foreign climes recently, but we've been pretty short of those rays here. So, to cheer us all up, and remind us that summer is on its way (we hope) I thought I'd highlight a fabulous cookbook that was published last year by Bloomsbury: **Mediterra, by Ben Tish**. A beautifully photographed hardback, it's £26 and would make a lovely gift.



Chef Director of Cubitt House, a group of London pubs, restaurants and boutique hotels, Ben oversees its food offering. With a love of the Mediterranean, the food and its history, one of Ben's passions is recreating the flavours and dishes of his travels in his own home and restaurants. He appears regularly on TV including Saturday Kitchen, Sunday Brunch, and Masterchef and writes for numerous publications. This is his fourth book - and it's a breath of very welcome, and much needed, sunshine.

From Spain and Italy, through Greece and Turkey and down to North Africa, the Med is a rich seam of deeply delicious food. While each country has its own unique dishes and distinct cultures, there is a commonality that brings the Med together – hot summers, dry winters, coastal briny winds, alfresco eating, street markets, sacrosanct meal times and making the best of local seasonal ingredients and produce, often in the simplest way. In this mouth-watering collection, Ben Tish creates outstanding simple, modern recipes whose flavours transport you to the Med with minimal effort in the kitchen, bringing the flavours, sights and smells of your favourite holiday meals to life.

Here are a couple of recipes to give you a taste of the sun:

### **Kerkennah-style grilled prawns** *Southern Shores – Tunisia*

*“On the Kerkennah islands just off the coast of Tunisia, seafood is often paired with kerkennaise, a spiced tomato sauce with subtle chilli heat, pungent spicing and lots of spring onions, olives and capers. It is a sublime mix of Moorish and Mediterranean flavours. Use this sauce for any grilled fish, squid or octopus.”*

**Serves 4;** the sauce makes about 200ml

- 16 large Atlantic prawns, heads removed and the tail shells peeled off
- olive oil
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

#### **For the sauce**

- 10 spring onions, white parts chopped and green ends thinly sliced
- 2 plum vine tomatoes, cut into large chunks
- 1 large green chilli, trimmed, quartered lengthwise and deseeded
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon caraway seeds, lightly ground
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds, lightly ground



- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar, such as cabernet sauvignon
  - a handful of pitted green olives, chopped
  - a handful of flat-leaf parsley leaves, roughly chopped
  - 1 tablespoon tomato purée
  - extra virgin olive oil
1. First make the sauce. Blitz the spring onion whites, tomatoes, green chilli, garlic, ground coriander, caraway and cumin seeds and vinegar together in a blender. Transfer this mixture to a bowl, stir in the spring onion greens, olives, parsley, tomato purée and a good splash of extra virgin olive oil. Cover the bowl with cling film and let it rest while you heat the barbecue.
  2. Light the barbecue about 30 minutes before you want to cook so the coals turn ashen grey and are at the optimum grilling temperature. Position the grill above the coals so it gets very hot. Alternatively, heat a large ridged, cast-iron griddle pan to maximum.
  3. When you're ready to grill, pat the prawns dry, then rub them with a little olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Place on the grill and grill for 3 minutes on each side until the prawns change colour and are cooked through – a little charring adds a smoky flavour.
  4. Transfer the prawns to a serving platter or individual plates and spoon over some of the sauce. Serve the remaining sauce on the side for everyone to help themselves.

### **Sea bream crudo with blood orange and cumin seeds** *Islands – Sicily*

*"This beautiful, vibrant crudo will brighten up the winter months when blood oranges are at their best. The bittersweet, ruby-red juices lightly cure the fish, and the cumin-infused dressing adds an earthy, aromatic punch. Always choose the freshest possible fish for crudo, so the just-caught sweetness and texture of the flesh stand out among the accompanying flavours.*

*"I like to serve a platter of this in the centre of the table to share, accompanied with really good bread to mop up the citrusy, oily juices."*

#### **Serves 4**

- 2 sea bream fillets, skinned and cut into 1cm slices
  - 1 small blood orange (or a bitter orange, such as Seville), skin and pith removed
  - 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
  - ½ teaspoon cumin seeds, lightly crushed in a pestle and mortar
  - 2 tablespoons sweet white wine vinegar, such as chardonnay
  - 1 teaspoon caster sugar
  - a handful of mint leaves, to garnish
  - sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1. Place the sea bream slices in a non-metallic bowl and season well.
  2. Segment the blood orange with a sharp knife, working over the bowl that the fish is in – you want the juices to marinate the fish. Give the sea bream a stir, then leave for 10 minutes to cure.
  3. Heat the olive oil and cumin seeds in a small saucepan over a low heat. When the seeds start to slowly fizzle, remove the pan from the heat. Whisk in the vinegar with the sugar and season with salt and pepper.
  4. To serve, pile the *crudo* and blood orange onto a serving platter, drizzle over a little of the cumin vinaigrette and top with the mint leaves.
  5. Serve the remaining vinaigrette alongside in case anyone wants extra.



# What's love got to do with it?

By Deep Patel

~Life through the eyes of a Twickenham shopkeeper~



If you have visited my shop before, you will know that it is no secret that I have a soft-spot for preaching kindness towards all creatures from ants and slugs, to mice and squirrels, to me, all lives matter as we do unto other life forms as we would like done unto us...it's all our karma...but this past week, one of my customers asked me a very interesting question... "Dee, which insect is most related to love and Valentine's day?"...and the answer is the humble ladybird/ladybug...but why? Yes...they are red, and red is the colour of love...but that's not the main reason...the reason the ladybird today is so closely related to love is largely due to folklore originating from central Europe more than 200 years ago...there was a deeply held belief that if a ladybird landed on you, the direction in which it flew off in after was the direction that would lead you to where your true love and life partner would be found...furthermore, if the ladybird happened to land on your hand, it was believed that you were very soon to be married! So you can see it now...dozens of people from central Europe walking around in the direction in which a ladybird who sat on them flew off...in the hope that they would find their true love by doing so...this folklore tradition then spread to other parts of Europe...and today...to the world, crowning the humble ladybird as the insect most associated with love! Upon hearing this, one of my other customers remarked "ok clever-clogs, tell me why ladybirds are called ladybirds then...even the male ones are called ladybirds...why?" ...

Ladybirds are extremely unique in that sense...you will seldom find a species of anything where BOTH the males and females are called "Lady" as the prefix...so why are they called ladybirds I hear you ask? Well here is yet another interesting fact for you lovely Tribune readers (don't say I never spoil you)...farmers in the middle ages would worship the Virgin Mary asking for protection from the creatures that ate their crops...then these little red flying beetles with black dots on them would be seen eating the little creatures that destroyed the farmers crops...these beetles were named "Beetles of Our Lady" as they were believed to be sent by the Virgin Mary to save the farmers crops...during that time, the Virgin Mary was also commonly depicted wearing red, hence a further association with the ladybird...who would have thought? Who also knew that there are actually over 5000 varieties of ladybird, they can live for three years and the secrete a foul smelling yellow liquid from their knee joints in order to give them badly smelly legs to deter predators (I think everyone reading this right now knows at least one human who has badly smelling legs/feet and that keeps us away from them), also did you ever wonder what ladybird babies look like? Well perhaps you are wondering that now? Let me ease your curiosity in that case...ladybird larvae very accurately resemble tiny little alligators...yes...ALLIGATORS! So there we have it...Ladybirds, love, valentines...and smelly legs...you never know what conversation you may stumble into when you enter the doors of Meet & Deep Newsagents (my shop)...one thing is for sure...the conversations I end up having with my dear customers are far from being predictable...you really never know what you are going to get...but that is why I love being a shopkeeper in Twickenham...no two days are the same.

If any of you happen to be passing by Meet & Deep Newsagents on Hampton Road, TW2 5QB, pop your head in and say hello.

## **Remember...**

***"Follow the ladybird wherever it may go...and that is where you will find me..."***

### **MY CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP OF THE WEEK...**

Make use of high-frequency plug-in pest stopping plugs into each room, buy ones with good reviews online and follow the instructions, we stock them at Meet & Deep Newsagents here too, they work really well to keep ALL "pests" away, without harming any...good karma always!

