

# Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



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# TickerTape - News in Brief

## Former Mayor raises over £20,000 for charity

The former Mayor of Richmond upon Thames, Cllr Suzette Nicholson, accompanied by her Deputy Mayor Cllr Fiona Sacks, presented cheques this week to the two charities she supported during her 2023-24 mayoral year.

A total of £20,921.86 was raised at the Mayor's charity events, with the funds being evenly distributed between [SEEN](#) (Support, Empower, Educate and Nurture) and [Age UK Richmond](#).

Cllr Nicholson was pleased to present the £10,460.93 cheques to SEEN CEO Fay Hamilton and Age UK Richmond Communication and Fundraising Manager Aydee Burke at the Mayor's Parlour in York House on 5 March 2025. Cllr Nicholson expressed her thanks to all who helped make it possible during her term in office.

The former Mayor's charity events were all a huge success and included a popular Tea Dance and Twelfth Night York House Dinner.

Both charity representatives reiterated how important the opportunity was to not only supporting crucial local services, but to raising the profile of their causes.

SEEN is a Twickenham-based charity that provides a safe space to support those facing unplanned pregnancy and baby loss. They deliver healthy relationship and sex education to empower and nurture the community.

Age UK Richmond is an independent local charity working in the community to deliver services, activities and support for older people, their families and carers. They want everyone to be able to love later life.

Read more about the [Mayor's 2024-25 charities and charity events](#).



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# Local Picture Postcard Column - Part 291

## Twickenham Rugby Ground - Posters On Postcards

By Alan Winter

Picture Postcards have often been used for marketing, promotional and event awareness reasons since their use began in 1894. Today we can look at four postcards dating from 1911 through to 1935 that were originally used as posters to advertise rugby matches at Twickenham. The postcard images today are reprints of the original posters and have been published by the London Transport Museum and the Museum of Rugby at Twickenham stadium.

The first postcard shows an England v Scotland match ticket from 1911. The 6 shilling price equates to 30 pence today. Second postcard is A 'Rugby at Twickenham by Tram' message that was used for many years to help attendees get to the matches at the stadium. We then have two rugby event posters that were used in 1935, the first promoting two All Blacks games against London Counties and England over the Christmas and New Year period.

The final postcard advertises the



7 A-Side Finals also in 1935 which was a charity tournament with proceeds going to the Middlesex Hospital Cancer Fund.

The history of the stadium starts in 1907 when the RFU purchase a 10 ¼ acre market garden in Twickenham for £5,572.12.6. Committee member William Williams was largely responsible for acquiring the land, against much opposition. It becomes known as "Billy Williams' Cabbage Patch".

The next year, the first stands at Twickenham were constructed. Covered stands were built on the east and west sides of the stadium. It is now 1909 and the first ever rugby match takes place at the Rugby Ground between Harlequins and Richmond.

Events at the stadium are put on hold at the outbreak of the First World War. In the absence of rugby matches the pitch was used to graze cattle and horses.

In 1925 the construction of the North Stand is completed. The new 10,500 seat stand meant that for the first time there were buildings surrounding the pitch. With the opening of the stand Twickenham received a record crowd of 60,000 to see New Zealand play England as part of the Invincibles tour.

In 1959 Twickenham celebrates its Golden Jubilee. 50 years after the first match at the stadium, The Stadium celebrates with a rematch of the first game between Harlequins and Richmond.



Twickenham is now the world's largest rugby union stadium, the second largest stadium in the United Kingdom (behind Wembley Stadium), and the fourth largest in Europe.

The stadium has hosted concerts by artists such as Rod Stewart, The Pretenders, Rihanna, Iron Maiden, Bryan Adams, Bon Jovi, Genesis, U2, Beyoncé, the Rolling Stones, the Police, Eagles, R.E.M., Eminem, Lady Gaga, Metallica and Depeche Mode.

On 5 August 2024, it was announced that Twickenham Stadium would be renamed Allianz Stadium, as part of a long-term sponsorship investment plan by the insurance company Allianz. I think it's fair to say that most of us locals will continue to call it 'The Rugby Ground' as we have done for generations.

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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# St. David's Day Celebrations in Twickenham

By Charlotte West and Doug Goodman

St Mary's Church in Twickenham celebrated St David's Day with a flourish as nearly 80 people got to their feet to join in an evening of barn dancing with professional band Cajun Boogaloo.

While primarily a social event to welcome everyone into the church, it also raised over £1000 for repairs to the fabric of the building. Such an event would not have been possible before the interior of the church was reconfigured in 2020 and the fixed pews were replaced by benches and the new oak floor was laid.

Guests at the dance enjoyed a splendid supper prepared by Liz Sledge, Charlotte West and other volunteers.



# Greens push for quicker action on Council-funded developments

From Chas Warlow, Councillor for South Richmond

At Richmond Council's budget-setting meeting this week, the Green Party Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Andrée Frieze, pointed out that big Council-funded projects such as Twickenham Riverside are falling behind schedule. She warned the Liberal Democrat administration that they may end up "lamenting missed opportunities" unless they find out the source of the delays. The Twickenham Riverside development is one of several projects that have been in the pipeline for several years without significant progress.

CLlr Frieze also took the opportunity in her speech to express solidarity with the people of Ukraine, who she described as "being let down by the Government of the country that should be their staunchest ally against Putin's Russia."

## Waste disposal charges will increase – Greens' proposal rejected

Richmond Council has seen major increases in its waste disposal costs: more household waste is being collected than a year ago and less is being recycled. What's more, waste disposal costs will increase in coming years due to the fact that our waste is sent for incineration. A levy on the harmful emissions from incineration will be introduced in 2027, which means Richmond Council will be subject to fines of around £3 million per year unless our waste can be reduced significantly. Green Party councillors pointed out that serious action needs to be taken to deal with this upcoming problem and proposed fortnightly residual (non-recyclable) waste collection alongside continuing weekly collections of recyclables and food waste. The proposal included improvements to residual waste, recycling and food waste services that would come at no cost to residents – they would be funded by a Waste Reserve which has ample funding for this purpose. However, the proposal was rejected. Green Party councillor Chas Warlow commented: "The Council's net-zero emissions and net-zero waste targets are ambitious – and rightly so – but they risk being labelled as pie in the sky by critics who wonder where the money is coming from to achieve them. The Green Party Group on Richmond Council have identified a ring-fenced source of funding for reducing our waste disposal costs – why isn't the Council using this money now rather than waiting for costs to rise sky-high?"

The Greens also pointed out the weaknesses in the Council's current Council Tax Reduction system – the Council is currently taking legal action to claim Council Tax arrears from the borough's most vulnerable residents even in cases where residents are in very dire situations. Councillor Niki Crookdake argued passionately in favour of providing more staff time to avoid the distress caused to residents by these claims, as well as the cost to the Council of taking legal action only to find that the resident then has money deducted from their benefits and slips into greater need: "this is a vicious circle that leaves no one better off – it would be far better to invest in our services in order to save money, time and avoid considerable distress," said Councillor Crookdake.



RICHMOND & TWICKENHAM



# Richmond Council in the Dock

By James Knight

Richmond Council has been taken to court eleven times in recent years over incidents involving its roads and pavements, with legal battles resulting in a total cost of **£63,532.94**, newly released figures reveal. The data, obtained via a Freedom of Information request submitted by local resident Tim Lennon, sheds light on the number of legal claims brought against the council by members of the public for accidents ranging from slips and trips to vehicle damage.

## A Costly Affair

Of the eleven recorded cases, eight involved pedestrians suffering **slips, trips, and falls**, while three concerned **vehicle damage**. The council admitted liability in three of the pedestrian incidents, resulting in settlements amounting to nearly **£44,000**. Meanwhile, five claims of trips and falls were denied, leading to either a dismissal of the case or an unsuccessful claim.

One of the costliest cases remains an October 2020 incident, where the council admitted liability and reached a final settlement pending payment of **£19,892.50**. Other claims where the council accepted responsibility saw compensation payouts of **£12,986** and **£10,993** in 2020 and 2021, respectively.

On the other hand, claims involving **vehicle damage** were largely contested or dismissed, with only minor compensation amounts being paid. The highest sum awarded in such a case was **£1,412**, while three cases resulted in no financial cost to the council.

## The Legal Landscape

While this report highlights cases that progressed to court, it does not take into account **out-of-court settlements**, which may further add to the financial burden on the local authority. The council's legal team has been able to defend several cases successfully, avoiding additional expenditure, but the frequency of claims raises concerns about the state of local infrastructure.

## Calls for Greater Oversight

With figures indicating multiple successful claims against the council, concerns have been raised over whether preventative measures are sufficient. Residents argue that the cost of legal claims could be better spent on **proactive maintenance** to prevent such accidents in the first place.

As Richmond Council prepares its next budget, campaigners and local representatives will likely call for increased investment in road safety initiatives to reduce the number of legal disputes and ensure public safety.



