

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 Staines area Saturday 22 to Friday 28 March

The lines in the **Staines** area will be **closed from Saturday 22 to Friday 28 March** due to maintenance work.

Due to the diverted services, some services via **Wimbledon** on **Saturday** will be **revised**.

Saturday

- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will be **revised** to depart **London Waterloo** earlier. These services will be diverted between **Clapham Junction and Virginia Water** and will call additionally at **Surbiton, Weybridge, Addlestone and Chertsey**.
- **London Waterloo to Weybridge via Staines** services will terminate at **Hounslow**.
- Additional services will run between **London Waterloo and Hounslow via Richmond**.
- **Buses** will run between **Hounslow and Virginia Water via Staines**.
- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will be diverted after **Twickenham** and will terminate at **Hounslow**.
- **Buses** will run between **Hounslow and Windsor via Staines**.

Sunday

- A **revised** service will run between **London Waterloo and Hounslow via Brentford and Richmond**.
- **Buses** will run between **Hounslow and Ascot via Staines**. (These **buses** will **not** stop at **Longcross**).
- A **revised** service will run between **Ascot and Reading**.
- **Buses** will run between **Hounslow and Windsor via Staines**.
- **Buses** will run between **Hounslow and Woking via Staines**.
- The afternoon and evening **London Waterloo to Kingston via Hounslow** services will run **all day** and will terminate at **Hounslow**.

Monday to Friday

- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will terminate at **Staines**.
- **Buses** will run between **Staines and Windsor**.



The Tree Agency

darryl parkin

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Local Picture Postcard Column - Part 293

Where Are These Houses?

By Alan Winter

I was handed three different postcards of houses last week in the hope that we could identify their whereabouts. I am going to call them Postcards 1 2 and 3 so we can follow them in this column.

They were all published by Bedford Studios with an address at 72 Waldegrave Road, Teddington. This address is printed on the reverse of each card and one of them was posted in 1916 and so I was having to go back over 100 years to try to locate them.

Not recognising any of them, I called in a bit of help from the local postcard collecting fraternity and was given a start point by Howard Webb (thanks Howard) who came up with the following details.

“T.R. Bedford was a very prolific publisher at the beginning of the last century. He specialised in commissioned portraits of people’s homes which were then printed onto blank postcards for the householders to send to whoever they wished.” Bedford Studios covered the whole of London and even further afield by advertising in selected magazines and newspapers. Despite the studios being based in Teddington, Howard had never seen a postcard they had taken of a local house and neither had I.

So, the search had to be spread wider and I had to call in some more help! I put the photos on various postcard and photograph identification websites with the hope that someone out there might recognise their location.

Results were interesting, with one probable result, one definite result and postcard number 2 still a mystery.

Postcard Number 1 was an ivy clad detached house with a lady standing at the gate holding a baby. There were two additional but key elements to the photograph which I had failed to spot. Someone managed to blow the photo up to a size where they could read the name over the door. It said ‘Lyme Regis’ This brought someone else to the party who thought that they recognised it in a street of similar houses in New Malden. This brought the added information that there was a house called Lyme Regis in the 1911 census for Coombe Gardens in New Malden. It was occupied by the Inglis family at the time and the sign in the window says “Room to Rent” indicating that it was a boarding house at the time. It seems a very likely “probable to me”.





Postcard Number 2 has had a few suggestions that it may be in the Tulse Hill or Hornsey Rise areas as there were/are similar houses built in that style. When searching for these houses it may well be that they have been knocked down or bombed but are no longer there and memories do not go back that far of course.

Postcard Number 3: We hit the jackpot with this one. This house is not only still there but here is also a colour photo of it taken last week. It is a house named 'Hatfield' and is number 55 Cavendish Road, Clapham Park, South London. The house has had the ivy removed since the original postcard was photographed as you can see. It stands today on the corner of Cavendish Road and Abbeyville Roads and sits on the A205 which is the South Circular Road. My thanks go to Wilfred Ptolemy for sorting this one out for me.



So, an interesting few days of detective work but we didn't do too badly.

It's today! The first local postcard fair of the year will take place in the Baptist Church in Church Road

Teddington. Open at 10.00 until 4.00. 14 dealers selling tens of thousands of postcards as well as ephemera, stamps, photos and coins will ensure that you can browse happily for hours. Light refreshments will be served all day.

My tables are at the end of the hall by the stage.

If you have any postcards for sale, please come and see me. I also have large quantities of local area postcards covering the Twickenham, Richmond, Hamptons, Teddington and Kingston areas.

See you there!

CrusaderTravel



020 8744 0474

crusadertravel.com

Escapology Experts

info@crusadertravel.com

Your friendly local Travel Agency
established in Twickenham since 1966

With over 50 years experience we pride ourselves on being able to offer an unrivalled service with attention to detail. Come and have a chat with us in our cosy office off the Church Street Square, we are open 6 days a week from 11am until 6pm (Closed Sunday)



The future of Allianz Stadium

From England Rugby



Allianz Stadium has been the home of England Rugby for over a century, becoming a cornerstone of the sport and a highlight for fans each year.

As the governing body for rugby union in England, the Rugby Football Union (RFU) reinvests all revenue into the game to support its growth at every level. Like all businesses though, we face financial challenges, which ultimately impact our ability to sustain rugby's growth. With Allianz Stadium generating around 85% of our revenue, maximising and investing in this key asset is essential.

To address this, we've developed a vision to enhance the stadium as a world-class venue for sport and entertainment, and in turn generate more income all while becoming a valued local asset.

- [See our Vision](#)
- [Take our Survey](#)
- [Attend an event](#)

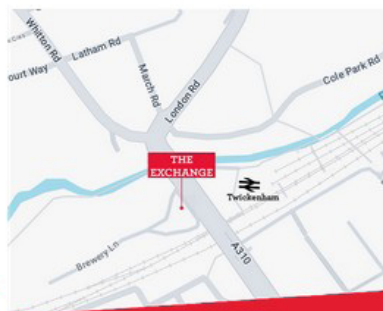
JOIN US

Building on our previous engagement with the community on the future of Allianz Stadium, we would like to invite you to meet with us at one of our events to hear about our vision first-hand. Please feel free to drop in at any of the below times:



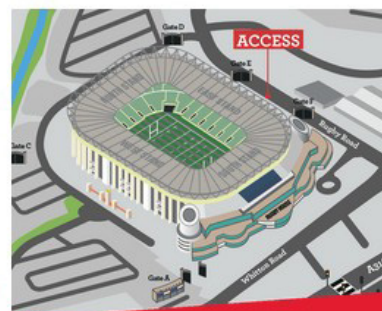
Event 1

Tuesday 25 March, 4pm – 8pm, The Clubhouse Bar, East Stand, Allianz Stadium, 200 Whitton Road, Twickenham TW2 7BA



Event 2

Wednesday 26 March, 5pm – 8pm, The Exchange, Twickenham, 75 London Road, Twickenham TW1 1BE



Event 3

Saturday 29 March, 10am – 4pm, The Clubhouse Bar, East Stand, Allianz Stadium, 200 Whitton Road, Twickenham TW2 7BA

To access the events at Allianz Stadium, please enter via the gates between Gate E and F.

We hope you can join us at one of these events. However, if you are unable to attend in person, please be aware that we will not be sharing anything that isn't already on the website right now.

While it is too early to share any images of what the stadium might look like, these events will offer the chance to hear from the RFU about what we are hoping to achieve and how we have taken on board your feedback.

Once you've had a chance to read our vision for the future, you may be interested in exploring in more detail the transport measures we propose to improve travel to and from the stadium.

More information [HERE](#)

News from Holy Trinity Church, Twickenham

Gardening Socials

Come and be part of the Holy Trinity gardening gang during their spring meets. Gardening mornings will be running from 10.30am-12.30pm on the following Saturdays (please bring along gloves and tools if you have them): March 29, Saturday 17 May

Foodbank Focus: March

We received the following message from Lynne at the Foodbank this week:

'We're getting busier at the foodbank and are low on many things, even basics such as tinned veg, fruit and soup - the only thing we have plenty of is tinned fish! We have seen a rise in the number of people visiting the food bank for their first time: it is concerning that more people are needing us, but so glad we can go a small way towards helping out.'

[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

Supporting Local Economic Growth Through Changes to Street Works Management

By Jonathan Hulley, Conservative Parliamentary Spokesperson, Twickenham Constituency

I welcome the recent inquiry by the Transport Select Committee into the impact of street works on our communities, including Twickenham.

As this inquiry progresses, I sincerely hope that the Labour government will give proper consideration to the broader economic implications of street works, particularly in supporting economic growth and accelerating house building targets.

A local highway network that functions efficiently, without unnecessary and avoidable congestion, is fundamental to supporting economic prosperity.



In my view, enabling local authorities, such as Richmond Council, to support the delivery of the Government's economic ambitions is fundamental to progress. This includes improving the experience for residents and road users by addressing these street work issues.

While I recognise the essential role of utility works in ensuring network connectivity and safety, there is a considerable imbalance between utility companies' statutory entitlements and local authorities' ability to effectively maintain roads and facilitate smooth traffic.

Consequently, I align myself with the increasing number of voices advocating for change regarding how, why, and when utility companies excavate our roads.

Key Proposals for Reform

1. Enhanced Role for Industry Regulators

Utility companies may technically comply with street works legislation; however, they often lack a fundamental focus on minimising congestion and communicating effectively with stakeholders, including the public. I aim to bring street works performance under the authority of industry regulators to drive the necessary cultural change, benefiting both the public and the wider economy.