For ANY specific tip to stop any "pest" or insect KINDLY (for good karma/blessings), email me: [thedeepatel@gmail.com](mailto:thedeepatel@gmail.com) or join my Facebook page: "INSECT LOVERS UNITE"



## Deathtrap

by Ira Levin

Teddington Theatre Club at the Hampton Hill Theatre until 15<sup>th</sup> February

*Deathtrap* delivers on all fronts.

Sidney Bruhl, a once celebrated playwright, hasn't had a hit in eighteen years. In the opening scene, Sidney has just read his post. It includes a playscript sent to him by Clifford Anderson, "one of the twerps" who had attended one of Sidney's seminars the previous summer. Dishearteningly for Sidney, Clifford's script is surprisingly good, sound construction, good dialogue, laughs in all the right places. "Highly commercial... a gifted director couldn't even hurt it", he muses. If only Sidney had written it. If only...



Daniel Wain has the larger-than-life Sidney to a tee, savouring every bitter *bon mot* that drops from the playwright's mouth. Spiderlike, he lures the hapless Clifford into his web under the nose of his frowning wife, played by Laura Eagland, who essays a superb American accent. As Clifford, the gauche young student, Jacob Taylor turns in an excellent performance, varying the voltage with great precision as Sidney's plot plays out. The cast is rounded off by Dominic Lloyd as Sidney's lawyer, Porter Milgrim, and a sublimely funny Lara Parker as the Bruhls' alarmingly psychic neighbour Helga Von Dorf.

As with all of the very best thrillers - *Sleuth*, *Dial M for Murder*, *Witness for the Prosecution* - Levin's script needs to be taken seriously and director Steve Taylor – assisted by Karen

Sheards – concocts a near perfect blend of thrills and laughs. Director and cast are well served by Wesley Henderson Roe's set of the Bruhls' weapon-strewn house in Connecticut, and also by the technical team.

When Levin completed *Deathtrap* in 1977, it had been five years since he had had the original idea, that of a playwright receiving a manuscript in the mail. "It started with that. I didn't know who it was from, or whether he was using it to deceive his wife, or she him. I played with it for several years". He felt it was his best play. And it is. Indeed, *Deathtrap* has a good case for being the best stage thriller of them all.



Read Louis Mazzini's review at [www.markaspen.com/2025/02/12/deathtrap](http://www.markaspen.com/2025/02/12/deathtrap)

Photography by Steve Sitton

# The Marriage of Figaro

by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte

English National Opera at the London Coliseum until 22<sup>nd</sup> February

If you were hoping to see a traditional Mozart offering, or indeed the spectacle of the opera, you might feel short-changed by a “Figaro for today”. But if you are looking for simplicity and an analytical approach, then this stripped-back *Marriage of Figaro* will be enriching.

The set, by Johannes Schütz, is quite startling, a blinding white box, with four almost invisibly white doors, suspended in the proscenium. During the overture the cast busily open and close the doors, revealing, hiding and moving between them. Whilst establishing the piece as a farce, it introduces its conventions. A character’s presence on stage may be reality or may be in only in the febrile imagination of a protagonist, for director Joe Hill-Gibbins’ *Marriage of Figaro* steers away from the political and sociological aspects of class warfare, to home in on the emotional aspects of human feelings.



*The Marriage of Figaro* is motored by the full range of meanings of love, from devotion and romance to flirtation and lust. Mozart knew it causes great joy, yet great anguish. Its outcomes may be fun (epitomised by Cherubino) or distress (epitomised by Rosina). The production certainly has fun, but does not lose the pain in the piece.



Lyric mezzo Hanna Hipp plays Cherubino with a cheeky insouciance. Cherubino is a teenager all freshly fired up with overbrimming testosterone, who’s gagging to have it off with any female. He wears an Hawaiian shirt to impress, and the ladies tease him rotten. Sadly though Hipp gets crowded out of her iconic *Voi che sapete* (probably the best know aria of the opera), as Susanna and Rosina disco-dance along, losing the focus on Cherubino’s adolescent yearnings.

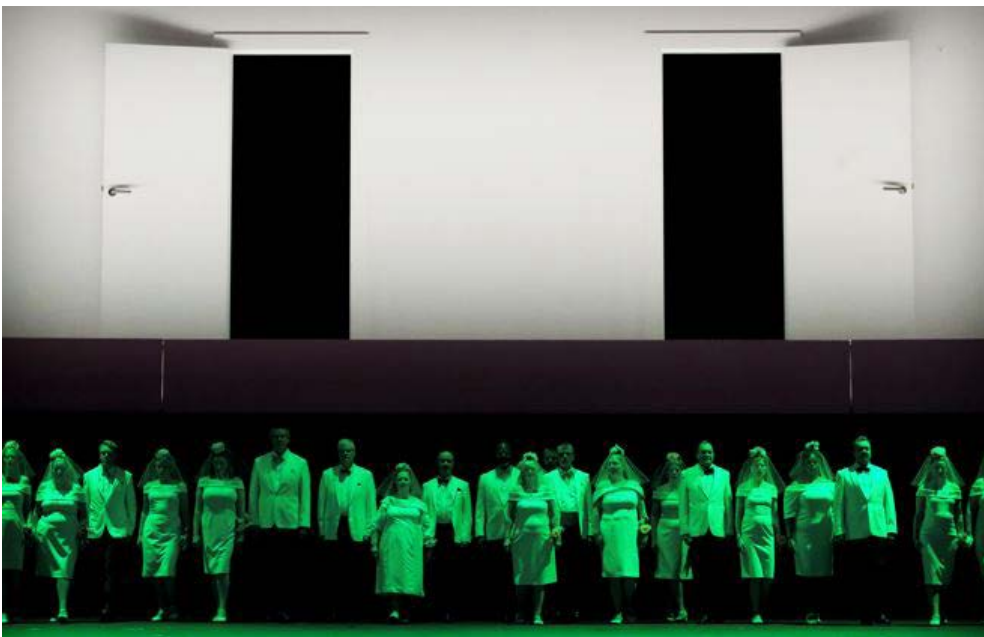
In contrast to Cherubino’s openness, the dark side is the sexually predatory Count, seeking to assert his *droit du seigneur*. Baritone Cody Quattlebaum, however, makes him more than two-dimensional. He is a hipster with his jaunty top-knot, but when he releases his hair the wild man emerges. Implausibly, he never notices his quarry “hidden” behind an open door, or even spread-eagled against a wall, but when his imagination opens a door, behind it he sees couples practising more sexual positions than in the *Karma Sutra*.

David Ireland's Figaro is sanguine, although his frustration is patently obvious, but Ireland's gymnastic bass-baritone is not tested as it could be in this production. Soprano Mary Bevan's spirited Suzanna brings a bright and lively presence as Figaro's fiancée, and Bevan's sweet tone gives the role a springy resilience.



Dressed in a gorgeous silk gown, Nardus Williams' elegantly statuesque Countess is the standout performance in this opera. Her lament for the loss of her husband's love, *porgi amor*, is transfixing and touching, and when she reflects on the loss of those beautiful moments, the poignancy in her sustained splendid soprano rings out. In these reflective moments there is a respite from the madcap whirligig of this highly physical production. They give chance the music to speak; and conductor Ainārs Rubiķis has the ENO Orchestra talking Mozart, in a positive and supportive soundscape.

Trevor Eliot Bowes, whose rich bass never fails to impress, gives a sensible interpretation of the affronted Antonio, the Count's Gardener. In a production where it could be a slapstick part, he gives a measured performance, instead of the usual overdone drunkenness.



In the last two acts, the overwhelming dazzling box is raised, to reveal a lot of busy-ness in the semi-darkness underneath. It gives an upstairs-downstairs effect, of others skivvying for the Count. The big-but is that it pulls the focus at crucial moments in the plot.

It is in these concluding scenes that the role of Barbarina, Antoi's daughter, comes to the fore. She is gutsy in standing up to the Count, shaming him into giving his permission for her to marry Cherubino. However, in the garden scene her aria, *l'ho perduta*, hints at the cost. It becomes quite clear precisely what Barbarina has lost. Soprano Ava Dodd excels as Barbarina, portraying her sweetness and vulnerability against her native deviousness. Dodd's wonderful clear bell-like rendition of Barbarina's plaintive regret is a gem.

