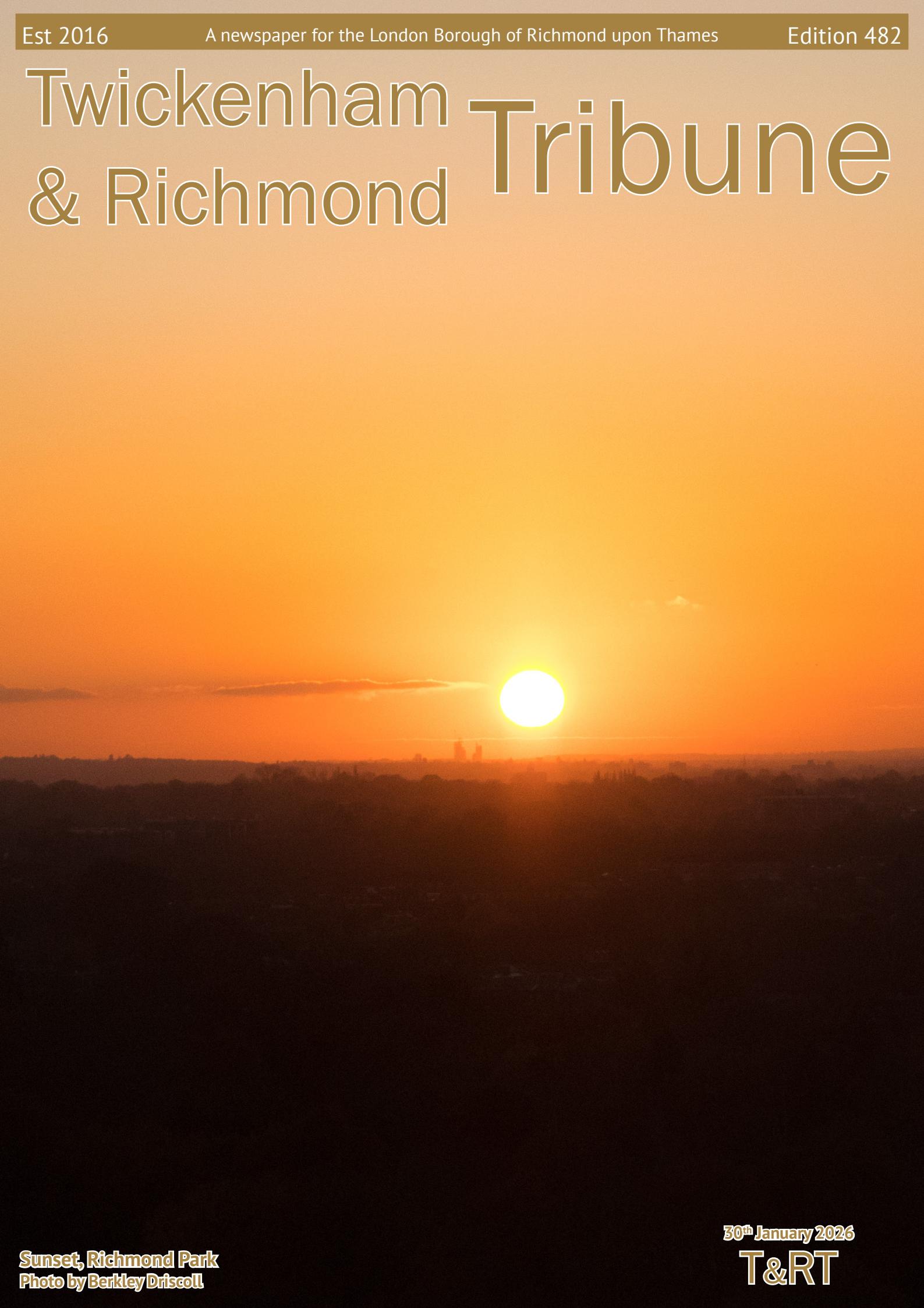


Twickenham Tribune & Richmond



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London Councils

Editors: Teresa Read, Berkley Driscoll

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TickerTape - News in Brief

South Western Railway

Some lines will be **closed** between **London Waterloo and Clapham Junction all weekend** due to maintenance work.

Queenstown Road station will be **closed all weekend**. Please use other nearby stations.

Saturday

- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will start from **Clapham Junction**.
- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will start from **Clapham Junction**.
- **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Richmond and Wimbledon** services will start from **Clapham Junction**.

Sunday

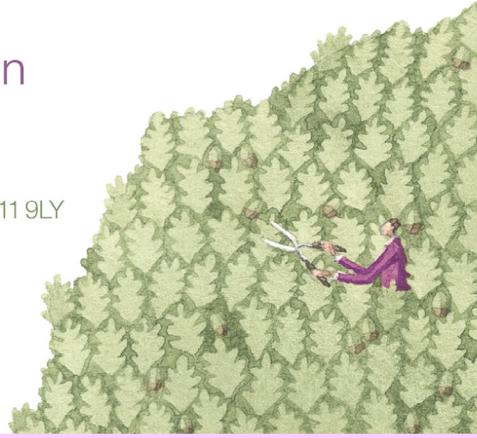
- **London Waterloo to Shepperton** services will **not** call at **Vauxhall and Earlsfield**.
- **London Waterloo to Hampton Court** services will start from **Surbiton**.
- **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Richmond and Wimbledon** services will only run between **Clapham Junction and Kingston via Richmond**.
- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will start from **Clapham Junction**.
- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will start from **Clapham Junction**.
- The afternoon and evening **London Waterloo to Kingston via Hounslow** services will **not** run.



The Tree Agency

darryl parkin

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The Local Picture Postcard Page - Part 312

Mortlake – Level Crossing

By Alan Winter

The Mortlake Level Crossing located on Sheen Lane, SW14 is both a historic and busy level crossing dating back to the opening of the [London and South Western Railway line on July 27, 1846](#). That's 180 years ago now!



The first postcard (in colour) dates from around 1904. Note the lack of motorised traffic and the cobbled rather than tarmac road surface. The policeman used to assist the railway staff in manually opening and closing the crossing gates when necessary.

It is a Manually Controlled Barrier CCTV crossing immediately adjacent to Mortlake Station. As of January 2026, it remains one of the busiest and most congested level crossings in London, frequently closing for approximately 47 minutes every hour due to heavy rail traffic on the London Waterloo to Richmond/Reading line.

As a result, crowds of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles build up when the barriers are down. A primary school is located close to the crossing and large numbers of children need to cross the railway, especially at school opening and closing times. They have to cope with the surge of traffic when the barriers rise. Pedestrians can cross between platforms via a stepped footbridge or use the level crossing for step-free access when the barriers are up.



Our second postcard shows a train passing through the crossing. The crowd seem very interested in the car and driver waiting to cross. Note the road has now had a coat of tarmac to deal with the early cars. I'm guessing this postcard to be around 1910 ish.

The third postcard was postmarked as being sent in 1937 and so the actual photo may have been taken a bit before that.

high-risk due to its restricted road space, and narrow footpaths. Approximately 3,888 vehicles and 2,376 pedestrians/cyclists use the crossing daily along with some 349 trains. A major blockade is planned for this summer 2026 to replace an overhead powerline stanchion damaged in early 2024 that is currently held by a temporary structure.

Ongoing local developments, such as the Stag Brewery project, are expected to significantly increase pedestrian and vehicular pressure on the crossing through 2026, leading to further concerns about barrier downtime and safety.

Despite calls for safety improvements, full or partial renewal of the crossing is deemed unlikely in the immediate term due to high costs (estimated up to **£2.7 million**) and physical land constraints.



As a piece of added interest, the building next to Mortlake railway station – now occupied by a classic car showroom – houses Queen Victoria's old waiting room, built for her and Prince Albert as they frequented White Lodge in Richmond Park, where their family and later their son, the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII), lived.



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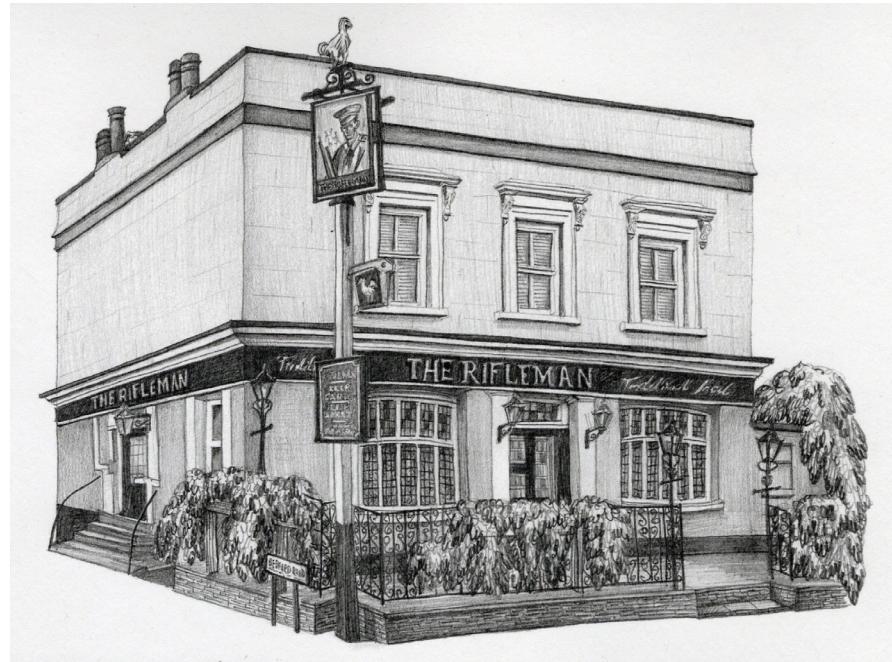
Save The Rifleman Pub

From Rifleman Rescue Community Team

Hello everyone – and thank you for your continued support in helping to secure the long-term future of the Rifleman pub in Fourth Cross Road, Twickenham. This group on Facebook has now grown to over 350 members!

[Rifleman Rescue Community](#)

It's been a couple of weeks since our last update in the TRIBUNE and there's been a huge amount of momentum recently, so we thought we can now provide a new update on where we are now.



