

Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



Contents

TickerTape

lines in the Wimbledon area will be closed all day Sunday

The Tree Agency - Seasons Greetings

The Local Picture Postcard Page: Cricket In The Winter?

Crusader Travel - Black Friday Deals

Green Opposition criticises Council's weak progress on affordable housing

Twickmas Trail 2025

Financial Pressures and Political Contradictions Deepen

Big Game 17

Is Richmond Misleading Residents on Air Quality Targets?

Richmond Art Society Winter Exhibition 2025

Dark, Unsafe and Ignored: Waterloo Place Exposes Richmond Council's Failings

Bushy Park Video

Grab a treat while bringing joy to care home residents

November update on the Teddington Launch Lock refurbishment project

National Award for Richmond Transport Chief Highlights a Deeper Shift in Local Governance

No1a Duke Street New Year's Eve Party

Special Richmond health walk to celebrate reopened towpath

Regal Spice Twickenham: Tuesday Banquet & Christmas Bookings

When Innovation Stops Listening: Richmond's Liberal Democrats Face a Liberalism Question

Next Week at Richmond Council

Christmas Shopping Event

Twickers Foodie: A Tower of Flavour on Richmond Bridge

Gibraltar Rocks Package

Black Friday - Going Going Gone!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

To laugh or not to laugh?

Mark Aspen Review: Shock Horror

Mark Aspen Review: The Woman in Black

Mark Aspen Review: Albert Herring

Mark Aspen Review: Partenope

Organ Recital - Advent: Light in Darkness

Jack Petchey Foundation recognises young people from Richmond upon Thames

St Mary's Hosts 'Weeping in Ramah' Conference

This is a sign: Mortlake station provides access to mental health support for those in need

M&S Expands Search For Potential New Sites As It Picks Up The Pace On Store Renewal

Red Roses World Cup Winner Abby Dow Retires From Rugby

Match Preview: Brentford v Burnley

Haymarket Media Group achieves B Corp certification

London Councils responds to the Budget

South Western Railway 'races the dark' for White Ribbon Day

South Western Railway

Alan Winter

Richmond & Twickenham Green Party

A Taste of Twickenham

James Knight

Harlequins

Michael Jones

The Richmond Art Society

James Knight

The Royal Parks

Embracing Age

Environment Agency

Michael Jones

No1a Duke Street

Richmond Council

Regal Spice Twickenham

Micheal Jones

Creative Native Ldn

Alison Jee

Sunborn

Bruce Lyons

Deep Patel

Heather Moulson

Heather Moulson

Helen Astrid

Fi Mead-McNish

St Mary Magdalene, Richmond

Jack Petchey Foundation

St Mary's University

South Western Railway

M&S

RFU

Brentford Football Club

Haymarket Media Group

London Councils

South Western Railway

Editors: Teresa Read, Berkley Driscoll

CONTACT

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TickerTape - News in Brief

South Western Railway

Altered train services and buses replace trains in the Wimbledon area Sunday 30 November

The lines in the **Wimbledon** area will be **closed all day Sunday** due to maintenance work.

- **London Waterloo to Shepperton** services will be **revised** and will be diverted between **Clapham Junction and Kingston via Richmond**.
- **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Wimbledon and Kingston** services will **not** run.
- The afternoon and evening **London Waterloo to Kingston via Hounslow** services will **not** run.
- **London Waterloo to Hampton Court** services will **not** run.
- **Buses will run between:**
Clapham Junction and Surbiton via Kingston
Clapham Junction and Surbiton (non-stop)
Clapham Junction and Hampton Court via Surbiton (Buses will not call at Berrylands)

Seasons Greetings from



The Tree Agency

The Tree Agency

darryl parkin

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The Local Picture Postcard Page - Part 305

Cricket In The Winter?

By Alan Winter

As we move deeper into the Winter period, I find it a bit bizarre that nearly everyone I meet is wrapped up in watching how England's men's cricket team is getting on in Australia.

As a youngster in Twickenham in the 1950's, playing and watching sport was fairly straight forward. Football and Rugby Union were played over a 9 month season from September to early May when the finals were played and then cricket took over in the summer months along with tennis and lawn bowls from May to early September.

All changed now though with the globality of sport when we have men and women's international sport played at a time when the television companies can fit them in and shovel vast amounts of money to the sports administrators paid for by the global advertising that supports the larger events.

Meanwhile, as sport has become globally more popular we live in a country where government and local authorities have been steadily reducing the number of sports fields at schools and in public parks in favour of building more housing and car parks. This is why the hire of playing facilities has increased in cost massively which in itself makes it difficult for schools and wolf cub packs to play outdoor games when they want at an affordable cost.



MOOR MEAD, ST. MARGARETS.

1532

That's enough from an old moaner like me. This is supposed to be a local postcard page so I have found three postcards of local cricket pitches that I played on in my time and thankfully they are all still in use for our local teams and young people to play on while dreaming of scoring a hundred not out in Australia themselves one day.



The first postcard shows cricket in action at Moormead Park in 1964 in St Margarets, the second goes back 118 years to 1907 where the action is taking place on Twickenham Green and the last postcard this week shows the cricket pitch in Marble Hill Park hosting a game back in 1912.



Just to get up to date on the current ashes series, there are five test matches scheduled between the end of November and the beginning of January, England lost the first test to Australia in Perth last week. Next week sees the second test in Brisbane. The third test will take place in Adelaide in mid-December while the Christmas period will see Melbourne host the fourth test. Last, but not least comes the final test of the series in Sydney in early January.

The five-match series forms part of the [2025–2027 ICC World Test Championship](#).

Australia are the current holders of the Ashes, having won in [2021–22](#) and drawn in [2023](#).

CrusaderTravel

020 8744 0474

crusadertravel.com

Escapology Experts

info@crusadertravel.com



Your friendly local Travel Agency
established in Twickenham since 1966

BLACK FRIDAY



Green Opposition criticises Council's weak progress on affordable housing

From the Opposition at Richmond Council, Richmond & Twickenham Green Party

The Opposition Group is bringing a motion to the Richmond Council meeting on 2 December, pushing the Council to invest in more truly affordable homes, such as social rented.

Data from the GLA shows that:

1. only 40 genuinely affordable homes were completed in the borough since March 2022, with zero so far this year.
2. affordable housing supply has dwindled year on year since 2018 – just 166 completed since 2018/19 when this administration took over, yet 491 new affordable homes were completed over the previous eight years.

This is despite opportunities for the Council to do so, including at Twickenham Riverside, which has just had another planning application for the site approved. In the officers' report on the application, it quotes an email from the Council's Housing Policy team:

"The Council is disappointed that the applicant [the Council] has not actively sought to secure funding to provide Social Rented homes on the site in place of London Affordable Rent. Social rented housing is a priority to deliver in the borough as per the newly adopted Local Plan (para 17.20); The Council priority is social rented homes, as this is most affordable product available."

The Housing Policy response to the application criticised the Council for:

- ignoring its own Local Plan
- not responding to the GLA's offer of grant to change the tenure of homes at Twickenham Riverside to the most needed, lowest cost rent available,
- failing to use its own in-house expertise to negotiate this.

Cllr Andrée Frieze, Opposition Leader, says:

"I sat on this Planning Committee and I was shocked to read this in the papers. When I questioned officers to find out if Council was following up on the GLA's offer to create social rent homes on Twickenham Riverside from December 2024, the officer said: 'I think discussions are taking place.'"

"This Council needs to be doing more than merely 'thinking' about social rent homes, it needs to be providing them, to put an end to residents being placed in temporary accommodation, often outside the borough, costing the Council nearly £10 million every year."

Instead, the Liberal Democrat administration in Richmond has made it very clear where its priorities lie. Within two days of the Budget, the Council put out a press release worried for residents being squeezed by the new council tax on properties valued at more than £2 million.



Green Party
Richmond & Twickenham

Twickmas Trail 2025

The Clay
Garden

Buy a Gift
**Local Ceramic
Makers Market**
Make a gift
**Pottery Throwing
Pottery Painting**
Enjoy
Festive Drinks
Be a Winner
Raffle
Kid's Lucky Dip



Shop
35 Unique Gift Stalls
Enjoy
3 Stages of Live Music
KidsZone
Visit Santa Crafts
Write a Letter to Santa
Eat & Drink
Visit Santa Kids Crafts
Hog Roast
Christmas Drinks

PATCH

Dance
Kid's Silent Disco
Facepainting
Watch & Listen
Local Performance
Enjoy
Mulled Wine
Buy a Gift
Local Gift Stalls

29 - 31 York St

67 London Rd

42 York St

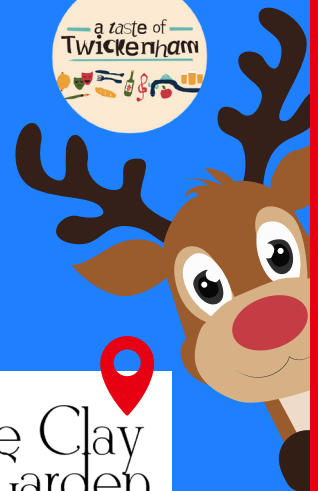
FREE EVENT

Treasure Hunt

Spot Rudy the Reindeer
at each location on the

Twickmas Trail

then **COLLECT YOUR PRIZE!**



London Rd

The Clay
Garden

SAT 29 & SUN 30 NOV

12:00 - 5:30 pm

York St

PATCH

Financial Pressures and Political Contradictions Deepen

By James Knight



Richmond Council's **Finance, Policy and Resources Committee** met this week in a session that blended cautious optimism with uncomfortable questions. A major Government shift in national funding rules has eased the existential threat the borough had been warning about for months. Yet the Council's own financial reports, spending decisions and internal contradictions reveal a more fragile position than the official line suggests. Richmond has escaped the worst, but not the consequences of its own decisions.

It was a long agenda, covering everything from ward safety and funding reform to community grants, infrastructure, debt collection and the corporate budget. What emerged was a picture of a council relieved to escape the worst, but wrestling with decisions that are becoming harder to explain to the public.

Ward under pressure: Waterloo Place ASB

The evening opened with a Green Party ward concern from Councillor Chas Warlow regarding persistent antisocial behaviour in Waterloo Place. This is reported on in a separate article.

Fair Funding Review 2.0: Government Reprieve

The most significant development of the evening was the Government's revision of the Fair Funding Review formula. Richmond had previously warned it could lose around 90 percent of

its settlement by year three. However, a fresh policy statement reduced the projected loss and placed Richmond in the “0 percent cash floor transition” category.

Deputy Leader Jim Millard called the change “a significant shift”, crediting “evidence-driven lobbying” and legal pressure. But even as Members welcomed the improvement, one detail from the Council’s own lobbying submission drew attention. Richmond admitted that repeated Council Tax rises had been used partly to build up c£60 million in reserves intended for Twickenham Riverside and the Richmond town centre pedestrianisation project, rather than to shore up frontline services. This revelation sits uneasily with public messaging in which the Liberals claimed they would pay for essential frontline services.