This stylised *Marriage of Figaro* certainly achieves what it sets out to do, turn the focus onto the human strengths and failings. It brings out the farce, the humour, the sexiness of the piece. But it does feel over-tricksy and it feels denuded. It is fun, fast ... but frustrating.

Read Mark Aspen's review at [www.markaspen.com/2025/02/07/m-figaro-eno2025](http://www.markaspen.com/2025/02/07/m-figaro-eno2025)

Photography by Zoe Martin



# SEND Families Still Being Let Down

By James Knight

6 February 2025 – **The Education and Children Services Committee** has unveiled its financial plans for the upcoming 2025/26 fiscal year, raising alarms over pressing issues in school funding, admissions, and maintenance that threaten the sustainability of essential services. The council's budget shows that high levels of financial strain persist, particularly in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services, which remain in crisis, letting down families across the borough.

## Challenges in School Admissions:

As the admissions authority for primary and junior schools that are not academies or free schools, the council plans to maintain most existing admission policies and introduce feeder arrangements between a limited number of primary and junior schools. This is due to issues with new children arriving in the borough, which have prevented some children from transferring to their intended junior school.

Due to declining birth rates and young families moving out of London, schools are having to lower their planned admission numbers (PAN). For instance, the PAN for Stanley Primary School has decreased from 120 to 60, with similar situations at many of the borough's primary and junior schools. Rather than closing schools at this stage, the council is looking into repurposing space into SEND provision.

Not mentioned in the meeting is the Education Bill that is progressing through Parliament. It introduces new powers for local authorities to oversee and adjust school admission policies, assisting councils in managing declining enrolment in secondary schools more effectively. With diminishing pupil numbers in certain areas, councils will now have the authority to coordinate admissions, ensuring a balanced distribution across local schools. This will prevent situations where some schools experience under-enrolment and financial strain, while others remain oversubscribed. By granting councils greater control over place allocation, the Government claims that these reforms aim to create a more strategic and sustainable approach to school admissions, helping to maintain educational standards and viability in areas undergoing demographic shifts. However, some critics argue that these changes could erode parental choice, limiting families' ability to select their preferred schools.



## Budget Report Highlights Inflationary Pressures:

The Directorate Budget Report for the 2025/26 academic year reveals an increase in the budget to £53.6 million, primarily due to inflation, along with an additional £2.2 million to tackle rising salaries and operational costs. Despite these increases, they do not resolve the broader financial challenges. Social care services are under significant strain, and although the Social Care Grant has risen by £1.762 million, officers caution that it may not be sufficient to meet the growing demand. Without further action, the borough could face increasingly large budget deficits in the coming years.

## SEND Children:

The borough's Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) has increased to £235.6 million, reflecting a 6.6% rise from last year. While this may seem promising, it conceals more profound structural issues, particularly regarding funding for SEND services, where demand continues to greatly exceed available resources. After concluding a five-year Safety Valve Agreement with the Department for Education and securing

£20 million to tackle a historic deficit, the borough must now implement its SEND Futures Plan without any further external assistance, raising fears of renewed budget shortfalls. Due to government policies, several new SEND Schools have experienced significant delays, significantly pushing back the anticipated planned savings.

Previously, the council had to apologise to families it let down in 2020 when the Local Government Ombudsman found fault in many cases relating to SEND provision. In 2021, Ofsted found many weaknesses that required a written statement of action. The council is currently trying to balance the books by reducing the support provided to children with SEND and keeping them within maintained schools as much as possible and limit the number of new Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans which is causing friction with parents who feel their children are being denied the support they deserve due to mismanagement by the council.

### **School Maintenance Funding:**

For the 2025/26 period, £1.232 million has been allocated for vital capital maintenance projects. This year, the selected projects aim to enhance heating and safety in several schools; however, Academy schools will receive maintenance funding directly from the Department for Education.

What was not discussed in the meeting was the dissatisfaction of numerous governing bodies with the current funding model for capital repairs for schools under the council's control. This model requires schools to submit bids for maintenance funds, which many consider outdated and inefficient. Smaller schools find it difficult to navigate the bidding process, often leaving essential issues unaddressed until they escalate.

### **Controversial Changes to Children's Centres:**

In a bid to make savings, the council announced the merger of Heatham House Youth Centre, Whitton Youth Zone, and Heathfield Children's Centre. This decision aims to consolidate resources and provide a more integrated service to families. However, critics have raised concerns that this restructuring may limit access to essential early years and youth support, particularly affecting disadvantaged communities as the focus shifts to a more affluent neighbourhood. Questions have also arisen regarding whether the merged centres will receive sufficient funding to meet the increasing demand, with fears that site sell-offs—similar to those proposed in Hampton—may follow

### **Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring: A Bleak Outlook:**

The latest Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring Report presents a grim financial outlook for Richmond. Although the General Fund forecasts an underspend of £0.272 million, this is overshadowed by a staggering projected overspend of £3.316 million in the DSG, which exceeds the thresholds set by the Safety Valve Agreement. Rising costs related to SEN provision, social care services, and a 10% increase in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are driving this overspend, exacerbated by exorbitant residential placement fees for looked-after children—some surpassing £12,000 per week. Furthermore, the borough's reliance on agency staff exacerbates instability within education budgets.

Without a coherent strategy to mitigate these challenges, Richmond's education services face the threat of becoming unsustainable. Without urgent financial reforms, the borough risks entering a continuous cycle of cuts and funding shortages, dramatically affecting local children and families.

The failure to take advantage of the breathing space provided by the safety valve funding lies with the leadership, with the buck stopping at Cllr Gareth Roberts. He has not ensured that the strategic changes necessary for the financial stability of children's services were implemented during the breathing space afforded by the Safety Valve Agreement - and has instead allowed timelines to slip repeatedly which is going to result in the re-emergence of unsustainable overspends.

To read the committee papers and view the webcast, please click the link [HERE](#)

# St Mary's University

## St Mary's HR and Legal Services Director Completes Coaching Professional Apprenticeship

The Director of HR and Legal Services at St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU), Ruth Thompson, has successfully completed the Coaching Professional (Level 5) Apprenticeship which launched in November 2023.

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Ruth was part of the first St Mary's cohort on the Coaching Professional Apprenticeship which covers key knowledge, skills, and behaviours in coaching. While the Apprenticeship typically takes sixteen months to complete, Ruth achieved it in just thirteen.

The Apprenticeship involved learning and reflective practice, delivering constructive feedback, and coaching theory and practice.

Throughout it, Ruth also worked with members of staff across the University to empower and engage with them, with the aim of enhancing their professional performance.

Ruth's completion of the Apprenticeship coincides with [National Apprenticeship Week](#), which takes place from the 10th-16th February 2025. This annual event celebrates the positive impact that apprenticeships make to individuals, businesses, and the wider economy.

Speaking on the Coaching Professional Apprenticeship Ruth said:

*"I chose a coaching apprenticeship as I had informally coached before, but wanted to obtain a professional qualification.*

*The Apprenticeship has definitely improved my coaching techniques and increased my wider knowledge of psychology and organisational and leadership culture.*

*While managing work and study was challenging at times, I feel that the professional qualification has enhanced my own skills and knowledge to the benefit of me personally and within my work.*

*Doing the Apprenticeship also gave me the opportunity to build a network, and work with colleagues across the University."*

[Find out more about Staff Apprenticeships at St Mary's.](#)



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

# Valentine's Day 2025 – Keeping couples together at Royal Star & Garter

The partners of residents at Royal Star & Garter's three Homes have spoken about the importance of being able to spend time with their loved ones, whenever they want to, ahead of Valentine's Day on 14 February.

The charity has a proud history of caring for couples who have spent a lifetime with each other and can remain together in older age. It helps couples stay in its three Homes, but this is only possible if both require nursing or dementia care.

Royal Star & Garter's Homes, in Solihull, Surbiton and High Wycombe, also have residents whose partners do not require the same level of care and live elsewhere. In these instances, staff go out of their way to support the couples to spend time together as much as possible.