2. Reform of Immediate Works Classification

I propose the introduction of a "deferred start immediate activity" category for utility companies that are aware of immediate works prior to commencement. This change would benefit all parties, particularly the public, as it would improve advance notice of works, enhance collaborative working opportunities, and create substantial financial savings.

3. Enhanced Active Travel Considerations

Current legislation prioritises vehicle volume and congestion metrics while neglecting pedestrians and other road users, such as cyclists. I propose that the designation criteria for traffic-sensitive streets should incorporate considerations for active travel. The existing criteria for footpath traffic sensitivity, based on pedestrian volume, are unachievable except in busy city centres.

4. Reform of Defective Apparatus Regulations

The legislation and guidance concerning Defective Apparatus under Section 81 (NRSWA), including drain covers, should be revised to specify clear timelines for utilities to repair any defective apparatus, along with appropriate penalties for non-compliance. Consistent intervention levels that align with highway authority policies would remove any ambiguity.



I know that local authorities receive complaints about defective utility covers causing disturbances; however, repairs are often postponed indefinitely. Highway Authorities can only act in emergencies, which leads to many drain covers deteriorating and causing noise nuisances. Prompt repairs and clear guidelines will enhance road safety and reliability, thereby supporting the government's priorities for economic growth and community welfare well-being.

Implementation of Optimum Works Durations

Current legislation favours utility companies over local authorities. The requirement for a 'reasonable' period for works offers little incentive for the prompt completion of street works. Implementing mechanisms to shorten this 'reasonable' period when works can be completed more swiftly would reduce unnecessary network occupation and disruption, as well as address public complaints about inactive work sites. Furthermore, reducing work durations will minimise disruptions, supporting economic productivity and efficient housing development.

Enhanced Communications for On-Site Delays

I support the requirement for mandatory improved on-site signage that clearly explains delays and identifies the type of utility involved. The current signage requirements are inadequate, resulting in numerous complaints. Enhanced signage would enhance public understanding and reduce frustration.

I believe that the changes I have outlined above will enhance public trust in utility companies and assist local authorities in addressing those road works that often seem to go on forever.

HAMPTON CHORAL SOCIETY

BRAHMS GERMAN REQUIEM

Saturday 29 March 2025, 7.30pm

**Musical Director Emma Warren
with professional soloists & musicians**

**St James's Church, St James's Road
Hampton Hill, TW12 1DQ**

**Tickets: £15 (Adults), £7 (Under 16's)
Box Office: 020 8941 5394
on the door: contactless, card, cheque, cash
www.hamptonchoral.org.uk**

The Royal Parks

We're urging visitors to take extreme care due to a heightened risk of wildfires in London, due to seasonally high temperatures and dry ground.

Please remember that BBQs are not permitted in the parks, and we ask to make sure that cigarette ends are properly disposed of.

The start of the Spring Equinox

You'll see a mix of differing colours in the Royal Parks in the coming weeks as new life blooms



Royal Parks Police

On Saturday 22nd March we will be at Pen Ponds Cafe in Richmond Park between 10:30 - 12:30 offering free bike marking! Come along to get your bike registered.



The Lights are Working on Twickenham Green but what about CCTV?

Teresa Read

It has taken the Council a long time to instal lights along the path across Twickenham Green – and make sure that they work on a regular basis. In fact, I suggested lights and CCTV on the Green to the Council Parks department twenty years ago, but better late than never. However, there is still no CCTV so anti-social behaviour at night is not recorded although there have been one or two reports recently about night problems on Twickenham Green.

A recent police report was made last week on Sunday 16 March when boys on e-bikes were seen racing around causing damage to the grass – mud flying onto the path. The notice board on Twickenham Green shows that e-bikes are not allowed but with no supervision or CCTV it is often difficult to know what is happening or has taken place.

Following a call to the police by a resident using the footpath the police were on the spot within minutes.



Camera added for illustration



Here are a few photos of the damage before the arrival of the police car.

Teddington Lock footbridges future-proofed following multi-million-pound investment

From Richmond Council

A major programme of improvement works to the Teddington Lock footbridges, securing this key river crossing for thousands of pedestrians and cyclists every day, is now complete thanks to essential maintenance works led by Richmond Council.

The project, which began in June 2023, saw extensive repairs to the suspension footbridge and the lockcut iron truss footbridge, backed by a £6.7 million investment from the Council.

Councillor Alexander Ehmann, Chair of Richmond Council's Transport and Air Quality Committee, said:



“The Teddington Lock footbridges are a lifeline between Teddington and Ham, with more than 5,000 pedestrian and 2,000 cycle movements on a typical weekday. Thanks to these much-needed improvements, the bridges are now safer, stronger, and built to last for years to come.”

“We’ve worked hard with contractors to minimise disruption, keeping access open for the vast majority of the project. I thank residents for their patience and I am delighted that we have delivered this project on time and within budget.”

Behind the scenes: what it took to restore the bridges

The large-scale restoration involved meticulous planning and execution:

- 140 night shifts and 95 weeknight closures, plus two full weekend closures, to complete essential works
- 40,000+ working hours to deliver structurally sound and refreshed bridges
- 300 steel repairs using 14m² of replacement steel
- 340-ton bags and 2,200 sandbags to construct a dam for rebuilding the Ferry Road approach ramp
- 260 tins of specialist protective paint applied to extend the lifespan of the bridges

Join the Big Annual Litterpick on Barnes Common

From Barnes Common Ltd

Take part in the Great British Spring Clean and help clean up the Common on Sunday 23 March. Litter pickers, bags and gloves will be provided (or bring your own gloves if you prefer).

- **Date:** Sunday 23 March 2025
- **Time:** From 10am
- **Location:** Vine Road Recreation Ground, SW13 0NE

Please register for this free event so the organisers know how many people to expect.

[Register now](#)

Come and collect your litter picker and gloves from bases at Rocks Lane car park (SW13 0DG), the Pavilion at Vine Road Park (SW13 0NE) and the little bridge over Beverley Brook on Barnes Green (pick up only).

Dress appropriately for the weather - it will go ahead, rain or shine!

Refreshments and snacks will be available from the Vine Road Café with a 50% discount on hot and cold drinks for event attendees.



Barnes
Common

Learn to turn food and garden waste into compost

From Etna Community Centre

Habitats & Heritage are hosting three free workshops to help residents transform their waste into nutrient-rich compost.

The interactive workshops, supported by our [climate action microgrants scheme](#), will support residents to turn their waste into something wonderful and environmentally friendly.

- **Dates:** Tuesdays 25 March, 29 April, and 22 May 2025
- **Times:** 10.30 to 11.30am (25 March and 29 April) and 7 to 8pm (22 May)
- **Location:** Etna Community Centre, 13 Rosslyn Road, TW1 2AR



[Book tickets for the free composting workshops.](#)



Some Winning Wines

A duo of delicious and great value Chilean wines from **Viña San Pedro's 35 South** is now available at Sainsbury's. **35 South Sauvignon Blanc** and **35 South Cabernet Sauvignon** are produced in the heart of latitude 35° south, where Viña San Pedro has been crafting wines for almost 160 years. Offering great wines at an affordable price for everyday drinking, 35 South was a pre-existing brand that has now been revived and updated for the modern drinker. Viña San Pedro is one of the most awarded wineries in Chile for sustainability, and it was the first winery in the world with a biogas renewable energy station, which feeds Chile's central electric system. 35 South Sauvignon Blanc and 35 South Cabernet Sauvignon are fab and available from Sainsbury's, priced at £7.75 per single bottle and £8.00 respectively.



If you didn't know that **Gordon Ramsay** has a wine range in his business portfolio, it's worth looking for them in your local supermarket. Gordon Ramsay's wines are crafted in collaboration with world-renowned winemaker **Alberto Antonini**. Made from hand-harvested grapes in fine Italian vineyards, these surprisingly good wines embody quality, heritage, and value. There's a Pinot Grigio (crisp, dry, refreshingly citrus with ripe pear notes, from the Delle Venezie DOC region) and Intenso Rosso (a bold red from Sangiovese, Merlot and Montepulciano grapes with redcurrant, blackberry and flinty notes and a velvety finish) RRP £8.50 (available at major supermarkets, including [Tesco](#), [Morrisons](#), and [Asda](#)).

Romanian wine is a relatively new one for me, and this one was a revelation. This **Sorcova Fetească Regală** is a zesty modern take on this famous variety. Similar in taste to Chardonnay, Fetească Regală is one of Romania's best-known grape varieties. Pale yellow with hints of green, fresh and fruity with citrus and jasmine on the nose, light and crisp, it's full of fruit flavour. It's a perfect aperitif wine for drinking well chilled with good friends, but also pairs well with creamy pasta, seafood and even Asian dishes. What's more, it's well priced and available at £9 a bottle from Waitrose Cellar.