Green Party councillor Niki Crookdake pressed the administration on childcare costs and other London-weighted factors. Millard said more modelling was expected but that “it is all quite hot off the press”.

Neighbourhood CIL: Tough Questions on Priorities

The Committee approved £1.1 million in Neighbourhood CIL grants. The largest award, £350,000, went to Moormead Pavilion. Councillor Mansfield said the project would “unlock the potential” of the community group. Crookdake questioned whether NCIL should support affordable housing instead. Officers confirmed it is legally possible but would require policy changes.

Meanwhile, the long-promised rebuild of Heathfield Recreation Ground Pavilion has been shelved due to a lack of funds. Ham and Petersham again produced no bids, prompting a supplementary round. Overall, the Neighbourhood CIL seems to have become a general grant-making pot, rather than one to tackle the genuine impact of new development on local infrastructure.

Infrastructure Funding Statement: Large Balances, Limited Transparency

The Statement confirmed that Richmond holds £23.6 million in unspent Section 106 contributions, largely intended to support affordable housing and expanded public services such as GP surgeries, alongside £6.3 million in unspent CIL. Despite this, the Council continues to divert significant sums into highways, public realm and cycling schemes, with limited visibility over how decisions are made or which projects are prioritised. The absence of a clear, publicly accessible framework for allocating these funds is now prompting concern that statutory developer contributions are being used to bolster the Council’s own capital programme rather than the service expansions residents were told they would support.

Corporate Complaints: Rising Dissatisfaction and Strained Services

Complaints have increased across Housing, Waste and Highways. Response times have slipped, and more cases are escalating. Several departments now regularly miss statutory response times. Cllr Mansfield noted that complaint patterns directly drove recent improvements in waste services. Cllr Crookdake queried whether rising statutory adult social care complaints reflected policy shifts.

Debt and Income Collection: Arrears Rising Sharply

Last year, the Council wrote off £4.4 million in debt, including £1.5 million in Adult Social Care

charges, while Council Tax arrears climbed to £21.9 million and Business Rates arrears to £12.8 million. Officers pointed to a new HMRC data-sharing pilot as a way to strengthen recovery efforts and confirmed that two long-running disputed debts have finally been closed. However, the committee papers also reveal that Richmond operates a notably light-touch enforcement approach for Council Tax arrears and has been writing off debts where individuals have absconded without leaving a forwarding address, rather than pursuing County Court Judgments. This practice may reduce administrative burden, but it raises questions about deterrence and consistency at a time when arrears continue to rise.

Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring: Reserves Carrying the Strain

Q2 monitoring shows a £3.9 million overspend, but the more telling issue is the Council's dependence on reserves. The original budget required £4.9 million from reserves. The updated figure rises to £8.8 million. Homelessness overspends by £2.07 million, children's placements by £1.3 million, while ASC shows a small underspend due to vacant posts.

Capital Programme: Riverside Towers Over All Else

The capital programme totals £110 million, with £66.3 million financed through borrowing, marking one of the heaviest debt-funded investment years the borough has undertaken in recent times. Twickenham Riverside alone accounts for £67.2 million, dwarfing every other scheme and concentrating financial risk in a single high-profile project whose final costs and delivery timetable remain fluid. Despite repeated delays and cost inflation, the administration continues to treat Riverside as untouchable in the capital programme.

Green councillors challenged the administration to redirect a greater share of capital spending toward projects that could curb long-term pressures in social care and housing, such as supported accommodation or specialist provision that reduces reliance on expensive out-of-borough placements. The administration acknowledged the argument in principle but offered little detail on concrete plans beyond existing pilot schemes.

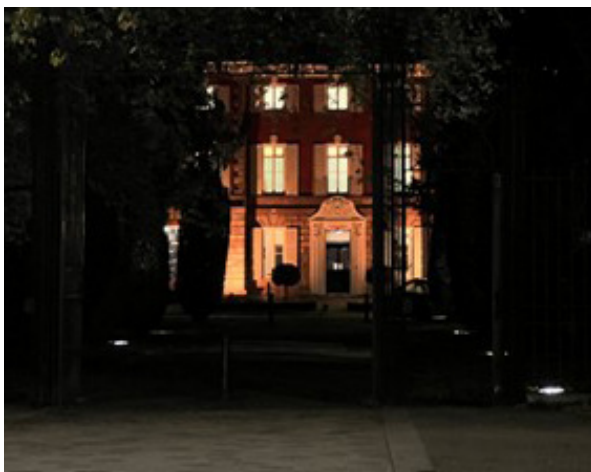
Given the scale of borrowing and the weight of the Riverside scheme within the programme, the question now facing the Council is whether its capital priorities genuinely reflect the areas of greatest strategic need, or whether prestige projects continue to crowd out investment that could deliver stronger financial resilience over the next decade.

A Close Shave

The Government's revision of the Fair Funding Review has granted Richmond breathing space. But the Council's own reports reveal rising demand, uneven investment, increasing arrears and a growing reliance on reserves. With critics now armed with fresh contradictions, and the most dramatic funding scenario off the table, the administration faces a tougher test of its priorities and transparency in the months ahead. Having built its narrative around an existential funding threat, the administration must now answer for the pressures that are entirely of its own making.

You can view the committee paper and webcast by clicking [HERE](#)

Photod ©Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



Gallagher
PREM

DHL

GASTORE

PWR
PREMIERSHIP
WOMEN'S RUGBY



Harlequins

BIG GAME 17



BRISTOL
BEARS

— F E A T U R I N G —



GROOVE ARMADA
DJ SET

SATURDAY 20 DECEMBER 2025

DOUBLE HEADER

ALLIANZ STADIUM, TWICKENHAM

**SECURE
SEATS**

**YOUR
NOW**

ADULTS FROM
£40
U18S FROM
£25

Is Richmond Misleading Residents on Air Quality Targets?

By Michael Jones

Richmond Council's [Air Quality Action Plan](#), championed politically by Cllr Alexander Ehmann, promises to deliver some of the cleanest air anywhere in Britain. The document adopts the World Health Organisation's strictest guideline limits – nitrogen dioxide below 20 micrograms per cubic metre and fine particulate matter below 10 – and suggests the borough can meet these figures by 2030 through ambitious local action. On the surface, it reads as a confident statement of environmental leadership. The problem is that the scientific basis for these claims is far less certain than the council presents.

It is an impressive ambition. But it's not an honest one.

WHO Targets Presented as Achievable Local Goals

Richmond has chosen to treat these WHO values as if they are realistic local delivery targets. Every major scientific adviser to the UK Government has been clear that WHO guidelines cannot be met by local measures because much of the pollution affecting southern England originates outside the country. Even if Richmond removed every diesel engine, banned all wood-burning stoves and electrified every bus, it would still not reliably meet WHO thresholds.

This scientific limitation is nowhere acknowledged in the plan, and residents are left with the impression that local interventions alone can deliver global benchmarks. That omission is not accidental: it reinforces a political narrative that places ultimate responsibility on residents rather than recognising the physical constraints of atmospheric pollution.

What the Government's Scientists Actually Say

The scientific position is clear and documented across multiple official sources. DEFRA's own technical assessments state that WHO PM2.5 guidelines cannot simply be turned into UK legal limits, because WHO values are set on health grounds alone and "do not consider the practicalities of policy development and implementation, including issues of costs and proportionality".

DEFRA also confirms that around a third of the PM2.5 measured in the UK originates outside the country, largely from continental Europe, meaning that no level of domestic action can achieve full compliance everywhere. The Chief Medical Officer likewise notes that many pollutants "travel long distances" and that air quality in England is significantly affected by European emissions.

Leading atmospheric scientists reinforce this point. Professor Ally Lewis of the National Centre for Atmospheric Science urges action to reduce pollution wherever possible, and believes that some of the new values are feasible for the UK – but not all of them. He has warned that the new WHO PM2.5 guideline is "close to impossible to achieve" in parts of the UK, and that the South East would likely breach the WHO limit even if the UK were uninhabited due to incoming pollution from Europe.

Together, these statements form a consistent scientific view: the WHO guideline is a useful long-term aspiration, but it is neither technically achievable everywhere in the UK nor suitable for direct translation into binding national law.

The Real-World Consequences for Residents

The omission of this context is not a matter of academic quibbling. When targets are scientifically unachievable, the pressure to appear compliant shifts onto residents through increasingly interventionist and costly measures. If the council frames persistent pollution solely as the result of local behaviour, this becomes the justification for higher parking charges, expanded enforcement, filtered roads, restricted junctions, reduced town centre parking and more aggressive displacement of traffic. In short, scientifically unreachable targets have political consequences, and they fall on those trying to move around the borough. Policies that would be contentious in their own right are softened when presented as the necessary price of "following the science," even when the science does not support the council's framing.

What the Council Says – and What It Does Not

In fairness to the council, the plan does include general references to public health advice and the importance



of long-term environmental improvement, and no one disputes that cleaner air is a legitimate aim. What it does not include is the essential context that WHO guideline values are aspirational global benchmarks and not operational standards for local authorities. The result is a document that implies scientific inevitability where none exists. Residents are entitled to know that compliance with WHO levels depends primarily on international emissions, meteorology and continental agricultural activity, not on whether they drive to the supermarket or park near the station.

The Nolan Principles

The Nolan Principles of Public Life provide the ethical framework for public governance, and the issues raised by this plan engage several of them directly. These principles apply not only to elected councillors but also to senior council officers, who draft, analyse and recommend the policies that shape the borough's strategic direction. Officers have a professional duty to ensure evidence is presented clearly, accurately and without distortion. They must not allow scientific limitations to be downplayed in ways that create a misleading impression for elected members or the public. When WHO limits are framed as straightforward delivery targets without explaining why they cannot be met locally, it is not only councillors who risk breaching the Code. Officers do too.

The principles of **Honesty**, **Openness** and **Objectivity** are particularly relevant. Honesty requires a truthful account of what science can and cannot deliver. Openness requires full disclosure of the reasoning behind decisions, especially when the evidence contains important caveats. Objectivity demands that scientific advice be used impartially, without omitting inconvenient conclusions. When WHO limits are presented as straightforward delivery targets without explaining why they cannot be met locally, all three principles are stretched. When the omission supports a particular policy direction, they risk being breached.

Why the Nolan Principles Matter

The Nolan Principles are not abstract ethics for academic debate. They are the standards that allow residents to trust that the people who govern them are acting with integrity. When officials or councillors present aspiration as scientific certainty, that trust begins to erode. When evidence is presented selectively to justify predetermined policies, confidence weakens further. Once lost, trust in local governance is extraordinarily difficult to rebuild.