Among these is Jeremy, who was a Royal Marine Reservist. His wife Isobel is living with dementia at the charity's Surbiton Home, and he said: *"I normally visit Isobel daily. The staff know me by name and are very friendly and I feel part of the Royal Star & Garter family. I don't know how much my visits mean to Isobel. We have some days where the clouds part and the old Isabel appears for a little bit. But then the clouds come over again and she looks and says 'who are you?' But the visits mean the world to me. We've been married 55 years and it's very important to me that I can spend time with my wife. I don't take any day for granted."*

Margaret Beaumont lives at Royal Star & Garter in High Wycombe. Her husband, Army veteran Gordon, lives nearby and comes in to see his wife several times a day. Last year, staff at the Home put on a family lunch for the couple to celebrate their 70<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Their daughter Anne said: *"Going into the Home gives Dad purpose, I think he'd be lost if he didn't have the ability to see Mum every day. He pushes her to eat well and to keep walking. Without him, Mum might not bother, she might not try. I feel relief that at the age of 95, they still both have each other, which is enormous comfort for me. The staff at the Home are amazing. They treat my Dad like he's part of the family, and it means so much to me that they are encouraging and helping my parents to live their lives together."*



Ellena Whatley has been regularly visiting her husband Peter at Solihull since he became a resident in October 2022. He served in the Army and is now living with dementia. Staff at the Home provided a special lunch for the couple last summer when they celebrated their anniversary. Ellena, 86, said: *"Peter's face lights up when I come to visit, so I take it that he gets a lot of pleasure from my visits. And they mean a lot to me too. If the weather is nice we take a walk to the park and have a coffee or tea. I visit him at least twice a week, his children come regularly and so do his grandchildren. I think the visits are essential in keeping him connected and in touch with his family."*

Royal Star & Garter provides loving, compassionate care to veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia. It also runs services from its Homes which reach out into the community, including Lunch Clubs and Day Care.

Director of Care & Wellbeing, Shirley Hall, said: *"We do everything we can to keep couples together and partners can visit as often as they wish, spending time with their loved one, joining them for meals and enjoying activities together. After a lifetime of love and happiness together, couples don't want to be separated, so we welcome partners and encourage them to visit as often as they want. Our Home is their home and they are part of the Royal Star & Garter family."*

Royal Star & Garter is welcoming new residents into its Homes. For more information on this, its other services, or to work for the charity, go to [www.starandgarter.org](http://www.starandgarter.org)



**Royal Star  
& Garter**  
Care with courage

# London's key emergency services back call for more life-saving O negative blood donations

London's Air Ambulance, London Ambulance Service and London Fire Brigade have come together to support NHS Blood and Transplant's appeal to Londoners to help book and fill appointments to give blood at one of the capital's seven donor centres.

Through their day-to-day life-saving work, the teams at London's Air Ambulance, London Ambulance Service and London Fire Brigade see first-hand the need for blood supplies, from attending road traffic collisions, stabbings and shootings through to fires, falls from height and incidents on the rail network. First responders rely on supplies of O negative blood as it is the universal type that can be safely transfused to critically injured patients at the roadside.

Stocks of both O negative and B negative blood remain under particular pressure and more donations are urgently needed to keep these types in good supply. The NHS in England remains in Amber alert for low blood stocks.

Dr Jo Farrar, Chief Executive of NHS Blood and Transplant, met with senior leaders from the three emergency services to thank them for their ongoing support.

Dr Farrar said: *"We're incredibly grateful to our partners at London's Air Ambulance, London Ambulance and London Fire Service for the fantastic support they continue to give to promoting and driving blood donation. Our job is to collect, manufacture and supply blood so the NHS can save lives. We can only do that thanks to our amazing donors. If you've never given blood before, please make an appointment to see if you're O negative."*

The visit, hosted by London's Air Ambulance Service, saw the leaders come together at the Royal London Hospital where they also visited the helipad.



(Left to Right): Dee Thiruchelvam, Chief Nursing Officer at NHS Blood and Transplant, Jonathan Smith, Deputy Commissioner for London Fire Brigade, Jonathan Jenkins, Chief Executive of London's Air Ambulance, Darren Farmer, Director of Ambulance Operations at London Ambulance Service and Dr Jo Farrar, Chief Executive of NHS Blood and Transplant.

Jonathan Jenkins, Chief Executive, London's Air Ambulance Charity, said: *"In 2012, London's Air Ambulance became the first air ambulance to carry blood on board our cars and aircraft. Since then, it is no exaggeration to say that blood has become crucial to our operations on a daily basis. All the blood we use comes from one single source – donations from the general public. Without that generosity, so much of the work our trauma teams do on scene would simply not be possible. I would urge anyone who can to give blood – for many of our patients, it can make a life-saving difference."*

London Fire Brigade's Deputy Commissioner, Jonathan Smith, said: *"In our role as first responders our teams see firsthand how quickly a person can find themselves facing a life or death situation. The generosity of blood donors helps give critically injured patients the very best chance of survival – whether through a transfusion given at the scene or later in hospital. London Fire Brigade has long been committed to this cause, hosting blood donation drives at our fire stations to make it easier for local communities to give blood. We are proud to unite with our partner services, to call on more people to come forward and help save lives."*

Darren Farmer, Director of Ambulance Operations at London Ambulance Service, said: *"Every day, our crews care for critically injured patients in the capital and they are proud to help in those vital moments. While our paramedics working on the air ambulance can do this on scene, we absolutely rely on stocks of donated blood – so by making an appointment today and donating your blood, you could be a lifeline for some of the sickest patients in London."*

NHS Blood and Transplant is appealing to donors to fill empty appointments at town and city donor centres across England following high demand for blood over the festive period and into the start of the new year.

While community sessions are generally well filled, donor centres in towns and cities still have thousands of appointments available over the coming weeks. Donors are especially needed to fill slots during the quieter weekday morning and afternoon sessions.

Over 20,000 appointments are still available to book over the next six weeks across the seven main donor centres across London, including at the newly opened Brixton Donor Centre.

Blood is constantly needed to help the NHS treat patients with cancer, blood disorders and those suffering medical trauma or undergoing surgery, and O negative blood is mostly used for emergency treatment. Each donation can save or improve up to three lives.

As well as O negative and B negative donors, people with Ro blood are also particularly needed. There is an ongoing need for more donors of Black heritage to help patients with sickle cell who need ethnically matched blood. First time donors who don't know their blood type will find out after their first successful donation.

To book an appointment visit [www.blood.co.uk](http://www.blood.co.uk), use the GiveBlood app or call 0300 123 23 23



**Blood and Transplant**

# WHO: COVID-19 Epidemiological Update

Published 13 February 2025

Teresa Read

**At the regional level**, the number of newly reported 28-day cases decreased across five of the six WHO regions: the Region of the Americas (-40%), the South-East Asia Region (-26%), the African Region (-23%), the Western Pacific Region (-23%), and the European Region (-20%).

The number of newly reported 28-day deaths decreased across two regions: the South-East Asia Region (-67%) and the European Region (-23%) while death numbers increased in two WHO regions: the Region of the Americas (+30%), and the Western Pacific Region (+6%). Neither the African Region nor the Eastern Mediterranean Region reported deaths during the reporting period.

**At the country level**, the highest numbers of new 28-day cases were reported from the Russian Federation (93,541 new cases; -21%), Greece (10,065 new cases; -12%), Italy (6,660 new cases; -25%), the United Kingdom (5,122 new cases; -7%), and Malaysia (4,167 new cases; -23%).

The highest numbers of new 28-day deaths were reported from, the United States of America (2,598 new deaths; +32%), the Russian Federation (192 new deaths; -5%), Sweden (167 new deaths; -1%), Italy (117 new deaths; -45%), and Greece (99 new deaths; -20%).

## European Region

The SARS-CoV-2 weekly percent test positivity from sentinel and systematically conducted virological surveillance in the European Region changed from 3.4% to 2.0% across 38 countries who reported at least once during the four-week period. One country reported an increase of more than 2.5% in percent test positivity during the four-week reporting period: Slovenia (from 10.0% to 18.2%). Two countries showed elevated SARS-CoV-2 activity (10% or more) in the final week: Slovenia (18%) and Greece (15%). During the reporting period, the weekly average number of specimens tested was 4507.