- Plunkett UK support secured: We've been granted three months of specialist support from Plunkett UK, who are advising us on setting up a Community Benefit Society (CBS) to take on the Rifleman as a community-owned asset.
- Progress with Twickenham Fine Ales: We've held a further constructive meeting with TFA, who have been extremely supportive, to explore reassigning their lease to the community group. We're also assessing the option of purchasing the freehold. Following a pro bono walk around survey, discussions are continuing to identify a way forward that works for all parties.
- Steering group in place: An initial steering group has been formed, an interim legal entity is being set up and a meeting has been arranged for everyone who has generously offered to volunteer or join a working group.
- Learning from others: We met with one of the new owners of the Lion in Teddington, who shared valuable insight and advice.
- Council support: We've also met with a senior representative from Richmond upon Thames Council, who has offered in-principal support and connected us with other helpful council officers.

Next steps

- If we can reach provisional agreement with the brewery and freeholder, funds raised will be used to:
- Establish the Community Benefit Society (CBS) to run the Rifleman
- Finalise the business plan
- Launch further fundraising – including the opportunity for everyone to buy shares in the CBS
- Put in place all the required legal structures

We value your feedback, so comments are always welcome.

Save The Rifleman – Fundraising Gig

The Fundraising gig is now confirmed: The brilliant Chris Tulloch (aka Mandolin Jack) has organised a fundraising gig at The 300 seater Twickenham Exchange opposite the railway station on **Tuesday 3rd March**, sponsored by local singer and estate agent David at David McGeachie Property.

Many of the area's top musicians and bands are on the bill. We'd love your support.

Paste this link into your browser to get your tickets:

https://www.mandolinjack.com/SR/Save_The_Rifleman.html

or via the Twickenham Exchange web site [HERE](#)

Hope to see you there!



Here's the running order:

7:00 – 7:10	THE MANDOLIN JACK EXPERIENCE
7:15 – 7:30	KINDRED SPIRIT
7:35 – 7:45	MARK SHARP
7:50 – 8:00	SPARK & STONEk
8:05 – 8:10	DAVID McGEACHIE
8:15 – 8:30	TIM STAFFELL & PAUL STEWART
8:30 – 8:45	**BIG RAFFLE & BAR BREAK**
8:45 – 8:55	ROB MILLIS & BAND
8:55 - 9:00	MOJO MAX
9:00 – 9:10	KEVIN STENSON
9:10 – 9:20	BRIAN COOPE
9:20 – 9:30	JOE CARD
9:30 – 9:40	Words by the Rifleman Community Group
9:40 – 9:50	DAVID McGEACHIE
9:50 – 10:00	JIM GUYNON & THE FULL REVUE

Thanks to you all.

Rifleman Rescue Community Team



Richmond Council Admits It May Seek Permission for Above Cap Council Tax Rise

By James Knight



Richmond Council's January Full Council meeting revealed a growing gap between the administration's confident public posture and the financial constraints now pressing in on the borough. Over the course of a long and carefully managed evening, councillors heard for the first time an explicit acknowledgement that, if transitional government funding is not extended, the Council may seek permission from the Secretary of State to raise council tax above the national cap (4.99%) without holding a local referendum.

That admission, though framed as a contingency, marked a significant moment. The national system places a speed limit on annual council tax rises, allowing increases up to a set percentage without a public vote. Councils facing severe financial difficulty can apply for an exemption known as bespoke referendum principles, allowing them to exceed that limit without asking residents directly. The mechanism exists to prevent effective insolvency. Richmond has not applied for such permission, but the fact it was discussed openly at all signals the pressure now bearing down on the authority.

A prayer that crossed from remembrance into politics

Proceedings opened with a prayer from the Council's chaplain to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. It began with solemn remembrance of the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered by the Nazi regime, before widening into contemporary political reference. The prayer spoke of people "subject to ethnic cleansing in our own day", named individuals "killed in America by ICE recently", and warned against those "trying to erode the freedom of others in their lust for power".

No procedural rule was breached. However, the movement from historical commemoration into present day political implication was clear in the chamber and prompted visible unease among some members. Jewish organisations have repeatedly cautioned against this approach. The Holocaust Education Trust has warned that drawing contemporary conflicts into Holocaust remembrance risks diluting its Jewish specificity and is "especially hurtful, disrespectful and wrong" when done on Holocaust Memorial Day itself.

Public questions expose governance unease

Public questions focused heavily on transparency, governance, and housing. Several residents pressed the leadership on the handling of the Pensfold Field decision, asking why a matter described internally as controversial had not been treated as a key decision requiring committee scrutiny.

The Leader defended the process and the outcome, conceding imperfections but insisting legal advice had been followed. When asked what recourse residents have short of legal action, answers pointed towards external bodies such as the Ombudsman. Richmond has no scrutiny committee and no call in mechanism, a fact that underpinned much of the frustration expressed.

Housing delivery proved another pressure point. Pam Marum, Labour's housing spokesperson, asked how many genuinely affordable and social rented homes had been completed since 2018, net of losses. The response focused on pipelines, permissions, and future schemes. No net completion figure was provided in the chamber. That omission matters. Publicly available Greater London Authority data shows that Richmond has consistently delivered low numbers of genuinely affordable homes since the LibDems took control of the council, often in the low tens per year, with social rent forming only a small proportion. The exchange highlighted a recurring tension between stated ambition and measurable outcome.

Members' questions and a financial turning point

The most consequential exchange came during members' questions. Green councillor Andrée Frieze asked Deputy Leader and finance lead Jim Millard what would happen if the current three-year period of transitional funding relief were not extended.

Mr Millard confirmed that the Council's medium-term financial strategy assumes annual council tax rises at the maximum permitted level. Without further protection, he said, Richmond faces a funding cliff edge of around £17 million at the end of the period. In those circumstances, he acknowledged, the Council might have to seek government permission to raise council tax above the usual cap.

In local government terms, this was a rare moment of candour. Councils do not raise the prospect of bespoke referendum principles lightly. The admission cut through weeks of reassurance about financial resilience and exposed the limits of managerial confidence alone. It is the sort of admission the Conservatives will quickly frame as a request for a blank cheque, with voters asked to sign up to ambition now and confront the bill after the election.

Opposition Priority Business on net zero delivery

The Green Party used its Opposition Priority Business slot to ask how the Council intends to achieve its stated goal of a net-zero borough by 2043. Their intervention was methodical rather than rhetorical. Tens of thousands of homes remain heated by gas, only a few hundred heat pumps are installed, and current engagement mechanisms reach a small fraction of residents. Targets exist, they argued, but milestones, funding pathways, and delivery capacity remain unclear.

The administration responded with references to climate hubs, cooperatives, partnership working, and behavioural change. No one disputed the ambition. What remained unresolved was whether the scale and pace of current action bear any realistic relationship to the timetable the Council has set itself.

Governance and the committee system

Later in the meeting, the Council confirmed its intention to continue operating under a committee system, arguing that recent government amendments allow it to do so.

Guidance from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny is explicit that councils which did not adopt

the committee system via a protected referendum or within the original five year resolution window cannot simply reset the clock by passing a fresh resolution. Richmond did neither. The Leader insisted external legal advice supports the Council's position, though no detail was provided in public session. The vote passed, but uncertainty remains about whether the governance model is being sustained by statute or by assertion.

Notices of Motion

Three motions were debated and passed.

The first, proposed by Green councillor Andrée Frieze, called for the publication of a public ethical and environmental policy governing the Council's use of artificial intelligence. While the administration accepted the principle, amendments shifted the emphasis towards further review rather than immediate publication, delaying firm commitments on transparency and mitigation.

The second, proposed by Liberal Democrat councillor Katie Mansfield, opposed the Government's proposed London Emergency Housing Package. The motion argued that reducing borough level Community Infrastructure Levy receipts while retaining Mayoral CIL would undermine local infrastructure and affordable housing delivery. The critique was coherent, though it sat uneasily alongside Richmond's own affordable housing record which is one of the worst in London.

The third motion, from the Liberal Democrat Leader councillor Gareth Roberts, called on government to extend business rates relief beyond pubs to the wider hospitality sector. It passed unanimously. Notably, the Council is simultaneously consulting on a visitor accommodation levy under a Business Improvement District model, a measure that would raise costs for hotels and potentially deter more price sensitive visitors. That tension was not explored in debate.

Confidence and constraint

For much of the last Parliament, Richmond's Liberal Democrats benefited from political cover. An unpopular Conservative government absorbed public anger, allowing local leaders to point upwards while presenting themselves as competent managers at home. That cover has now evaporated. Labour's return to power brought only a fleeting and fragile honeymoon, which has already passed. With no convenient villain in Whitehall, familiar explanations are wearing thin.

That matters because the Council's predicament is no longer only imposed from outside. The admission that it may seek permission to raise council tax above the national cap was not an abstract contingency. Councils only contemplate such exceptional measures when normal assumptions are breaking down. In Richmond, that pressure has been intensified by local choices: the escalating cost of the Twickenham Riverside scheme and the ambition to pedestrianise Richmond town centre, both expensive, politically sensitive projects pursued even as funding tightens.

The Liberal Democrats now find themselves the architects of their own difficulties. They continue to present an undiminished programme while quietly acknowledging that it may no longer fit within the rules designed to protect residents from exceptional tax rises. The road ahead is narrowing, not widening. What this meeting exposed is that the margin for reassurance has gone and the numbers are starting to speak for themselves. This is not misfortune imposed by others, but the consequence of ambitions maintained long after affordability should have set clear limits.

You can access the papers and webcast of the meeting by clicking [HERE](#)

Fundraising Quiz Night at The Elleray Centre

February 12, 7.30 – 10.00 pm

From the Elleray Community Association

Get ready for an evening of fun, friendly competition and plenty of laughter at The Elleray Quiz Night - the first of a series of fundraising events at the new Elleray Centre in North Lane, Teddington.

The event will be hosted by Peter Parkin, an experienced and fun local quiz master. There will be several rounds to test your general knowledge including your grasp of popular culture and overall mastery of trivia - giving teams the perfect opportunity to revel in their command (or lack of it) of the who, what, when, why and how! Come as a table of six or let the organisers bring you into a team on the night.