This is where accountability matters. As the Cabinet Member responsible for air quality and transport, Cllr Alexander Ehmann carries the political responsibility for the framing of the Air Quality Action Plan. When a plan he publicly promotes omits the central scientific fact that WHO targets cannot be met, he is accountable for that omission. It is not enough to champion ambition; he must also champion honesty about what the science does and does not allow. Residents expect transparency from the councillor leading this policy area, and they are entitled to expect him to ensure scientific limitations are communicated clearly rather than quietly set aside.

Senior officers also have responsibilities under the Nolan Principles. They are trusted by taxpayers to present evidence impartially, to advise councillors accurately, and to ensure reports do not mislead by omission. When officers allow aspirational global benchmarks to be described as locally deliverable targets without explaining the constraints identified by Government scientific advisers, they too place themselves at risk of falling short of the standards their roles demand.

What's at Stake

The stakes are not rhetorical. Decisions on traffic, parking, enforcement, development and the design of town centres flow directly from how air-quality targets are framed. If those targets rest on a misrepresentation of the science, the policies built on top of them lose their legitimacy. Residents begin to question whether restrictions are evidence-led or politically convenient. And when that doubt takes root, the entire system of democratic consent begins to fray.

Richmond Council is entitled to pursue cleaner air with resolve. It is entitled to adopt WHO guidelines as an aspirational direction of travel. What it is not entitled to do is mask the scientific reality that these limits cannot be delivered by a single borough, then use that fiction to justify increasingly intrusive policies. Accountability means being honest about the evidence, even when it limits what can be achieved. Without that honesty – from both councillors and officers – the foundations of local governance begin to weaken, and trust weakens with them.

Richmond Art Society Winter Exhibition 2025

From The Richmond Art Society

The Richmond Art Society is delighted to announce its Winter Exhibition 2025, showcasing a vibrant and diverse collection of artwork from its talented members. The exhibition will be held at The Landmark Arts Centre, Teddington, from Friday 28th November to Sunday 30th November 2025, with the opening night taking place on Friday 6-8pm.



Featuring over 200 original works across painting, sculpture, printmaking, and mixed media, the Winter Exhibition offers art lovers and collectors a chance to discover unique pieces from both emerging and established local artists. It will also include works from Richmond Art Prize. All works will be available for sale, making it the perfect opportunity to find a special gift or add to your own collection.

Admission is free, and all are welcome.

Exhibition Details:

Landmark Arts Centre, Ferry Road, Teddington TW11 9NN
Friday 28th November 2-8pm (Opening night. Bar open 6-8pm)
Saturday 29th November 10am-5pm
Sunday 30th November 10am-4pm



Dark, Unsafe and Ignored:

Waterloo Place Exposes Richmond Council's Failings

By James Knight

What emerged at the latest Finance, Policy and Resources Committee was a stark account of life on Waterloo Place, Richmond. This modest alley off Sheen Road has become the scene of a sustained and **violent campaign of antisocial behaviour**. For at least two years, residents have endured late-night intimidation by roaming groups of teenagers. The residents' own words reveal the extent of their anxiety: we "live in constant fear of having our front door kicked in".



This is not an occasional nuisance. It is consistent, predictable, and terrifying for those forced to endure it. Pregnant women, elderly residents, and households with infants are all caught in this cycle of fear. CCTV footage has been repeatedly handed to the police. However, the behaviour persists.

The Issue That Never Goes Away

This alleyway has followed the same pattern of behaviour for years. Meetings have been held. The police have promised action. Yet residents still brace themselves for another night of thuds, shouting, and vandalism. Waterloo Place now stands as the latest example of a council that only responds to crime when pressured, and even then, with little urgency.

A Broken Promise on Street Lighting

One detail underscores the issue. The alley remains poorly lit, relying on a single heritage lamp. In 2018, the Liberal Democrats pledged to increase street lighting in the darkest parts of Richmond to enhance safety. Seven years later, Waterloo Place, an area already known for serious antisocial behaviour, has received no such upgrade. In other words, the very pledge intended to prevent situations like this has not been fulfilled where it is most needed.

Richmond's Statutory Duty

A deeper issue lies beneath the surface. Richmond's Finance Committee is not just a financial body; by law, it also functions as the borough's Crime and Disorder Committee. It is responsible for scrutinising policing, community safety, and antisocial behaviour.

Under section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006, strengthened by the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009. The council is legally required to maintain an active Crime and Disorder Committee, hold at least one dedicated scrutiny meeting annually, and operate a formal Councillor Call for Action process for crime and disorder issues.

That role seems scarcely understood.

Green Party councillor Chas Warlow raised the issue, but only through the informal ward concern route. The formal Councillor Call for Action process mandated by the law is not functioning in Richmond. There was no mention of the committee's legal responsibilities during the item. The outcome is a council that may be failing to meet its statutory obligations while residents continue to suffer.

There was a very clumsy discussion on the matter, and it was clear that Cllr Roberts had done no preparation and had not summoned the relevant council officers to assist. He only promised to mention the case at the next safety partnership meeting.

A Council Unsure of Its Own Responsibilities

Instead of exercising its scrutiny powers, the committee focused on whether the alley was a public right of way, whether gates were feasible, and how much could reasonably be asked of the police. What never came up was the question that truly matters: is the council fulfilling its statutory duties to keep residents safe and hold the Community Safety Partnership to account? Based on this meeting, the answer is a resounding no.

The management of Waterloo Place reflects longstanding concerns voiced by residents around Twickenham Green, Richmond Green, and other hotspots. Issues are downplayed, and practical measures are often delayed. Authorities tend to excuse or try to understand the offenders instead of prioritising the protection of victims. This pattern has become increasingly difficult to ignore.

Conclusion: A Liberal Democrat Blind Spot on Community Safety

The Liberal Democrats took power in 2018, claiming they would prioritise safety and community wellbeing. However, Waterloo Place tells a different story. Residents live in fear while promises about lighting remain unfulfilled. The committee's statutory crime and disorder responsibilities are not mentioned, topped with a consistent tendency to focus on trying to explain away offenders rather than standing firmly with victims.

Richmond deserves better than this.



Photos ©Twickenham & Richmond Tribune

Bushy Park Video

From The Royal Parks

Take a peaceful autumnal tour through Bushy Park's Woodland Gardens in this specially curated walkthrough

This hidden oasis of azaleas, camellias and bubbling streams, also contains the popular Pheasantry Café

Watch on via the link [HERE](#)



Grab a treat while bringing joy to care home residents

From Embracing Age

Twickenham-based charity Embracing Age are holding an online silent auction. Lots for you to enjoy, while raising vital funds to bring joy and companionship to more older care home residents in the new year.

The brilliant prizes on offer include a week in a Suffolk holiday cottage, theatre tickets donated by Richmond Theatre and the Richmond Shakespeare Society, co-working membership at Patch Twickenham, Rugby Museum tickets, London Wetlands tickets, sports memorabilia, art prints, shopping vouchers and much more.



View the prizes and place your bids before 10pm on Sunday 30 November.

Visit the [Silent Auction](#).

November update on the Teddington Launch Lock refurbishment project

From the Environment Agency

Construction work is progressing well at Teddington Launch Lock. In recent weeks, the Environment Agency (EA) and its construction partner, Bam Nuttal, have completed ground investigations and have begun installing temporary works in the lock chamber.

This will allow the team to dewater the lock and undertake further investigations prior to beginning repair works.

The EA have started by installing a stop log barrier at the upstream end of the lock which has enabled them to remove the upstream lock gates. The lock gates have been transported down river via barge to the Ham Street Car Park, and taken off site for refurbishment.



Contractors are currently navigating in unusually low tidal river conditions. This means the works can only progress during high tide as the water levels are too low for navigation at low tide.

Following the removal of the upstream lock gates, the team have begun installing propping throughout the lock chamber.

Once the propping has been installed, the downstream gates will be removed for refurbishment and a stop log barrier installed at the downstream end. Further investigations will then be undertaken before the full repair works begin in earnest.

The EA anticipates that the Launch Lock will be open for navigation in Summer 2026.

Please note, the Thames path at Teddington Lock and Ham Street car park will be diverted for short periods of time throughout the works and will be clearly marked on site.

Use of the Teddington Barge Lock will continue throughout construction to maintain navigation. [Further updates on the work will be available on the EA's Thames Area Asset page.](#)

If you have any questions about the works, please email the project team on enquiries_thm@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Orleans House Gallery



Christmas Shopping Weekend

Saturday 29 & Sunday 30 November, 10am-5pm

The Christmas Shopping Weekend features over 40 independent Makers, Designers, Artists and Artisans showcasing their unique and exciting products with live musical performances, free family creative activities, and festive treats from the onsite Stables Café.

FREE ENTRY

Image: Zoe's Clay

Orleans House Gallery
Orleans Road,
Twickenham TW1 3BL
020 8831 6000
info@orleanshousegallery.org

@orleanshousegallery
/orleanshousegallery

 LONDON BOROUGH OF
RICHMOND UPON THAMES

National Award for Richmond Transport Chief Highlights a Deeper Shift in Local Governance

By Michael Jones

Richmond councillor Alexander Ehmann has been named Innovator of the Year at the LGIU and CCLA Councillor Awards, winning praise for his work on transport reform and air quality.

The accolade reflects what the judging panel described as bold and creative leadership, and the council's own leader, Gareth Roberts, said the award was "a testament to Councillor Ehmann's determination to deliver real, practical improvements for people across our borough", adding that his work was helping create "a cleaner, safer and more accessible Richmond".



The recognition is notable, but it arrives at a moment when Richmond's transport agenda is increasingly contested. The blanket 20 miles per hour limit, extensive school street schemes and a steady expansion of traffic interventions have provoked strong reactions across the borough over the past seven years. Supporters argue these measures are overdue and essential. Others describe them as heavy-handed and insufficiently tested, and point to rising frustration among drivers, traders and disabled residents.

A Governance Model Moving Away from Pluralism

What gives this award wider significance is the evolution in how the council makes decisions. Richmond's Liberal Democrat administration has shifted from traditional local pluralism toward a more technocratic model that privileges expert frameworks over resident preference. The adoption of WHO style public health metrics, Healthy Streets tools and behaviour shaping planning guidance has subtly reshaped the centre of power. These frameworks are not required by UK planning law. They reflect a more interventionist philosophy in which government is expected to influence how people live their lives.

The declaration of a climate emergency has accelerated this trend. For many, climate change represents a serious and irreversible threat that justifies bold action. That view has real support. Yet others believe the emergency narrative has created a political atmosphere in which contentious policies are presented as unavoidable moral duties rather than democratic choices. Concerns about congestion, access or practical impact are often overshadowed by appeals to higher environmental imperatives.

The influence of green politics has also been a factor. Although the Greens hold few seats, their policy instincts have shaped the local debate. Rather than moderating this pressure, the Liberal Democrats have tended to absorb it. The result is a party that has edged away from its classical liberal roots of choice and consent and toward a style of governance focused on behavioural outcomes and long-term strategic targets.