The Region reported over 146,000 new cases, a 20% decrease as compared to the previous 28-day period. Six (10%) of the 62 countries for which data are available reported increases in new cases of 20% or greater, with the highest proportional increases observed in Portugal (583 vs 334 new cases; +75%), Cyprus (1,233 vs 792 new cases; +56%), Estonia (821 vs 557 new cases; +47%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (89 vs 61 new cases; +46%), Sweden (2,896 vs 2,324 new cases; +25%), and Ireland (679 vs 551 new cases; +23%). The highest numbers of new cases were reported from the Russian Federation (93,541 new cases; 64.1 new cases per 100,000; -21%), Greece (10,065 new cases; 93.9 new cases per 100,000; -12%), and Italy (6,660 new cases; 11.2 new cases per 100,000; -25%).

The number of new 28-day deaths in the Region decreased by 23% as compared to the previous 28-day period, with 673 new deaths reported. The highest numbers of new deaths were reported from the Russian Federation (192 new deaths; <1 new death per 100,000; -5%), Sweden (167 new deaths; 1.6 new deaths per 100,000; -1%), and Italy (117 new deaths; <1 new death per 100,000; -45%)

**WHO is currently tracking several SARS-CoV-2 variants**, including:

- Variant of interest (VOI): JN.1
- Variants under monitoring (VUMs): JN.1.18, KP.2, KP.3, KP.3.1.1, LB.1, XEC and LP.8.1



**World Health  
Organization**

# FIXTURES

2025

— GMT —

<b>ROUND 1</b>	<b>FRA</b> 	FRI 31 JAN <b>20:15</b>	 <b>WAL</b>	<b>ROUND 1</b>
	<b>SCO</b> 	SAT 1 FEB <b>14:15</b>	 <b>ITA</b>	
	<b>IRE</b> 	SAT 1 FEB <b>16:45</b>	 <b>ENG</b>	
<b>ROUND 2</b>	<b>ITA</b> 	SAT 8 FEB <b>14:15</b>	 <b>WAL</b>	<b>ROUND 2</b>
	<b>ENG</b> 	SAT 8 FEB <b>16:45</b>	 <b>FRA</b>	
	<b>SCO</b> 	SUN 9 FEB <b>15:00</b>	 <b>IRE</b>	
<b>ROUND 3</b>	<b>WAL</b> 	SAT 22 FEB <b>14:15</b>	 <b>IRE</b>	<b>ROUND 3</b>
	<b>ENG</b> 	SAT 22 FEB <b>16:45</b>	 <b>SCO</b>	
	<b>ITA</b> 	SUN 23 FEB <b>15:00</b>	 <b>FRA</b>	
<b>ROUND 4</b>	<b>IRE</b> 	SAT 8 MAR <b>14:15</b>	 <b>FRA</b>	<b>ROUND 4</b>
	<b>SCO</b> 	SAT 8 MAR <b>16:45</b>	 <b>WAL</b>	
	<b>ENG</b> 	SUN 9 MAR <b>15:00</b>	 <b>ITA</b>	
<b>ROUND 5</b>	<b>ITA</b> 	SAT 15 MAR <b>14:15</b>	 <b>IRE</b>	<b>ROUND 5</b>
	<b>WAL</b> 	SAT 15 MAR <b>16:45</b>	 <b>ENG</b>	
	<b>FRA</b> 	SAT 15 MAR <b>20:00</b>	 <b>SCO</b>	

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HOTELS & RESORTS



# Red Roses for LG this Valentine's Day

**RFU and LG Electronics UK announce new partnership ahead of huge year for women's rugby**

The RFU is pleased to announce a new multi-year deal with leading global electronics innovator, LG Electronics, which will deliver world-class fan experiences and grassroots growth in 2025 and beyond. LG Electronics is now the Official TV Partner to the Red Roses as well as Official Screens Partner of Allianz Stadium – the home of English rugby.

Despite increases in women's sport content over the past few years, coverage for women's sport remains at only 8% across key UK channels. 2024 was the most watched year for women's sport in the UK with significant momentum for women's rugby. With 2025 set to be a momentous year for women's sport, LG will use its "Let's Go" sponsorship platform in collaboration with the RFU on various soon to be announced campaigns to amplify the growth of the sport. Together with the Red Roses, LG hopes to inspire and enable more women and girls to watch and engage in women's sport.

2025 is set to be a huge year for women's sport in the UK with the Women's Rugby World Cup coming to England in August and September featuring all the home nations, plus the UEFA European Women's Championship taking place in Switzerland in July with both England and Wales set to take part.

LG will also support the RFU's grassroots development plan as well as supply key improvements to Allianz Stadium – in a year in which it will host the blockbuster final round of the Guinness Women's Six Nations clash with France and the 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup Final. LG UK is a long-term sponsor of The FA, having worked with the national football body since 2019 on campaigns including various major international tournaments, and now adds the new RFU deal to its existing roster of sporting partners.

LG's partnership with the RFU will not only invite more viewers into the sport but also encourage a new generation of players with grants that support English community rugby clubs. What's more, LG will provide cut-rate technology solutions and products to provide grassroots players a great experience and give clubs the opportunity to reduce their environmental impact too.

LG has also become the Official Screens Partner of Allianz Stadium and will support discussions as the RFU start their multi-million pound masterplan to improve the iconic stadium. New and improved LED big screens and TVs around the stadium and hotel at Allianz Stadium will be upgraded in 2025, to deliver a new level of fan experience in the ground.

**Speaking on the announcement, Daniel Michelson, head of marketing at LG UK, said:** *"2025 will be another monumental year for women's sport around the world. In recent years we have seen the women's game take periodic steps forward in popularity, reach and fan engagement around key tournaments and this year should be no different. The "Let's Go" platform, represents the desire to create change, using innovation, design and creativity to captivate fans and elevate outcomes. At LG we've been lucky to be part of these incredible moments for women's sport via our work with The FA and now we are proud to work with the RFU to continue our support. This multi-year deal, will help to improve fan experience and reduce the stadium's carbon footprint moving forward. Myself, the team, and the whole global business is excited to get to work on this new partnership."*

**Claudio Borges, Executive Director Commercial & Marketing, comments:** *"We are delighted to announce LG as England Rugby's Official TV Partner to Red Roses, as well as Official Screens Partner of Allianz Stadium. LG's support in amplifying the work of the Red Roses and the amazing personalities in the team as they build into an important year will be of huge value, as will enhancements to our multiple screens around the stadium that are so critical to the matchday experience of our fans."*



# England A Wider Squad Named



A 25-player squad has been selected as part of a wider England Men's A group to prepare for the side's upcoming fixture against Ireland A at Ashton Gate Stadium.

Following on from a 38-17 win over Australia A last November, England A return to action on Sunday 23rd February (13:00 GMT kick-off) in Bristol, with tickets available [here](#). The match will be streamed live for free on RugbyPass TV.

The squad boasts four previously capped players at senior men's level, including Leicester Tigers duo Ollie Hassell-Collins and Jack van Poortvliet, and Curtis Langdon and Tom Pearson of Northampton Saints. Twelve of the selected cohort have achieved appearances for the England Men's A side in at least one of their 2024 fixtures against Portugal or Australia A. 21 of the 25 players also boast caps at age-grade level for the England Rugby Men's Pathway.

Earlier on this week, Bath Rugby's Lee Blackett was appointed the team's head coach and attack coach for the game. He will be accompanied by Haydn Thomas (Exeter Chiefs, defence coach), Louis Deacon (Red Roses, forwards coach) and Matt Ferguson (Northampton Saints, scrum coach) as part of his staff for the match. The coaching team was chosen by the RFU in consultation with Premiership Rugby, with the selection of the match day 23 determined by senior men's head coach, Steve Borthwick, and RFU Executive Director of Performance Rugby, Conor O'Shea.

The squad will assemble at the Bristol Bears High Performance Centre next Tuesday (18th) to begin preparations for the fixture later that week, where they may be joined by selected players presently training with the senior squad. The coaching staff will be supported by Strength & Conditioning, Medical and Operational staff from across Premiership Rugby, Red Roses and England Rugby Pathway for the game.