Ume fruit is a popular fruit in Japan, offering a unique tasting experience reflecting Japanese cultures and traditions. There is a range of liqueurs available that are great for cocktails, but I was most impressed with the **Choya Ume Salute Sparkling Wine** - a crisp and refreshing blend of Italian wine blended with Choya's exotic sparkling plum wine. It's a wonderful marriage of Japanese and Italian wines, best enjoyed chilled as an aperitif or with your favourite food. RRP: 75cl from £11.99 ABV 5.5% from: [DrinkSupermarket](#) and [Master of Malt](#)

6PERCENT is a premium wine brand made in Bordeaux, offering **half the alcohol and calories** of traditional wines. **6PERCENT Red** is a lighter wine developed by husband & wife team, **Russell & Gabriella Lamb**, born out of frustration at the after effects of a few glasses of wine, and the lack of satisfying low-no options. They believe that if beer and cider can have 6% ABV or less and still taste great, then wine can too. Made using traditional winemaking methods and pioneering technology, 6PERCENT Red is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot that features red berries, black cherry and blackcurrant, complemented by mocha oak and vanilla notes. The wine offers a velvety mouthfeel and a lingering finish and really is rather good. 6PERCENT Red (RRP: £12.50) is available now from [6percent.wine](#) as well as independent retailers including [Club Soda](#) and [Drink Well](#).



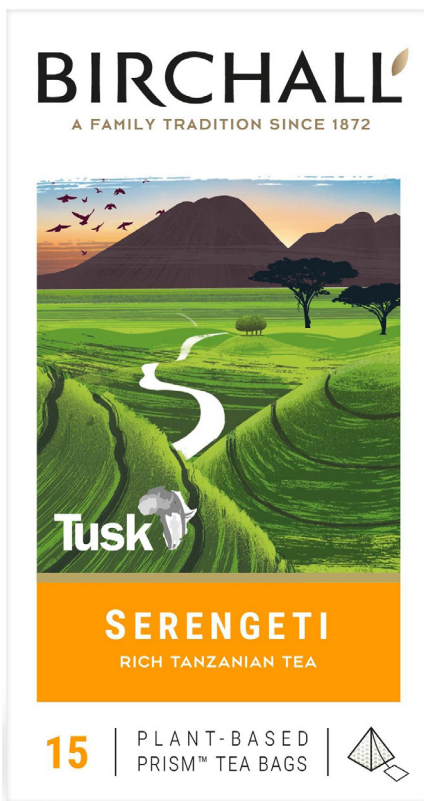
Tea: Best Drink Of The Day

According to the **UK Tea & Infusions Association**, we Brits are turning to tea not just for warmth, but also for comfort, focus and a much-needed break. The UK gets through an impressive volume of tea as almost all of us (98%) drink at least one cup a day. 43% drink tea for comfort, 38% for warmth, whilst 63% use tea to calm down, and 62% to clear their minds. Despite this, over a quarter rush making their brew, with only one in 14 of us following the recommended 3-4 minutes brew time for the perfect cup of tea. And 7% admitted to only dunking the bag for a few seconds, barely giving the water a chance to change colour. Despite this, regular black tea remains the nation's favourite hot drink - a ritual that helps people slow down and embrace the season.

Taking a moment to ourselves with a cup of tea allows us to take stock of where we're at, what we need, and what we want.



Birchall is one of the largest exporters of black teas from East Africa in the world, and its commitment to quality is evident through the strict tasting process, where over 5,000 teas are sampled every week to ensure only the best blends are selected. The brand's dedication to excellence is reflected in its unparalleled track record. In addition, Birchall Tea holds the prestigious title of the UK's most awarded tea for taste (**Great Taste Awards** of which I happen to have been a proud judge for quite a few years), a remarkable achievement maintained for an unprecedented 14 consecutive years. Birchall's teas are often found in upmarket hotels and B&B's and I think this was probably where I first encountered these great teas.



Birchall's origins date back to 1872 and Captain Birchall George Graham, an officer with the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, who was posted to India, where he served for a number of years. After his military career, he started growing tea in Darjeeling, and the seeds of a tea dynasty were planted. It also recently swept up two other awards - both Gold, one at **The Leafies** and one at **The Grocer's New Product & Packaging Awards** for their '**Great Rift**' and '**Serengeti**' blends respectively.

The Leafies International Tea Awards are the leading awards for tea in the UK and were first launched in 2022 by the UK Tea Academy in collaboration with Fortnum & Mason. Birchall's Great Rift has been celebrated as one of the best teas, achieving the highest possible award, Gold. The Leafies identifies and promotes integrity, excellence and collaboration within the international tea industry and is revered as a pinnacle achievement within the industry.



In The Grocer's New Product & Packaging Awards, Birchall's Serengeti also won Gold, within the Hot Drinks & Cold Brew category. **Serengeti** was recently launched by Birchall in partnership with **Tusk**, the esteemed African wildlife conservation charity. Through every sale of the new tea, 5p will be donated directly to Tusk, underscoring Birchall's commitment to sustainable and ethical practices.

I've tried both Great Rift and Serengeti and they are superb. Great Rift has a depth and roundness that reminds you how important it is to choose a quality tea. With Serengeti, the master blenders discovered rare Tanzanian teas to bring a rich tasting breakfast tea. Inspired by the vibrant wildlife in the Serengeti. This new tea is bold and refreshing and will make any morning come alive.

All Birchall's award winning teas are sourced from East Africa, where the very best teas are found. The high altitude, lush volcanic soil and heavy rainfall of this equatorial area combine to create the perfect set of conditions for producing tea of unparalleled flavour.

Still showing dedication to protecting wildlife in the regions it sources its teas, **Birchall Virunga™** is a pure origin tea, sourced from the finest tea gardens in Rwanda, close to the Virunga National Park. In this region, the tea bushes grow slowly, at high altitude and relatively low temperatures, developing greater flavour. 5p from every pack goes towards saving the **Virunga National Park**.



If you are a real tea aficionado, I'd recommend trying this new bundle from Birchall Tea that will take you through your day and introduce you to the different teas available. [Birchall's new Morning, Noon and Night tea](#) allows you to enjoy your favourite hot beverage when you wake, when you have 3 o'clock slumps and when you want to sleep! The offer features three boxes of tea for just £10 with three different flavour options, optimised for the time of day.

Needless to say, Birchall's offers a full range of teas, including Green Tea, and a range of herbal infusions. There is Earl Grey (one of our favourites) as well as a really good Peppermint Tea (both with two Great Taste stars). Or this wonderful [selection box](#) contains four tea bags from each of the full range, from East Africa and around the World in a beautiful box. It will also make a fabulous gift.



sunborn
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YACHT HOTEL RESORT



GIBRALTAR ROCKS PACKAGE

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POLAND

Speaking of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said "*Ukraine has bought priceless time for Poland and All of Europe*"

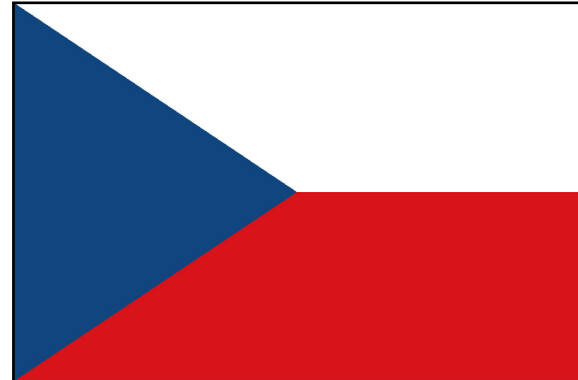
<https://worldinfozone.com/facts.php?country=Poland>



CZECH

Czech President Pavel has advised that the strongest and cheapest guarantee of peace is "*Ukraine in NATO*". There are thirty-two countries in NATO. Czechia became a member in 1999.

<https://worldinfozone.com/facts.php?country=CzechRepublic>



LITHUANIA

In December 2002 Lithuania took part in EU accession negotiations with nine other countries (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia).

Lithuania joined NATO in 2004.

In March 2025 the president of Lithuania, Gitanas Nauseda, made it known that he is ready to send peacekeepers to Ukraine.

<https://worldinfozone.com/facts.php?country=Lithuania>



ESTONIA

Estonia and Russia agreed on the border between the two countries in 2014. British troops arrived in Estonia in 2017 as part of a NATO mission.

In March 2025 Prince William of Wales visited British troops in Estonia. The Prince was seen wearing battle gear, joining troops in a Challenger 2 tank.

<https://worldinfozone.com/facts.php?country=Estonia>



Is it really a s***t day?

By Deep Patel

~Life through the eyes of a Twickenham shopkeeper~



Each morning when I lift the shutter to open the shop, I look at the big tree opposite my shop for inspiration (don't ask me why, it's like we are friends now). This past week I noticed that the new leaves of spring have started to show...birds are chirping a lot more as they seek their mates, and people are starting to show more skin and wear less...all of these things are a sign that the sun is coming...but what is it about the sun that we are all so obsessed about? I mean sure, yes... I get it...feels good on the skin, nice flowers and a holiday-like feel, not having to wear so many clothes, being outdoors more in general, days out at the seaside, ice cream and cold refreshing drinks...all valid reasons to love the sun...but are we missing out on something else...I feel we are to be honest...

You see, in the absence of light...there is darkness...and darkness need not be a negative thing? Why do so many of us consider darkness to be negative? Why do so many see rain, wind or cold as being "bad", or a time that is "rubbish", something that they cannot enjoy? We need all of those conditions for nature to thrive, and the seasons are never to blame...it is only us that we can blame...for conditioning ourselves to be one-way only...

We all have experienced some very changeable weather recently, it was hot and sunny and now it's wet and cold...I have spoken to customers who have said "what a crap day, can't do anything at all", or they will come in to my shop and say "rubbish weather today" with a disappointing sigh...but it made me think...if we spend all our time waiting for the sun in order to enjoy our lives in a country that only has sun for around 40% of the year, we will be wasting a massive 60% of our year (and indeed lives) simply "waiting"...does that sound good to you?