A Borough Still Negotiating Its Future

For many in Richmond, the central question has never been whether the borough should pursue cleaner air, safer streets or better-designed neighbourhoods. Those aims attract broad support. The real debate is now about method and mandate. How far should a local authority go in shaping the everyday behaviour of its residents? To what extent should international frameworks and emergency declarations guide local decisions? And how can a council balance environmental ambition with the pluralism, consent and practical realities that have long defined local governance in Richmond?

Cllr Ehmann's award underscores a moment of confidence for the administration, but it also coincides with a period of heightened scrutiny. The borough finds itself negotiating the boundary between innovation and imposition, between expertise and lived experience, and between strategic vision and democratic responsiveness. As Richmond continues to refine its transport and environmental policies, these tensions will remain central to the public conversation.

What happens next will determine not only the shape of the borough's streets, but the character of its governance. Whether that governance continues on its current path or pivots toward a more consultative and plural approach is a question that residents, councillors and policymakers will be returning to in the months ahead. *Photo © LGIU*

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Special Richmond health walk to celebrate reopened towpath

From Richmond Council

Residents are invited to join a special Richmond health walk on Monday 1 December 2025 along the popular Thames Path National Trail.

The walk will start at 10.30am outside the White Cross Hotel on Water Lane, Richmond, and follow a scenic linear route along the riverside, finishing at the Ship Inn, Mortlake SW14 7QR (near to the station and local bus routes).



The route includes the newly reinstated stretch of towpath between Richmond Lock and Kew Gardens, which reopened on 8 November following a year-long programme of major riverbank repairs.

Find out more about the [restoration works to stabilise the riverbank](#) and safeguard the towpath against future erosion.

The walk on 1 December is expected to last between one and one-and-a-half hours, offering participants the chance to enjoy uninterrupted views along one of the borough's most popular walking routes.

To join, simply come along to the starting point 10 minutes before the stated start time. Please note, paths follow the towpath and sometimes cobbles and gravel tracks, which can be muddy and slippery when wet so please wear appropriate footwear.

The Richmond health walks are free, organised group walks for people who are currently not very active but would like to increase their physical activity. There are walks every day of the week throughout the year except Saturdays and public holidays.

[Find out more and view the full timetable](#) of walks across the borough.

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When Innovation Stops Listening: Richmond's Liberal Democrats Face a Liberalism Question

By Micheal Jones

Richmond has long been a borough where the Liberal Democrats could secure not only votes but also a sense of civic trust. Their appeal was based on a familiar combination: administrative competence, social moderation, and an innate respect for personal freedoms. However, recent years have seen a noticeable shift in how the council perceives its mandate, and voters who once saw themselves as firmly supporting the party are beginning to question whether something more fundamental has changed.

The earlier articles in this series examined the scientific basis of the council's air quality strategy and the increasingly expert-led nature of its transport planning. What those pieces revealed was not a dispute about aims. Nearly everyone agrees that cleaner air, safer streets, and environmental responsibility are essential goals. The issue lies in how these goals are being pursued, and the extent to which the council relies on external frameworks and emergency rhetoric at the expense of local consent.

A Council No Longer Grounded in Its Own Liberal Tradition

The Liberal Democrats once stood out for their approach to public engagement. Consultation was genuine rather than just an exercise in justification. Residents felt not only spoken to but truly listened to. It is that tradition, rather than any particular policy, that many long-term supporters now say seems to have been lost.

The tendency to portray controversial decisions as inevitable responses to global obligations or health imperatives has eroded the art of political persuasion. In the debate over air quality, scientific nuance has been overshadowed by certainty, even when government advisers are clear about the limits of what local measures can accomplish. The disconnect between the complexity of the underlying evidence and the simplicity of the council's messaging has not gone unnoticed.

Emergency Politics and the Narrowing of Debate

The declaration of a climate emergency marked a pivotal moment. For many, climate change is seen as a serious and urgent challenge. That point is not disputed. However, moving from urgency to inevitability has incurred its own political costs. Policies that were once openly debated are now presented as moral imperatives. Disagreement is met with impatience. Concerns about congestion, access, or the experiences of disabled residents are politely acknowledged but rarely influence decisions.

This does not represent the liberalism that many Richmond voters recognise. Instead, it shows a confidence in administrative judgment that risks becoming presumptuous, and a tendency to view dissent as a lack of education rather than a legitimate expression of preference.

Behaviour Shaping by Design

The growing use of WHO-style health metrics, Healthy Streets assessments, and behavioural planning tools has quietly changed the way the council perceives its role. These tools are neither illegal nor inherently unreasonable. However, they do embody a particular philosophy: that well-designed environments can and should influence people toward better decisions.

This view is not widely shared among Liberal Democrat voters. Many recognise the value of environmental design but do not want policy to be dominated by it. The concern is not that these tools

exist, but that they are increasingly influencing decisions more than voters.

The Influence of Green Politics

To understand the Liberal Democrats' shift, one must recognise the influence of the Greens. Their agenda is clear, confident, and ideologically coherent. It is also more demanding than the pragmatic liberalism Richmond voters have traditionally supported. Rather than tempering Green pressure, the Liberal Democrats have adopted much of it. For some voters, this is admirable. For others, it feels unbalanced, especially when the effect is to reduce the scope for compromise.

Although the Green Party is often associated with progressive parties, it is not a liberal party in any significant philosophical sense. Its origins are rooted in communitarian and ecological politics rather than the liberal tradition of personal freedom, limited government, and pluralism. Green ideology presumes that the state should direct behaviour to attain environmental objectives, even if this limits individual choice. It emphasises collective outcomes over personal autonomy and adopts a model of governance where environmental imperatives justify much stronger intervention than most liberal voters would instinctively accept.

This makes the Greens an awkward bedfellow for the Liberal Democrats in Richmond, despite their ongoing electoral cooperation. The Liberal Democrat brand is built on openness, consent and respect for personal freedom. The Greens rest on a far more directive political philosophy. When the Liberal Democrats absorb Green policy instincts, they inevitably drift away from their liberal centre ground. The climate emergency framing, the rise of behaviour-shaping tools in planning, and the growing reliance on international frameworks reflect this influence. Liberal Democrat voters who supported the party for its moderation and independence are now confronted with a version of local government shaped partly by a partner whose instincts sit well outside the liberal tradition.

Liberal Democrats at a Turning Point

Nothing here indicates the council is acting in bad faith. Many of its aims are commendable. However, ambition is not the core issue. Richmond is now dealing with a more subtle problem: a governing philosophy that has gradually prioritised expertise over consent and certainty over dialogue.

For the Liberal Democrats, the question is whether this development enhances their appeal or jeopardises it. A party that built its success on trust and moderation cannot afford to seem impatient with the very public whose support it relies on.

Residents who supported the Liberal Democrats for their openness and balance are watching for signs that these qualities will return. Whether the party chooses to re-establish itself in its liberal roots, or continues along its current course, will influence Richmond's political character in the years to come.

If the Liberal Democrats continue on this course, where does that leave voters who still believe in liberalism?

Next Week at Richmond Council

On Tuesday, 2nd December, a **Full Council** Meeting will be held. The meeting will start at 7 pm at York House, Twickenham. For more details, click [HERE](#)

For guidance on how to **participate** at different types of council meetings, such as speaking or asking written or verbal questions, please click [HERE](#)



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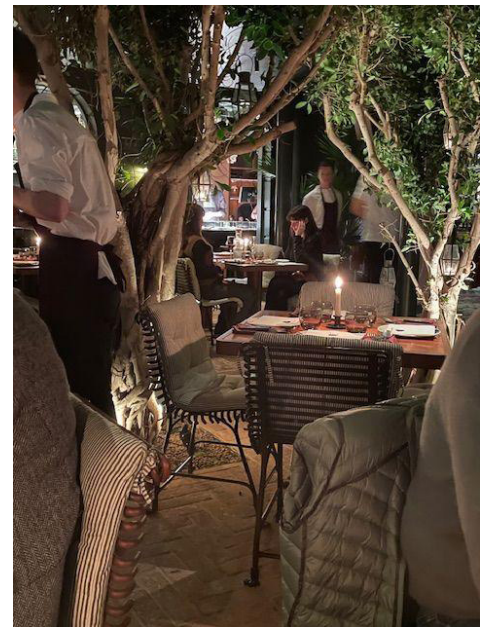
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Creative Native Ldn

A Tower of Flavour on Richmond Bridge

If you've been over Richmond Bridge recently you'll have seen the hive of activity in the former Pitcher & Piano site. Well folks, it's no longer a secret: **Tower House** is open...and packed! So I went along the other day with my pal Lyndsay to check it out.

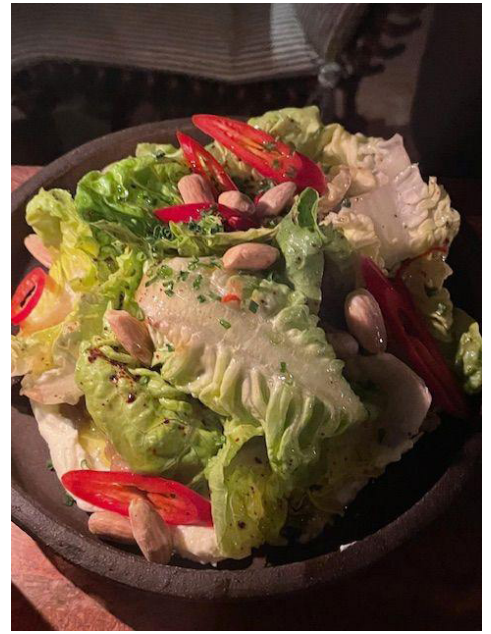
It was a bitterly cold night, and they have sensibly put a heavy velvet curtain inside the main door to stop draughts. Once inside, it's a light and cosy cocoon atmosphere amidst flickering lights. We were taken to our table downstairs, where they've built a very impressive glass room complete with large olive and palm trees. Tables are quite close together, and they have lit candles in a 'wee willie winkie' type of candle holder on each table, creating a beautifully festive, (but perhaps rather risky from a safety point of view), ambience. There's an open kitchen at the rear showing the busy brigade at work.



The staff are delightful - and helpfully take you through the menu concept, which is one of sharing plates. Tower House is described as a modern Mediterranean restaurant. The executive chef here and at the sister restaurant **Gold in Notting Hill**, is Theo Hill, and his menu changes daily, making the most of seasonal ingredients.

An excellent Negroni kick started my evening, while Lyndsay opted for a Mini Martini (served in a small glass - but with a big kick).

We chose a portion of whipped cod's roe, radish and chicory to start, together with a special of the day of burrata, with endive, Bellota ham and grilled pears. Both were excellent - the cod's roe was delightfully lemony and smoky, with the chicory and radish being the perfect accompaniments. The grilled pears added a very tasty and interesting element to the burrata salad.



We also had a portion of gem lettuce, baba ganoush, labneh, chilli and almonds which, again, was really excellent and a perfect balance of ingredients.