*Photo © Twickenham Tribune*

# Travel disruption warning for London Road roundabout on Sunday 9 March

From Richmond Council

Richmond Council is advising residents and visitors to expect significant delays due to ongoing Transport for London (TfL) roadworks at the A316 London Road Roundabout.

Despite previous commitments to remove traffic management measures on rugby match days, delays in TfL's construction programme means that lane restrictions at the roundabout will remain in place this weekend.

Councillor Alexander Ehmann, Chair of the Transport and Air Quality Services Committee said: *"It is deeply frustrating that the TfL works at the A316 London Road roundabout have not been completed as planned in order to reinstate both lanes of traffic ahead of Sunday's match. This will undoubtedly cause significant inconvenience to residents and visitors. We urge everyone to plan their journeys accordingly and allow extra time for travel."*

Richmond Council and the RFU have consistently stressed the importance of ensuring the roundabout is fully operational on match days to prevent major disruption. The Council has urged TfL to escalate efforts with their contractor to complete the works as swiftly as possible to prevent congestion.



While the Council has been working closely with TfL to mitigate the impact of these works, warning of this delay was

not provided with sufficient time to provide alternative solutions. However, the Council has continued to urge TfL to take every possible measure to minimise disruption.

In response to these concerns TfL's contractor has committed to working over the weekend to progress the project as quickly as possible.

Residents are warned to expect delays and to plan journeys accordingly to avoid any unnecessary disruption.

Read [more information about the A316 roadworks](#).

For details of all the planned and emergency roadworks taking place across Richmond upon Thames, sign up for our [weekly roadworks bulletin](#).

# Richmond's Rates Rage!

Families Squeezed as Council Pours Millions into Pre-Election Splurge

By James Knight

For years, residents of Richmond have been cautioned that financial prudence is the sole method to keep the borough solvent. Maximum council tax increases have been enforced year after year, justified by the necessity to bolster reserves and safeguard services from government funding cuts. However, as the May 2026 elections approach, the council seems to have undergone a change of heart.

A flurry of spending announcements during the council's **Annual Budget Meeting** indicates that the Liberal Democrat-led administration has suddenly discovered the means to splash the cash. Investments in roads, pavements, waste collection, and even mega skips have been promoted as part of a "fairer, greener, and safer" borough. Simultaneously, millions have been allocated for social housing, climate action, and community projects. While these are all worthy causes, the timing has raised eyebrows.

Critics argue that Richmond's approach to financial management has been inconsistent. Between 2016 and 2024, the council increased its usable reserves, much like many other local authorities. A recent report from the Tax Payers Alliance indicates that over half of councils saw growth in their reserves during this period, despite claiming to face funding gaps. Richmond was no exception. Now, as the electoral cycle nears its peak, the administration is drawing on those reserves to fund a number of high-profile projects.

However, at the same time, the council is moving forward with another maximum council tax increase this April. Households will experience a 4.99% rise in the portion of their bill that relates to Richmond Council—the highest increase allowed without a referendum. For a Band D property, this results in an annual bill of £2,372.07, while those in larger Band H homes will now pay £4,744.14. For many, the disparity between years of tax increases and a sudden pre-election spending spree is hard to overlook.

Even the Green Party, which shared a joint ticket with the ruling Lib Dems at the last local elections, was among those voicing concerns during the latest budget debate. They pointed out that capital projects have repeatedly been delayed, with major housing, cycling, and public realm improvements slipping from one year to the next – at considerable cost to taxpayers, as the final projects would end up costing far more due to inflation. Now, with voters set to decide the council's fate, many of these projects are suddenly being prioritised.

Councillor Bennet has questioned whether this newfound generosity is sustainable. Concerns have been raised regarding the true state of the council's finances, which has not been fully disclosed, as the council has refused to update members on the current cost estimates for the Twickenham Riverside development, despite significant construction inflation. However, some residents are asking why they were informed for years that belt-tightening was essential, only to witness a surge in pre-election spending.

The council asserts that its approach is both responsible and necessary. Speaking at the budget meeting, Councillor Robin Brown, Richmond's finance chief, defended the spending plans, arguing that investment in local services is vital and made possible by years of prudent financial stewardship. However, critics contend that this justification rings hollow. If the council has had the financial flexibility to embark on a pre-election spending spree, then why have residents been subjected to relentless tax increases year after year? When they were already feeling the pinch from inflation caused by the pandemic and Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Could some of these burdens have been avoided, or was the council merely using residents as an easy revenue stream while withholding the true state of its finances?

While Richmond has avoided the financial disasters seen in other councils, this budget raises serious concerns about transparency and long-term strategy. If reserves have been sufficient to fund this level of spending, why was the maximum tax hike deemed necessary once again? Was this truly a financial necessity, or a political calculation to secure a war chest before loosening the purse strings ahead of an election? Residents who have endured years of financial strain may well question whether they have been asked to sacrifice too much, only to fund a sudden burst of generosity designed to buy votes.

With elections looming, voters will have the final say on whether this budget is a masterclass in financial responsibility or a cynical bid to secure votes. For now, Richmond's roads may be getting smoother, but the political landscape is looking increasingly bumpy.

# Strawberry Hill House

Come and enjoy the sunshine in the beautiful gardens at Strawberry Hill House this coming weekend.

Garden entry is free and the gardens and Garden Café are open 9am-4pm Saturday - Wednesday.

For families we also have our Garden Portrait Trail, entry is just £2 and includes a prize from Strawberry Hill House Café



# Council Questions

By James Knight

*4 March 2025* - Before setting the budget and council tax took centre stage, members of the public took the opportunity to ask councillors on a range of contentious issues.

One of the most striking moments came when *Mr Martin Baker* questioned the council's abrupt decision to terminate the lease of Pensford Field two and a half years early in favour of Dose of Nature. Baker challenged Deputy Leader Councillor Jim Millard over the lack of transparency and public involvement, suggesting that democratic processes had been bypassed. In response, Millard conceded that communication around the decision had been mishandled but defended the move as the right choice for expanding mental health services in the borough. He pointed to the council's legal team affirming that all proper procedures were followed, yet his remarks did little to allay concerns that the decision had been pre-determined. Throughout this question, the leader of the Council, Cllr Roberts looked highly uncomfortable.

The controversy around Pensford Field was echoed in a question from *Ms Sarah Atkins*, who asked whether the council was concerned about the damage to its reputation following a *Times* article highlighting the decision. Council Leader Gareth Roberts dismissed the criticism, stating that the article was well-balanced and that the council had acted lawfully – whilst trying to control his rage. However, the intervention of MP Sarah Olney, who branded the entire episode a “debacle,” underscored the growing unease over the handling of the matter, with many believing the LibDems will end up paying a heavy price in the May 2026 local elections as they have seriously undermined their environmental credentials.

Mr David Marlow, a former Conservative Party councillor, pressed the Lead Member for Finance on the financial viability of the Twickenham Riverside project. Marlow noted that the council's capital budget report suggested the borrowing costs for the scheme would be far higher than previously stated. His question highlighted the critical fact that every million pounds of capital borrowing results in an annual revenue cost of £70,000 to cover the interest payments.

On the issue of housing, *Mr Philip Moshe* from the Twickenham Labour Party quizzed the council on the number of empty homes that would be subject to the new Council Tax premium. Councillor Millard confirmed that from April 2025, an estimated 850 properties would be affected, nearly 500 of which were classified as second homes. When Moshe suggested that the council should use Empty Dwelling Management Orders to make these homes available for those on the borough's 4,000-strong housing waiting list, Millard acknowledged the need for reform. Still, he deflected responsibility to central government, calling on the Labour administration to streamline the legal process so the council could force more owners to let the houses to tenants.

Meanwhile, *Mr Gary Evans* sought clarity on revenues from the six enforcement cameras installed to police the Burtons Road low traffic neighbourhood scheme. It was revealed that the cameras generated an eye-watering **£176,855 in fines** between May and December 2024, despite assurances that the scheme was not intended as a cash cow. When pressed on why contraventions remained so high five years after the restrictions were introduced, Councillor Alexander Ehmann gave a facetious reply, claiming ignorance of motorists' motivations, a response that did little to reassure residents who see the scheme as little more than a revenue-raising exercise.

# HAMPTON CHORAL SOCIETY

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# New parks contract boosts sustainability and local jobs

From Richmond Council

A new six-year contract to maintain our award-winning parks and open spaces came into effect in February, promising significant benefits for both residents and the environment.

It prioritises high-quality maintenance while driving forward our ambitious sustainability goals and supporting local employment.

The contractor, Krinkels (formerly operating in the borough as Continental Landscapes Ltd), has pledged to achieve carbon neutrality from the first year of the contract, propelling us toward our aims to become a carbon-neutral Council by 2030 and Net Zero Borough by 2043. In addition to a number of electric vehicles, Krinkels will also introduce Hydrotreated-Vegetable-Oil (HVO) to its fleet, a stable, renewable, sustainable and high-quality diesel alternative, capable of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by up to 90%.