There will be prizes as well as a raffle, and a licensed bar where you can drown your sorrows or toast your successes! And it's all in a great cause!

All proceeds will go to Elleray Community Association (ECA), the local charity that provides services for older people living in and around Teddington. Their much valued social club is open every weekday and is based at The Elleray Centre. It gives members the opportunity to make and meet friends while taking part in a variety of classes and activities to keep them fit, healthy and above all, entertained. For many, it really is a social lifeline! All funds raised will go towards maintaining and expanding the services ECA provides both for club members and the entire local community.



Organiser Robert Dollery says. "We wanted to create a fun way for people to come together for an enjoyable event to raise funds that will help make a real difference to the lives of people who live in this area. So please, round up your friends and come along! You will be supporting a great cause as well as enjoying a great evening!"

Tickets at £10 per person plus a very small booking fee are only available from ticketsource.co.uk/elleray-community-association

Doors open at 6.30 pm

The quiz starts with table quizzes from 7.00 pm with the main event from 7.30 until 10.00 pm. There will be a 30 minute break for the raffle and to stretch your legs and replenish your glasses.



The Elleray Centre

BRENTFORD



**WITH ALIX ANTHONY
& Friends**

**LIVE at THE BEEHIVE
SUNDAY JAM
8:30 PM**

Dear Twickenham Tribune,

The Freedom Pass

Regarding the debate about 'The Freedom Pass', I believe one of the original reasons for its implementation was to get retired people out of their homes, particularly small flats, where the only view out of the window was staring at a brick wall. It would enable people to go out to town centres, museums and cinemas etc where the travelling costs was a financial challenge for people on low incomes.

People forced to stay in their homes by travelling costs made them depressed, so they would visit the doctor and be prescribed medication like anti-depressants etc. This had become a large financial burden on the National Health System and the Freedom Pass was seen as a possible way of cutting this burden and improving people's quality of life.

To add travel expenses to the high cost of living will only result in a lower standard of living. Many older people give up driving because they have the Freedom Pass which apart from travelling to get groceries etc. it also enables them get to their doctors practice and overground trains make it possible to travel to hospitals in and outside Richmond Borough. Many people will not be able to self justify attending a local borough event if they have to add on a travel cost.

Norman Green

The Mulberry Centre's 25th anniversary charity quiz night

From The Mulberry Centre

This special celebration forms part of the centre's wider anniversary fundraising programme, helping to ensure it can continue providing free emotional support, practical guidance, information services and complementary therapies to people affected by cancer across the local community.

Grab a team, come along to the quiz night, and support a great cause!

- **Date:** Thursday 12 March 2026
- **Time:** 5.30pm
- **Location:** The Holiday Inn, Brentford
- **Price:** £15 per person and include entry to the quiz plus a delicious sharing platter

[Book your tickets for the charity quiz night](#)

The Mulberry Centre is an independent charity providing free information, support, and complementary therapies for anyone affected by cancer. For 25 years, the centre has offered a welcoming space for individuals and families to access care, connection and compassion when they need it most.

Quarter of Lib Dem councillors fail to attend Full Council meeting

From the Opposition and Green Party Group

At the Tuesday 27 January Full Meeting of the Council, the Lib Dem benches had empty seats as around 12 councillors were absent.

Full Council meetings occur just six times a year and are the only opportunities for all councillors to come together and address public concerns as political groups via members' questions and to submit petitions on residents' behalf. They are also the only chances for residents to ask questions of the ruling administration in public. In addition, the meetings are essential to approve changes to the constitution, senior staff appointments, reports from committees, and are the only opportunity to debate important topics.

In England, local councillors must attend at least one meeting of the authority within a consecutive six-month period to avoid automatically ceasing to be a member. Some Lib Dem councillors in Richmond are clearly maximising this rule to their benefit. You can check the attendance record of your ward councillor on the Richmond Council website here: <https://cabinet.richmond.gov.uk/mgUserAttendanceSummary.aspx>.

Cllr Andrée Frieze, Leader of the Opposition Green Group, says:

"It is shocking to see councillors failing to turn up to represent their residents. While some of these absences are down to illness, annual leave, caring responsibilities or bereavement, others are serial offenders who regularly miss meetings. At December's Full Council meeting, eight Lib Dems didn't come either.

"This is the problem when you have such a large domination by one political party. Some members become complacent and do the bare minimum for their residents.

"At the local elections in May, residents have the opportunity to vote in more hard-working Green councillors to represent them and their concerns, or put up with just another Lib Dem, who may not even bother to attend meetings on their behalf."

Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Cllr Chas Warlow, says:

"At a time when public trust in politicians is at its lowest, the casual way in which some members of this Lib Dem administration take their duties is very damaging to the public perception of democracy. Council Tax payers deserve much, much better from their councillors."

What Richmond's Community Conversation Revealed About Power and Consent

By James Knight

On Monday 26 January 2026, Richmond Council held a Community Conversation, inviting residents to question senior councillors in an informal setting. Less than twenty-four hours later, the same councillors gathered for Full Council, where a more formal tone was struck. Under formal scrutiny, the finance lead acknowledged that if further transitional relief from government is not secured at the end of the current three-year period, the Council may have to ask residents to approve a council tax increase above the five percent threshold.



That proximity matters. Read together, the two meetings illuminate not only policy ambition but also how this administration manages challenge, responsibility and public consent.

Residents' questions at the Community Conversation ranged widely. They covered

town centre change and traffic disruption, but also business viability, crime and enforcement, public transport reliability, environmental pressures, service delivery, council finances, and the transparency of decision making. Beneath the variety lay a consistent concern: not hostility to change itself, but unease about how decisions are being framed, when consequences will be acknowledged, and how much scope residents have to influence outcomes before they appear settled.

Engagement without deliberation

The meeting was courteous and well organised. Senior councillors answered every question, often at length, and did so in a far more relaxed manner than at formal meetings. There were no votes, no reports, and no binding decisions. Residents were offered reassurance and a sense of direction.

Residents were free to raise concerns across a wide front, from town centre change to bins, street cleanliness, crime and the reliability of basic services, but councillors retained full control over how far answers travelled beyond aspiration. That control over the conversation shaped not just tone, but responsibility.

Ambition owned, constraint externalised

Issue after issue, a pattern emerged. Where ambition was concerned, councillors spoke confidently and collectively. Where difficulty intruded, responsibility was frequently shifted elsewhere.

Funding pressures were attributed to central government. Transport capacity to Transport for London. Enforcement to the police. Retail decline to landlords and market forces. Each explanation was reasonable in isolation. Taken together, they diluted accountability. Power was exercised locally, while ownership of consequences was dispersed.

This style of partnership heavy governance has long been criticised, particularly by Labour, for blurring democratic responsibility. Decisions are presented as constrained by networks and external actors,

softening the sense that elected leaders are choosing between competing priorities rather than merely managing inevitabilities. In a borough without scrutiny or call in mechanisms, that diffusion matters more than it otherwise might.

Behavioural change as policy

Transport questions made the underlying logic most explicit, though it was present elsewhere too. Councillors were clear that the Council's priority is to shift behaviour, encouraging residents to move away from private cars and towards walking, cycling and buses. Increased journey times and congestion did not feature prominently as problems to be avoided.

This is consistent with earlier council discussions, in which congestion has been described as beneficial on the grounds that it leads to "traffic evaporation", as people abandon journeys altogether. The Council's Active Travel Strategy reflects the same thinking, treating reduced car use as an objective rather than a side effect.

That is a coherent policy position. It is also controversial, particularly when applied at scale and in a town centre that serves commercial, social and cross-borough functions. The distributional consequences were not explored in any depth.

Governing techniques on show

What was most striking about the evening was not the absence of decisions, but how much seemed already agreed in principle. The Community Conversation carried no formal authority, yet key assumptions were treated as settled: that change is unavoidable, that disruption is transitional, and that alternatives will follow in time.

This is a subtle but powerful exercise of authority. By the time decisions arrive formally, much of the argument has already been culturally settled. Debate narrows from whether a course should be taken to how its effects should be managed.

That is not accidental. It is a governing technique that relies on sequencing and framing rather than open democratic contestation. In Richmond, where decisions once formalised are difficult to revisit, early narrative carries disproportionate weight.

Limits of ambition

Residents were invited to discuss ambitious, long-term change at a moment when the Council's financial headroom is visibly narrowing and when everyday services are already under strain. Yet the tone of the evening suggested continuity rather than constraint, with major programmes discussed as if they sat outside the tightening fiscal context acknowledged less than a day later at Full Council.

That matters because the problem facing Richmond is no longer one of consultation or sequencing, but of credibility. Local government is ultimately judged not on the elegance of its plans, but on its capacity to deliver them. When ambition continues to be presented at full stretch while funding assumptions weaken, the risk is not merely delay or revision, but the quiet accumulation of promises that cannot all be kept.

As government support continues to fall, the test for the Council is whether it is prepared to recalibrate its programme to match its means, rather than sustain the impression of business as usual until circumstances force retreat. Stewardship requires more than vision. It requires the discipline to scale ambition to affordability before reality does it for you.

You can watch a recording of the Community Conversation by clicking [HERE](#)

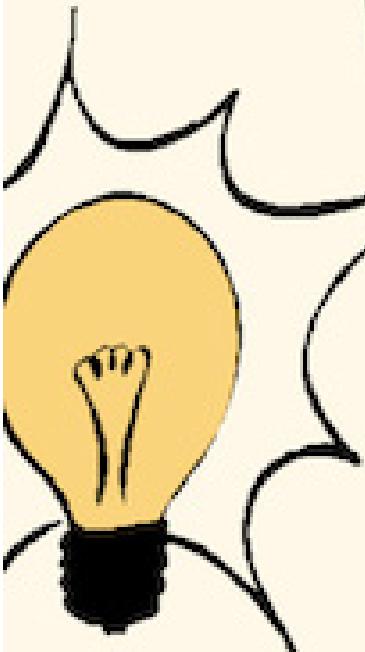


The Elleray Centre

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NIGHT

fundraiser



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Thursday 12th February 2026

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Charity no. 1150261

The Barnes Common Winter Wassail Returns

From Barnes Common

Join local charity Barnes Common on Saturday 7th February to make merry, and celebrate the success of the community orchard with the Barnes Common Wassail!