They say in order to change your life, you need to change your way of thinking...so why not start NOW...as you are reading my article, make a promise to yourself that you will never look upon a rainy, wet or windy dark day as being "bad" ever again...instead you will see them as GOOD rather...an opportunity to play board games or cards, read a book, cook a hearty warm meal with an old friend and eat together to talk about old times, watch a good film with snacks and a blanket on the sofa, meditate, draw...the opportunities are endless...all of which DON'T require the sun to shine...and all of which are low cost...and all of which will add enjoyment to your life instantly too...you see, what I realised this week from talking to customers in my shop was that there is no "bad weather" when it comes to enjoying our lives... and the enjoyment that we experience is not truly dependent on the weather...it is dependent on us, and our way of thinking...

Remember...

...to change your life...you need to change the way you think...

MY CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP OF THE WEEK...

STOP FOXES, RATS, MICE & SQUIRRELS KINDLY (GOOD KARMA):

Place empty bowls filled with white vinegar around places where you don't want them to come...they will go without you having to harm them...use humane mouse & rat traps and release them back out in parkland areas. Use electronic plug-in deterrent with good reviews around your house to stop them coming (the smell of white vinegar also stops ants kindly). For ANY specific tip to stop any "pest" or insect KINDLY (for good karma/ blessings), email me: thedeepatel@gmail.com or join my Facebook page: "INSECT LOVERS UNITE"



The Little Prince

by Antoine de Saint-Exupery, adapted by Chris Mouron
Broadway Entertainment Group at the London Coliseum and on worldwide tour

An aircraft pilot (Aurelien Bednarek) whose plane has crashed in the Sahara, tells the story of the Little Prince (Dylan Barone), through the sole voice of the Narrator (Chris Mouron). The story of how the Prince ended up in this place is told through Mouron's lyrical and emotive French narration (with subtitled translation), mostly spoken, but at times sung.

The Little Prince is based on the 1945 children's book, written and illustrated by Antoine de Saint-Exupery, whose own heroic experiences inspired his writing.



We are transported across the Prince's visits to eight planets through video designer, Marie Jumelin's exquisitely beautiful projections onto the vast stage. These landscapes, where the Prince meets a number of different characters, are a feast for the imagination. Particularly creative are Killian Mermet and Marta Kowalewska, who simply become The Fox and The Snake, through costume, make up and movement.

Throughout these encounters, themes such as loneliness, friendship, love and loss are touched upon.

The fantastical immersive backdrop projections leave little use for props or scenery, save the straps from which the performers fly, in an impressive display of strength, grace and agility. Especially

breathtaking is Marcin Janiak's Lamplighter, suspended on his swinging lamp, and Barone's use of the straps to hold himself and his love, The Rose (Marie Menuge). She hangs from him in a manner symbolic of their one-sided relationship. Her costume, (designed by Peggy Housset) is so evocative, we forget she is human and become lost in the soft floating petals of the flower's form.

Anne Tournie's choreography and direction makes use of a wide range of dance and movement including ballet, parkour and acrobatics, which paired with composer Terry Tuck's musical motifs makes a mesmerising spectacle.



To enjoy this dreamlike show, one must suspend adult logic and bring a good dose of childlike imagination and curiosity, in order to watch and see "clearly only with the heart".

To enjoy this dreamlike show, one must suspend adult logic and bring a good dose of childlike imagination and curiosity, in order to watch and see "clearly only with the heart".

Read Thea Diamond's review at www.markaspen.com/2025/03/13/little-prince

Photography by Fred Aguirre

While the Sun Shines

by Terence Rattigan

Richmond Shakespeare Society at the Mary Wallace Theatre, Twickenham until 22nd March

London is in the teeth of the Blitz. But love is the air despite wartime deprivations. Even before the curtain rises, Elizabeth Valentine, in melodic voice as the Soho Songbird, Rosie Dupree, sets the mood beautifully with *A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square*. An evening of gentle humour in this giddy farce where political correctness leaps out the window awaited them in three acts with musical intervals.

Rosie, in elegant black gown, fur stole, string of pearls, extravagant dangling diamanté earrings and wavy hairdo, sums the glamour that London was determined to uphold despite the horrors of nightly bombing raids, rationing and relationships torn asunder.



During the war years *While the Sun Shines* ran for 1,154 performances, one of Rattigan's most commercially successful plays. And the Mary Wallace stages it with aplomb thanks to a talented and well-directed cast, unapologetically mining rich national stereotypes. Aristocratic Englishman Bobby, too clueless to gain promotion from Able Seaman in the British Navy; brash Yankee Lieutenant Mulvaney; passionate Free French Army Lieutenant Colbert; serving British Army officer the Duke of Ayr and Stirling, a cad and addicted gambler; the guileless bride-to-be WRAF Corporal Lady Elizabeth, the Duke's daughter; loyal manservant Horton, whose facial expressions speak a thousand words; ditzy blonde tart with a heart Mabel Crum; all are there. An outstanding cast delight in this production, where set, costume and lighting design tick all the boxes.

Director Stuart Watson's *While the Sun Shines* is not

so much a bedroom farce as in Brian Rix's repertoire of slamming doors and embarrassing wardrobe malfunctions, but more a sitting room farce set in Lord Harpenden's chambers in Albany, Piccadilly. Bobby, the orphaned young Earl, with a nice-but-dim style, has begged for leave from the Royal Navy to marry his naive fiancée, Lady Elizabeth. But on the eve of the wedding in Hanover Square a beefy American airman and an impulsive Free French lieutenant also fall head over heels for the bride-to-be.



Misunderstandings abound and everything conspires against love conquering all as dawn breaks on the day of the wedding. After a fitful night of drinking, scheming and gambling in the Albany, Horton draws open the heavy brocade curtains. What will happen *While the Sun Shines*...?

Read Gill Martin's review at www.markaspen.com/2025/03/16/sun-shines

Photography by Steven Lippitt

Picture You Dead

by Peter James

Josh Andrews Productions at the Richmond Theatre until 22nd March, then on tour until 26th July

White knuckles, gripping edge of your seats for gun shots and shocks, torture and murders most grisly: if this is your recipe for a great theatre night-out, look no further than *Picture You Dead*. Detective Superintendent Roy Grace, well known to fans of the TV series *Grace*, investigates a cold case that leads him to the fabulously wealthy world of fine art. Beneath the respectability lurks a darkly secretive underworld of deception and deadly duplicity.



A long-lost masterpiece sparks deadly violence... and sets Detective Superintendent Grace (George Rainsford) on the darkly twisting path of a calculating killer. Bearded builder Harry Kipling (Ben Cutler) and wannabe jeweller wife Freya (Fiona Wade) are an ordinary strapped-for-cash couple, who have always dreamt of finding something priceless buried among the tat of a car boot sale. (Haven't we all?) It was a dream they knew would never come true: until the day it did...with dire consequences. The Kiplings buy a drab portrait for twenty pounds, solely for its frame. Back at home, they discover what seems to be landscape painting underneath. Could it be a long-lost 1770 masterpiece? If genuine, it could be worth millions.

But, bullets and blood shatter their tranquil Sussex lives, as greed, deception and violence walk hand in dodgy hand. And Harry and Freya discover that their dream of selling their French masterpiece has put their lives at risk.

This evil world is populated by career burglar Archie Goff, gruff and ready for thieving action (Mark Oxtoby), and the suave art collector Stuart Piper (Nicholas Maude). Silver goatee beard, plaited pigtail and designer suit versus balding, scruffy hoodie and jeans, but who will outwit their fiendish fixer Roberta Kilgore (Jodie Steele), glam blonde in sequins and black leather?

Peter Ash as art "copyist" Dave Hegarty and Adam Morris as *Antiques Road Show* expert Oliver De Souza both produce strong performances, alongside Gemma Stroyon as Grace's capable sidekick Bella Moy, while the set and its slick changes work well thanks to designers Adrian Linford and Jason Taylor.



Even for those less addicted to the *Grace* crime thrillers, director Jonathan O'Boyle's *Picture You Dead* offers an entertaining evening of drama with a mix of humour and cleverly convoluted plot.

Read Gill Martin's review at www.markaspen.com/2025/03/19/picture-dead

Photography by Alistair Muir



The Dance of Death

by Connor McPherson adapted from the play by August Strindberg

Rhinoceros Theatre Company at the Coward Studio, Hampton Hill Theatre until 22nd March

Perhaps the themes of Strindberg's *The Dance of Death* are timeless. Certainly, there is a mixed sense of period in director Harry Medawar's studious and detailed production. The dark setting with troubled-looking antique furniture creates an aura of genteel poverty which sets the tone of resentment to come. The design of this atmospheric and somewhat claustrophobic set is by the talented Junis Olmscheid, enhanced by Patrick Troughton's lighting and sound.



Nigel Andrews' Artillery Captain, Edgar is darkly charismatic as he plods on with his troubled marriage to Alice, played with sharp insight by Fiona Smith. Her unhappiness simmers acerbically, as Alice constantly reminds her spouse of their twenty-year age gap and faltered career as an actress.



Sounds of a nearby party drift into their isolated island home, a situation which speaks volumes about this toxic couple, without them needing to say a word to each other. However, there are plenty of words. With their approaching silver wedding, a poisonous fuel more than a celebration, sniping and bickering fire the subtext of deep black humour.