For our 'main' we had brill with ajada (garlic and paprika) sauce. It was served whole, but the offer to have it filleted was too tempting, especially as they had just dimmed the lights in the restaurant, so it was returned beautifully filleted. The skin (something I usually dislike intensely) was really tasty and topped with wafer thin slices of garlic and chopped herbs. The skill of the chef was evident by the subtle flavouring that allowed the fish to be the hero ingredient, without masking its flavour. To accompany this we very much enjoyed a side of chargrilled broccoli with piquillo sauce.



I'm not much of a dessert person, but Lyndsay was tempted by the peanut butter and jelly, burnt marshmallows. It was very rich and sweet indeed, and while she enjoyed it, Lyndsay couldn't manage to finish it.

The very extensive wine list has wines by the glass from £7.50 and we tried the 'Bonkers' English Chardonnay from the South Downs - mainly because we were tempted by the name - and it was excellent.

Tower House has launched with aplomb and looks set to be a great addition to the Richmond dining scene. For any vegetarian it is a welcome chance to try some very unusual and extremely tasty veggie dishes. Come summer, when the terrace is finished, al fresco dining will offer spectacular views of the river and it will, no doubt, be a very sought-after dining spot.

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Black Friday - Going Going Gone!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

By Bruce Lyons



The Travel Industry heaved a huge sigh of relief, there had been threats of colossal increases on Air Taxes, a tax on UK Homestays and minimum wages taxes on UK taxi transfers and more.

Yes, there are new taxes, especially in Business rates But Rachel obviously likes her holidays!!!

So, after a weeklong attack on my inbox and the day (Black Friday) finally arriving I had a look back to see the best offers - though most will be gone by next Monday or Tuesday- Maybe you will see one of these and give us a call, if there is something here on your "Wish List".

Possibly the best is one that arrived just as I was typing this a 14nt South African Safari, Garden

Route Beach and Cape Town; normally £6075 reduced by £1400, flights included. Amazing.

But there are more and here is a little sample:

- G Adventures, the adventure company has till Sunday (30th November) 30% discounts on a whole raft of trips on selected dates, Costa Rica - 1st April, 16 days was £1399 now £979, South East Asia Encompassed, 29 Days 28th February was £3499 now £2499!! There today gone tomorrow (nearly literally)
- Best of All is HX Expeditions these are on offer till 3rd December with up to 35% on selected dates; Alaska Inside Passage, now £3228; Svalbard in Spring 6/6 - 9 days inc flights £5264; Iconic Antarctica - The Explorers Route 31/10 x 16 days, Galapagos, Greenland, Iceland Arctic & Norway are all on offer. Sister Company Hurtigruten Have a selection of Norwegian Coastal Voyages on offer with 25% off The North Cape Line itinerary - 15 days £2078n selected dates- or the Coastal Express with 50% off £913 -
- Small Ships by Seafarers - book by 5th December have savings on many of their worldwide cruises. They have savings up to 50% on sailings in Cape Verde; West Africa; Seychelles; French Polynesia; Sicily; Malta and Several Greek Itineraries
- Hundreds of Hotels Worldwide; Many 5 * but also 3* and often through the year up to 50% off



As the saying goes - "Don't Delay Book Today"

Crusader
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To laugh or not to laugh?

By Deep Patel

~ Life Through the Eyes of a Twickenham Shopkeeper ~



If you are lucky enough to have been in my newsagents shop when I am on duty you who have been into my shop would have heard me saying one of my most said phrases “you gotta have a laugh”, admittedly, I often say it at very irrelevant and probably inappropriate times, none the less, needless to say, I say it very often. Conversely, I am told by my older brother that it’s easy for me to have a laugh as all I need to do is to look in the mirror...charming. All that aside, do we really have to have a laugh, or should we be more focused/real or serious?

Don’t get me wrong, we all have down days, or down weeks/months (or even years in some cases) but never forget, that after every dark night, the sun always rises again...things...will...get...better. So why the majority of us spend 70% of our lives worrying about things that probably aren’t even as important as the importance we give them? Well, it’s human nature some might say? I mean, you only have to look at the newspapers (not this one of course) to see that 80% of what we read is somehow warning us, or reporting on something “bad” that has happened to someone, or something, somewhere in the world...we are always somehow more interested in reading “bad news” than good news stories (don’t act like you aren’t too...we all are...in fact a few years ago a new newspaper launched that reported on 80% of the good news stories from the world...it went bankrupt after 6 weeks of launching).

Life can be hard, it is not without its challenges to say the least, there are often more downs than ups too along the way, but that doesn’t mean we need to be so serious surely? In the words of George Orwell: “all of us are in the gutter, but some of us are looking up at the stars”. The cup can be half empty...or half full...the grass isn’t greener on the other side, it’s greener where you water it”...

So in answer to my original question...do we really need to “have a laugh”? Absolutely we do. Laugh more and frown less, turn that frown upside down...why? Because life is too short, and no matter what difficulties you are facing, there is usually always someone worse off...so granted it isn’t easy, but as we near the end of the year 2025, do me one favour in the coming month, try to face each difficulty with a smile and don’t take life too seriously. Life is for living...not worrying. Troubles come and go, but it is the way we choose to greet them that really matters...whether with tears...or laughter...the problems will still come and go...so why choose the tears, anxiety or stress? Instead smile more and remember there is always a bigger plan for us all, and all we have to do is keep trying with good intent to be the best humans we can bekind...caring....and loving towards all lives big and small. So in answer to my original question...yes...it’s true...”you gotta have a laugh”...otherwise what is even the point in life? Laugh more...stress less...and always try and do your best. Read that again:

Remember...

“Laugh more... stress less... and always try and do your best!”

MY CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP

STOP RATS KINDLY FOR GOOD KARMA:

Simply use humane LIVE CAPTURE mouse & rat traps (available online or at Meet & Deep News) and release them back in our parkland areas. Use electronic plug-in deterrents with good reviews around your house to stop them coming (the smell of white vinegar not only stops rodents and foxes, it also stops ants kindly).

For ANY specific tip to stop any “pest” or insect KINDLY (for good karma/blessings), email me:

InsectLoversUnite@gmail.com or join my Facebook page: “INSECT LOVERS UNITE”

Shock Horror

by Ryan Simons

Thunder Road at the Exchange Theatre, Twickenham, then on tour until 23rd December

Shock Horror seems at first akin to an apocalyptic aftermath, dark loneliness and haunting sounds, or a reflection of nightmares. The lone character Herbert, however, soon disabuses us of these concepts, as he establishes the story of his childhood home, a derelict cinema, where he lived in the company of reels of film. Against the backdrop of horror films and conspiracies outlined by his projectionist dad, Herbert had suffered an unstable environment with his mentally ill and violent mother, and the alcoholic father who was desperate to break free.



Ethan Cheek's very effective set design, demonic and symbolising devastation, has a genuine Gothic feel, bolstered by atmospheric lighting by Andrew Crofts and Matt Carnazza. However, the impact of the eerie music, composed by Ben Parsons, loses the tension of the horror by being over-loud.

A creepy ventriloquist doll, darkly humorous and homicidal, excels in further stepping up the tension. No wooden acting here, as very skilled puppeteering, with deft and clever movements, breathes life into this articulate creature.

The sad and wonky cinema screen, in the now condemned Metropole Cinema, shows an array of images of Herbert's upbringing, with vignettes of Herbert's parents. Alex Moran's Herbert stays eerily consistent. Strong performances by Chloe Carter as his parents, and a very striking priest by Chris Blackwood, whose murder haunted Herbert, create a surreal scenario. The Darkness, voiced by Terence Mann, is creepy and penetrating.

There are nice effects with the filing cabinet drawer smoothly opening, in one case producing a round red balloon, among other macabre features by illusion designer John Bulleid.

The basis of *Shock Horror* is ambiguous. Is it a ghost story, or full-on horror, or just a very disturbing account of a childhood gone wrong? On any text, there are genuinely chilling moments. This slick production is directed in great detail by its writer Ryan Simons, and his very impressive production team. Keep a watch out for them, particularly on cold and shadowy autumnal nights.



Read Heather Moulson's review at www.markaspen.com/2025/10/30/shock-horror

Photography by Marc Brenner

The Woman in Black

by Susan Hill, adapted for the stage by Stephen Mallatratt

PW Productions at Richmond Theatre until 29th November, then on tour until 26th April 2026

The audience is filled with trepidation as the curtain goes up on a barren sloping set and a theatre props hamper. The reticent Arthur Kipps begins to read out from his diary about a traumatic and life-changing experience. The Actor, is determined to bring out the underlying horror lurking behind Kipp's flat delivery. In the play-within-a-play, he succeeds with unforgettable results.



Arthur Kipps, played by John MacKay, is engaging, but initially rather unforthcoming. Then he relaxes into his Scottish persona, and excels as he variously portrays many characters. The Actor, played by the vibrant Daniel Burke, has the edge of this two-hander as the character is consistently shrewd and sharp, and later, genuinely frightened.



So are we, and with good reason! Unnerving lighting designs by Kevin Sleep create incredible shadow effects and blackouts, and the impact of Sebastian Frost's original sound track is also used economically. Thick mist spreads over the stage and outwards towards us, which effectively makes the remote and abandoned house appear believable. All this builds up genuine tension that takes us to a point of no return.

The Woman in Black herself has quite literally a haunting stage presence, seeped with malevolence. Her apparition appears just enough to put us on the edge of our seats. Nothing is overdone and the build-up of horror is subtle.

With flawless inevitability, the sparse set becomes a scene of horror, particularly the upstairs. A tangible anticipation crackles in the theatre. The second act has the edge in its intensity and brutal climax. There is a terrifying nursery room filled with eerie detail. Otherwise, Michael Holt's simple set carries an abundance of atmosphere.

John MacKay and Daniel Burke work well with each other and this gritty text. Fittingly, in view of her crucial role the Woman in Black, sadly uncredited, also takes a curtain call.



Directed in great detail by Robin Herford, *The Woman in Black* is intricately thought-out, and is a triumphant production.

Read Heather Moulson's review at www.markaspen.com/2025/11/26/woman-black-rt

Photography by by Mark Douet

Albert Herring

by Benjamin Britten, libretto by Eric Crozier

English National Opera at the London Coliseum and The Lowry, Salford

ENO is taking its slimmed-down production of Britten's 1947 chamber opera on the road. *Albert Herring* is a whimsical tale set in a fictional village in Suffolk, Britten's home county. When the annual May Queen of unimpeachable virtue cannot be found, the townsfolk – convinced that none of the girls is sufficiently pure – settle instead on the painfully shy greengrocer's son, Albert, thus crowning a May King. The comic fallout from this decision unfolds with Brittenesque wit.



McDonald's set design lacked depth. Its lightweight texture evoked something closer to a cereal-box giveaway, easily assembled, and just as flimsy. We were reminded of the production's bare-essentials by placards indicating each setting and even when we should applaud.