An ancient rural English celebration giving fruit growers and pickers the opportunity to drink to the good health of their fruit trees and to an abundant crop in the coming year, as well as bring light, noise and cheer to long, dark winter months.

We will enjoy storytelling, crafts and singing, with a Wassail Master to oversee proceedings. We are delighted to welcome back the Age UK Richmond Patch Ukulele group.

A community event not to be missed, so why not join us as we make noise, make merry and share Mike's warm spiced apple cider and some tasty snacks. The theme for this year's event will be wellbeing and connecting with nature.



All are most welcome. Please dress appropriately for the weather and wear sturdy footwear. Entry with pre booked tickets only - family discounts available. Tickets include a cup of cider/ hot mulled apple juice, and a hot mug of soup.

[Book your tickets](#)

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Jews Omitted from Richmond Council's Holocaust Memorial Day Messaging

By James Knight

How Richmond Council marked Holocaust Memorial Day has prompted concern after its official messaging failed to explicitly name Jewish victims, echoing warnings raised nationally about the dilution of Holocaust remembrance.

Holocaust Memorial Day occupies a singular place in public life. It exists to remember a unique, state-sponsored genocide, to honour survivors, and to educate future generations about where hatred, dehumanisation, and the abuse of state power can lead. For that reason, the language used by public bodies on the day carries particular weight. This year, the way London Borough of Richmond upon Thames framed its Holocaust Memorial Day messaging has prompted criticism and wider questions about historical precision and judgement.

Across its official Facebook and Instagram accounts, Richmond Council marked Holocaust Memorial Day by referring to “the victims and survivors of the Holocaust 1941 to 1945 and other genocides around the world”. The posts highlighted the lighting of York House in purple and the display of banners telling the stories of those who died during the Holocaust and their connections to the borough. What they did not do was explicitly mention Jews, or the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered by the Nazi regime.

Why wording matters on Holocaust Memorial Day

At first glance, this may appear a matter of wording rather than substance. Yet Holocaust remembrance is inseparable from historical specificity. The Holocaust was not simply one genocide among many, but an industrialised attempt to eradicate an entire people. Holocaust Memorial Day exists because of that fact. Language that broadens the frame without anchoring it in that reality risks diluting, rather than deepening, public understanding.

The concern raised locally was not that other genocides should be excluded. Holocaust Memorial Day itself explicitly encourages learning about later atrocities. The concern was that, in generalising the language, the defining historical core of the Holocaust was blurred.

Local reaction raises questions

Some Richmond residents were quick to notice the omission. In response to the council's Facebook post, one commenter cited guidance from the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, noting that the Holocaust is central to Holocaust Memorial Day precisely because it commemorates the murder of six million Jews, alongside the millions of others persecuted under Nazi rule. The point being made was not emotive, but factual: naming Jewish victims is not an optional detail, but the foundation of Holocaust remembrance itself.

Inconsistent messaging across platforms

The council's handling of Holocaust Memorial Day messaging also varied by platform. While Richmond Council marked the day on Facebook and Instagram, no corresponding post appeared on its official Twitter/X account. This is notable given the council's frequent use of the platform to mark other civic commemorations and days of remembrance throughout the year. No explanation was provided for the absence.

A concern echoed nationally

These sensitivities are not confined to Richmond, nor are they a partisan invention. During a Holocaust

Memorial Day debate in the House of Lords on 27 January, senior peers warned explicitly about a growing tendency among public bodies to abstract Holocaust remembrance to the point where its Jewish specificity is lost. Lord Pickles (Eric Pickles), the former UK Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues, cautioned that “some councils and politicians even avoid using the word ‘Jew’ when discussing Holocaust victims”, arguing that such language risks undermining historical accuracy and weakening the very purpose of remembrance.

That concern was echoed by Lord Mann (John Mann), the Government’s independent adviser on antisemitism, who warned that failing to name Jewish victims clearly and consistently does not promote inclusion, but confusion. Holocaust Memorial Day, he argued, depends on precision, and remembrance loses its meaning when the identity of those targeted for extermination is softened or obscured through generalised language.

Both peers framed their interventions not as accusations of bad faith, but as warnings about the cumulative effect of imprecision when repeated across institutions. The concern, they stressed, is not intent but outcome: that abstraction, however well meant, risks eroding public understanding of what the Holocaust was and why it must be remembered accurately.

Precedent from other public bodies

Recent precedent underlines why this issue has become so sensitive. In 2024, Brighton and Hove City Council apologised after criticism of a Holocaust Memorial Day post that failed to mention Jews, deleting the post and accepting that its messaging should have centred on the specifically Jewish nature of the Holocaust. Earlier this year, Birmingham City Council issued a similar apology after a press release marking the day omitted any reference to Jews or Jewish victims, subsequently amending the wording following criticism from Jewish organisations.

Even the BBC has acknowledged the importance of precision in this area. After several Holocaust Memorial Day broadcasts referred to “six million people” murdered by the Nazis without specifying that they were Jews, the broadcaster issued a formal apology and correction, accepting that the wording was wrong. The response reflected a clear recognition that accuracy is not optional when dealing with Holocaust remembrance.

Judgement, not intent

Holocaust Memorial Day demands restraint, precision, and humility. Generalised language may feel safer, particularly in a febrile political climate, but safety is not the same as accuracy. As other public bodies have discovered, avoiding specificity does not foster inclusion; it risks confusion and, for many, genuine discomfort.

Some commentators have argued that this pattern reflects a wider unease among left-leaning institutions about explicitly naming Jews in public discourse since the war in Gaza, amid heightened tensions around Israel, antisemitism, and protest politics. Whether or not that interpretation is accepted, the perception itself is revealing. It suggests that efforts to navigate contemporary sensitivities can, unintentionally, lead to hesitation in naming historical truths that ought to remain settled and uncontroversial.

At a time when antisemitism is rising and historical knowledge is thinning, clarity about the Holocaust is not a secondary concern. Naming Jewish victims does not diminish the suffering of others. It anchors remembrance in truth. The criticism directed at Richmond Council’s messaging is not about excluding wider histories of genocide, but about ensuring that the very people whose destruction gave rise to Holocaust Memorial Day are named with the clarity that remembrance demands.

That is not an abstract concern. It is a question of judgement, and one that public institutions across the country are increasingly being required to confront.

Book an appointment or drop in for a chat

Castelnau Community Centre Tuesday 24 February 2026, 10am - 12pm

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Next week at Richmond Council

On Monday, 2nd February, the **Transport and Air Quality Committee**. On the agenda is (1) fee and charges increase, (2) quarterly monitoring report, (3) highway maintenance programme for 2026/27, (4) bike hanger and cycle parking update, (5) car club developments, (6) Richmond School Streets phase 4. The meeting will commence at 7 pm at York House, Twickenham. Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

On Tuesday, 3rd February, the **Regulatory Committee** will meet to discuss (1) the proposed consultation to extend the ASB Public Space Protection Order, (2) the Dog Control Public Space Protection Order. The meeting will commence at 7 pm at York House, Twickenham. Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

On Thursday, 5th February, the **Special Standing Committee on Heathrow** will meet to discuss (1) an update on airport expansion plans. The meeting will commence at 7 pm at York House, Twickenham. Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

For guidance on **participating** in various types of council meetings, including speaking or asking questions in writing or verbally, please click [HERE](#).

Funding available to support your green initiative

From Richmond Council

Submit your climate action idea by Friday 27 February and let us help you bring it to life.

Our climate action microgrants offers between £100 and £500 to community groups, schools, individuals or non-profits to run events, activities and initiatives that promote positive behaviours in the community around climate change and sustainability.

You can [find out more and apply now](#).

Examples of projects we've funded

Check out these projects we've previously funded to get some inspiration.

Sustainable Lego Club

The Museum of Richmond used the microgrant to launch a new Lego Club using only secondhand Lego sourced from local charity shops. The project promotes the circular economy and shows families the value of reusing materials. The initiative has already been showcased as a positive case study within the museum sector.

Twickenham Repair Café

The café used the microgrant to support a thriving monthly repair hub run by 65 volunteers, completing nearly 3,000 repairs. The project has helped over 2,000 residents, cutting 35 tonnes of CO₂e, saving 3.8 tonnes from landfill and avoiding £120,000 in replacement costs. The lively events build community skills, confidence and connection around repair and reuse.

Transforming Morland Close for wildlife

The Conservation Volunteers transformed a small greenspace in Morland Close by building an insect hotel, creating a stag beetle loggery and planting 84 wildflower plugs. Volunteers loved the handson work, with one saying: "It was nice to build new microenvironments from scratch."

Thai Upon Thames

With new restaurants opening all the time nowadays, it's easy to forget about those long-standing stalwarts. A case in point was clearly brought home to me the other day, when I returned to **Thai Upon Thames in East Twickenham**, somewhere I'd not visited for many years. There was no sinister reason for not visiting - it had just slipped from my mind - but it certainly is back at the forefront - and one of my favourite 'go-to' restaurants now.



I was accompanied by my Thai neighbour, Jiew, as it's always good to have a second opinion from someone who's very knowledgeable about a particular cuisine. Jiew has a Thai catering business, TW Thai, and runs Thai cookery courses and the occasional supper club.

Thai Upon Thames's general manager, Mark, welcomed us, and explained that the restaurant is privately owned, by a family that also has **Siam Food Gallery** in Esher. Head chef Kanjana is a family member and uses the cooking methods of her Thai childhood in the kitchen. The restaurant, through Mark, has long been heavily involved in local community groups, cleaning streets, parks and the rivers, and puts a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability, as well as supporting many charities in the vicinity, including The Victoria Foundation, for which I am an ambassador.