Enter the Quarantine Master, Alice's cousin Kurt, who fans the flames. Played by highly capable Steve Taylor, Kurt has his own grievances, custody of his children and the villainy of the law. This does not stop Alice goading and flirting with him, reminding him of a past dalliance. As she escalates from spiteful to psychotic, Kurt proposes a sexual encounter ... not though before she humiliates him in a tantalisingly sensuous power game.

Many more dark corridors are explored. Children are mentioned but not seen. Edgar does a grotesque sabre dance before collapsing and threatening to cut Alice out of his will.



In spite of Edgar ripping up a photograph of Alice's glory years, the couple become contented with each other again. The trail of their destruction has merely to be cleared up, so it seems. One realises that this has been one of many, and that this love-hate cycle will continue.

The Dance of Death is another gem from the Rhinoceros Theatre Company. One hopes there will be many more productions from this group of highly experienced artists, to add to this simmering and vibrant piece.

Read Heather Moulson's review at www.markaspen.com/2025/03/19/dance-death

Photography by Kim Harding

Support Landmark Arts Centre's fundraiser and double your impact

From Landmark Arts Centre

Local independent arts charity Landmark Arts Centre is taking part in The Big Give's Arts for Impact campaign from midday on Tuesday 18 March to midday on Tuesday 25 March 2025, with the aim of raising £12,500.

Funds raised will help expand the Landmark's programmes, allowing more people of all ages and backgrounds to take part in creative, fun and accessible arts events.

At a recent Colour Café session, an under-5s art club held on Tuesday mornings, Maya, aged 4, was asked about her experience. "I love art", she proudly declared. Through pay-what-you-can creative sessions, children like Maya have found confidence and a sense of belonging. Her grandmother shared: "Maya used to be so shy and quiet, but over time, I've seen such a change. Now she's confident, talking about her art, showing us what she's made. Without the pay-what-you-can programme, she wouldn't have come – and I wouldn't have seen this side of her. It's been a blessing for our family."



All donations made during the campaign will be matched pound for pound, and with Gift Aid, they go even further. Gift Aid adds 25% to the original donation amount, so a £20 donation becomes worth £45 or a £300 donation becomes worth £675! Your donation will go twice as far, but only if you donate in time. Once the campaign ends at midday on 25 March, the matching fund will be gone. [Give now before it's too late.](#)

To thank supporters, the Landmark is offering all donors public recognition via online shout-outs, and social media badges to show your support. For gifts of £300+ you get a seat dedication in the new theatre seating bank. The first five gifts of £500+ are offered

exclusive front-row seat dedications, which are not normally available. And anything over £1,000 will get you an invitation to the official industry ribbon-cutting event when the Landmark's new facilities (including your front row seat) are unveiled.

Beyond creativity and connection, the Landmark's work improves mental and physical wellbeing. Programmes offer opportunities for social interaction, self-expression, and joy, whether through community arts, live performances, or unique experiences such as the Landmark Tea Dance with Mr Wonderful on 10 May.

"This is a unique opportunity to double the impact of every donation." said Harper Ray, Director of Landmark Arts Centre. "With The Big Give's match funding, there has never been a better time to give. Every donation will make double the impact on our creative learning and community work. We hope as many people as possible will get involved, whether by donating or simply spreading the word."

The Landmark is at the heart of cultural life for many in the region. The largest multi-arts venue in the borough, its impact is far-reaching. Many will know the Landmark for hosting the giant globe artwork Gaia by Luke Jerram in 2023. The Landmark gave away £50,000 worth of free tickets and had nearly 16,000 visitors in just two weeks.

The venue turns 30 this summer and has no regular funding from the Council or Arts Council. Despite this they regularly try to subsidise arts events so that everyone can attend.



Get involved in Arts Richmond's Young Writers' Festival

From Arts Richmond

Come along to this special celebration at The Exchange in Twickenham this Sunday 23 March, where local actors will bring to life the work of young writers in our community.

The Arts Richmond Young Writers' Festival was open to all young people living or attending school or clubs in Richmond upon Thames. This was a chance to demonstrate their writing skills of any form: stories, descriptive writing, poems, playlets, or lyrics for songs - whatever their imagination could devise!



Over 700 entries were received, and the festival celebrates the finalists' pieces by presenting their work in front of the Mayor and other special guests.

- **Date:** Sunday 23 March 2025
- **Time:** 2:30 to 4pm (Doors open at 2pm)
- **Location:** The Exchange, 75 London Road, TW1 1BE

Book your tickets today. Children can attend free, but please still book their seats.

[Book now](#)

This year, the Festival was again supported by well-known author Anthony Horowitz, famous for the 'Alex Rider' book and film series.

You can download the [names and titles of all the finalists](#) whose work will be presented.

The winners for each category will be announced at the event.

A published book of all the children's work will also be available for sale. You can pre-order copies when booking your tickets.



Join VE Day 80 celebrations at The Poppy Factory

From The Poppy Factory

On Tuesday 6 May, residents are invited to join The Poppy Factory's discovery sessions to remember the end of the Second World War in Europe.

Participants will hear VE Day-themed talks by The Poppy Factory's expert hosts, watch special presentations and have the chance to view lesser-seen parts of the historic factory, which since 1922 has employed injured veterans to make Remembrance poppies and wreaths for the Royal British Legion and the Royal Family. Its workers and their families were among those who took to the streets of London to celebrate the end of the war in 1945.

Hot drinks, refreshments and special VE Day 80 Victoria sponge cake will be on offer in the visitor centre café, with music from the era adding to the spirit of celebration.



Event details

- **Date:** Tuesday 6 May 2025
- **Time:** 12.30pm
- **Location:** The Poppy Factory, 20 Petersham Road, Richmond, TW10 6UR
- **Price:** £15 for discovery session £7.50 for tea and cake

[Book your tickets now](#)

Chief Executive of The Poppy Factory, Amanda Shepard said: "It's so important that we all come together to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day and pay tribute to all those who gave up so much to fight for peace in Europe.

"Our VE Day 80 programme offers an opportunity to join the celebrations that are planned across the UK, and we hope our guests will also see this as an opportunity to support the veterans and family members who we continue to help today."

In more recent times, The Poppy Factory has grown into a national charity helping veterans and their families on the path to employment. Funds raised through the visitor centre go towards its Veteran and Family Services, which last year helped more than 1,100 members of the Armed Forces community to change their lives.



**THE
POPPY
FACTORY**

St Mary's University

St Mary's Nutrition Academic Publishes Edible Flowers Book

St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU) Senior Lecturer in Nutrition Dr Magali Chohan has announced the launch of her book, *Edible Flowers*, which is an informative and beautifully illustrated guide exploring the profound healing properties of the natural world.

St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU) Senior Lecturer in Nutrition Dr Magali Chohan has announced the launch of her book, *Edible Flowers*, which is an informative and beautifully illustrated guide exploring the profound healing properties of the natural world.



In *Edible Flowers*, [Dr Magali Chohan](#) delves into the science and ancient wisdom behind using herbs, flowers, and plants to improve health and well-being. Drawing on years of research and personal experience, she introduces readers to the transformative potential of nature's offerings, from soothing teas to skin-nourishing balms, all of which can be made at home using simple ingredients.

The book has been illustrated by [Jazmin Morrone](#), a Research Assistant at St Mary's University.

Speaking on the book, Dr Magali Chohan said, *"Plants have been a cornerstone of healing for centuries, and I wanted to share that knowledge with the modern world. Whether you're a seasoned herbalist or just starting out, this book offers something for everyone. It's about reconnecting with nature and harnessing its powerful gifts for our health. The book is perfect for anyone looking to reconnect with nature, improve their health, and embrace a holistic lifestyle. Whether you live in a rural area or an urban space with just a small balcony, this book will empower you to create your own healing sanctuary."*

[Edible Flowers](#) takes readers on a journey through a variety of plants known for their medicinal properties, including lavender, chamomile, dandelion,

pot marigold, viola, and many others. The book is organized by flower type, offering practical advice on cultivation, harvesting, and creating remedies to address common health concerns such as stress, insomnia, digestive issues, skin irritations, and more.

The book features:

- A detailed guide to over nine flowers with healing benefits
- Step-by-step instructions for creating natural remedies, from teas and tinctures to oils and lotions
- Beautiful full-colour artistic illustrations, to help identify and appreciate each plant, as well as hyper realistic pencil artwork cover
- Expert advice on how to grow your own medicinal garden at home
- Insights into the history and cultural significance of herbal healing traditions from around the world.

About the Author

Dr Magali Chohan is a mindful and devoted educator bridging traditional knowledge with scientific evidence of plant wisdom to help others unlock nature's healing power for modern wellness. Magali spent her childhood in rural France, surrounded by botanicals which inspired her to pursue studies in Aromatherapy, Herbal Medicine, and Nutritional Medicine. She attended University in the UK as a mature student and completed a BSc in Nutrition, followed by a PhD on the health benefits of culinary herbs in 2011. Magali has since been working as an academic, currently as a Senior Lecturer in Nutrition and Course Lead at St Mary's University. Magali co-authored the book *Culinary Herbs and Spices: A Global Guide* in 2021. This inspired her to undertake new projects, including a series of self-help journals as well as *Edible Flowers*.