Lee Blackett said: *"It's an honour to be a part of this team once again, even more so having now been trusted to lead it. I'm privileged to be surrounded by a fantastic coaching and support staff from the RFU and Premiership Rugby clubs, and we're all keen to work with this exciting group of players. The players we have at our disposal is a real indication of the breadth of talent within the Premiership currently. A healthy proportion of the team have experience with the Men's A team and are motivated to seize the opportunity whilst representing their country. With Haydn and I previously involved in the setup last November, we want to continue to develop a collaborative and supportive environment alongside Louis [Deacon] and Matt [Ferguson]."*

Tickets for England A vs. Ireland A at Ashton Gate Stadium in Bristol are available from £20 for adults and £5 for U12s\* and can be purchased [here](#).

England Men A wider squad to face Ireland A (includes current club and senior caps)

## Forwards

Alfie Barbeary (Bath Rugby)

Phil Brantingham (Saracens)

Richard Capstick (Exeter Chiefs)

Greg Fisilau (Exeter Chiefs)

Luke Green (Northampton Saints)

Tarek Haffar (Northampton Saints)

Jack Kenningham (Harlequins)

George Kloska (Bristol Bears)

Curtis Langdon (Northampton Saints, 2 caps)

Tom Lockett (Northampton Saints)

Gabriel Oghre (Bristol Bears)

Tom Pearson (Northampton Saints, 1 cap)

Hugh Tizard (Saracens)

## Backs

Charlie Atkinson (Gloucester Rugby)

Orlando Bailey (Bath Rugby)

Will Butt (Bath Rugby)

Joe Carpenter (Sale Sharks)

Tobias Elliott (Saracens)

Ollie Hassell-Collins (Leicester Tigers, 2 caps)

George Hendy (Northampton Saints)

Josh Hodge (Exeter Chiefs)

Max Ojomoh (Bath Rugby)

Will Porter (Harlequins)

Jack van Poortvliet (Leicester Tigers, 16 caps)

Joseph Woodward (Leicester Tigers)

England Men A coaching staff for Ireland A fixture

Lee Blackett – Head Coach and Attack Coach / Haydn Thomas - Defence Coach

Louis Deacon – Forwards Coach / Matt Ferguson – Scrum Coach

# Match Preview: West Ham United v Brentford

**Analysis, team news, match officials and more. Here's everything you need to know ahead of Brentford's Premier League game against West Ham United at London Stadium on Saturday (3pm kick-off GMT)**

Written by Brentford Football Club

Brentford return to Premier League action with a trip across the capital to face West Ham United on Saturday 15 February (3pm kick-off GMT).

The Bees lost 2-0 to Tottenham Hotspur at Gtech Community Stadium last time out, while Graham Potter's side were narrowly beaten 2-1 at Chelsea, despite some improved performances under the new Hammers boss.

Analysis, team news, match officials and more. Here's everything you need to know ahead of the Bees' latest test.

## Pre-Match Analysis

Stephen Gillett, Playmaker Stats: The contrasting attacking output of Bees and Hammers

Currently 11th, Brentford travel to London rivals West Ham this Saturday looking to widen the four-point gap that currently separates the Bees from the 15th-placed Hammers in the Premier League table.

With 42 goals scored and the same number conceded, Thomas Frank's side enter the contest as the only team in the top flight with a neutral goal difference.

After a period of relative stability and success under David Moyes during the Scot's second spell at the club, West Ham struggled for results under former Real Madrid boss Julen Lopetegui and they will host the Bees this Saturday with Graham Potter in the dugout.

Potter will be looking to work his magic in east London and, despite winning one of his five games in charge to date, the early signs are that a talented West Ham squad have responded positively since the former Brighton and Chelsea manager was appointed last month.

It is early days in the 49-year-old's West Ham career, but Potter will be looking for improvements across the board from his squad, particularly in attack.

West Ham are currently among the lowest scorers in the Premier League, with 29 goals, and a number of their 2024/25 stats contrast starkly with Brentford's efficiency in front of goal.

The Bees currently have the best shot-on-target percentage (42 per cent) in the top flight, while the Hammers have the lowest (29 per cent), and the two sides' Expected Goals stats are also at loggerheads; there is no Premier League side with a better xG-per-shot than Brentford (0.15) or a worse xG-per-shot than West Ham (0.11).



With Michail Antonio and Niclas Füllkrug recovering from long-term injuries, the Hammers have been reliant on Jarrod Bowen finding the back of the net this season, and the England international (six goals, four assists) is the only West Ham player to reach double figures for Premier League goal involvements this term.



Since joining West Ham, Bowen has been impressively consistent and the forward will take to the stage this Saturday hungry to score his 50th Premier League goal, given he is currently just one short of that milestone.

Some much-needed support for Bowen has arrived in the form of new loan signing Evan Ferguson, who is in line to make his debut against the Bees.

The young Irishman has been unable to establish himself at Brighton this season, but he will be keen to rediscover the form that saw him average a Premier League goal every 158 minutes for his parent club - under Potter - back in the 2022/23 season.

Also available for selection for the Hammers this weekend, after his loan at Nottingham Forest was terminated, is midfielder James Ward-Prowse, whose prowess from free-kicks borders on legendary.

Now 30, the ex-Southampton man has scored the second-highest number of goals from free-kicks in Premier League history, behind only David Beckham!

Currently on 17, Ward-Prowse is just one adrift of the 18 free-kicks scored by Beckham during his time at Manchester United - and the Bees will certainly be aware of the danger the midfield technician poses from set-pieces should he feature.

However, arguably the biggest attacking weapon in West Ham's ranks is forward Mohammed Kudus. The 24-year-old possesses genuine X factor and his fantastic ability in 1v1 situations is underlined by the fact he tops the Premier League this season for successful dribbles, with 59.

## Scout Report

Dan Long, Sky Sports: Potter's opportunity to get Hammers supporters on side

After a season when West Ham had secured a third top-half finish in the last four campaigns and allowed David Moyes to leave after the expiry of his contract, whichever side of the Moyes debate Hammers fans were on, most would have expected to see improvement across the board when Julen Lopetegui took over in east London on a two-year contact.

The Spaniard had unfinished business in the Premier League after a 27-game spell at Wolves was ended by mutual consent on 8 August 2023.

*“My ambition as a coach is always to be better and better, to achieve more and bigger aims,”* he said after his appointment at the London Stadium.

The words were impressive and encouraging - as were the signings, which included Max Kilman, Crysencio Summerville and Niclas Füllkrug. But, as it turned out, there was little to back those words up on the pitch.

They lost five of the first 10 - including against Aston Villa, Tottenham and Nottingham Forest, who they would have been hoping to compete with in a bid to return to the top seven positions in the table - and had drifted to just above the relegation zone by December, earning just enough points to get by, but little else.

Having been beaten 5-2 at home by Arsenal on 30 November, West Ham lost 3-1 to struggling Leicester in the following game.

*“Today is a day where we deserved much more,”* Lopetegui told Amazon Prime. *“The next will be the most important, we must be focused.”*

A win against Wolves, successive 1-1 draws against Bournemouth and Brighton, and a 1-0 victory at Southampton followed, but a pair of chastening defeats after Christmas - 5-0 at home to Liverpool and 4-1 away at Man City - forced the hierarchy's hand and, on 8 January, Lopetegui was sacked after just 22 games, seven of which he won.

The club statement that followed was very matter-of-fact. *“The first half of the 2024/25 season has not aligned with the club's ambitions and the club has therefore taken action in line with its objectives,”* it read. *“The process of appointing a replacement is underway.”*

That process was concluded the following day, 9 January, when Graham Potter - who had already been heavily linked with the job - was appointed as his successor on a two-and-a-half-year contract.

*“It's a bit like Christmas for adults,”* the former Chelsea boss said when speaking about his excitement for taking on the new role.

Potter oversaw his first game the next day - a 2-1 FA Cup third-round defeat to Aston Villa - and won his first Premier League game in charge on 14 January, when the Hammers beat Fulham 3-2.