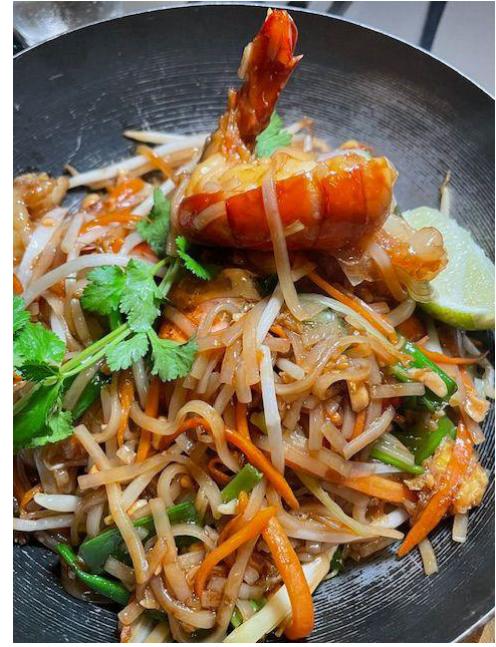
I left the selection of food to Jiew, who briefed Mark that while I'm not averse to spicy food, we wanted to 'dial down' the heat slightly, in order to maximise the flavours. We started with a portion of chicken satay; four generous sticks, served piping hot with a home-made peanut sauce. They were so good, and a great portent for what was to follow. Next we shared a portion of duck spring rolls that were obviously home made, as was the delicious sauce. This led Jiew to comment that so many Thai restaurants resort to using frozen spring rolls and ready made sauces, but the sauce we had was tamarind based, and with a strong hoi sin element.

The next dish was a new one to me: laab spicy chicken salad. This comprised seasoned minced chicken served with lettuce leaves, to be used to wrap the chicken. This was a veritable explosion of flavours: mint, chilli, coriander and red and spring onions, dressed with fish sauce and kefir lime. Despite it being a 'mild' version, the heat gradually builds in the mouth, but it was absolutely delicious and declared by Jiew to be an excellent example of the dish.





The idea of Beef Penang Curry appealed greatly, as did that good old favourite, Pad Thai, and neither disappointed us. The beef was incredibly tender - it melted in the mouth - and the sauce had a beautifully delicate sweetness. The Jumbo Prawn Pad Thai had a thinner noodle that one normally finds, and the peanuts had been part of the full cooking process, instead of being sprinkled on top. Two absolutely massive prawns (split in half for ease of eating) sat resplendently on top, but there were still plenty of smaller prawns



within the noodles and vegetables. Both dishes were incredibly good and the portions very generous.

So generous in fact that a 'doggy bag' fed my husband and me for lunch the next day.

Not that Jiew or I needed any more food, Mark persuaded us to share a delicious dessert. This was Banana Fritters with Pandan custard and Coconut Icecream. Wow, these were little balls of light deliciousness and the perfect dessert to share.

So delicately flavoured and the icecream, as expected, was also homemade.

Incidentally, the wines are well priced, from just £3.95 for a 125ml glass and also available by the 500ml carafe from £20.25

I'd forgotten how great the food is in this East Twickenham culinary oasis, but it's certainly front of mind for me - and for Jiew - from now on.

If you have a Richmond Card, there are a number of special offers, including 20 per cent off the main menu Sunday to Thursday. Other offers include BYO on Tuesdays.



Special offer for our readers - valid until 31 March 2026: Readers of **The Twickenham & Richmond Tribune** with the Richmond Card can mention this review and ask for 'Mark's offer' if dining there on Friday or Saturday evenings still to receive the 20 per cent discount on the main menu. The discount is applicable to the whole table but is food only and doesn't include drinks.

Thai Upon Thames is open for dinner every night and also has a thriving takeaway business that's available free for local deliveries and also through Deliveroo. To book a table, either visit the website or call the restaurant directly on 020 8892 6808

We're very lucky to have such a great Thai restaurant in our community, especially one that has the time and wherewithal to have such a strong community spirit as well.

Dry January?

I don't know about you, but the very idea of giving up alcohol for one of the most miserable, cold and dull months of the year doesn't really appeal to me. That said, I know it does us all good to have the occasional 'dry' spell, whether a day or two a week or just the days when you know you're going to be driving. Anyway, in the interests of research for you, I've been checking out some of the new alco free drinks on the market for you this month, and I have to say, it's been really interesting.

If, like me, you're a fan of an Aperol or Campari spritz, there are quite a few excellent alcohol free alternatives. One that I was very impressed with indeed is **Smiling Wolf Aperitivo**, a 0.0% alcohol free bittersweet aperitif crafted in the UK, inspired by the bold, aromatic aperitifs of Northern Italy. With notes of sun-ripened citrus, bitter herbs and aromatic roots, it captures the essence of an evening spritz without the alcohol. The flavour balances zesty orange and rhubarb sweetness with herbal complexity and a lingering dry finish. Around £32 for a 70cl bottle from online stockists including Club Soda and The Dry Drinker



Three Spirit is a range of functional non-alcoholic drinks for those who see wellness as a way to elevate their lifestyle. Well, they certainly taste pretty good, and they harness the power of plants. There are three variants and each is powered by adaptogens and nootropics, with different serving suggestions: neat on the rocks, with ginger ale or with tonic, but you can experiment. **Nightcap**, a non-alcoholic elixir including lemon balm, valerian, hops and ashwagandha is a good whisky alternative. **Livener**, a non-alcoholic botanical elixir including guayusa, schisandara, guava leaf and ginseng for an energising pick me up and a good G&T replacement. **Social**, a non-alcoholic botanical elixir including cacao, lion's mane and damiana, and designed as a dark spirit alternative, delicious with ginger ale. They're available from Ocado at £21 for a 50cl bottle.



Making a drink from trees? Yes, indeed and it's rather good. Tree company **Sylva**'s latest limited release is **Sylva Orchard**, an aged non-alcoholic spirit that captures the vibrancy of British orchards and barley fields, balanced with a gentle smokiness. It's the third release from the innovative Sylva distillery and maturation lab, founded by Ben Branson, to explore the untapped flavour of trees. The distillery uses a pioneering production and sonic maturation process, invented by Branson, to make dark non-alcoholic spirits. Sylva can already be found in Michelin starred restaurants, award-winning cocktail bars and luxury retailers like Selfridges. **Sylva Orchard** can be enjoyed neat over ice, or long with soda and a slice of apple. £40 for a 50cl bottle from www.sylvalabs.com



Another company producing a very passable and palatable alternative to spirits is new to the UK, and currently only available at **Fortnum & Mason**, **NietsCo.** is already recognised internationally as a leader in alcohol-free spirits. Its products are distilled, not blended - using traditional techniques, fine botanicals and barrel ageing, resulting in alcohol-free spirits with real depth, texture and aromatic nuance. **Botaniets Original 0.0% (£35)** is a crisp, herbaceous, triple-distilled spirit with juniper, cardamom, rosemary and citrus; an elegant base for alcohol-free G&Ts and cocktails.

What if beer is your usual tipple? Well, **Butcombe Brewing Co's Goram IPA Zero** has all the taste of Butcombe's Goram IPA but with none of the alcohol. It's one of the most highly awarded IPAs in the world, having won Gold medals at the World Beer and World Alcohol Free Awards along with BBI, SIBA and Taste of the West Gold medals. Based on Butcombe's Goram IPA recipe, Goram IPA Zero is a refreshing and easy to drink IPA made with a punchy blend of English, US and New Zealand hops, which balance aromatic stone fruit, citrus and bitter notes. It's also Vegan friendly. Goram IPA Zero is available in 330ml bottles and 440ml cans and available in 330ml bottles – from Amazon, retailers across the UK and online from

Butcombebrewery.co.uk at £21 for 12 x 440ml cans



No and Lo wines can be rather a mixed bag. However, companies like award-winning **Wednesday's Domaine** are really worth checking out. It has a range of six premium wines – all at 0.0% ABV, low calorie and fully vegan. The range includes: **Cuvée** (0.0%) - a sparkling rose with notes of red fruits and ginger, to raise a glass for a celebratory toast; **Éclat** (0.0%) - a sparkling white and **Vignette** (0.0%) - an award-winning rich and warming still red with notes of dark fruit, spice and forest floor; **Sanguine** (0.0%) Lively and fruit-forward, still lighter-bodied red offers berry notes and a smooth finish; **Piquant**

(0.0%) is a zesty still white, made with Airen Blanco grapes, making it a versatile wine for any white wine lover and last but not least, **Elan** (0.0%) a pink-hued, still rosé, with crisp acidity and light, herbaceous notes. These are very good indeed and available from £14.99 at selected outlets including Ocado and wednesdaysdomaine.com

Tesco always stocks an excellent range of well-priced alcohol free wines, and the **Vineyards Range** is very reasonably priced at just £3.25 a bottle. The flavour is excellent but don't, like my husband was, be tempted to quaff most of the bottle in one evening - strangely, he woke with a slight hangover the following morning, something that hitherto was a distant memory. But drinking in moderation, it's very acceptable, especially for the price. There is also **Hardys Alcohol free Chardonnay** at £4.25, that, while tasting slightly 'thin', perhaps is still a very pleasant drink, again at a bargain price.



A drink that isn't pretending to be like an alcoholic one, is **Belly Dance**, a kefir soda that delivers a unique three-strain probiotic blend with billions of live cultures and just one gram of sugar, making it one of the cleanest functional drinks in the UK. Unlike kombucha, which is brewed from tea and can be more acidic, Belly Dance uses water kefir - a fermentation of water, kefir grains and natural sugars - to create a softer, more approachable base. The brand then layers in natural fruit and botanical infusions for what it calls a "dance floor for your gut". Available in three flavours: **Cherry Berry**; **Kiwi Mango** and **Fiery Ginger** at over 100 stores including Fortnum and Mason, premium grab-and-go chains and directly from drinkbellydance.com



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Adventure is calling...

By Bruce Lyons

Ready For An Adventure?