Councillor Julia Neden-Watts, Chair of the Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Committee, said: *“We want to ensure our borough remains one of the greenest and most sustainable in London. Awarding contracts like this allows us to make positive progress toward this vision and ensure our partners and service providers align with our commitments.*

*“This not only ensures that our much-loved parks and open spaces continue to be beautifully maintained but also supports us in taking tangible steps toward reducing our carbon footprint, like introducing a more sustainable fleet, while also prioritising fair wages and local employment.”*

In addition to environmental commitments, Krinkels has pledged to pay the London Living Wage, ensuring fair pay for all staff involved in maintaining our green spaces. This commitment aligns with our dedication to fair employment practices and supporting a thriving local workforce.

Read more about the [range of improvements we made to our parks](#) and open spaces in 2024, based on resident feedback, as well as our 22 prestigious Green Flag Awards.

Find out more about our ambitions to become a carbon neutral Council by 2030 and Net Zero Borough by 2043, set out in our new [Climate and Nature Strategy \(2025-30\)](#).

# Road closures in Twickenham ahead of England v Italy Six Nations

From England Rugby

On **Sunday 9 March**, England will be going for the hat trick at home against Italy in their last Six Nations home match, kicking off at 3pm. Whitton, London and Rugby Roads will close from 1 to 3pm, and then again from 4.30 to 7pm.

The Controlled Parking Zone will be in operation from 11am to 11pm, and shuttle buses will run to the stadium from Old Deer Park and Hounslow East Underground station.



Live traffic updates will be posted on the day via:

- Allianz Stadium, Twickenham
- [Local Residents Information WhatsApp channel](#)
- The Stadium's [@rfuhometurf](#) account on X

Details of all upcoming events are available on the [England Rugby website](#).

## POLICE LIAISON GROUP MEETING

**Wednesday the 19th of  
March, 7pm, Day Centre,  
Barnes Green, SW13 9HE**





# Artists and businesses unite to bring art trail to East Sheen

From Sheen Artists

From Monday 17 to Monday 22 March, residents are welcome to visit the Sheen Art Trail for free.

Small independent business community East Sheen Village and the Sheen Artists group have joined forces to create the Sheen Art Trail, connecting a variety of local businesses and artists who will display their work in shop windows and interiors.

The trail will offer artists the opportunity to showcase their work beyond their studios or traditional galleries, and for businesses to generate increased interest in their respective spaces.

The exhibiting artists cover a range of disciplines, from pottery, ceramics, and sculpture to illustration, painting and photography - there is something for everyone to enjoy!

Visitors to the trail will be able to follow a map that plots the location of each business hosting the artists' work and they will have the opportunity to discover, view, and even buy beautiful artwork by local artists.



Jacque Duncan from East Sheen Village said: *"We are proud and excited to be supporting this fantastic collaboration between our independent high street businesses and the talented and diverse community of artists who live and work in SW14."*

*This is a unique opportunity for both parties to attract additional interest and footfall and to give residents and visitors the chance to discover our area's vibrant shops and art scene."*

The trail is free to follow and requires no advanced booking. The artists and businesses involved encourage visitors to look out for additional event announcements on [@sheenarttrail](#) and [@eastsheenvillage](#) Instagram accounts.

The trail will enable visitors to discover and enjoy the wealth of independent businesses and creative talent that Sheen has to offer, as well as benefit from the energy and inspiration that the event is expected to bring to the local area.

Find out more about the [Sheen Art Trail](#).

## Your New West End Treat - Oorja

I don't know about you, but it's often difficult to decide where to eat when you're up in the West End. There's a plethora of choices, but I can make it easy for you: head to **Oorja** for an Indian meal that you'll love. We checked it out the other evening, after a matinee performance of the wonderful musical 'Operation Mincemeat' (which I thoroughly recommend) and were very impressed.

Oorja is situated on Shaftesbury Avenue, (very near the junction with Charing Cross Road) and takes guests on a 'food journey through India with vibrant and delicious dishes available all day. Oorja (meaning energy in Hindi) offers casual comfort food with a focus on small plates inspired by Northern Indian recipes that have been handed down by generations.' Oorja is the second restaurant from Starwins Group, founded by Gobind Chona. His other restaurant is Gura Gura, serving pan Asian food.



We started with drinks - mine was a Negroni and my husband just opted for sparkling mineral water. It's worth noting, though, that the drinks menu has loads of options for non drinkers.



We were told that the table lights can be tapped to make them bright white (as opposed to the more mellow setting) to indicate that we would like service. Another fab idea is that each place setting has a fabric bib for diners to wear to protect their clothing - was this going to get messy we wondered? As it happened we didn't need them.

First we chose to try **Calamari Pepper Fry** (crispy panko-fried squid seasoned with black pepper and curry leaf podi, served with chilli tomato chutney). These were piping hot, beautifully crispy, with a delicate heat that came through at

the end. The portion was very generous too, and ample to share.

Next we had **Chilli Chicken** (Calcutta street-style chicken stir-fried with garlic, chilli sauce, onions and peppers). It arrived sizzling with crispy noodles piled on top. The chicken pieces had been coated with spices, then fried and covered in the sauce. We were advised on ordering that it was quite spicy, but, for us, the heat was perfectly balanced - it was 'comfortably warming'.





And then to the Chaat; reader, this was divine. **Banarasi Palak Patta Chaat** was 'off the chaat chart' as far as I was concerned. It comprised crispy gram flour-battered spinach (tempura style) topped with potato chaat, pomegranate, yogurt, tamarind and mint. When I want a light lunch in town this will be perfect. It really was so delicious. It was crispy, with a fabulous melange of textures and flavours, and bursts of juicy pomegranate seeds.



We were, not surprisingly quite replete, by this time, but having been recommended the **Barrah Lamb Chop** (house marinated lamb chops grilled and served with mint chutney and onion salad) we opted to try just one more savoury dish. There were just two of these beauties, but they were cooked beautifully: pink, really tender and with a delicate heat. The only - very minor - criticism was that they could do with a more thorough butchering, as there were some extra bits of bone that needn't have been there, and as I have had quite a few rather expensive crowns, I had to be extra careful!

Despite the menu promising a raft of fabulous Indian desserts, we only had room for a small taste of kulfi, so we shared a pistachio and a mango portion. Had we not had more than an 'elegant sufficiency', there was Saffron Malai cheesecake, Gulab Jamun Brulee and purple carrot halwa on offer, but they will have to wait until our next visit - which will hopefully be soon!

Oorja offers all-day dining, so for breakfast you can enjoy **Egg Burji on Toast, Vegan Dalla Porridge** or share a **Oorja Sawera Kebab Platter** if feeling adventurous and hungry.

On Sundays Oorja serves its very own Indian-inspired Sunday Roast, offering a different take on the classic British tradition. **Tandoori Spiced Tender and Succulent Roast Beef** with crispy Yorkshire puddings, golden roasted potatoes, mixed vegetables, topped with garam masala beef gravy sounds incredibly good...

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# What do you want to be...?

By Deep Patel

~Life through the eyes of a Twickenham shopkeeper~



Who here remembers being asked the question “what do you want to be when grow up”...I think we ALL have been asked this question at some point in our lives...and some kindred spirits reading this right now may (like me) still ask themselves what do they want to be “when they grow up”...and there is nothing wrong with that by the way...let me tell you, growing up has NOTHING to do with age...it’s about ripening of thoughts and purpose, and that comes to us all at different times...and that’s ok, just never stop believing in yourself...anyway, back to the subject at hand...

This Friday afternoon after school, two mothers and their sons were in my shop choosing an end-of-week treat. The two boys were talking to each other about their day and a question their teacher had asked them that afternoon in their class...the same question was asked to every child in the class... “what would you like to be when you grow up”. The two boys continued talking about this whilst their mothers were chatting about what they were planning to do on the coming weekend. I couldn’t help but listen in...one of the boys began laughing at the other, as if he was making fun of him. The other boy looked up at me and I looked away, acting as if I had not heard a thing (so as to not cause embarrassment to the boy).

The boy that was making fun then picked his treat, his mother paid, then they left. The other boy remained staring at the chocolate shelf with a somewhat distant and lost look in his eyes. His mother was on a work call on her mobile phone. I could see the boy was upset so I decided to try to find out more. I asked him why the other boy was laughing at him, and he just replied “don’t worry, it was because I got the answer wrong at school this afternoon when the teacher asked us all that’s all”.