Singing was first-rate, with standout performances. Emma Bell's commanding portrayal of the majestic, militaristic Lady Billows, the quintessential small-town moral busybody, sets the tone for the parochial village ensemble.

Caspar Singh, commanded the stage as the eponymous hero. His monologue, "And I'm eternally grateful to you all," where he reflects on his newfound independence and rebellion, was delivered with eloquence and brilliance.

The young lovers, Sid (Dan D'Souza) with his slicked-back DA hairstyle and sideburns, and Nancy (the lush voiced Anna Elizabeth Cooper) in a 1950s floral skirt, could have stepped out of the recent immersive *Grease* experience at Battersea Park.

Eddie Wade, as the Rev. Mr Gedge, was sensational. His crystal-clear diction and velvety tone shone out. Equally, Aoife Miskelly's pert and poised Miss Wordsworth was everything one could wish for in a schoolteacher. Carolyn Dobbin's Florence Pike delivered "country virgins" with such clipped precision that one hardly knew whether to giggle or wince.

The poignant mock-threnody, a pseudo-lament for Albert, when the villagers presume him to be dead, captures their exaggerated response while underlining his clever escape, prize money in hand, a beautifully sung ensemble moment and full of feigned grief and unintentional irony.



The ENO ensemble of fourteen players, conducted by Daniel Cohen, played with lucidity and colour. Instrumental touches hinted at psychological states, the harp, for instance, symbolising Albert's innocence.

Ultimately, the opera affirms that rebellion triumphs over hypocrisy. In this witty, sharply observed production, one is reminded that self-discovery and moral courage can flourish even in the most provincial of settings.

Read Helen Astrid's review at www.markaspen.com/2025/10/15/herring-eno

Photography by Genevieve Girling

Partenope

by George Frideric Handel, libretto by Silvio Stampiglia

The English National Opera at the London Coliseum until 6th December

A modernist, surreal production that repeatedly takes us to the absurd and back again, Christopher Alden's *Partenope* is joyful and uplifting. Handel's 1699 'rom-com' has been updated in an English translation by Amanda Holden, in a very contemporary adaptation. Modern slang and an occasional f-bomb bring guilty laughs.



Four suitors vie for the affection of the eponymous Partenope (Handel's Queen of Naples, here a Parisian socialite). Nardus Williams takes the lead as Partenope. Her clear, attractive soprano soars, and she has a graceful presence which is almost feline. Who will finally win her affections? The would-be lovers are (pay attention at the back): Armindo, too nervous to confess his love to Partenope; Arsace, who has betrayed his Rosmira; Emilio, a foreign invader; and Eurimene, really Rosmira in disguise.

The opera becomes increasingly bizarre. Armindo tap-dances. Ormonte appears in crinolines and banana-topped Pickelhaube, Arsace wrapped in loo roll. Along the way, the Arsace-Eurimene on-off romance offers a showcase for Katie Bray and delivers a touch of Shakespearean gender confusion.

In a singular display of dexterity, Jake Ingbar, as Armindo, uses designer Andrew Liberman's magnificent sweeping staircase. He declares his love for Partenope, holding on with his fingertips while rolling down the stairs, in an athletic achievement made all the more remarkable as Ingbar sings throughout in his beautiful countertenor.



Emilio, here portrayed as a surrealist photographer (think Man Ray) by tenor Ru Charlesworth, locked in a toilet cubicle with his oversized camera and flash-gun, sings through the fanlight in despair. He always wears sunglasses whilst peering through an oval cut-out in a sheet of paper.

Taking centre stage alongside Partenope in their on-off romance, Arsace is played by the talented Hugh Cutting, whose exquisite voice has the purity of a King's chorister (Christmas is coming!) In a show-must-go-on moment, the toilet door came off its hinges and he had to complete his aria holding it up.

Appearing all too briefly as Partenope's aide Ormonte, is the rich, mellow voiced bass, William Thomas.

Handel's score floats between carol concert and the theme to *Antiques Roadshow*. Conductor Christian Curnyn fell ill on press night, but his assistant William Cole stepped in. Undeterred, the musicians remained first-class.

Once settled into its groove, *Partenope* certainly delivers on style and humour. It's utterly bonkers, fabulously inventive and hugely entertaining.



Read Fi Mead-McNish's review at www.markaspen.com/2025/11/21/partenope

Photography by Lloyd Winters

ORGAN RECITAL

FOLLOWED BY CHORAL COMPLINE

SUNDAY 7 DECEMBER - 18:30

ST MARY MAGDALENE, RICHMOND

ADVENT:
LIGHT IN
DARKNESS

ANDREANA CHAN, ORGAN
CHOIR OF ST MARY
MAGDALENE

Jack Petchey Foundation recognises young people from Richmond upon Thames for amazing achievements

112 incredible young people from the Scouts, including many from Richmond upon Thames, received their prestigious Jack Petchey Foundation Achievement Awards presented at a live event at The Kings Centre.

The live event celebrated Achievement Award winners aged 11-25 for their contributions to their unit, where winners received medallions and framed certificates from the Foundation along with a £300 grant for them to spend to benefit their unit.

In addition, 8 adults were awarded Leader Awards for demonstrating outstanding ability to motivate young people. They each received a medallion and a framed certificate.

The Jack Petchey Foundation has invested over £955k in Richmond upon Thames since funding started.

Here is an inspiring story from one of our **Achievement Award Winners**:

Yusuf, 13, attends Scouts GLSW.



Yusuf won the Jack Petchey Achievement Award for his kindness and thoughtfulness.

Known to be a helpful young person, he works well in a team and always looks out for the younger members.

Last term, as part of his community challenge badge he went out of his way to fundraise for children in need and was the highest fundraiser by far.

His efforts contributed to raising nearly £1,000. Yusuf is a great example of what a scout should be – respectful, helpful and kind.

Yusuf decided to spend his **£300 Jack Petchey Achievement Award Grant** on a trip to Bournemouth Beach and Brownsea Island with his peers.



St Mary's University

St Mary's Hosts 'Weeping in Ramah' Conference

St Mary's University hosted a day conference entitled Weeping in Ramah Crisis in the Holy Land, on Friday 21 November.

This conference was linked to the University's master's programme in Catholic Social Teaching and reflected the long-standing engagement of St Mary's with the region, including the contributions of Fr Michael Prior and Prof Nur Masalha. Originally the conference had been due to be addressed by Prof Conor Gearty, who sadly passed away on 11 September. Mass in the University chapel during the conference was offered for him.



After a welcome from St Mary's Vice Chancellor Professor Anthony McClaran, the opening address was given by Archbishop John Wilson, Archbishop of Southwark. Archbishop John Wilson reflected on his links with Cardinal Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, and his regular contact with the Catholic parish of the Holy Land in Gaza. He reflected on the title for the day conference, 'Weeping in Ramah', a quotation from Jeremiah (31:15):

'A voice was heard in Ramah - Wailing and loud lamentation. Rachel weeping for her children. She refused to be consoled because they are no more. That ancient cry of Rachel, the mother, who will not be comforted, reverberates through the centuries. It's the cry of every parent who has lost a child to violence. Of every family forced from its home. Of every community torn apart by fear and hatred. It's the cry that rises again today from the land where our Saviour was born, crucified rose from the dead. First and foremost, the Holy Land belongs to God. It is a sacred soil of divine revelation, a geography

and landscape of salvation. This land is scarred by inhumanity and bloodshed. And faced with such devastation, silence can never be an option. We must affirm again and again that war destroys lives, that war destroys homes, that war tramples dreams and steals hope'.

The second keynote was delivered by the Scripture scholar, Fr John Deehan, who looked in detail at how Old Testament passages are used to explain contemporary policies in Israel, particularly from Deuteronomy and Zechariah. Fr Deehan argue that these nuanced passages place a lot of emphasis on the obligation to support the stranger, the alien.

After Mass there was a panel discussion, involving Brendan Metcalfe, CEO of Friends of the Holy Land, international lawyer Dr Harry Hagopian and Joseph Hazboun, regional director of the Pontifical Mission in Jerusalem. One theme which emerged from this discussion was the need for Christians to resume pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

Prof Ian Linden, Visiting Professor at St Mary's and former, Director of the Catholic Institute of International Relations, followed in his address where he discussed the contemporary debates around antisemitism in this country, and efforts to counteract it and other forms of racism. He looked in detail at legal cases which are being pursued internationally in relation to recent events in Gaza and the West Bank.

The final speaker, Sir Vincent Fean, former Consul General in Jerusalem and Ambassador to Libya discussed the history of the Holy Land since the Balfour Declaration in 1917. He explained in detail how much the large number of people employed by the Palestinian Authority have suffered big losses to their income. He referred to what the Anglican Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, had said recently about sanctions on settlement related enterprises, a ban on trade relating to illegal settlements in the West Bank, territorial clauses in trade agreements and church investment strategies.

A recording and transcript of the conference is available from Fr Ashley Beck, ashley.beck@stmarys.ac.uk



**St Mary's
University**
Twickenham
London

This is a sign: Mortlake station provides access to mental health support for those in need

South Western Railway (SWR) and Network Rail have unveiled 'Hub of Hope' signage at Mortlake station, signposting to local and national mental health services.

Hub of Hope is provided by Chasing the Stigma, one of the UK's largest mental health charities. The signs at Mortlake station are designed to help those using the station who may be experiencing a mental health crisis or who may just need some support.

Scanning the sign's QR codes will take users to the Hub of Hope Directory, helping individuals find relevant and clear guidance. As well as helping individuals navigate to the resources that may assist them, the signs offer reassurance, clarity and hope at a moment when they may need it most.

It is also hoped that the easily accessible information and support will help to remove the barriers that may prevent individuals from accessing support.

The Hub of Hope signage was unveiled at Mortlake station on Wednesday 26 November, by representatives of SWR, Network Rail, Chasing the Stigma, and Councillor Margaret Dane, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames' Disability Champion, who first proposed the idea.



Councillor Dane's proposal was initially a local experiment as a way of providing easily accessible information for witness trauma. Working alongside SWR, Network Rail and Chasing the Stigma, the concept has grown to what was unveiled today, and which is hoped to help those in need.