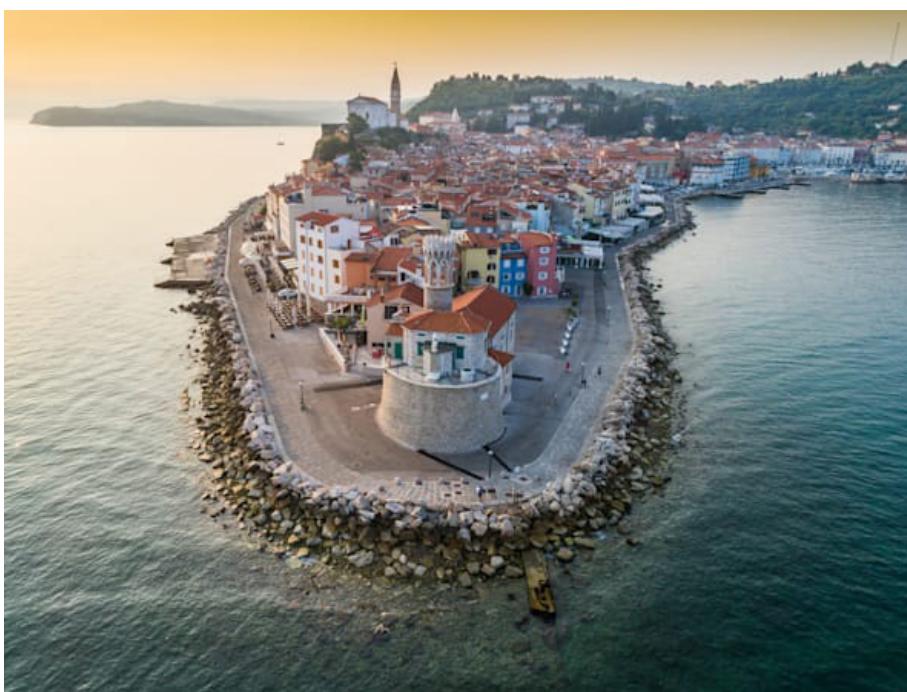
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Crusader 

Who is saving who?

By Deep Patel

~ Through the Eyes of a Twickenham Shopkeeper ~



For anyone who knows my shop or has been inside, you will know that over half of my shop's front window is covered in posters encouraging people to pick up stranded worms and snails from pavements after rains so people walking there don't step on them, or signs saying don't use mouse poison, instead use humane live capture mouse traps to trap alive and free into woodlands as poison creates 5 days of suffering whilst their veins slowly tear up causing internal bleeding. I am forever giving every customer that leaves my shop my "master tips" leaflet to put on their fridge door should they need a kind way to deter practically any little life without harming it (it's good karma). However, few question me as to why I spend so much effort on trying to save these little lives, except one little girl this past week...

I was behind the counter on a rainy weekday evening and a little girl came in with her father to buy a packet of fruit pastilles. As she approached my shop counter she was transfixed at the poster on the counter. "Daddy, why is the shop telling people to care about ants and not use poisons for slugs, aren't those things bad?"

I smiled and replied to the little girl "why do you think they are bad?" She looked at her father for an answer but he simply answered "don't look at me, you are the one asking the question, ask the shopkeeper". She answered me "because they eat all our plants and come into our homes". I smiled back and said yes they do, but is "being hungry and wanting to eat a bad thing, we all get hungry and need to eat don't we?" The little girl smiled and said "oh yeah I didn't think about that". I laughed and said, it's ok, you're a little girl and you didn't think about that, but most adults I know don't think about that either and simply say "well they shouldn't eat my plants should they"...I said do you think they do that on purpose? They are just hungry and don't know that they are eating YOUR plants?" The little girl carried on and said "well that may

be true, but they still shouldn't come into my house, it's my house not theirs?" I smiled again and said "do you know that they were here in the world a long time before we humans were, like millions of years before us...so are they taking OUR land...on did we take over THEIR land and build our concrete homes upon it?". She looked at me and shrugged her shoulders. Her father seemed to be enjoying the conversation and encouraged me to keep talking to her and asking her questions. The little girl then said "but they are smaller than us and we are bigger so we should be in charge". I gently smiled again and asked her "are you the tallest girl in your class?" and she said "no, I am one of the smallest as most girls are taller than me". I then said "would you like it if all the other taller girls were always in charge of you just because you were smaller?" She said "no way, that is not fair". I replied "so is it fair we are in charge of all the smaller creatures just because we are bigger than them?" Her father was smiling as she shrugged her shoulders once more. The father turned to his daughter and said "he has a point". The girl laughed and I laughed and they left my shop.

The next morning I saw the same father and daughter walking to school past my shop. I was standing at the door at the time grabbing some early morning sunrays whilst the cloud had broken briefly (you have to grab it whilst you can this time of year). I watched and then suddenly the little girl stopped walking. I wondered what was wrong. I kept watching and then I saw it. She went to a bush next to her, broke off a leaf and bent over to pick up a slug off the pavement. Her father turned to look for her and saw her behind him bending to pick up the slug. He asked her what she was doing, and I could hear her still as she was only a few metres from my shop door. "I am moving this slug off the street over the wall so no one behind me treads on it". Her friend was walking with her and shouted out "Yuk that's a disgusting slug, who cares?" The little girl who was picking up the slug answered back "but it's just trying to live its life like we all are, just because it's smaller it doesn't mean it doesn't matter". Her friend laughed and then came to help her find a nice damp leafy spot over the wall next to them to put the slug. At that exact moment, the cloud cover suddenly cleared and just as the little girl's words had warmed my heart, the sunshine warmed my face as I looked up at the sky above me and thought to myself, isn't life just beautiful...

Remember...

“...Whoever thought that saving a little slug could help shape a generation”

MY CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP OF THE WEEK...

Silverfish causing you stress?

Put a few drops of peppermint oil along the areas where they come...This remedy also works to deter virtually any insect without harming them...like it & share it!

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”

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St Mary's University

St Mary's Research Reveals why there is Vaccine Hesitancy Among Adults

A new study led by researchers at St Mary's University, London, has revealed that mistrust, misinformation and a lack of culturally tailored communication are key reasons why some adults aged 50 and over continue to decline the COVID vaccine booster doses – particularly within ethnically diverse and socioeconomic disadvantaged populations.



The research, known as the TRUST Study, highlights that vaccine hesitancy is rarely driven by a single concern. Instead, it reflects a complex mix of psychology, social and practical factors that influence how people engage with public messaging. The study aimed to bridge the gap by improving the effectiveness of future booster dose campaigns targeting specific audiences.

The qualitative study involved in-depth online interviews with 30 adults aged over 50 in London and the West Midlands who had declined a COVID-19 booster dose. Participants discussed their attitudes towards vaccines and their experience of health information and misinformation.

Four key themes were found from analysing the research:

- Vaccine production and administration, including mistrust in vaccine manufacturing
- Health misinformation and beliefs, influenced by social networks
- Personal circumstances and social influences including trust in healthcare systems
- Policy and logistics factors, such as access to appointments and clear guidance

The research found that mistrust was often not limited to vaccines themselves, but reflected broader concerns about health systems, communication and feeling unheard.

Samual Lam, Research Fellow in the [School of Allied Health and Life Science](#) at St Mary's University, said: *"Our findings show that vaccine hesitancy is not simply lack of information. Many participants described feeling excluded from public health conversations or unsure whether messaging reflected their lived experience. Building trust requires listening, transparency, and communication that speaks to different communities in meaningful ways."*

This research show that there are implications beyond Covid 19 offering valuable lesson for future public initiatives, including flu vaccination campaigns and other booster programmes."

[Dr Silvia Riva](#), Associate Professor in Psychology at St Mary's University and Principal Investigator of the study, explained that *"Mistrust is influenced by cultural practices and the knowledge schemas through which individuals interpret scientific information. In many cultural contexts, science is commonly understood as a gradual process involving time, trials, and errors. The unusually rapid development of vaccines, while representing a remarkable scientific achievement, may therefore have challenged these expectations and contributed to concerns about trust and reliability among some individuals."*

The TRUST Study was funded by unconditional research grant from [Moderna](#), enabling St Mary's researchers to collaborate with industry while maintaining academic independence and a focus on public insight and health equity.

The full study, [Barriers to equitable COVID-19 booster uptake among adults aged 50 and older in the UK: psychological factors and misinformation influencing vaccine hesitancy](#) has been published.

[Watch Inside St Mary's:
Understanding Vaccine
Hesitancy](#)



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

St Mary's University

St Mary's Honorary Fellow Andy Sutch RIP

St Mary's University, London was saddened to learn of the recent passing of Honorary Fellow Andy Sutch.

Andy was an advocate of sport at the University and played a key role in developments in this area on campus in the 90s and 00s. He was an advisor in the successful bid for national lottery funding that enabled the building of the University Track and refurbishment of sports facilities. Andy was also instrumental in building partnerships between the English Institute of Sport and St Mary's.



These facilities have been a key part of the University's development of elite sport, launching the careers of Olympians and world class including Sir Mo Farah, Beth Potter, Andrew Osagie, Charlotte Purdue, Adelle Tracey, Steph Twell, amongst many others.

His contributions to the University were recognised in 2005 as then Chair of Governors Bishop George Stack awarded him an Honorary Fellowship.



Aside to his support for St Mary's, Andy was an advocate for ensuring everyone could access sport. He was the Director at the Sports Council (London)

1989-2003, was part of the bid team for London 2012, Chair of GLA London Mayor Sport Team between 2009-2014, and Chair of the Panathlon Foundation 2013-2023.

Speaking of his contributions to St Mary's, former Vice-Principal Prof Dick Fisher said, *"Andy was in many ways a part of us. He was our go to person for advice on developing projects, engaging with community sport and understanding how national sports policy was unfolding. In turn he really enjoyed what he called the 'university vibe' at St Mary's and was delighted to be made an Honorary Fellow. The vibrant entity that now is Sport St Mary's owes much to him; from student engagement in all respects, flourishing community initiatives and performance at the highest levels."*

"He was always full of ideas and unfailingly generous to us with his time and enthusiasm. St Marys owes him a lot, and he enjoyed his engagement with us and the friendships he developed here."

Andrew Reid-Smith, Head of Sport at St Mary's University, added: *"Andy believed deeply in sport as a force for good – creating opportunity, building confidence and strengthening communities. That ethos continues at Sport St Mary's today. Working with Andy, as former Chair and then Director of the Panathlon Foundation, we were proud to host the regional final for young people with disabilities and special educational needs. Supported by our student volunteers, it was a wonderful day for the children, and for our students and staff alike – exactly the kind of inclusive, community-connected sport that Andy championed."*



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Editor's note.