They have since lost to Crystal Palace and Chelsea, as well as drawing away at Villa in between those two games. There is a healthy 10-point cushion between his side and the relegation zone at present, but that could soon narrow without improvement.

The new Hammers boss utilised his contacts at former club Brighton to bring Evan Ferguson in on loan during the January transfer window, which has remedied the issues in attack; with Michail Antonio out for the season and Füllkrug's season disrupted by injury, Danny Ings - who has scored just twice in 44 games since the start of last season - was the only fit recognised no.9 at the club.

There is now little more to play for than league position, but there is an opportunity for Potter to garner favour with the supporters who will be hoping for something greatly contrasting to what they have endured this season in 2025/26.

## In The Dugout

Graham Potter

Solihull-born Graham Potter started out at nearby Birmingham and was playing for the Blues' first team by the age of 17 in 1992.

After a loan in the Third Division with Wycombe the following campaign, he moved on to Stoke, but it was not until the 1995/96 season that he earned a regular spot in the Potters' first team.



That year, he helped the club to a fourth-placed finish in the First Division, but they lost 1-0 on aggregate to Leicester in the play-off semi-finals.

Potter's performances at Stoke led to a transfer to Southampton and the Premier League for the first time, where he played on eight occasions.

His time at The Dell was short-lived and, next, he returned to the Midlands to join West Brom, for whom he played 47 times over three-and-a-half seasons.

It was at York that Potter played his most regular football, though, and, between 2000 and 2003, he featured over 100 times for the Minstermen in the Third Division.

Following retirement after a season with Mansfield in 2004/05, Potter explored various avenues within football to expand his knowledge of the game, including completing a degree in social sciences and a master's in leadership, as well as working with the Ghana Women's and the England Universities teams.

He then managed Leeds Carnegie for three years, before taking on the head coach role at Swedish club Östersund.

ÖFK were a fourth-division club when Potter took over but, by the time he left in June 2018, they were in the top flight - and had been for three seasons.

He returned to the UK as Swansea's new manager and, 11 months later, Brighton took him to the Amex as Chris Hughton's successor.

He took the Seagulls up a level and, in his last full season in 2021/22, they set new club records for most Premier League games won, fewest lost, most goals scored, fewest conceded, points earned, as well as finishing in the top half for the first time.

Early on in the 2022/23 season, Potter and his backroom staff moved to Stamford Bridge but, after just over seven months and only 31 games at Chelsea, he was sacked in April 2023

Potter did not return to management until January 9 2025, when he replaced Julen Lopetegui at West Ham.



# Councils could face £8bn funding black hole by 2028/29

Councils in England should be a major driver to boost local growth over the coming years but could face a funding gap of more than £8 billion by 2028/29 without adequate funding, new analysis by the Local Government Association reveals today.

In its submission to The Treasury ahead of the Spending Review, the LGA demonstrates how councils have a vital role to play in the Government's reform and growth agenda but will only be able to deliver on this ambition if they are given the necessary financial headroom as Government makes decisions about the nation's finances. The LGA's submission highlights the impact of not investing across the many critical council services that millions of people rely upon everyday such as looking after older and vulnerable adults, ensuring children gain access to vital SEND provision, providing home to school transport and much relied upon temporary accommodation.

Without urgent action in the upcoming Spending Review, not only will many councils be left with having to make impossible choices on what desperately needed services they can provide in the future, but the opportunity that this moment presents on boosting growth and reform may be missed.

This year sees the seventh one-year settlement in a row for councils. Over time this has severely hindered how councils can plan for services and deliver to their local communities. It is, therefore, encouraging that that government has now committed to provide councils with three-year settlements over this coming Spending Review period. However, that promise still comes at a critical time for the future of local services with councils remaining under severe financial strain due to long-standing funding reductions and cost and demand pressures that will continue to rise at an alarming rate and threaten to push many towards the financial brink.

New costs associated with the employer National Insurance Contribution changes, which have not been fully compensated for by government, alongside demographic change, inflation, and unfunded rises to the National Living Wage, are also exacerbating this challenge.

In its submission the LGA reveals that:

- If current cost and demand trends continue, by the end of 2028/29 cost and demand pressures would add £21.4 billion to the cost of delivering council services since 2024/25. This is 29.8 per cent in additional service costs.
- If these new pressures and funding streams are taken into account, councils would face a £1.9 billion gap in 2025/26 rising to £4.0 billion in 2026/27, £6.0 billion in 2027/28, and £8.4 billion in 2028/29.
- Last year 18 councils required Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) to set their 2024/25 budgets. Of those who responded to the LGA's survey, 25 per cent of chief financial officers (CFOs) now say that their council had either applied for EFS to support their 2025/26 budget or that they expected to do so in 2025/26 or 2026/27. This is indicative of the growing financial emergency facing councils.

Cllr Louise Gittins, Chair of the Local Government Association, said: *"Councils hold the key to public sector reform which is a clear ambition of government. As leaders of their communities and major local employers, they must play a critical role in promoting sustainable and inclusive growth. We know that there are huge financial challenges ahead for government. However sufficiently funding councils in the Spending Review would enable them to fully play their part in leading local growth priorities and unlock the full potential of their local people, businesses and places. Local government has made huge savings and efficiencies over the past decade and continues to innovate and transform services to get the best for residents and provide greater value for money. However, without adequate investment now we risk not being able to deliver crucial services that so many depend upon and our desire to help government fulfil its ambitions for the future are severely hindered."*



# Rise of ‘Carspreading’

Campaigners are warning about the new phenomenon of ‘carspreading’ with supersized SUVs crowding out space in towns and cities compared to the average sized car.

A YouGov survey commissioned by Clean Cities shows that four times as many UK car owners agree (71%) that more SUVs “will make parking more difficult” compared to those that disagree (15%).

A majority of UK car owners (59%) also agree that SUVs are not necessary in towns and cities, compared to just 20% that disagree. This is despite research showing that three quarters of SUVs sold in the UK are registered to people living in towns and cities.

Supersized SUVs more than 1.8m wide (larger than typical urban on-street parking spaces) are reducing the street space for other cars and making it more dangerous for cyclists and other road users.

A list of some popular new models that are larger than the typical urban parking space is below. The Ford Ranger Raptor, Mercedes Benz GLE and BMW X5 / X6 are all more than 2m wide, while the Land Rover Defender 130, Audi Q8 and Kia EV9 are all wider than typical on-street parking spaces in towns and cities in the UK.

Rank	District	Long	Total	% Long
1	Kensington and Chelsea	339	1,555	22%
2	Westminster	379	1,885	20%
3	Hammersmith and Fulham	222	1,195	19%
4	Wandsworth	387	2,400	16%
5	Camden	168	1,181	14%
6	South Bucks	218	1,537	14%
7	Stratford-on-Avon	527	3,726	14%
8	Elmbridge	401	2,916	14%
9	Richmond upon Thames	306	2,259	14%
10	Derbyshire Dales	152	1,149	13%
11	Harborough	228	1,763	13%
12	Aberdeenshire UA	706	5,579	13%
13	Stirling UA	191	1,549	12%
14	Ribble Valley	164	1,342	12%
15	Epping Forest	355	2,897	12%
16	Sevenoaks	271	2,237	12%
17	South Northamptonshire	272	2,265	12%
18	Windsor and Maidenhead UA	335	2,784	12%
19	Doncaster	1,605	13,569	12%
20	Harrogate	391	3,315	12%

Oliver Lord, UK Head of Clean Cities, said: *“Our cities face a double whammy of more cars and bigger cars. Carspreading doesn’t just affect parking, these supersized cars increase danger, congestion and pollution on our streets. City leaders must act now and stop carspreading before it’s too late. Even car owners want to see change.”*

SUV sales hit record levels in 2024, taking up 62% of new car sales in the UK, up from 47% in 2020. A new analysis by T&E UK found that 1,145,456 SUVs were sold in 2024, out of a total of 1,835,349 cars. Worryingly, sales of larger models of SUVs have been increasing year on year.

At the same time, SUVs are seen more as status symbols for the elite rather than being practical. Almost three times as many UK car owners (60%) agree that SUVs “are bought more as status



symbols than for practical use” compared to those that disagree (21%).