About the Illustrator

Jazmin Morrone is an active research scientist who finds passion in intertwining the worlds of art and science. Having specialised in hyper-realistic pencil artwork since the age of 14, she has spent the past decade honing her craft and has sold and displayed her art globally. With an undergraduate degree in Applied Physics and Master's in Cognitive Neuroscience, Jazmin now devotes much of her artistic expression into bridging intricate artwork into the world of science and mathematics. Although Jazmin's research focuses on the human brain and exploring the complexities of physics, she enjoys using her art to communicate complex scientific concepts and has even done so within her own published work.

[Order a copy of Edible Flowers.](#)



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Richmond upon Thames College Hosts Events with GAUCHO for Six Nations Rugby Tournament

Across February and March, Richmond upon Thames College (RuTC) hosted three events in partnership with [GAUCHO](#) restaurants for the [Six Nations Rugby Tournament](#).

The events took place in coordination with the England team's home games at the [Allianz Stadium in Twickenham](#); England v France on the 8th of February, England v Scotland on the 22nd of February and England v Italy on the 9th of March. RuTC students worked alongside [GAUCHO](#) staff, under top Chef de partie, Dilshan Wijesekara, to cook for and serve over 700



guests across the three functions.

Attendees enjoyed the hospitality of our on-campus restaurant, [The View](#), before making their way over to the nearby stadium to watch the matches. Special guests and speakers at the events included English rugby legends, Mike Brown, Anthony Watson, Neil Back and Kyran Bracken, former French rugby union player, Serge Betsen and former Scottish rugby union player, Craig Chalmers.

The fourteen fabulous [Professional Cookery & Hospitality](#) students involved were; Ella Davies, Lucy Wilson, Nancy Shilston,

Harriet Fisher, Casey Watson, Brennan Souza, Angel Menezes, David Rutkowski, Lily Stidwell, Tazmin Baker, Andrew Sousa, Rodian Brazhyk, Rafael Read and Elizabeth Grandison. These learners were guided by our brilliant staff team of Daniele Giraud, Ray Wilson-Brooks, James Unwin and Mark Brough.

Thank you so much to [GAUCHO](#) for their work and guidance in hosting the successful events!



[Interested in getting involved in opportunities like this? Browse our course and apply for September 2025 entry here.](#)



The Sunday Times Reveals The Best Places To Live In London 2025

Walthamstow, E17, has been named as the Best Place to Live in London in the annual Sunday Times Best Places to Live guide. *The Sunday Times* judges described Walthamstow as diverse, vibrant and cool without being frosty, living up to its name which is believed to be derived from the Anglo-Saxon for “the welcome place”. They said it encapsulates so much of what’s great about the capital: hip hangouts, independent shops and restaurants, handsome Victorian housing stock, calming green space, excellent public transport and, imminently, West End-quality culture, courtesy of the new Soho Theatre, adding to a cultural scene that includes a wallet-friendly local cinema, the Instagrammable neon art at God’s Own Junkyard, and the William Morris Gallery. The street market is part of an impressive retail offering that runs from upmarket lifestyle stores, pubs and delis in chichi Walthamstow Village to no-frills fabric shops on the High Street.

Six other locations in London are featured in the comprehensive guide. Published by *The Sunday Times*, the guide includes 72 locations across the UK and is released online on Friday, March 21. An abridged version will be published as a magazine supplement on Sunday. The full list of London locations is as follows:

- Walthamstow, E17 (regional winner)
- Bloomsbury, WC1
- East Dulwich, SE22
- Stoke Newington, N16
- Telegraph Hill, SE14
- **Twickenham, TW1**
- Wembley Park, HA9

Please note: apart from the winner, they are not ranked but published in alphabetical order.

Helen Davies, editorial projects director and Best Places to Live editor, says:

“It is easy to feel overwhelmed by everything going on in the world, but there really is so much to celebrate closer to home, from small gestures that lift the everyday from verges blooming with daffodils to volunteer-run dementia cafés, to new initiatives from repair cafés to new railway stations.”



The Sunday Times’s expert judges have visited all the locations and assessed factors from schools to transport, broadband speeds and mobile signal to culture, as well as access to green spaces and the health of the high street.

The chosen locations come in all shapes and sizes, from the Scottish Island of Tiree and the remote Welsh village of Maenclochog to vibrant market towns, and suburbs of big, lively cities such as Leeds, Liverpool, Sheffield and London.

There are more new entries than ever before in this year’s guide and no place for many previous winners including York, Winchester, in Hampshire, and Altrincham in Cheshire. As always, the judges looked for thriving locations with a strong sense of community rather than famous names with high house prices.

“What makes our guide unique is that we actually visit all the places we choose and talk to locals to find out what life is really like there,” Davies says. “That means we can see what people really love about the places they live. That could be anything from exceptional schools and fast trains to beautiful houses and countryside. The health of the high street is important, but more than anything else, what we are looking for are towns, villages and cities with strong communities who work hard to make the best of where they live, and play hard too. We also consider affordability. High house prices are no barrier to inclusion - as long as they provide value for money. Different people will be looking for different qualities when they are choosing a place to live. One thing all our chosen locations have in common is that the people who live in them are proud to call them home.”

The guide is sponsored by the mortgage lender Halifax, which has provided an average house price for each location.

“We know it can be daunting buying your first home, looking to move to your next home or even getting a new mortgage for your current home. There is so much to think about even once you’ve found the right house in the right area. The best thing to do is speak to a mortgage adviser as early as you can in the process. They will be able to help you understand the mortgages available to you and how to get the best deal for your circumstances to help you focus on the exciting things that come with buying a home too,” says Amanda Bryden - Head of Halifax Mortgages.

Broadband speeds were provided by [Thinkbroadband.com](https://www.thinkbroadband.com), the UK’s leading independent guide to broadband. For the first time we’ve included mobile signal coverage, which is likely to be even more important with the shutting down of the 3G network, using network data from [signalchecker.co.uk](https://www.signalchecker.co.uk).

Previous winners of the Best Places to Live in Britain title are: Stamford, Lincolnshire (2013); Skipton, North Yorkshire (2014); Newnham, Cambridge (2015); Winchester, Hampshire (2016); Bristol (2017), York (2018), Salisbury, Wiltshire (2019), Altrincham, Cheshire (2020) Stroud, Gloucestershire (2021), Ilkley, West Yorkshire (2022) Wadhurst, East Sussex (2023), and North Berwick, East Lothian (2024).

Pen portraits of the London locations from the Sunday Times judges

Winner: Walthamstow, E17

Walthamstow is diverse, vibrant and cool without being frosty. *The Sunday Times* judges said it encapsulates much of what's great about the capital: hip hangouts, independent shops and restaurants, handsome Victorian housing stock, calming green space, excellent public transport and, imminently, West End-quality culture, courtesy of the new Soho Theatre. The street market is part of an impressive retail offering that runs from upmarket lifestyle stores, pubs and delis in chichi Walthamstow Village to no-frills fabric shops on the High Street.

Bloomsbury, WC1

This genteel patch of central London might be the brainiest place to live in the capital, thanks to UCL, the British Museum and its association with Virginia Woolf and her book-writing, brush-wielding, bed-hopping set. Much of Bloomsbury's charm lies in its relaxed and (relatively) under-the-radar vibe. This is a prime slice of London, but not Prime Central London – gold-plated supercars and ritzy branded residences are thinner on the ground than in Mayfair or Knightsbridge, and you'll find British boho chic, not blingy global brands, in the designer boutiques on Lamb's Conduit Street, the neighbourhood's shopping and dining epicentre.

East Dulwich, SE22

East Dulwich's Victorian and Edwardian terraces are less grand than the Georgian piles of Dulwich Village next door – frequently described as one of the poshest areas in the capital. But they're also a good deal less expensive and within walking distance of the village's prized assets: powerhouse private schools (excellent state schools are also available); the genteel Dulwich Picture Gallery; and the glorious 76 acres of Dulwich Park. Community spirit comes deeply rooted, and proximity to Peckham is a serious plus when a dose of urban energy is required.

Stoke Newington, N16

Happening yet homely, creative yet cosy, funky yet family-friendly: this neighbourhood on the border between north and east London offers Hackney hipness without the hustle and hassle. Its handsome Victorian houses are an easy stroll from glorious green spaces, and Stoke Newington Church Street is a haven for lovers of single-estate coffee and scented candles. There's a tasty food scene and plenty for active types, including climbing at the Castle and cold-water swimming and watersports in the West Reservoir.

Telegraph Hill, SE14

Welcome to the urban hamlet. This tranquil conservation area in southeast London has a pair of highly regarded state schools, a community centre next to the local church, a café and events space, top-notch pizza, grand Victorian houses and, blissfully, not an awful lot else, apart from the two beautiful parks that are its crowning glory. One dog-free, one dog-friendly, with spectacular views of central London.

Twickenham, TW1

This tree-lined Thames-side suburb ticks all the boxes for the aspirational family: houses at substantially lower prices per square foot than Richmond, Kew, Barnes or neighbouring St Margarets; almost as many well-maintained playgrounds as there are excellent state schools (catchment areas are so tight some parents move a few streets for a place at their top choice); and zippy 25-minute train rides to London Waterloo.

The town centre has a clutch of independent shops, cafés and restaurants on pretty, pedestrianised Church Street, a bustling Saturday farmers' market, and a veritable toolkit of hardware stores. And after years of wrangling, the unsightly stretch of riverside south of the high street is set for a spruce-up.