I am deeply saddened to hear of Andy's passing. Teresa and I worked closely with Andy for many years and he was a great help in developing the various river activities we introduced to Twickenham Riverside.



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Debbie Wiseman

Cécile Chaminade

Roxanna Panufnik

Twickenham Choral

Panel Discussion: Debbie Wiseman, Roxanna Panufnik, Leah Broad,
Lottie Walker (facilitator)



Debbie Wiseman
photo Michael Leckie



Roxanna Panufnik
photo Benjamin Eolviga



Marina Solarek

Solarek Piano Trio & friends

A full programme of events for the festival during March 2026 featuring female composers in and around the borough can be found at www.artsrichmond.org.uk



Designer Marina Melnikova pink.off.design

Charity number 251359

Head Coach John Mitchell Commits Future To The Red Roses

Rugby World Cup-winning head coach John Mitchell has signed a long-term contract with the Red Roses. The World Rugby Coach of the Year, who led England to World Cup glory in 2025, has committed his future through the next World Cup cycle.

Mitchell's time with the Red Roses has been laden with success. Twenty-five wins in a row has contributed to a world-record winning run, which has resulted in two Guinness Women's Six Nations Grand Slam, two WXV 1 titles and a first World Cup triumph for 11 years.

The Red Roses have also cemented their world number one ranking under Mitchell's stewardship, with their ranking of 98.09 points - the most of any women's or men's side in the history of the game.

"I am pleased to extend my time with the Red Roses," he said. "This extension provides continuity across a World Cup cycle and enables the programme to operate with a clear, long-term vision. The past three years have been both challenging and rewarding, delivering success at the highest level while allowing for authenticity of individuals within the Red Roses. That period has helped establish strong standards, clarity of purpose, greater connections and a culture that wins."

"This emerging group has the opportunity to continue leading our game globally. By driving higher standards and continually seeking new performance gains, the programme can build on what is already in place and push for new trends. The immediate focus, however, is 2026. There is a strong sense of unfinished opportunities within the group, and that will shape our preparation, training approach, and ongoing drive to raise our floor as we build our hunger in dynasty."

Executive Director of Performance Rugby at the RFU, Conor O'Shea, added: *"We are all delighted that Mitch has committed to this next cycle, and if anything, he is more driven to see the Red Roses become better versions of themselves. He has created a Red Roses culture that has delivered success on the biggest stage, and just as importantly, he is deeply committed to growing the team's legacy whilst creating something that will last long beyond his coaching role."*

Mitchell will be supported by forwards coach Louis Deacon and defence coach Sarah Hunter while Lou Meadows is set to depart her role as attack coach.

Meadows joined the Red Roses in the summer of 2023 and has overseen an attack that has crossed for 215 tries in 28 matches, helping the squad triumph in two Six Nations, two WXV tournaments and a World Cup.

Everyone at the RFU would like to thank Lou for her contribution to the Red Roses' success, and previous work with the U20s programme, and wish her all the best for the future.

Mitchell will be head of attack for the 2026 Guinness Women's Six Nations with England women's highest point-scorer of all-time, Emily Scarratt, assuming lead attack and backs coach responsibilities for the tournament. The 35-year-old called time on her illustrious playing career following the World Cup success. Scarratt will continue in her role as an assistant coach at PWR club Loughborough Lightning.



Jo Yapp Appointed To Brand New Role Of Head Of Women's Pathway

Seventy-time capped England international Jo Yapp has been appointed the Head of Women's Pathway – a brand-new role at England Rugby- from July 2026.

She will work collaboratively with Head of Women's Performance, Charlie Hayter, to align on the future England women's pathway priorities, whilst leading on the delivery of the strategic direction of the women's pathway – a key pillar in the RFU's Every Rose strategy.

That strategy set out a clear ambition to maintain the Red Roses as a world-leading team, with strong player pathways and thriving domestic leagues, including supporting Premiership Women's Rugby. In her role, Yapp will ensure players are inspired and equipped to maximise their potential and spearhead further growth in the pathway moving forward.

Yapp represented the Red Roses as a player at three World Cups and has previously been head coach of the England Under-20s as well as Worcester Warriors and the Barbarians.

Most recently, she led Australia to a quarter-final finish at the 2025 Rugby World Cup after becoming the first female to be named a head coach of any senior Australian national team in rugby union, rugby league, Australian rules football or association football.

"I'm incredibly passionate about the women's pathway," Yapp said of her appointment. *The pathway is in a really strong place, thanks to the commitment and passion behind so much outstanding work. It's special to be coming back into this space and to work alongside people who care deeply about making a real difference. I want to use the knowledge and experience I've gained from different environments to keep driving the pathway forward and support its continued growth."*

Head of Women's Performance, Charlie Hayter, added: *"The women's pathway has made significant strides over a number of years and Jo will play a pivotal role in its continued growth and progress. This role reflects both how far the pathway has come and our commitment to providing further support to sustain that momentum."*

"Jo brings with her a wealth of experience from across the women's game. From top level international coaching with Australia, as well as previous England and PWR roles. Jo has a wealth of knowledge, and a proven track record of embedding progress. I'm really excited by the impact Jo will have on shining a brighter spotlight on the whole of the pathway, by both supporting on the ground and helping to drive key objectives aligned to the EveryRose strategy."

Until the end of the 2025/26 campaign, Yapp will take on a consultancy role as an advisor across the pathway programmes as well as supporting Emily Scarratt's interim role as attack and backs coach with the Red Roses.

The former scrum-half will embed herself within the Under-18 and Under-21 international programmes to gain a deeper insight into the broader England system, and work alongside the Player Development Group (PDG) Lead to understand the key strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the Under-18 PDG programme. Alongside this, she will be present at the 2026 Guinness Women's Six Nations.



Aston Villa v Brentford FC

By Ron Brand

I sit here attempting to access Brentford FC 2025/2026 season to date?

2026 started well. A 0-0 draw with Spurs and Thomas Frank at the GTECH followed by convincing wins away 4-2 at Everton and a 3-0 Home win v Sunderland. Draw, Win, Win in the Premiership.

All cup games can be tricky as Palace were reminded at Macclesfield, (more of Macclesfield later) so a 2-0 win against Sheffield Wednesday sitting midway in the Championship is never going to be easy. 2-0 a good result, what next in the FA Cup?

Chelsea were obviously going to be challenging, although the BEEs have a strong record against them, but not this time. Chelsea got their act together and won 2-0, Never mind, move on!

Notts Forest are tricky, sitting 17th in the table one above the relegation positions yet with Sean Dyche as a Manager Brentford FC have never beaten you never know what to expect? As I have already stated here 'There are NO EASY GAMES IN THE PREMIER'.

Back in November Forest went to Anfield and beat Liverpool 3-0? What ODDS on that?

It proved to be the case this time as Forrest came out 2-0 winners at the GTECH.

So Three wins a Draw and two Losses to start 2026.

Aston Villa sitting in 3rd position and playing well. An ex Brentford player, Watson at centre forward and scoring well, 8 so far this season means yet another challenging game for The BEEs.

Brentford as has so often been the case have replaced Watson. Igor Thiago the BEEs new this season centre Forward has already notched up 16 goals. How do they find them?

The Brentford recruitment team and process are a wonder to behold. Keep it up!

14th Feb 4th Round of the FA Cup, Brentford go to Macclesfield. With Macclesfield at Mid Table in the Sixth Tier of the English football league system a nice easy game. You would think?

We will never know the frame of mind Crystal Palace players arrived there in for the last Round?

Be interesting to know the mind sets when they left? As the wonderful Jimmy Greaves used to say, IT's a Funny Ole Game!

Expect Brentford FC players to arrive with a different Mind-Set?

You would expect a different attitude? Not simple, Keith Andrews has an interesting challenge in setting the correct Game Plan. Obviously Brentford a Premiership Team should win. Some of the Macclesfield players are Part-Timers whilst some of the Full-Timers earn as much as a £1000 per week. Dizzy Stuff!

This is why football is the Greatest Game and the most supported World Wide.

Brentford continue to exceed expectations competing as they do against some very deep pockets.

Match Preview: Aston Villa v Brentford

Written by Brentford Football Club

Brentford face Aston Villa at Villa Park in the Premier League on Sunday (2pm kick-off GMT, live on *Sky Sports*).

The Bees have already beaten Unai Emery's side twice this season - once in the league and once in the cup - but, since then, the Villans have climbed up the table and are now just four points off the top of the league.

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

Pre-match Analysis

Stephen Gillett, *Playmaker Stats*: Brentford may need to rethink approach against a Villa side capable of scoring from range

Brentford are renowned for playing the percentages - but the Bees may need to tweak that blueprint this Sunday against high-flying Aston Villa.

Keith Andrews' men travel to Villa Park to take on Unai Emery's Villans, third in the table and just four points shy of leaders Arsenal, who have found their shooting boots after a slow start to the season.

The Midlanders made a seriously shaky opening to the 2025/26 campaign, notably becoming only the fifth side in Premier League history not to score in their opening four league games - after Sheffield Wednesday (1993/94), Newcastle United (2005/06), Swansea City (2011/12) and Crystal Palace (2017/18).

Emery's side have since clicked into gear and will be gunning for revenge against the Bees, who beat Villa 1-0 on the second matchweek of the season before dumping them out of the Carabao Cup on penalties in September.

Brentford may have bested their opponents twice already this term, but Villa are a different beast now - and their unparalleled ability to score from long range may require the Bees to rethink their approach.

Emiliano Buendía's gorgeous knuckleball from outside the box in the Villans' 2-0 win at Newcastle last weekend was merely the latest in a growing catalogue of spectacular long-range goals this season.

13 may be unlucky for some... but not Villa, who have scored a baker's dozen from outside the box in the Premier League this season - two more than any other side across Europe's top five leagues.

And here's the rub from a Brentford perspective: the Bees actually invite shots from outside the box.

Since their promotion to the top flight in 2020/21, Brentford have focused on maximising the quality of the chances they create and minimising the calibre of opportunities they concede.



The Bees have sought to superpower set-pieces, target opponents' six-yard boxes and shoot centrally in attack - while, defensively, they have packed their own 18-yard box and encouraged teams to take on low-probability efforts from range. This season, 37 per cent of the shots Brentford have faced have been from outside the box, a higher percentage than any other team in the top flight. That approach usually pays dividends - but Villa's current form challenges that logic.