Matt Smith, SWR's Senior Security and Strategy Manager, and Alex Moles, Wessex Route Crime Lead said: *"The Hub of Hope initiative at Mortlake station shows the railway and the local community coming together to make a difference. We're proud to be working alongside Councillor Dane and Chasing the Stigma to create a safer, more compassionate environment for our customers."*

Cllr Margaret Dane, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames' Disability Champion said: *"South Western Railway, in conjunction with the Hub of Hope, Network Rail and other partners have broadened my initial proposal far beyond what I had envisaged. The Hub of Hope signage will include mental health resource information for a wide range of mental health issues, reaching all over the country."*

Andrew Coe, Project Manager at Chasing the Stigma said: *"Chasing the Stigma are delighted to see the introduction of Hub of Hope signage at Mortlake Station. This vital initiative will continue to help people using the rail network to access over 14,000 mental health services listed on the Hub of Hope."*

**South Western
Railway**

M&S Expands Search For Potential New Sites As It Picks Up The Pace On Store Renewal

From M&S

- M&S searches for new, bigger Food store sites as it aims to double the size of its food business
- Unlocking new sites will help deliver the plan to modernise and rotate the M&S store estate to a footprint of 180 full line stores and 420 Food stores
- M&S is particularly looking for large sites that could stock the full range of M&S Food, growing the target size of its Food stores to an average of 18,000sqft
- This summer M&S announced its acquisition of 12 Homebase sites which are set to become some of the largest M&S standalone Food stores in the UK
- 20 new or renewed M&S stores are opening between November and March, creating 800 jobs

M&S has today launched a new list of 500 target locations it is considering for new and renewed Food stores as it aims to double the size of its Food business. With 20 stores opening or renewing before the end of the financial year, creating 800 new jobs, M&S is picking up the pace on renewing in its store estate.

Locations include:

Barnes, Ham, Hampton, St Margarets, Whitton, Hanworth, Brentford, Isleworth, Sunbury

As M&S reshapes for growth, it is opening stores with the right space in the right places as it looks to double the size of its food business and modernise its store estate. To grow the food business, M&S is looking to expand the size of its Food stores to stock a fuller range and attract more customers to do their weekly shop.

Following the excellent performance of the new M&S Food stores opened in the last three years, M&S is now expanding the number of locations in its search for sites, including areas where there is not yet an M&S store such as Hove, Marlborough and Wallingford.

All of these stores would be in the new renewal format with an extended range of M&S Food, wider aisles for bigger shopping trolleys and larger car parks for more family shoppers. The Food store in Selby opened on Three Lakes retail park last year and has outperformed expectations, delivering above average food market share growth in the region.

M&S is now searching for sites in 500 potential locations to bring its tried and tested format for stores to modernise in existing markets and bring Food stores to new areas. Over half of the stores across the M&S estate, including convenience stores, are expected to be in the renewal format by April 2028.

Alex Freudmann Managing Director, M&S Food said: *"The strong performance of our new M&S food stores gives us the confidence to explore even more locations across the UK, from Elgin to Exmouth. With more than twenty stores opening or modernised before the end of the financial year, we are moving faster. Our team want new sites where we could open a large M&S Food store as we deliver on our strategy to bring the right stores to the right places and offer the best shopping experience, range and availability for our customers."*

M&S

Red Roses World Cup Winner Abby Dow Retires From Rugby

Red Roses World Cup winner Abby Dow has today announced her retirement from professional rugby. Dow concludes an incredible career where she contributed significantly to seven Six Nations titles – including six Grand Slams - two WXV1 triumphs and a historic 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup victory on home soil.

She earned 59 international caps, scoring an outstanding 50 tries – the first two of which came on her England debut against Canada in 2017. Eight years later, her final Red Roses appearance ironically came against the same opposition, ending in World Cup glory in front of a world-record crowd of 81,885 at Allianz Stadium.

"I never realised when I picked up a rugby ball at the age of five that I was at the start of a 23-year sporting career," Dow said. "Rugby has been central to my life and has shaped me into who I am today. However, I feel the pull of my other passion – engineering - so I have decided to hang up my boots and try my luck in a different world. The rugby family has given much more than I could ever give back. I would like to thank my coaches, family, friends, and most importantly, the fans. They have enabled me to participate in something truly wonderful. I feel very privileged and humble. Today, I leave rugby as a player and join as its number one fan. Thank you all!"

Dow's journey to becoming one of the most recognisable faces in the women's game began as a five-year-old at Maidenhead RFC, influenced by father, Paul, and siblings Chris and Ruth. She furthered her rugby education with Reading RFC ahead of making a name for herself as Wasps Women's player, a year out from her England debut alongside familiar back-three teammates Jess Breach and Ellie Kildunne.

The 28-year-old's electric pace, powerful running and instinctive finishing was evident for all to see from the outset as she crossed for eight tries in her first six caps. Her try scoring prowess continued with a rate of 0.85 tries per game as a Red Rose with her last try – her 50th - coming in the 2025 World Cup quarter-final win over Scotland.

Dow, whose 50th cap came in the 2025 Guinness Women's Six Nations against Ireland, balanced sporting success with academic excellence. She achieved a Masters degree in Mechanical Engineering from Imperial College London whilst at the top of her game and inspired supporters across the world via her crochet expertise. From scrunchies, mini opposition shirts and single roses for personal milestones, she even crocheted a special gift for The Princess of Wales on her recent visit to the Red Roses changing room. A selfless individual on and off the field, Dow will go down as one of England's most creative players in history.

Red Roses head coach John Mitchell said: *"Abby is an awesome individual and a fierce competitor who lifts those around her. She is intelligent, insightful and inquisitive – attributes that have defined the brilliant Red Rose she has been across her 59 caps. Abby has been part of an era for the Red Roses in which the game has grown exponentially and, through her love of crochet, her interaction with supporters and her undoubted rugby ability, she has helped drive the women's game to unprecedented heights. I personally believe that we are losing arguably the best right winger in world rugby at the peak of her powers, but we fully respect her decision to move on to a new chapter. We will miss having her in our environment, and we look forward to seeing her succeed - as we know she will - in whatever she chooses to do next."*



Match Preview: Brentford v Burnley

Written by Brentford Football Club

Brentford face Burnley at Gtech Community Stadium in the Premier League on Saturday afternoon (3pm kick-off GMT).

Keith Andrews' side have lost just one of their seven home games in all competitions this season, while the Clarets head into this clash losing all but one of their away matches.

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

Pre-match Analysis

Stephen Gillett, *Playmaker Stats*: Two low-possession sides go head-to-head at the Gtech

José Mourinho once said, *"They can take the ball home; I take the three points."*

The Portuguese icon's point was simple: possession means nothing without purpose. And Brentford and Burnley's approaches this season reflect a similar low-possession, high-efficiency mindset - even though results have varied.

While Keith Andrews and Scott Parker know their sides still need to be refined and evolve, there are positives for both managers to take with almost a third of the season gone.

As Southampton's plight last season showed, the Premier League can punish teams who overplay - and neither Brentford nor Burnley can be accused of that particular crime.

The Clarets (39.1 per cent) have the lowest average possession share in the Premier League this season, and Brentford (42.3 per cent) have only seen marginally more of the ball this term.

Yet despite having less of the ball, goals have not been a serious problem for either side ahead of their clash at Gtech Community Stadium this Saturday.

Brentford have hit 18 goals, while last season's runners-up in the Championship have notched 14 - the same number as seventh-placed Sunderland.

While Brentford and Burnley lag in the possession stakes, they rank near the top of the charts in terms of their shot conversion rates. Only Spurs (18.2 per cent) have scored a higher percentage of their shots this season than the Clarets (14.3 per cent), and Brentford (14.2 per cent) are on their opponents' heels in this regard.



Where Brentford have improved - and Burnley have struggled - is in limiting the quantity and quality of shots on their own goal.

The Bees have allowed opponents to take 12.3 shots per game, considerably fewer than last season, and only Arsenal and Sunderland (both 0.10 xG-per-shot against) have given up lower-quality chances than Brentford (0.11). With Andrews' side also leading the division in shot quality at 0.17 xG-per-shot, the omens look good for the west Londoners.

Meanwhile, Burnley - who lost 2-0 to Chelsea last time out - have taken the fewest shots per game (8.2) in the Premier League and conceded the most (17.3). And with their xG-per-shot (0.11) lower than that of the chances they concede (0.13), the numbers don't really add up at present for the Clarets.

Scout Report

Dan Long, *Sky Sports*: Burnley have fighting chance of avoiding another immediate relegation

Burnley were promoted back to the Premier League earlier this year - for no less than the fourth time in the last 12 seasons.

They finished second to Leeds on goal difference alone, but they still accrued 100 points, just one fewer than they won the title with two seasons prior. There have only been six instances of 100+ point seasons since the Championship was rebranded for 2004/05 - and two have been achieved by the Clarets.

Interestingly, the two most recent promotion-winning campaigns have been similar from a statistical perspective.

In 2022/23 under Vincent Kompany, they had the highest average possession in the division (64.7 per cent), the second-most accurate passes per game (479) and scored the most goals (87), while also keeping 21 clean sheets and conceding the fewest goals in the division (35).

In 2024/25 under Scott Parker, they ranked fourth for highest possession (56.9 per cent) and accurate passes (415.1) and second in the goalscoring ranks (69).

But what was most eye-catching about the latter was their genuinely incredible defensive record. So good, in fact, that it set a new record for the best defensive record in the history of English league football.

A tally of 16 goals shipped in 46 games equated to 0.35 goals conceded per game. It looks even more impressive when you factor in the fact that their xG conceded figure was 38.4, meaning an overperformance of 22.4.

Not only that, they kept 30 clean sheets, which is the joint-most any team has kept in history. They matched Port Vale's Third Division North title-winning side of 1953/54 in achieving that feat.

When Kompany took the Clarets up, he was not able to get the same tune out of his players with the attractive style of play in the Premier League.

It took seven games for the first win and another seven for the second. But Parker, with a third promotion from the second tier under his belt now, has more experience managing in this division.

No one expected Burnley to be pulling up trees this season, but they beat Sunderland in the second

game of the season - which looks all the more valuable given how Régis Le Bris' side have gone on to greatly exceed expectations - and secured wins over Leeds and Wolves, who are fighting near the bottom with them.

They only achieved 24 points across the whole of 2023/24 and only four from their first 12 that season. They already have 10 from 12 this season, which suggests they are going to give themselves a fighting chance of avoiding the immediate relegations they fell to in their last two top-flight campaigns.

If they finish 17th and survive on goal difference alone, that will be seen as a relative success, not only for Burnley, but for those with hope of seeing promoted teams remain in the Premier League for more than just one fleeting season.

In the Dugout

Scott Parker

As a footballer, Scott Parker was a product of the Charlton youth set-up, where he started at nine and made his senior debut at the age of 16 in August 1997. The midfielder stayed until he was 23 in January 2004, when he joined Chelsea.

By then, he was a senior England international, having been handed his debut by Sven-Göran Eriksson in a 3-2 loss to Denmark in November 2003. However, he made just 28 appearances across two seasons with the Blues and was sold to Newcastle in the summer of 2005.

After two seasons at St James' Park, Parker returned to the capital to sign for West Ham. His time there was thoroughly positive, so much so that he was named Hammer of the Year in the last three of his four seasons in east London - and no other player in history has won that accolade three times in succession. West Ham were relegated in 2011, and early on in 2011/12, he returned to the Premier League to join Tottenham.

Another two years followed there before, in August 2013, he signed a three-year deal at Fulham, though he stayed for four seasons in the end and retired from playing at 36 in June 2017.