Wembley Park, HA9

Long famed only for football and a gargantuan Ikea, this once nondescript corner of Brent is now one of northwest London's buzziest, most brunch-tastic neighbourhoods. This transformation is all thanks to a two-decade, £2.8 billion development of the area around the stadium. The buzz is not confined to concert days and sporting events - baking buffs flock here from across the city for sourdough starter classes at the flagship Bread Ahead cookery school, while the Saturday market's artisan produce and handmade crafts supplement the stores at the London Designer Outlet, and street food and crazy golf at Wembley Boxpark.



Network Rail launches new digital notification system for lineside neighbours

From Network Rail

Local residents who live near to the railway can benefit from a new digital service. It lets people know about upcoming railway engineering work, emergency work and provides updates about current maintenance and upgrade projects in real-time.



Lineside neighbours living within 500m of a railway line across Network Rail's Wessex route - which covers the major commuter area of south-west London as well as from London Waterloo to the south and south-west of England - are encouraged to [sign up to this new email service](#).

This free opt-in service will keep people up-to-date with the latest information about any works going on in their neighbourhood, especially those that might cause a disturbance, providing details in a clear, accessible and timely way.

This is part of a wider national initiative that will benefit Network Rail's 25 million neighbours nationwide.



Kingston Care Home Pledges to Raise £2,500 for BRACE to Support Dementia Research

Signature at Coombe Hill Manor, a local provider of luxury residential, nursing, and dementia care, has announced an exciting new partnership with BRACE, a dementia research charity.

Through this collaboration, the care home is committing to raising £2,500 this year, to fund a dedicated Dementia Research Nurse, helping to advance crucial research into dementia diagnosis, and treatment. Together with nine other care homes operated by provider Signature Senior Lifestyle, across Greater London and the Southeast, the aim is to collectively raise £25,000.

With almost one million people in the UK living with dementia, research into early diagnosis, prevention, and treatment has never been more vital. BRACE, which has been funding pioneering dementia research for over 30 years, supports projects across leading institutions in England and Wales. This new partnership marks the first time BRACE has collaborated with care homes, highlighting the shared commitment of both organisations to improving the quality of life for people living with dementia and support for research, care and awareness.



Sonya Fenwick, Home Manager at Signature at Coombe Hill Manor, commented:

"We are proud to be partnering with BRACE to champion their incredible mission, and doing our bit in helping to further educate and support members of the Kingston community that are affected by it.

"Dementia is a condition close to the heart of so many of our residents, their families, and our team members, so we recognise the urgent need for more research."

The £2,500 raised by Signature at Coombe Hill Manor will go towards funding a Dementia Research Nurse, who will play a critical role in supporting ongoing studies at the Bristol Brain Centre. BRACE's work focuses on education, earlier diagnosis, new treatments, and ultimately, finding a cure for dementia.

Throughout the year, the care home will host exciting fundraising activities, ranging from bake sales and charity events to educational talks and dementia cafés, designed to engage residents, families, and local communities. A key element of the partnership will be an educational initiative, with the BRACE team leading information sessions at Signature at Coombe Hill Manor to increase understanding of dementia, its symptoms, and ways to reduce risk.

In 2024, Signature at Coombe Hill Manor demonstrated its support of the local community, helping to fund facilities at Kingston Hospital, and supporting charities such as Centrepoin, which campaigns to end youth homelessness.

This partnership with BRACE is a continuation of the home's dedication to working with charities and other vital organisations to drive positive change in the health and social care sector and make a meaningful impact on society.

Signature

Red Roses Team To Play Italy In York

Lilli Ives Champion and Mia Venner will make their full Red Roses debuts when John Mitchell's side take on Italy at a sold-out LNER Community Stadium, York on Sunday in the opening round of the Guinness Women's Six Nations.



Loughborough Lightning lock Ives Champion, a product of the England pathway, earned her first cap in the WXV warm-up victory over France while Gloucester-Hartpury wing Venner's maiden international came as a 17-year-old in 2020.

Claudia MacDonald of Exeter Chiefs and Gloucester-Hartpury's PWR top points scorer Emma Sing join Venner in the back three with both last appearing in an England shirt 16 months ago.

Harlequins scrum-half Lucy Packer and Loughborough Lightning's Helena Rowland make up the half-backs, and Holly Aitchison (Bristol Bears) and Emily Scarratt (Loughborough Lightning) form a centre partnership.

Ives Champion is joined in the second row by Rosie Galligan (Saracens). Kelsey Clifford (Saracens) and Maud Muir (Gloucester-Hartpury) sandwich Amy Cokayne (Leicester Tigers) in the front row.

Zoe Aldcroft (Gloucester-Hartpury) will lead the side from blindside flanker in a back row containing vice captain Marlie Packer (Saracens) and Exeter Chief Maddie Feaunati.

On the bench, Flo Robinson (Exeter Chiefs) and Jade Shekells (Gloucester-Hartpury) are in line for their first Red Roses caps.

Red Roses team to play Italy

- | | |
|--|---|
| 15 Emma Sing (Gloucester-Hartpury, 6 caps) | 1 Kelsey Clifford (Saracens, 9 caps) |
| 14 Mia Venner (Gloucester-Hartpury, 1 cap) | 2 Amy Cokayne (Leicester Tigers, 79 caps) |
| 13 Emily Scarratt (Loughborough Lightning, 116 caps) | 3 Maud Muir (Gloucester-Hartpury, 35 caps) |
| 12 Holly Aitchison (Bristol Bears, 35 caps) | 4 Rosie Galligan (Saracens, 19 caps) |
| 11 Claudia MacDonald (Exeter Chiefs, 32 caps) | 5 Lilli Ives Champion (Loughborough Lightning, 1 cap) |
| 10 Helena Rowland (Loughborough Lightning, 34 caps) | 6 Zoe Aldcroft (Gloucester-Hartpury, 58 caps) - captain |
| 9 Lucy Packer (Harlequins, 26 caps) | 7 Marlie Packer (Saracens, 108 caps) |
| | 8 Maddie Feaunati (Exeter Chiefs, 10 caps) |
| Replacements | |
| 16 May Campbell (Saracens, 1 cap) | 20 Sadia Kabeya (Loughborough Lightning, 18 caps) |
| 17 Hannah Botterman (Bristol Bears, 51 caps) | 21 Flo Robinson (Exeter Chiefs, uncapped) |
| 18 Sarah Bern (Bristol Bears, 66 caps) | 22 Jade Shekells (Gloucester-Hartpury, uncapped) |
| 19 Abbie Ward (Bristol Bears, 69 caps) | 23 Ellie Kildunne (Harlequins, 48 caps) |

Digital ticketing: What you need to know

Written by Brentford Football Club

From the 2025/26 season, Brentford Football Club season tickets including premium seats will be digital; find out how this affects you and what support will be available to help manage the transition

From the 2025/26 season, Brentford Football Club season tickets will be digital, replacing physical season cards.

In this article, we'll outline what this means for fans and how we'll be supporting you with the transition.

In August 2024, [Premier League clubs voted](#) to make digital ticketing mandatory for all clubs in the league from the 2026/27 season. For our fans, this means a move away from physical season cards to digital tickets, managed through your Brentford FC ticketing account, and accessible on your phone.



Digital ticketing is a critical step in our fight against ticket touting and is integral to our efforts to keep home areas for home fans only.

We're making this move now, ahead of the Premier League deadline, to escalate our anti-touting operation for the new season, and to give fans plenty of time to get familiar with digital ticketing while we provide the necessary support during this transition.

With digital ticketing, any sharing of your ticket will be completed online through your Brentford FC ticketing account.

To share a ticket, the person receiving it must also have a ticketing account and be in your Friends & Family network. Read our guide [on how to add someone to your Friends & Family network](#).

How will moving to digital tickets benefit fans?

- Moving to digital ticketing makes purchasing and sharing tickets more secure and helps us identify ticket touts. By managing everything online through your ticketing account, it improves our visibility of who is attending matches to ensure, as best we can, that home areas are for home fans only.
- Digital tickets are not new for many Brentford fans and have been shown to be quick and easy to use. With ticket forwarding available online, you'll be able to send your tickets to friends and family in just a few clicks and manage all your tickets in one place.
- Ticket Access Points (TAPs) are awarded based on attendance. With digital tickets shared online, we can ensure that it's the person who attends the game that receives the TAPs. This aligns with our five-year rolling TAPs system, which rewards active and consistent attendance to give fans a pathway to accessing tickets for high-demand fixtures.

How we'll help with the transition

Digital ticketing has already been an option for Bees fans for two seasons alongside physical tickets. We're confident we can support fans with a smooth transition, and we'll take extra steps to help everyone feel comfortable with digital ticketing by the start of the 2025/26 season.

To help fans familiarise themselves with how to access and share digital tickets, we'll update and create new educational resources, including explainers, how-to guides and FAQs.

For fans that need one-to-one support, we'll also host drop-in sessions with our box office team who are on hand to answer your questions.

Fans are welcome to contact our box office team for assistance at any time at tickets@brentfordfc.com, or by calling 0333 005 8521.

Alternatively, speak to them in person at Gtech Community Stadium.

Exemptions for exceptional circumstances

We know that not all fans will be able to access their season ticket on their phone. Exemptions for fans with exceptional circumstances, such as limited access to, or knowledge of, the necessary technology, or fans with access needs, will be available to those who still require a physical season card.

[Exemption requests can be submitted using this form](#). While our aim is to help all fans feel confident using digital tickets before the Premier League's 2026/27 season deadline, we will allow exemptions on a case-by-case basis to ensure you are not disadvantaged by the move away from physical season cards.