I was going to leave it there...I mean everyone gets answers wrong sometimes I thought to myself, it’s no big deal...that’s just life? Then I couldn’t stop thinking about what the boy have said to make the other boy make fun of him? So I asked the boy, what did you say? He pretended not to hear me I think (unless of course he didn’t hear me). So I asked again. His mother was still on her work call and he was still looking to choose his treat. The second time

I asked the boy, he answered me and I can honestly say the answer the boy gave me will stay with me for the rest of my life. He confirmed that the question the teacher asked to the whole class was “what would you like to be when you grow up?” ...the boy told me all the other children answered differently to him. I asked him to explain to me in what way? He said most of the girls replied back to the teacher saying they wanted to be top pop-stars, Hollywood actresses, ballerinas or artists. He went on to tell me that most of the boys said they wanted to be premier league footballers, actors, pilots, basketball players or astronauts. The boy went silent after that. I still really wanted to know what his answer was...what could have been so terrible that his other class mates were laughing at him and making fun of him?

I asked him one last time...and he finally told me. His mother had been listening in on the entire conversation and had finished her work call now and was also eager to hear her son's answer...

He became shy and looked to the ground and said “when my teacher asked me what I would like to be when I grew up, I misunderstood her question and answered back that I would just like to be a good person”. At that point my heart dropped. I told him “it's not you that had misunderstood the question but it was the other children that had misunderstood”. I went on to explain, being an astronaut, footballer, pop star, actress or ballerina are just professions or jobs...in truth what the world needs right now more than astronauts, ballerinas, pop stars, and actresses is just GOOD PEOPLE...exactly what you said...so the in fact it was not you that had misunderstood the question...it was your friends who laughed at you that had misunderstood your answer...be proud of the fact that you understood what really matters better than the entire class of children did. That is the kind of people we need in our world. His mother then bent down and kissed him on his head and whispered to him “mummy is so proud of you for being you, never change for anyone”. The boy's previously distressed look suddenly trickled away and just like a rainbow after the rain, a great big smile took over his little face. He chose his treat, his mother paid and they left. The school rush subsided and I went back to the counter and sat down thinking how wrong we can sometimes be with understanding things when the most important thing in life is sometimes simply to be a good person...

**Remember...**

***“Learn to be a good person first...everything else will follow...”***

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

Virtually ALL creatures will go without you needing to harm them and you too will have good karma if you try this...high-frequency plug-in pest stopping plugs...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”

# Alligators

by Andrew Keatley

Putney Theatre Company at the Putney Arts Theatre

Although the experience is rewarding, *Alligators* is a tough watch, with adult themes and language an intrinsic part of the play. The intimate studio setting reveals a comfortable living room. Children's toys scattered on the rug, a baby photo on the bookshelf, and pictures suggest a happy middle-class family home.

However, Daniel and Sally find their predictable world increasingly turned upside down. As the story develops, the deftly constructed set stays the same, while their TV ingeniously shows the passage of time, as their certainties disintegrate, and their relationship is challenged by the events they face. The play throws a light, from an insider perspective, on the personal toll as one becomes a story, and on the waves that ripple out to the family and wider. Ultimately they engross the prurient community.

Amanda Benzecry's sympathetic direction means the play loses none of its dramatic effect, as "oh's" escape the audience as new developments are revealed. What and whom do we believe remains the dilemma.

Jim Dixon's performance as Daniel is outstanding. The happy husband and devoted dad, and empathetic teacher, is suddenly confronted with a series of unsettling unknowns, and his past re-interpreted as a stick to beat him with. Daniel's emotional collapse as events drive him to despair is disturbing but utterly convincing. Strong performances by Alexa Adam

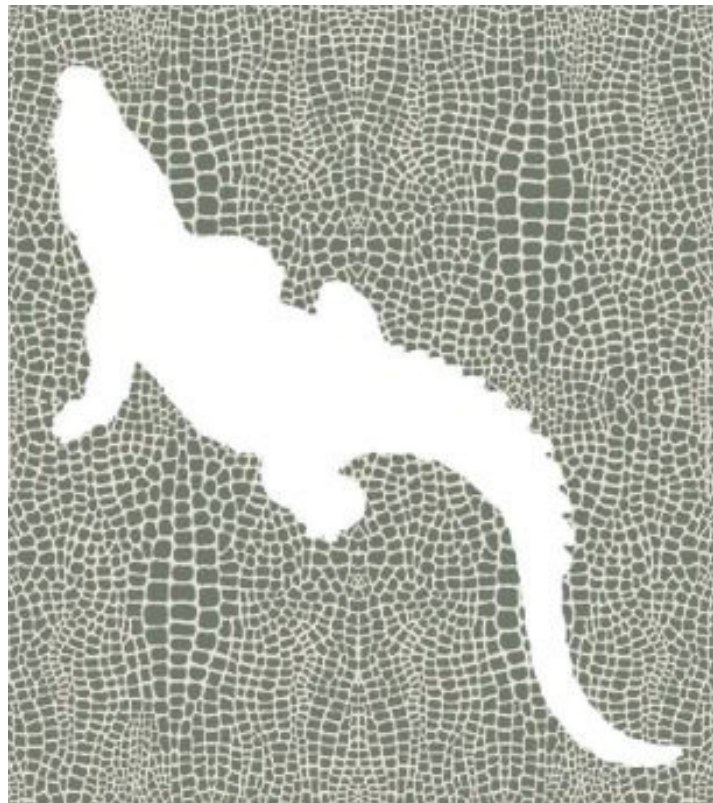
as Sally, and Demi Wallace as their daughter critically develop the story's twists and turns. Alexa admirably portrays a loving but exhausted mum, trying to keep normality for the children whilst supporting her husband. She is completely understandable; not least when her patience starts to run thin. Demi is convincing as the daughter, Genevieve, aware things are not right and trying to rationalise events that unsettle her happy home and schoolgirl life.

Lily Barrett plays Rachel, the solicitor, drafted in as events become more and more threatening. The character of Daniel, caring and emotional, all too human, contrasts with that of the lawyer Rachel, who has seen this before, knows the intricacies of the law, and the best way to develop a defence. Lily's Rachel might have difficulty showing emotion, but knows when to present an invoice.

Skilfully thought-provoking, *Alligators* is a play that is absolutely compelling.

Read Polly Davies' review at [www.markaspen.com/2025/02/19/alligators](http://www.markaspen.com/2025/02/19/alligators)

Photography by Steven Lippitt





## The Capulets and the Montagues

by Vincenzo Bellini, libretto by Felice Romani

English Touring Opera at the Hackney Empire and on tour until 26<sup>th</sup> April

Intrepid photojournalist Letizia Battaglia kept a record of the atrocities of the Sicilian Mafia in her “archive of blood”. Her horrific photographs inspired director Eloise Lally’s *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, not soft flowery balcony pictures associated with Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. Both Bellini and the Bard draw from an early Italian source, both fleshing out the same skeleton, but Bellini has no Nurse and no comedy, and all the early hostilities that inflame Capulet and Montague rivalry have already taken place.

The action of the opera is set within the base of the Capulet clan, in designer Lily Arnold’s 1960’s setting, a café-diner front for its cocaine smuggling racket. The sepia set presents a faded look, period detailed in its counter, bar stools and coffee machine.

During the *sinfonia* introduction, as clan members arrive the pecking order becomes clear. The hardened Capellio is top dog, the godfather to whom all defer. His walking-stick, a scar from past violence, is a handy weapon to supplement the ever-ready handgun. The waitress is Giulietta, the daughter of Capellio, whom he treats as a chattel to be traded to enhance his power.



Giulietta is a prize exhibit, wolf-whistled by the Capuleti men, but she is betrothed to Tebaldo, Capellio’s chief fixer. Tebaldo is a hard man, who yields to no-one, and Brenton Spiteri fires up the role with an intense bellicosity, yet suffuses it with the genuine but clumsy passion that Tebaldo feels for Giulietta. He is the antithesis of Shakespeare’s effete Paris, and Spiteri effortlessly extends his fine *spinto* tenor between the taut anger of the avenger and the ardent adoration of the would-be lover.



Capellio is as immovable as a rock-face, immured in this self-defeating attitude. [Timothy Nelson](#), whose sturdy baritone has commanding effect, exhibits in his body-language Capellio’s stiff resistance to his own feelings in his stubborn insistence that Giulietta will marry Tebaldo, now.

Romeo contacts the Capuleti, as an unnamed Montecchi representative, offering to end their feud. Tension ramps up, however, when he suggests that peace be guaranteed by the marriage of Romeo and Giulietta, which causes uproar. The idea that Romeo would be a second son for Capellio, inflames things further. Tension mounts as the small ensemble, whose presence colours the action, engulfs all in sound when the Capuleti call for war.



Later, tensions boil into violence when Romeo and the Montecchi storm the Capuleti diner just as the celebrations for the wedding of Giulietta and Tebaldo get underway. The slo-mo brawl, with guns, knives (and walking-stick) is timed perfectly with Bellini's music. It is a *tour de force* ... culminating in the throwing of a live Molotov cocktail!!

The jewel in this crowning production is the outstanding pairing of the lirico mezzo of Samantha Price's Romeo and the coloratura soprano of Jessica Cale's Giulietta, a cornucopia of *bel canto*.