Clean Cities are one of the founder members of The SUV Alliance, a new campaign made up of a coalition of 14 environmental and transport groups. The Alliance has published a manifesto with a five point plan calling for:

1. Changes to Vehicle Excise Duty to tax SUVs and the heaviest and most polluting vehicles more when they are sold
2. Setting a maximum size for new car sales from 2030 so that carmakers cannot sell vehicles too big for parking spaces.
3. Following the lead of Edinburgh City Council to introduce a tobacco-style ban on SUV advertising
4. Mandate that carmakers must publish an “ecoscore” for all new electric vehicles
5. Allowing local authorities to introduce higher parking charges on SUVs and other heavier, more polluting vehicles.

Data from Paris shows that action can have real impact. According to reports in Le Parisien, the tripling of the parking rate for “heavy” or SUV-type vehicles in Paris has already made it possible, according to the City, to reduce by two thirds the number of SUVs using surface parking.

**Table 1: Ten Examples of supersized SUVs too wide to park in UK**

Car model	Width (m)	Parking bay overhang (cm)
Ford Ranger Raptor	2.03	23
Mercedes Benz GLE	2.01	21
BMW X5 / X6	2.00	20
Land Rover Defender 110 / 130	1.99	19
Audi Q8	1.99	19
Kia EV9	1.98	18
Porsche Cayenne	1.98	18
VW Touareg	1.98	18
Maserati Levante	1.98	18
Jeep Grand Cherokee	1.97	17

Clean Cities are asking for members of the public to share their worst examples of #carspreading that they have seen with photos on social media using the tag #carspreading and mentioning @cities\_clean on X or @cleancitiescampaign on Instagram or @cleancitiescampaign.org on BlueSky.

Liz Godfrey, a parent who lives in Manchester said: *“Carspreading is a threat to our children’s health. If our streets are more dangerous to walk*

*around then we’re just going to end up with more people driving. Carspreading creates a vicious cycle of feeling safer behind the wheel, which makes the air our children breathe even more toxic.”*

Research by the AA and Which found that 129 car models were too big to fit in parking spaces in the UK. However, the survey was done in 2018, and is likely to be far higher today.

Jillian Anable, Professor of Transport & Energy at the University of Leeds, said: *“I believe we will look back with disbelief at how we allowed larger and larger vehicles to take hold. SUVs require more land to park them on, more materials to produce them with, more road space to drive them along and more fuel to travel the equivalent distance by smaller vehicles. Even electric and hybrid SUVs will delay the transition to Net Zero as their larger batteries require more electricity.”*



# Heathrow British Airways cleaners strike over living wage hypocrisy

Employer OCS Living Wage Foundation accredited but pays BA workers minimum

Workers employed by facilities services firm OCS to clean British Airways' offices at Heathrow are to strike over pay.

OCS is accredited by the Living Wage Foundation for paying its directly employed staff the real living wage of £12.60 an hour and £13.85 an hour in London.

Most of OCS' 50,000 employees are not covered by the real living wage, however, because the outsourcing company does not pay it to workers on its external contracts.

This has resulted in OCS' BA workers being paid the legal minimum wage of £11.44 an hour in one of the most expensive cities on the planet.

Poverty pay has resulted in some workers, who wear BA branded uniforms, having to use foodbanks while others are struggling to pay their rent.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: *"It is rank hypocrisy for OCS to boast about being a real living wage employer when its BA staff are on poverty wages and having to use foodbanks. The Living Wage Foundation should not be allowing race-to-the-bottom outsourcers like OCS to take cover under its good name."*

*"Both OCS and BA are hugely profitable and can well afford to pay these workers fairly and decently. Unite will support them in their strike action until that happens."*

OCS made operating profits of £28.3 million in 2023, while BA's parent company, IAG, made £1.7 billion during the peak summer season last year.

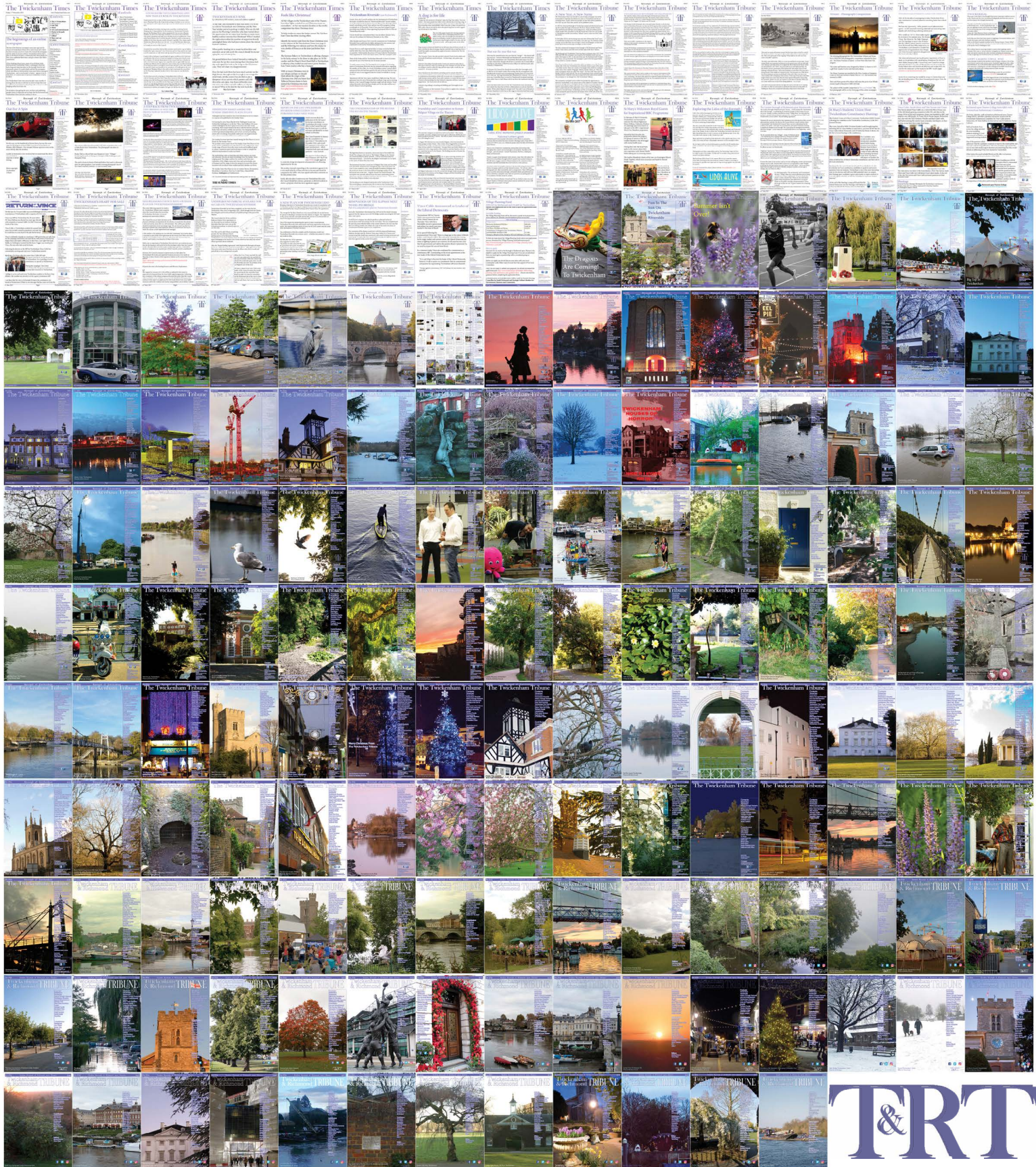
The workers are based at BA's offices at Heathrow airport. They will strike from 25 to 28 February. Escalating industrial action is planned if a satisfactory pay offer is not put forward.

Unite regional officer Martin West said: *"There is still time to avoid industrial action but that will require OCS to put forward a fair pay offer. This dispute will continue to escalate and does reflect well on either OCS or BA – it is in both companies' interests to resolve it."*

Unite yesterday announced that it had secured BA workers at Gatwick and Heathrow a pay rise worth more than £290m over three years as well as a potential profit share worth a further £318m.



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