Does this impact away tickets?

For away fixtures, the format of the ticket (digital or physical) is the decision of the home team.

We will let you know what the format will be for each away fixture at the point of purchase. If, as a member, you require a physical ticket, please contact the box office.

Digital ticket sharing for the 2025/26 season

From the 2025/26 season, all ticket sharing (forwarding on your ticket) will be managed online through your Brentford FC ticketing account.

To share your ticket, the person receiving it must:

- Have a registered Brentford FC ticketing account
- Be in your Friends & Family network

You can add other Brentford supporters to your Friends & Family network if they have a Brentford FC ticketing account.

You will no longer be able to email yourself a PDF of your ticket that you can print at home. Sharing tickets will be managed online.

Who can season ticket holders share their season ticket with?

For the majority of fixtures, you can forward your ticket to anyone in your Friends & Family network.

For selected Category A games with an exceptional high demand for tickets, the recipient in your Friends & Family network will need to have a membership and meet the TAPs threshold for that match.

This is to ensure that, as best we can, we keep home areas for home fans only, and to ensure that access to the highest-profile games is available to those with the highest TAPs.

If season ticket holders aren't able to attend a high-demand fixture or transfer to someone in their Friends & Family network who qualifies for that game, they can list their season ticket on the ticket exchange for another qualifying member to purchase for that game.

Examples:

- Cat B: Wolverhampton (H) - season ticket holders can share their ticket with anyone in their Friends & Family network
- Cat A: Liverpool (H) - season ticket holders can share their ticket with a member in your Friends & Family network who has 100+ TAPs

Who can premium seat holders share their tickets with?

Premium seat holders can forward their tickets to anyone within their Friends & Family network.

Premium seat holders will continue to have the same ticket-sharing capability with no TAPs threshold, however, this will now be managed online from your ticketing account.

How will TAPs for forwarded tickets be allocated?

By sharing your ticket, you are forwarding it on to another fan. When you forward a ticket online, the recipient must accept it.

Once accepted, the ticket is officially forwarded to them, and they will receive the TAPs for attending the fixture, if they attend the game.

The original season ticket holder will not receive TAPs for a forwarded ticket. This ensures that TAPs are awarded to the person who attends the match.

This aligns with our five-year rolling TAPs system, which rewards active and consistent attendance to give fans a pathway to accessing tickets for high-demand fixtures.

We will be in touch before the start of the new season with digital ticketing guides and FAQs.

If you would like to speak to someone and have any questions answered, feel free to contact our box office team at tickets@brentfordfc.com or call 0333 005 8521.



Spending Review: Pressure on social housing finances could impact achieving housebuilding targets

Council housing rents across the country will have to increase, and many councils will be forced to draw on their financial reserves, due to the ongoing financial pressures facing Housing Revenue Accounts (HRAs) according to a new survey by the Local Government Association (LGA).

The survey, sent to councils ahead of the Spending Review to assess the financial stability of Housing Revenue Accounts (HRAs), revealed that 72 per cent of all respondent councils with an HRA are 'very' or 'fairly' likely to draw down on reserves to balance budgets for 2025/26.

Additionally, 100 per cent of councils who responded to the survey anticipate raising rents within allowable limits (CPI + one per cent) with 67 per cent also expecting to reduce real terms spending on supervision and management, and 57 per cent on repairs and maintenance.

Government is currently consulting on a long-term rent settlement for the sector, and is offering CPI+1 per cent over five years. However, only 38 percent of respondents were confident that the new settlement would allow them to invest in planned new build programmes. This would have a knock-on effect on the Government's housebuilding aims, with fewer councils having the necessary funds to invest in new developments.

Furthermore, the survey found that, only 61 per cent of respondents said that they were very or fairly confident that this settlement would allow them to balance their budgets over this period.

Many councils face an impossible choice between running HRAs into deficit or failing to meet statutory repair obligations, including new requirements under Awaab's Law. The cost of required capital investment has surged from £64.2 billion in 2012 to £96.1 billion today, leaving local authorities with a £31.8 billion shortfall.

Compounding this, day-to-day repair costs are rising sharply due to increased demand for hazard mitigation under Awaab's Law and broader cost increases driven by labour and supply chain challenges. New regulatory requirements and proposed professional qualification standards for housing staff will add further strain.

The LGA is calling on the Government to use the Spending Review to restore over £600 million in lost revenue due to the rent cap in 2024/25 and to provide a long-term rent settlement that supports financial stability for HRAs. Without immediate action, councils will also struggle to finance new affordable homes, undermining the Government's ambition to build 1.5 million homes over the next five years.

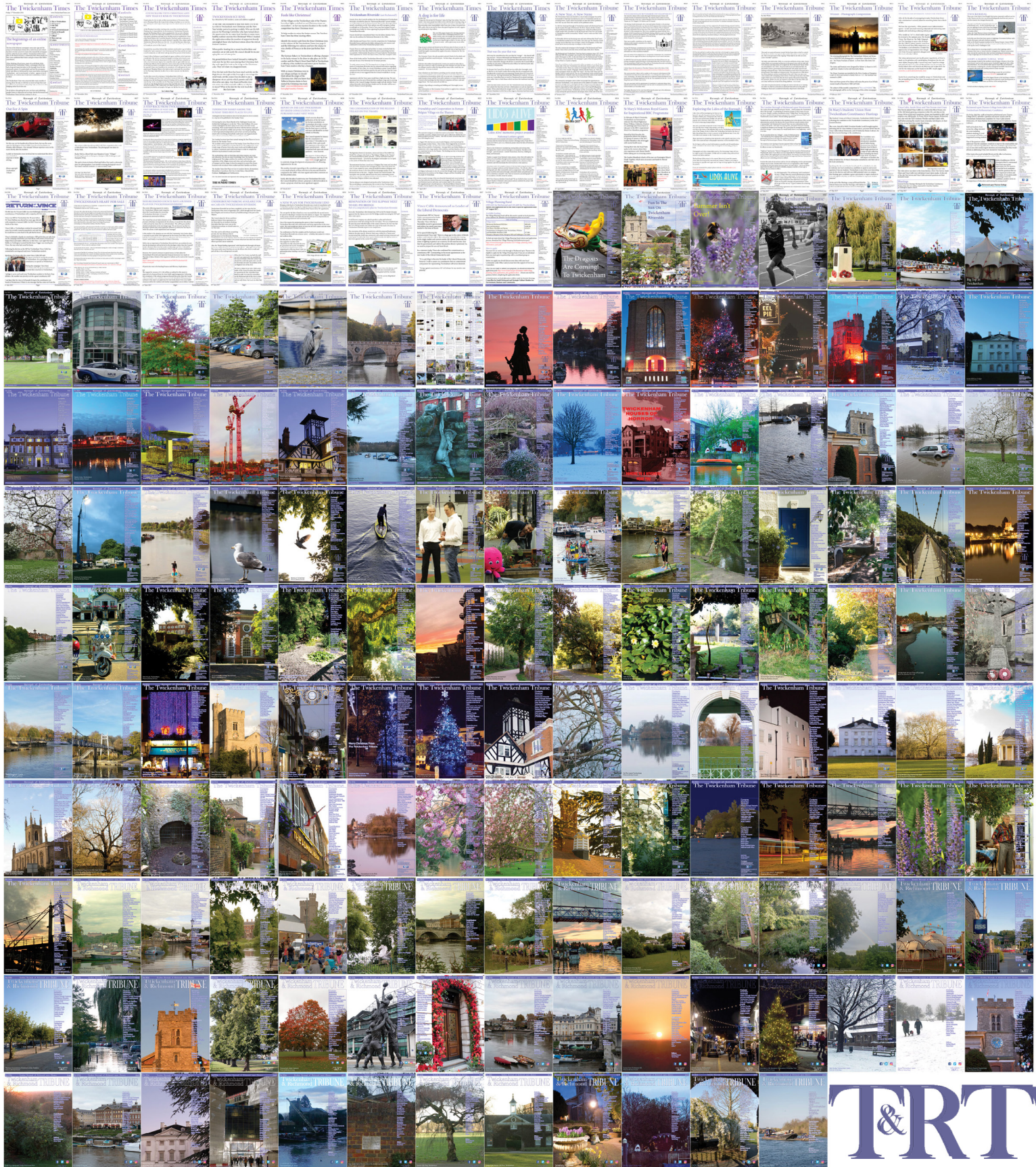
To address the funding gap, the LGA proposes a 10-year rent settlement allowing annual rent increases of up to 1 per cent above CPI, which would help balance HRA income and expenditure over 30 years. However, even with such measures, an income shortfall of between £6 billion and £7 billion is expected in the initial 5 to 10 years.

Cllr Adam Hug, housing spokesperson for the LGA, said:

"These findings are yet another example of the financial pressures facing councils with HRAs. The situation is untenable and unsustainable, and without urgent action, councils – and the communities and people they support – will be severely impacted. Specifically, the impact of the proposed five-year CPI+1 rent settlement needs to be looked at. The survey shows not only that while many councils see a proposed five year settlement as a step in the right direction, there are concerns that this is not long-enough to give them the certainty they need to ramp up their new build housing programmes in the way they would like. A sizable minority are reporting real concerns around balancing their budgets over the next five years due to the pressures they face. The upcoming Spending Review is the opportunity to help give the sector the certainty it needs to build more homes and better look after its residents."



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