We first see Romeo parleying for peace with the Capuleti from a telephone booth, underlining how far apart they are. There is a remarkable contrast between his earnest cavatina plea for reconciliation, and his machismo cabaletta when his approaches are strongly rejected. Cale silently acts Giulietta's bobby-socks off, but then when presented with her wedding dress, her *Quante volte*, asking how many times she must beg heaven for Romeo, goes to another level. Her smoothly sighing legato is exquisite. Then, when Romeo fruitlessly pleads for them to elope, their dazzling duet marries Price and Cale's voices in an idyllic whole.



Conductor Alphonse Cemin takes the ETO Orchestra on a journey of strength and intensity. The narratorial score is beautifully expressive, foregrounding individual instruments as Bellini paints the mood in tableaux where time stands still.

To a plangent cello solo, muted and misty pre-dawn light uncovers the level of destruction. A charred hole gapes in the rear wall of the diner, pipes dangle down. Giulietta wanders within the wreckage, stunned. Gingerly she takes the cold comfort of the sleeping potion. The distraught Romeo comes looking for her,

but suddenly comes face to face with Tebaldo. A powerful duet rides on the ensuing violent action between two men, incandescent with anger, grief and the lust for revenge, in virtuoso vocal fireworks.

Their combat abruptly ends as Giulietta's body is carried in on a flower-bedecked bier. Lally crafts a *coup de théâtre* as it begins to snow. Music, lighting and movement create a scene of overwhelming sombreness. After Romeo has made his final fatal mistake, and Giulietta wakes and her hopes turn to emotional devastation, their final cabaletta in each other's arms is heartbreaking.

Lally's *The Capulets and the Montagues* packs a visceral punch in a raw retelling of a story we thought we all knew.

Read Mark Aspen's review at [www.markaspen.com/2025/02/24/capulets-montagues](http://www.markaspen.com/2025/02/24/capulets-montagues)

Photography by Richard Hubert Smith

# St Mary's University

## St Mary's Endurance Performance Centre Celebrates Early Season Success

The Endurance Performance Centre (EPC) at St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU) has enjoyed a highly successful few weeks, showcasing outstanding performances across multiple prestigious British University and National events.

The [Endurance Performance Centre \(EPC\)](#) at St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU) has enjoyed a highly successful few weeks, showcasing outstanding performances across multiple prestigious British University and National events.



At the [BUCS Cross Country Championships](#) held in Cardiff, the senior Men's A team were led home by EPC athlete and current SMU student Matthew Pickering delivering a commendable finish in 13<sup>th</sup> place, with EPC students Frank McGrath and Sam Charig closely behind. All three making the top 20.

Fellow EPC student Mia Waldman secured a podium finish, placing 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Senior Women's A race. Overall SMU women's and men's teams finished 5<sup>th</sup> place.

The [BUCS Indoor Championships](#) held in Sheffield saw Sam Charig dominate his heat and semi-final, before executing an exciting winning strategy in the 1500m final. Mia Waldman continued her impressive form, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 3km final after leading and winning her heat and semi-final. EPC athletes Lola Sutton, Hannah Clark, Lottie McClaren and Orla Gregory made

the finals in their respective events, and set new personal bests, highlighting the depth of talent within the team.

At the [English National Cross Country Championships](#) held at Parliament Hill, Matthew Pickering and Frank McGrath achieved outstanding results, finishing 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> respectively in the Junior Men's race.

EPC athlete Amelia Quirk prevailed over the challenging conditions to finish 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Senior Women's race and EPC alumna Kate Estlea-Morris produced a strong performance in 13<sup>th</sup>. In the Senior Men's race, EPC alumnus Tom Butler finished 30<sup>th</sup> in a competitive field.

EPC alumnus Cameron Allen took the win at the [Battersea 10km](#) in a time of 28:46, achieving the fastest road 10k in the UK so far this year.

The [UK Athletics Indoor Track Championships](#) in Birmingham also saw EPC alumni Tom Randolph and Joe Wigfield finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> respectively in the 800m final.

Fellow alumna Revve Walcot-Nolan finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 1500m, with both Tom and Revee having been selected for GB at the upcoming [European Indoor Championships](#) in Apeldoorn, Netherlands.

St Mary's University and the EPC continue to be a leading force in endurance sports, fostering talent and achieving excellence on the national stage. These achievements underscore the dedication and hard work of the athletes and coaches at the Endurance Performance Centre.



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

# Join the garden recycling scheme or renew your subscription

From Richmond Council

We're now accepting garden waste subscriptions for 2025/26. Existing contracts are due to end on 31 March 2025. To continue receiving collections, you'll need to make a payment.

You can [make a quick and easy payment online](#).

If you already pay by Direct Debit and want to renew, you don't need to do anything. Payment will automatically be taken from you on 28 March 2025.

If you're an existing customer and payment's not received by 12 May 2025, we will not empty your bin.

## New stickerless system for 2025

From 3 March 2025, we no longer issue garden waste bin stickers.

Instead, the collection crews will use in-cab technology to identify addresses with an active garden waste contract.



To help make this new system work, it's important you follow these instructions:

- Write your **house name or number on the side of your bin**, so it's clearly visible
- Do not write it on your bin lid
- Put your bin directly outside your property for collection

The main benefits of this new system are:

- Your subscription will automatically be updated once you sign up to the service
- You don't need to wait for your sticker to arrive

## Fees

These fees are for the collection period of 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 inclusive:

- Aged under 75 years old: £90
- Aged 75 years old and over: £67

## Collections

Your garden recycling will be collected once a fortnight on your scheduled collection days throughout the whole year, except for two weeks from 5 to 16 January 2026.

If you only produce garden waste occasionally, you can [buy our garden sacks](#) and book a collection without a subscription.

# BUS-T UP! Councillor Wilson Slammed for Soapbox Rant

A heated row on social media has erupted in Twickenham after local Liberal Democrat councillor Michael Wilson intervened in a discussion about schoolchildren's behaviour on public transport, only to face a barrage of criticism for his dismissive response on the Whitton Village Facebook group bust up.

It all began when a local Resident posted about his experience on the H22 bus at Whitton Corner. The Resident, who walks with a cane, described how schoolchildren "pushed past all the old people, including me, nearly knocking me over. No manners! No respect!! This is the future of our nation."

Rather than expressing sympathy or addressing the specific issue, Cllr Wilson, who is the husband of Twickenham's Liberal Democrat MP Munira Wilson, responded by questioning the Resident's accuracy and accusing him of generational stereotyping. "Well, there isn't a Whitton School," Wilson shot back, before adding, "Why don't you send an email to the headmaster rather than putting a post on social media if you feel that strongly about it? I'm not entirely sure labelling an entire generation is particularly helpful."

This response set off a wave of criticism. One local resident pointed out that there is indeed a senior school at the end of Ross Road, adding, "but believe it's classed as Twickenham." Another resident suggested Wilson was simply being "cocky as usual."

The Resident himself responded with visible frustration, writing, "Thank you for the finer points and splitting hairs. Please do not assume it was easier for my generation. Born in 1960, started work at 9 years old, worked all my life, did an apprenticeship, went to college at night after work."

Rather than taking this on board, Wilson doubled down, using quotation marks to throw the Resident's own words back at him: "No manners. No respect. This is the future of our nation."

Many residents saw Wilson's intervention as an unhelpful attempt to shut down the debate. A resident accused him of deliberately misrepresenting the Resident's words, writing, "Why have you used quotation marks to quote him but not applied any context? Classic twisting the narrative to suit you." Another resident responded bluntly: "Oh dear, who popped you up on a soapbox?"

Other contributors pointed out that rudeness and poor behaviour on public transport is a long-running problem. It was suggested that schools should take responsibility and "address [it] in assembly for students/minors to be thoughtful to the older generation." Another resident recounted similar experiences: "The kids at Turin school are terrible. I've been pushed and shoved a lot on the 481. I walk with a stick as I have lots of problems and they won't give up the seats that are for disabled people."

But the exchange also touched on broader political and economic issues. Wilson made a thinly veiled reference to the ongoing housing crisis, writing, "I imagine if you ask them how they feel about a generation that could afford housing, a pretty good pension and a climate that nobody

worried about, I assume they may have some choice words.”

This remark was met with strong pushback: “All those children have the opportunity to purchase housing and secure a pretty good pension... what’s your point? Do you honestly think a single one of the kids running onto the H22 bus was considering the climate?”

For many, Wilson’s comment typifies a certain mindset—quick to blame older generations for economic difficulties while sidestepping the real drivers of house price inflation, such as high levels of immigration, which Wilson and his party have consistently supported. His wife, Munira Wilson MP, has openly advocated for an “inclusive” immigration policy and previously pushed back against government measures to curb overall numbers.

The spat has underscored growing intergenerational tensions in Britain, where pensioners grappling with rising costs and overstretched public services often find themselves blamed for issues they have little control over. However, it also prompts the question of whether local councillors like Wilson should spend less time on social media lectures and more time tackling real-world concerns. As one frustrated resident expressed, “We don’t need a councillor giving us a history lesson on pensions. We need someone who will ensure elderly people aren’t being pushed aside just to catch a bus.”