Parker then spent time coaching back at Spurs, before returning to Fulham and working under Slaviša Jokanović and Claudio Ranieri. He took over in his own right in February 2019 and stayed in the job for more than two years, taking the Whites to the Premier League in 2020. He left after they were relegated in 2021 to take over at Bournemouth, who he also took up in 2021/22.

He left his job with the Cherries in August 2022, shortly after a Premier League record-equaling 9-0 defeat to Liverpool, but was back working four months later, this time at Club Brugge in Belgium. His time there, however, was ill-fated and he was sacked after a little over two months - and just 12 games - in charge in March 2023.

He replaced Vincent Kompany at Burnley in July 2024 and, again in his first season, secured a third promotion from the Championship to the Premier League. Parker, 45, is in the second year of a contract that runs until 2027.



Haymarket Media Group achieves B Corp certification

From Haymarket Media Group

[Haymarket Media Group](#), the global media, data and information business headquartered in Twickenham, today announces it has achieved B Corp certification across its entire business, on an international scale. This landmark achievement positions Haymarket as a leading force for good, balancing profit with purpose to benefit workers, customers, communities and the planet. It is a powerful and verified testament to Haymarket's commitment to meeting the highest standards of social and environmental performance, accountability and transparency.

Haymarket - which owns more than 90 market-leading brands including [Campaign](#), [What Car?](#), [MyCME](#), [GP](#), [Wonderly](#) and [Asian Investor](#) - has more than 1300 employees, spanning offices in the UK, US, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Hong Kong, Singapore and India. The certification marks an almost three-year effort. Reaching this point entailed significant investment by the business and its employees. From the introduction of new policies spanning key areas including sustainable travel, environment, procurement and business ethics, to mandatory employee training and enhanced Learning & Development (L&D) offerings.

Haymarket has continued to set ambitious targets to support its commitment to reducing emissions and improving outcomes for the communities it serves. Crucially, measurement and progress is publicly reported in the company's annual [Impact Report](#).

Speaking about the certification, Kevin Costello, Global Chief Executive at Haymarket said: *"Achieving B Corp certification is a moment of immense pride for everyone at Haymarket. This milestone is not only a huge achievement for us but within our industries too. This was the result of a company-wide effort that demanded new commitments and formalised ways of working. The process emphasised global collaboration across continents and teams, ensuring our commitments to being a force for good are embedded in our daily decision-making. As a privately-owned, family business, our people are our greatest asset. We have long been confident in our commitment to shaping a better future but today proves we walk the talk. We are setting a new standard amongst our peers - and we are excited for all that's to come."*

Continuous improvement is at the foundation of being a B Corp, and Haymarket commits to fully embedding these principles, with mandatory recertification required every three years. The B Corp certification process, administered by the non-profit B Lab, involves a tough evaluation of a for-profit company's entire social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability, with Haymarket amending its legal Articles of Association.

Chris Turner, Executive Director, B Lab UK added: *"We are delighted to welcome Haymarket to the growing community of Certified B Corporations. The rigour of the B Impact Assessment ensures that companies like Haymarket are truly balancing profit with purpose to benefit workers, customers, communities, and the planet. For a global media company of Haymarket's stature to make this commitment shows the increasing momentum of the movement and its reach across all sectors."*

Haymarket has long held a deep commitment to responsible business, sustainability and inclusive practices. Haymarket Impact, launched in 2023, is centred around the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and ensures all its colleagues, brands and divisions are aligned and committed to the company's global purpose of shaping a better future.

From its longstanding commitment to its charity partners, investment in learning and the next generation of talent with its apprenticeship and intern programmes, to being a Disability Confident Employer in the UK, Haymarket has an average tenure of over seven years and is award-winning as an employer of choice. The company holds ISO 14001 accreditation for Environmental Management in the UK, US, and Asia, as well as being one of the only ISO 20121 accredited media companies in the UK.

Haymarket now joins a community of more than 10,000 B Corps around the world, including Ben & Jerry's, Patagonia, Danone and Innocent.

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Remarkable content

London Councils responds to the Budget

Responding to the Budget, **Cllr Claire Holland, Chair of London Councils**, said:

“London is a crucial part of the UK economic engine and we welcome the measures announced today that will help us boost growth in the capital and contribute to national prosperity.

“Government investment in transport infrastructure is essential for accelerating growth in London and supporting the delivery of new housing. We have consistently made the case for the DLR extension to Thamesmead, along with the Mayor of London and business leaders. We are pleased to see the Chancellor backing delivery of this vital project, which will help unlock thousands of new homes and jobs.

“Greater fiscal devolution and local empowerment is critical to addressing the crisis in council finances and stalled growth. We welcome confirmation that London will be able to introduce an overnight accommodation levy. This is something we have long called for and we look forward to working with the government and the Mayor on the design and implementation of the levy, in order to ensure this is a success for Londoners and our tourist industry.

“It is vital that a fair portion of the revenue raised from any levy is retained locally by boroughs, so those parts of the capital experiencing high volumes of tourism have the resources they need to invest back into their area in order to manage pressure on services and support growth, with the remaining funds invested across the capital to support pan-London services and local growth opportunities.

“We have repeatedly called for reform of the council tax system, but this must be done in a way that gives local authorities more freedoms and flexibilities rather than fewer, and maintains the principle that revenues raised locally are retained locally. We will be looking at the government’s proposal for a council tax surcharge on higher value properties in more detail and will continue to make the case for an approach that is fair and empowers local authorities.

“In the face of the urgent challenges facing London’s economy and town hall finances – particularly housing and homelessness pressures – we know that further policy action is needed at a national level. We will keep working with the government to restore stability to budgets, sustain local services, and help drive growth in our communities.”

Transport infrastructure

London Councils has consistently made the case to the government to support three priority transport infrastructure projects because of the benefits they will bring to the capital and wider country.

These priority projects are the extension of the DLR to Thamesmead, the Bakerloo Line upgrade and extension, and the West London Orbital. In total these projects would enable the delivery of 60,000 new homes and create tens of thousands of new jobs.

Boroughs also emphasise the importance of broader infrastructure investment to enable housing delivery and economic growth in the capital, as set out within the [London Growth Plan ambitions](#). This includes improving electricity grid capacity and access to local services such as GPs.

Council tax changes

London Councils has long argued for reform to the current system of council tax, which is clearly not fit for purpose.

Boroughs have consistently made the case for being given greater flexibility around council tax,

including the ability to introduce additional bands, with revenues retained locally.

The future of council tax needs to be considered as part of the urgent need to fix the broken local government finance system.

Boroughs are almost entirely reliant on council tax and central government funding streams, with very limited ability to shape their own financial destiny. Years of underfunding have undermined their ability to sustain local services and make faster progress on priorities such as building affordable homes and generating economic growth.

Boroughs need far more financial autonomy, in line with the powers and resources available to local government in other countries. London Councils has welcomed the [government's announcement](#) on the introduction of overnight accommodation levies. Additional proposals from boroughs include 100% business rates growth retention; devolution of Vehicle Excise Duty and the new Growth and Skills Levy; and assignment of a share of national taxes such as income tax and VAT.

Housing and homelessness priorities

London is grappling with the most severe housing and homelessness pressures in the country. More than 300,000 households are on waiting lists for social housing in the capital. London Councils estimates one in 50 Londoners is homeless and living in temporary accommodation, including one in 21 children in the capital.

Following the Budget, London Councils will continue to push for more help from the government on meeting boroughs' temporary accommodation bills. The amount the government pays councils to subsidise temporary accommodation has been frozen since 2011, despite housing costs increasing significantly in the subsequent 14 years.

Recent research points to a [£740m annual funding shortfall](#) in London boroughs' temporary accommodation spending, putting unsustainable pressure on their budgets and absorbing resources that could be used for other vital local services.

The crisis in social housing finances represents another priority concern, with the government's social rent policy a pivotal factor. For too long boroughs' social housing costs have outstripped their income, forcing them to make budget cuts at a time when they want to invest, including in new council homes.

London Councils welcomes the government's planned re-introduction of rent convergence, which will raise additional income. At the Budget it was announced that the government will make a decision on rent convergence rates in January 2026. London Councils says convergence needs to be set at £3 per week to reverse funding pressures and boost resources for investing in existing stock and new homes.

Wider borough finance challenges

London Councils recently warned that boroughs in the capital are grappling with a [£1 billion funding shortfall this year](#), and a cumulative budget gap of £4.7bn across 2025-26 to 2028-29.

The group forecasts that half of boroughs could require emergency financial support by 2028 to avoid bankruptcy. London is already the region most reliant on Exceptional Financial Support to balance council budgets.

Key factors driving these pressures include skyrocketing demand for services, spiralling costs, and long-term underfunding of boroughs.



South Western Railway 'races the dark' for White Ribbon Day

South Western Railway (SWR) has continued its support for White Ribbon UK by taking part in a 'Race the Dark' event for White Ribbon Day on 25 November.

White Ribbon UK is the leading charity in England and Wales engaging men and boys to prevent violence against women and girls. SWR has supported White Ribbon UK since 2022, with many of its Class 450 trains carrying the White Ribbon logo.



Inspired by White Ribbon, the Race the Dark event was developed by fellow train operator Southeastern, with the aim of sparking meaningful conversations with customers and colleagues. Those conversations are designed to shed light on the fear many women and girls experience daily, and the precautions they routinely take to feel safe.

Joining other publicly owned train operators, SWR began its race in Weymouth just after sunrise, at around 8:30 am, when a group of four colleagues boarded an SWR service

bound for London Waterloo. A White Ribbon baton was then passed along in a relay through stops at Winchester, Woking and Wimbledon stations.

Further colleagues and volunteers joined the relay at stations along the way, encouraging colleagues and customers alike to sign the White Ribbon Promise to support the cause, creating and promoting a culture of respect and safety on our trains and at our stations.

A team of 20 arrived with the White Ribbon baton at London Waterloo just after 3pm, ahead of the sunset at 3:59pm. As a finale, a human chain was formed to symbolise the stand being taken against violence aimed at women and girls, serving as a poignant way to end the crucially important 'Race the Dark' event.

Speaking on behalf of SWR and Network Rail, Grant Robey the Head of Security and Safeguarding for SWR said: *"We have supported White Ribbon UK for the last three years and are committed to play our part in helping to end violence against women and girls. We are especially proud to stand alongside our colleagues from train operators across the country, underlining the railway industry's commitment to the White Ribbon promise."*

"The Race the Dark event reflects both SWR and Network Rail's commitment to safeguarding on the railway, and we are very pleased that so many customers and colleagues took part today."

Lilian Greenwood, Minister for Local Transport said: *"South Western Railway's support for the White Ribbon campaign shows real leadership in helping to make our transport network a safer place for women and girls."*

"Everyone should feel confident when they travel, and it's inspiring to see staff taking practical steps to promote safety and equality, bringing communities together to make our railway a place where all passengers feel safe."

**South Western
Railway**

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