## Next week at Richmond Council

On Monday evening, the **Adult Social Services, Health and Housing Committee** meet to discuss; (1) adult social care annual report, (2) quarterly budget Monitoring, (3) revenue budget and fees & charges for 2025/26, Richmond housing associations annual audit report, (4) Richmond sexual and reproductive health strategy, (5) joint health overview and scrutiny committee updates. The meeting commences at 7.00 pm, at York House, Twickenham.

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

On Tuesday evening, the **Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Committee** will meet with the following items on the agenda: (1) domestic retrofit report, (2) the Richmond upon Thames climate and nature strategy, the Richmond adaptation and resilience strategy, the Richmond retrofit strategy, (3) housing delivery test, (4) leisure infrastructure plan, (5) arboriculture contract, (6) quarterly monitoring report, (7) budget report 2025/26. The meeting commences at 7.00 pm, at York House, Twickenham.

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

On Thursday afternoon, **The Finance, Policy and Resources Committee** will meet to discuss; (1) connect to work scheme for the disabled, (2) consultation on the empty home and second home property premiums, (2) corporate monitoring report, (3) budget report 2025/26 including fees & charges, (4) council tax for 2025/26, (5) Richmond capital program and funding review, (6) treasury management strategy. The meeting commences at 7.00 pm, at York House, Twickenham.

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

How to participate: We encourage all members of the public who live or work in the borough to participate. You can submit questions or speak on an item on the agenda. To ask a question, submit it by noon two working days in advance. To speak, you must register by noon the working day before the meeting.

For further details on how to participate, please follow the link [HERE](#)

# British Beekeepers' Association response to honey authenticity results

Britain's leading charity representing hobbyist beekeepers has responded to new evidence raising significant questions about the composition of blended honey samples imported to the UK and sold at supermarket retailers.

In a recent authenticity test, 96% of samples of imported honey from supermarkets were found to be 'atypical' for honey, compared to 100% of UK beekeeper samples that were deemed 'typical'.

The Honey Authenticity Network UK (HAN UK) sent 30 honey samples for testing last month, with 24 out of the 25 jars of imported honey not meeting the required standards. All five of the samples sent from UK beekeepers passed the test, as well as one supermarket honey, which was also British honey. The test was carried out at The Celvia research institute in Estonia. Celvia has developed a DNA Metagenomic test in which the composition of samples is compared against a database of more than 500 genuine honeys.

Diane Drinkwater, chair of the British Beekeepers' Association – which has a membership of nearly 30,000 beekeepers across England and Wales – said she was *'disappointed, but not surprised'* at the outcome of the results, adding:

*"Our members are small, local producers of artisan honey. Whilst the amounts that they can produce each year will vary due to the seasonable nature of the product, our methods of extraction are unique, and each jar will have its own distinct flavour and texture. We will continue to champion the benefits of local honey in an era of increasing debate over the composition of imported honey sold in the UK".*

According to the International Trade Centre, the UK imported an average of 50,917 tonnes of honey in 2023, of which 39,405 tons were from China. Jars and bottles of honey can be bought off the shelf for as little as 69p, but often feature a blend of

products from a number of different countries. Honey adulteration can take many forms, with one of the most common methods being to bulk out honey with cheap syrups made from corn, rice and other crops.

These new results follow similar outcomes from imported honey samples in Europe, with 80% of samples from Germany, 62% of samples from Finland, and 100% of samples from Austria failing the same test.

Lynne Ingram, BBKA Honey Ambassador and Chair of the Honey Authenticity Network UK said:

*"It is disappointing that yet again, samples of cheap imported honeys in UK supermarkets have been found to be 'atypical' for genuine honey. All British honeys in the tests were found to be genuine.*

*"The lack of appropriate monitoring, testing and enforcement by UK government has led to the UK being flooded with cheap honey, much of it from China.*

*"Consumers wanting authentic honey are advised to be guided by price as very cheap honey is unlikely to be genuine; to read labels carefully and choose honeys that are not a blend. Ideally buy British honey.*

*"We would also call on more UK supermarkets to stock British honey."*



# Heartless! Council Hounds Mum for £1,300 While Ignoring Help Rules

By James Knight

Liberal Democrat controlled Richmond Council has come under fierce criticism for its refusal to grant discretionary Council Tax relief under **Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992**, leaving some of the borough's most vulnerable residents in dire financial straits.

Campaigners, opposition councillors, and advocacy groups have raised concerns that the council is failing in its duty to consider applications for hardship relief, even in cases of extreme financial distress. This refusal has sparked renewed debate over local government responsibilities and the fairness of council tax enforcement.

## The Human Cost of Policy Rigidity

One such case was recently highlighted by Councillor Niki Crookdake of the Green Party, who recounted the harrowing ordeal of a single mother caring for her disabled son. Despite being eligible for a full council tax reduction, she missed the deadline to apply. Now, instead of offering relief, the council is actively pursuing her for a debt of £1,300, deducting payments from her already meagre benefits.

*"These are the residents, Councillor Brown, who are forced to use the cost of living programme, who need to access the household support fund, food banks and warm spaces. You committed to look after those that need it most. Well, the current policy doesn't provide flexibility to write off unclaimed reductions, so change it"* Crookdake declared during a council debate.

Research shows that Richmond's approach starkly contrasts with many other local authorities that actively advertise and process Section 13A applications, providing much-needed relief in cases of exceptional hardship.

## A Question of Legality?

The Local Government Ombudsman has made clear that councils must at least consider discretionary tax relief applications. Failure to do so, or even to inform residents of their right to apply, may constitute maladministration.

A previous Freedom of Information request by Citizens Advice Richmond unearthed damning evidence that Richmond Council does not have a budget allocated for Section 13A relief, nor does it appear to have a formalised process for handling applications. This revelation raises serious legal and ethical concerns about whether the council is unlawfully ignoring its statutory obligations. It also undermines Councillor Brown's claim to be creating a "fairer" council.

## How Residents Can Fight Back

With cost-of-living pressures mounting, affected residents are being urged to take action. Legal experts advise that those who believe they have been unfairly denied relief should escalate their cases through official channels:

1. **Challenge Council Tax Liability via the Valuation Tribunal** – Residents refused relief can appeal to the independent Valuation Tribunal, which can review council tax liability and make legally binding decisions.
2. **Appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman** – If Richmond Council has failed to consider a discretionary relief application or refused to engage with claimants, affected residents should lodge a formal complaint with the Ombudsman on the grounds of maladministration.

Opposition councillors have also seized on the controversy, demanding an urgent review of the council's tax relief policies. The Green Party has proposed a budget amendment to fund additional officers to process discretionary relief applications, ensuring that residents in crisis are not left to fend for themselves.

Public pressure is mounting, and Richmond's leaders may soon be forced to act. In the meantime, affected residents should approach pro-bono advice agencies to help them use every available legal mechanism to fight back against what many call an unjust, cruel, and unlawful policy.

# Mike Bell, Chair of South West London Integrated Care Board, visits Princess Alice Hospice

On Thursday 20 February Princess Alice Hospice welcomed Mike Bell, Chair of South West London Integrated Care Board, along with senior members of NHS England and Hospice UK. The purpose of the visit was to find out more about the palliative and end of life care provided by the Hospice and to discuss ways of working together to support local people facing life limiting illness.



Mike's visit began with a tour of the Hospice with Nigel Seymour, Chief Executive of Princess Alice Hospice, when he was able to chat with staff and volunteers on the In-Patient Unit, along with members of the Hospice at Home community team.

**Mike Bell, Chair of South West London Integrated Care Board, said:** *'Princess Alice Hospice is a vital provider of palliative and end of life services in the*

*Kingston and Richmond boroughs. At any one time it's serving for up to 1,000 people in a care area covering over 600 square miles. Most people are cared for in their own homes or care settings, but the quality of the complex, specialist care delivered to smaller numbers on the In-Patient Unit was plain to see. It's great to see their rapid response car out on the road too, a good example of how they help prevent hospital admissions and can provide a better experience for people in their own homes.'*

After the tour, Mike Bell joined a round-table conversation hosted by Nigel Seymour, along with Richard Meddings, Chair of NHS England, Duncan Burton, Chief Nursing Officer for England, and Toby Porter, CEO of Hospice UK. The group discussed ways the hospital and hospice sectors can work together to help achieve the government's ambition of shifting more health services from hospitals to the community. **Nigel Seymour, Chief Executive of Princess Alice Hospice, said:** *"We know this is how most people want to be supported and that it leads to better outcomes for them and their families, allowing them to make memories and spend precious time together. Mike and the South West London Integrated Care Board have been very supportive of our work and we were grateful to have the opportunity to discuss with him the ways we can continue to work together to provide the best possible palliative and end of life care for local people."*

*(Photo left to right, above: Lesley Munro, Deputy CEO and Director of Patients and Communities, Princess Alice Hospice; Nigel Seymour, CEO of Princess Alice Hospice; Richard Bell, Chair of NHS England; Duncan Burton, Chief Nursing Officer of England, and Mike Bell, Chair of South West London Integrated Care Board).*





# England Team To Play Italy At Allianz Stadium

England men's head coach Steve Borthwick has named his starting XV to play Italy at Allianz Stadium on Sunday 9 March (kick-off 3pm, live on ITV1).

There are three changes to the starting XV who defeated Scotland in round three of the 2025 Guinness Six Nations with Fraser Dingwall, Elliot Daly, and Jamie George all included.

George will win his 100th England cap when he takes the field having made his debut in 2015 against France. The hooker becomes England's seventh male Test centurion and takes his spot in the front row alongside fellow vice-captain Ellis Genge at loosehead prop and Will Stuart at tighthead. At lock, England captain Maro Itoje is again paired with Ollie Chessum.

The back row sees Tom Curry on the blindside flank, Ben Earl at openside and Tom Willis at No.8 to complete the pack. In the half-backs, Alex Mitchell is at scrum-half with Fin Smith at 10.

In midfield, Dingwall is named at inside centre, earning his first start of the Championship, with Ollie Lawrence at 13. In the back three, Ollie Sleightholme starts on the left wing, with Tommy Freeman on the right, and Daly comes into the starting line-up at full-back.

On a 6-2 split bench, Luke Cowan-Dickie, Fin Baxter, Joe Heyes, Ted Hill, Chandler Cunningham-South, Ben Curry, Jack van Poortvliet, and Marcus Smith are named as replacements.

*"England versus Italy is always an exciting fixture to be part of," said Borthwick. "Playing in front of our home supporters at Allianz Stadium is something we're really looking forward to, and we're sure it will be a fantastic game of rugby."*

Commenting on Jamie George's milestone, he added: *"Reaching 100 caps is a wonderful achievement that reflects Jamie's talent, dedication and hard work. He has consistently given his all while wearing an England shirt and the team couldn't be prouder of his incredible milestone."*

## ENGLAND v ITALY

**Sunday 9 March 2025**

Allianz Stadium, Twickenham

Kick-off: 3pm (GMT)



15. Elliot Daly (Saracens, 71 caps)
14. Tommy Freeman (Northampton Saints, 18 caps)
13. Ollie Lawrence (Bath Rugby, 34 caps)
12. Fraser Dingwall (Northampton Saints, 2 caps)
11. Ollie Sleightholme (Northampton Saints, 7 caps)
10. Fin Smith (Northampton Saints, 9 caps)
9. Alex Mitchell (Northampton Saints, 21 caps)

### Replacements:

16. Luke Cowan-Dickie (Sale Sharks, 47 caps)
17. Fin Baxter (Harlequins, 8 caps)
18. Joe Heyes (Leicester Tigers, 10 caps)
19. Ted Hill (Bath Rugby, 3 caps)

1. Ellis Genge (Bristol Bears, 69 caps) – vice-captain
2. Jamie George (Saracens, 99 caps) – vice-captain
3. Will Stuart (Bath Rugby, 48 caps)
4. Maro Itoje (Saracens, 91 caps) – captain
5. Ollie Chessum (Leicester Tigers, 26 caps)
6. Tom Curry (Sale Sharks, 59 caps)
7. Ben Earl (Saracens, 40 caps)
8. Tom Willis (Saracens, 4 caps)
  
20. Chandler Cunningham-South (Harlequins, 13 caps)
21. Ben Curry (Sale Sharks, 9 caps)
22. Jack van Poortvliet (Leicester Tigers, 16 caps)
23. Marcus Smith (Harlequins, 42 caps)

# Match Preview: Brentford v Aston Villa

Written by Brentford Football Club

Analysis, team news, match officials and more. Here's everything you need to know ahead of Brentford's Premier League game against Aston Villa at Gtech Community Stadium on Saturday (5.30pm kick-off GMT)

Brentford will be looking to continue their good run of form in the Premier League on Saturday evening (5.30pm kick-off GMT), when Aston Villa visit Gtech Community Stadium live on *Sky Sports*.

Thomas Frank's side have lost just one of their last five matches, with their most recent points coming courtesy of a 1-1 draw with Everton last Wednesday. As for Aston Villa, their trip to west London falls between their two Champions League Round of 16 games against Club Brugge.

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

## Pre-Match Analysis

Stephen Gillett, Playmaker Stats: Villa come alive when the ball goes dead

Brentford are currently on the joint-longest winning run in the Premier League on their travels, but the Bees' focus will snap back to their home form at Gtech Community Stadium against Aston Villa this Saturday.

The most prolific side in the top flight on home soil this term with 30 goals, the Bees had to settle for a 1-1 draw against in-form Everton on their own patch last weekend and Thomas Frank's side will aim to bag three points against the Villans prior to back-to-back away trips to Bournemouth and Newcastle.

Frank's team talk is perhaps halfway written given the last raucous encounter between the two teams at the Gtech back in December 2023. An injury-ravaged Brentford looked on course for a valuable victory thanks to Keane Lewis-Potter's first Premier League goal, but the hosts were derailed by Ben Mee's contentious 71st-minute red card.

Alex Moreno's equaliser and a late match-winner from Ollie Watkins turned the game on its head, and the lingering memory of a full-blown melee in Mark Flekken's goal after the former Brentford forward's 85th-minute decider could feature in Frank's pre-match rallying call.



Aside from heaping cognitive dissonance upon Brentford fans who cheered every one of Watkins' 49 goals in 143 games for the Bees between 2017 and 2020, Villa's match winner that day serves as a clear warning regarding one of their key strengths: set-pieces.

Watkins' winner was a close-range header from a corner-kick routine involving a classy flick from Boubacar Kamara and if you fast forward to this season, Unai Emery's side top the Premier League charts for goals (13) from free-kicks, corners and throw-ins.

Both Lucas Digne and Yuri Tielemans rank in the Premier League's top 10 for assists from crosses this season, with four apiece, and Brentford will need to utilise their own street smarts to counter the Midlanders' considerable threat when the ball goes dead.

Another potential danger for the Bees stems from Villa's ability to cause problems with the ball at their feet.

Only Man City (260) and Brighton (257) have completed more successful dribbles than Villa (256) this season in the top flight, and Emery's side have drawn more fouls (371) than any team - John McGinn (54) and Tielemans (46) in the top 10 in the division for fouls suffered.

Morgan Rogers' rapid evolution into one of English football's most exciting wingers has been a highlight of the current campaign, and the former Man City academy graduate (52) is one of only five Premier League players to complete 50+ successful dribbles this season.

Add into the mix new loan signing Marcus Rashford's four successful take-ons per 90 in 2024/25 and Villa will be a handful in 1v1s.

There are statistical chinks in Villa's armour for Brentford to exploit, though.

No team has conceded more Premier League goals to fast breaks than Villa's seven so far this season and Brentford's quicksilver frontline of Mbeumo-Wissa-Schade, along with creator-in-chief Mikkel Damsgaard, could get joy if they spring forward at the right times.

Furthermore, this season only three teams (Leicester, Wolves and Southampton) have shipped more away goals than Villa (27) in the Premier League and this will be music to the ears of a Brentford side with a league-leading goal tally at home.

With top talent on the pitch, astute tacticians in either dugout and a Brentford side looking to reassert themselves at home, everything points to an intriguing encounter.

## Scout Report

Dan Long, *Sky Sports*: Villa's fight to secure European football

Aston Villa were on a run of one win in eight Premier League games when Brentford visited Villa Park in December. The attempt to follow last term's fourth-place finish had started so well - then dropped off considerably.

*"Our challenge is to fight on Wednesday with Brentford and see how our level is,"* Unai Emery told



Sky Sports after a 3-0 defeat to Chelsea three days earlier. *“There are still matches to play and we are going to recover our confidence, trying to build the team. We have to try to be better than we are now.”*

His call was answered as three goals in 13 first-half minutes set his side on their way to a 3-1 win over the Bees. But it did not spark a dramatic return to form and they

took seven points from the next 15 on offer, having scraped past lowly Southampton and lost to clubs with similar ambitions in Nottingham Forest and Newcastle.

There was certainly more transfer talk and rumours for fans to get their teeth stuck into during this year’s January transfer window compared to 12 months earlier - and not many clubs were as active as Villa were – and perhaps needed to be.

In addition to the 12 players that departed on loan for the remainder of the season, three were sold: Jaden Philogene to Ipswich, Diego Carlos to Fenerbahçe and Jhon Durán to Al-Nassr.

When factoring in the signings of Donyell Malen and Andre Garcia from Borussia Dortmund and Levante respectively, Villa ended the window having spent less than they brought in.

The loan signings they managed to complete were impressive, too. They strengthened the backline with Chelsea centre-back Axel Disasi and managed to bring three-time Champions League winner Marco Asensio in from Paris Saint-Germain. However, one story dominated the headlines: Marcus Rashford’s future. For the time being, that is at Villa Park.

The forward’s apparent differences with Manchester United boss Ruben Amorim led to him missing eight Premier League games between 15 December and 26 January and, on 2 February he left on loan for the rest of the season. He has already played four league games and provided both assists for the aforementioned Asensio in the 2-1 win over Chelsea on 22 February.

What might become integral to any permanent move, though, is whether Villa manage to secure European football for next season in what remains of this.

Along with champions-elect Liverpool, Unai Emery’s side have played 28 league games, which is one more than each of the remaining 18 teams.

A six-point gap to third-placed Nottingham Forest might not seem like much right now, but it could soon look a little more challenging, particularly when you factor in they have won just once in the last seven league games. There are other avenues through which they could qualify - namely the FA Cup and the Champions League - but that would require a first major trophy since their Coca-Cola Cup win in 1995/96.

Emery has already conceded his side are “not a contender” to win the FA Cup, which probably tells you all you need to know about what he thinks of their Champions League hopes.

Therefore, finishing as high in the table as possible is imperative, even though the amount of European places is yet to be decided, and as many as seven English clubs could play in the Champions League next term.

But with Brighton, Nottingham Forest, Southampton, Newcastle, Man City, Fulham, Bournemouth, Tottenham and Manchester United to play after the trip to west London, the end of the season is not going to be plain sailing.

## **In the Dugout**

Unai Emery

Having taken charge of more than 1,000 matches across the last 21 years, Unai Emery is one of the most experienced managers currently working in the Premier League.

After a career as a midfielder, mostly playing in the second tier of Spanish football, the Spaniard had a pretty quick transition into management, having suffered a serious knee injury in his early 30s.

He helped now-defunct Lorca Deportiva earn promotion in 2004/05 and got Almería into La Liga for the first time in 2006/07, before an incredible eighth-place finish the following campaign.

In 2008, his exploits saw him move on to Valencia, whom he guided to three straight third-placed finishes from 2010 to 2012, before a forgettable six-month spell in Russia with Spartak Moscow. He returned to Spain in January 2013 and guided Sevilla to three successive Europa League titles.

Two years and seven trophies with Paris Saint-Germain followed, with Emery then trusted by the Arsenal board to become the successor to Arsène Wenger, which was, to an extent, a poisoned chalice.

The Europa League king guided the Gunners to the final in 2019, where they were beaten by Chelsea in Baku, Azerbaijan, but he was unable to help them finish higher than fifth for the first time in four seasons.

He was sacked after 18 months in November 2019 and appointed by Villarreal in July 2020, with - you’ve guessed it - a fourth Europa League triumph following 10 months later, by way of a penalty shoot-out win over Manchester United in Gdańsk, Poland.

The 53-year-old turned down an approach by Newcastle United in November 2021, but came back to England to replace Steven Gerrard at Villa Park in October 2022. He signed a new contract until the summer of 2027 last April, then another extension until the summer of 2029 the following month.



# South London Parking Wardens Stop Issuing Tickets

Forced by 'penny-pinching' employer, wardens across four boroughs will stop issuing tickets from today



More than 200 parking wardens and environmental officers across four London Boroughs are due to stop issuing tickets as a form of industrial action from today [Monday 3rd March].

This is the continuation of a dispute which has seen GMB members take 14 days of strike action since November.

The action is being taken by wardens in Wandsworth, Richmond, Lambeth and Kingston,

and will continue indefinitely or until APCOA agree to settle the dispute.

Members of GMB, the union for outsourced workers, voted last year to take action over a slew of workplace issues, including:

- Still not being offered a fair rise in pay talks that have lasted months
- Leading the members on for months and not negotiating in good faith
- Still no recognition agreed for contracts in Kingston and Richmond
- Harassment and intimidation of GMB members

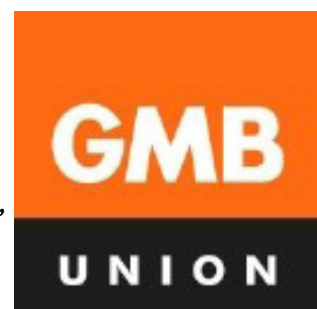
## **Alex Etches, GMB Regional Organiser said:**

*“APCOA is refusing to settle this dispute, which is forcing our members to take this unprecedented action.*

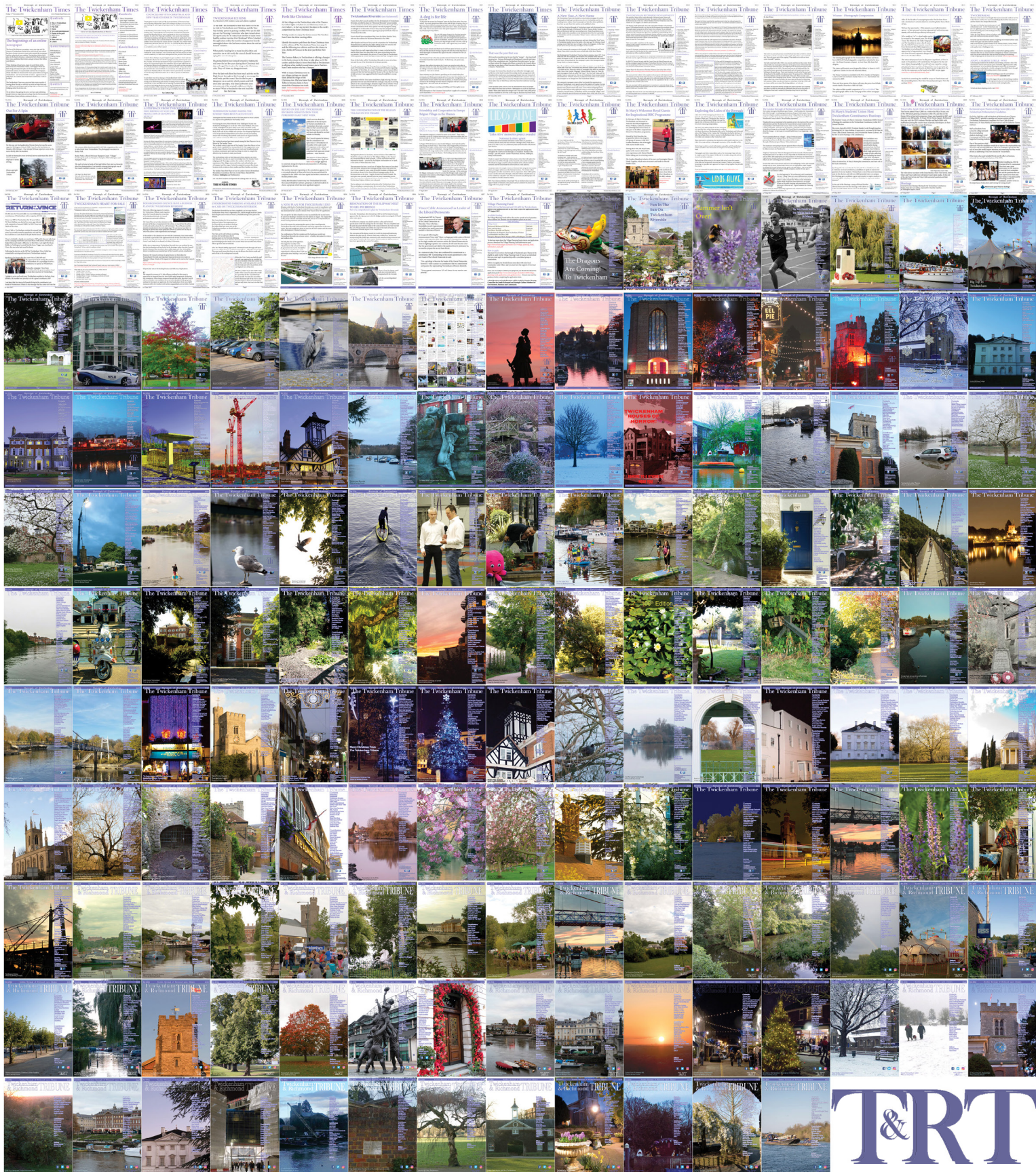
*“Despite this type of industrial action never having been tried before, we are predicting complete disfunction when it comes to traffic and parking across South London.*

*“Our members meanwhile won’t be losing any pay, but solely costing this privateer and the local authorities, who are yet to learn that workers are the ones that make these contracts run.*

*“If APCOA refuse to settle this dispute, our members have shown their resolve to finally shake off the penny-pinching, vampire-like bosses that impoverish us all.”*



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**Published by:**

Twickenham & Richmond Tribune (in association with World InfoZone Limited)

Registered in England & Wales

Reg No 10549345

The Twickenham Tribune is registered with the ICO under the Data Protection Act, Reg No ZA224725

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