Buendía (five goals) and former Bee Ollie Watkins (eight) carry obvious goal threats for Villa, but their standout performer this season - and the most productive English player in the Premier League - has been Morgan Rogers.

Now a key part of Thomas Tuchel's plans at international level, Rogers won the PFA Young Player of the Year award last term and has kicked on impressively. With 12 goal involvements (seven goals and five assists) in 2025/26, the 23-year-old is Villa's most productive player and has typified their ability to confound the expected goals metric.

The former Manchester City academy graduate's league strikes this season include three efforts from distance, as well as a match-winning double that oozed quality in Villa's 2-1 win over Manchester United in December. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that Rogers' seven goals have come from less than 4xG.

A gripping contest looks to be in store - and both sides will need to time their challenges carefully.

Only La Liga giants Real Madrid (10) have been awarded more penalties than Brentford (seven) this season across Europe's top five leagues, while Villa have drawn more free-kicks (308) than any team in the Premier League.

Remarkably, given they win an average of 13.4 fouls per game, Villa are one of only two Premier League sides - Tottenham the other - yet to be awarded a penalty this season, and Brentford will want to keep it that way on Sunday.

Scout Report

Dan Long, *Sky Sports*: Aston Villa's chance of winning the Premier League assessed

Finishing last season with eight Premier League wins from 10 suggested there was every reason to believe another hugely exciting campaign would lie ahead in 2025/26 for Aston Villa.

That has, ultimately, proved to be the case, but it didn't start that way - the Villans were in the relegation zone for most of September, having failed to win any of their first five league games for the first time since 1970.

In the first four of those, they failed to score. That long-awaited first goal was scored by Matty Cash in a 1-1 draw with Sunderland, but by that point, they had only hit 12 shots on target in all, which was the lowest figure in the division.

"We have to recover our identity. Of course, we have to try to recover our personality, confidence and personality to play," Emery said afterwards. *"I am frustrated with how we played, how we are not feeling comfortable with our style."*

Whether or not directly linked to the Spaniard publicly airing his grievances, the run of form since will have been beyond the realms of what he or the Villa fans thought possible.

In all competitions from and including the 1-0 win over Bologna in the Europa League on 25 September, they have played 26 games and won 21 of those.

At home in the Premier League, they have taken 24 of the last 27 points on offer; on the road, it is 20 from the last 27. Had Emi Buendía not missed a late penalty away at Go Ahead Eagles back in October, they would have been sitting above Lyon at the top of the Europa League league phase table before their final game against RB Salzburg.

The record is quite astonishing, to say the least.

There has also been no shortage of goals: Ollie Watkins, Morgan Rogers, Buendía, John McGinn and Donyell Malen - who has since joined Roma on loan - have scored 35 between them, yet no one player has scored more than eight in all competitions.

Before the first meeting with Brentford back in August, Villa were priced at 4/1 to finish in the top four. That has now shortened to 2/9. They are 9/2 to finish in the top two for the first time since the very first Premier League season back in 1992/93 - and even priced at 16/1 to win the league, which is not beyond the realms of possibility, given they trail leaders Arsenal by only four points.

In the Dugout

Unai Emery

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

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

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

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

Two years and seven trophies with Paris Saint-Germain followed, with Emery then trusted by the Arsenal board to become the successor to Arsene Wenger, which was, to an extent, a poisoned chalice. The Europa League king guided the Gunners to the final in 2019, where they were beaten by Chelsea in Azerbaijan, but he was unable to help them finish higher than fifth for the first time in four seasons.

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

Emery turned down an approach by Newcastle United in November 2021, but came back to England to replace Steven Gerrard at Villa Park in October 2022.

The 54-year-old - under contract until the summer of 2029 - is Villa's longest-serving manager since Martin O'Neill, who left after four years in August 2010, and is approaching 200 games in charge.



DLSM Studio Unveils A Bold Reimagining at the Iconic Allianz Stadium for Radisson RED London Twickenham

DLSM Studio is proud to announce the completion of its latest hospitality project: Radisson RED London Twickenham, a dynamic new hotel experience located within the iconic Allianz Stadium, the home of England Rugby. Owned by the Rugby Football Union (RFU) and operated by Aimbridge Hospitality EMEA, the property has been fully reimagined with the vibrant personality of the Radisson RED brand, underpinned by a design narrative that celebrates the heritage, energy and community spirit of the RFU and rugby culture.

Working in collaboration with MMSE as the main contractor and NBM as cost consultants and project managers, DLSM Studio has delivered a comprehensive design spanning the hotel's 150 guest rooms, reception, lounge, co-working areas, event spaces and washrooms alongside forming two new social concepts – The Loft and The Huddle.

The Loft, situated on the mezzanine floor, consists of a bar, gaming area and premium lounge space, perfect for evening drinks and relaxation or for groups / families looking to enjoy some time together.



The Huddle, located on the ground floor, is the main bar and restaurant for the property, appealing to both locals and hotel guests alike.

DLSM Studio approached the project not only as a design exercise, but as an opportunity to reposition the hotel's role within Twickenham. Guided by extensive strategic insight, the team undertook a detailed study of the hotel's operations, guest profiles, community needs and wider market potential, identifying the importance of creating a destination that would resonate beyond match days when the stadium welcomes up to 82,000 visitors. The result is a concept that actively appeals local residents as well as hotel guests, with co-working spaces, all-day lounge zones and art-infused social areas offering a warm, everyday backdrop to work, relax, dine and gather.

This emphasis on community connection shapes the design of The Huddle, the hotel's standalone restaurant, for which DLSM Studio developed both the brand and full interior design. Influenced by the crafted materiality of historic rugby equipment, such as stitched leather and rugby shirt inspired stripes alongside warm timber detailing and tactile finishes

- the restaurant presents a playful, artisan-led environment that shifts effortlessly between casual dining, weekend socialising and the high-energy atmosphere of match days. Feature elements taken such as the expressive bar, pizza oven, counter-dining area and bespoke local inspired artwork, further enhance the brand's personality.

At ground level, the lobby has been transformed into a vibrant, multifunctional space where dramatic colour contrasts, layered textures and curated artwork create a sense of energy and connection. Taking centre stage is a bespoke sculptural installation of a female rugby player integrated into a structural column, symbolising the RFU's commitment to its *Every Rose* five-year action plan to elevate women's rugby. This statement piece reinforces the hotel's connection to its setting while amplifying the inclusive values at the heart of the RFU's vision.



Dramatic, atmospheric lighting installations - crafted in collaboration with Into Lighting - shape the hotel's identity, intensifying the bold visual language at the heart of the Radisson RED experience. The lighting scheme channels the powerful motion and electric energy of rugby in full play.

Guest rooms have been redesigned, embracing the Radisson RED brand's expressive palette and flexible spirit.

Reflecting on the project, Holly Hallam, Co-Owner of DLSM Studio, said: "*Designing Radisson RED London Twickenham has been an incredible opportunity to work within one of the most iconic sporting destinations in the world. Our ambition from the outset was to combine strategic depth with bold creative thinking, ensuring the hotel not only captures the drama and excitement of match days, but also becomes a meaningful everyday space for the local community. We're immensely proud to have delivered a design that feels expressive, rooted in heritage, and truly connected to the destination.*"

Ian Donaldson of Radisson Hotel Group added: "*It has been fantastic to collaborate with DLSM Studio on this flagship opening. Their team has brought a fresh creative perspective, translating the Radisson RED DNA into a scheme that feels energetic, relevant and completely unique to Twickenham.*"

DLSM Studio's latest project, Radisson RED London Twickenham, marks a significant milestone in the evolution of the UK's next-generation hotel experiences - where bold design, community relevance and heritage storytelling converge to create a destination that feels both iconic and intimately local.

DLSM STUDIO

NPL to establish new Centre for AI Measurement

From NPL, Teddington

The new centre will deliver on the objectives of the AI Assurance Innovation Fund.

The UK Government has today announced the establishment of a new Centre for AI Measurement, to be led by NPL. The centre is a cornerstone of the AI Assurance Innovation Fund, designed to accelerate the development of secure, transparent and trustworthy AI technologies.

As high-capability AI systems become more integrated into the economy, the new centre will address the critical need for scientifically robust approaches for AI assurance, the process of identifying and mitigating risks before they impact businesses or the public. The centre will offer the collaborative environment required to undertake research while also providing expertise and support to empower industry, startups and researchers looking to develop and pilot technical assurance tools, with the aim of moving trustworthy AI assurance tools to market faster.

As the UK's National Metrology Institute, NPL already plays a vital role in developing tools and approaches to increase confidence in AI. For example, through NPL's Life Cycle for Trustworthy and Safe Artificial Intelligence. Alongside the new centre, NPL is a founding partner of the AI Standards Hub, an initiative dedicated to shaping global standards for AI. The AI Standards Hub Global Summit is taking place 16-17 March in Glasgow, with a focus on the interplay between AI standards, measurement and assurance.

By underpinning AI assurance with metrology (the science of measurement), the new centre aims to give the UK a distinct competitive advantage, positioning the nation as a global leader in AI adoption.

Dr Peter Thompson, CBE, CEO of NPL said: *"The UK has world-class expertise in AI and through the creation of the Centre for AI Measurement, we aim to strengthen the UK's leadership in developing and adopting secure and trustworthy AI. As the UK's National Metrology Institute, NPL will work with industry and lead in developing and validating scientifically robust technical AI assurance capabilities, ensuring the centre becomes an independent national resource that supports development of the UK's AI technical assurance capabilities, economic growth and national security."*

AI Minister Kanishka Narayan, said: *"Robust, trusted tools for assessing the safety and effectiveness of emerging AI systems are essential for businesses to deploy them with confidence. That's why it is one of the key pillars of the AI Opportunities Action Plan."*

"The centre delivers on that promise - uniting industry, start-ups and researchers to create new ways for organisations to identify and mitigate risks early. In the long-term, this will help speed up the adoption of AI – keeping the UK in pole position for cutting-edge AI innovations."

Government announces support package that backs British pubs

Stakeholders react to pubs support package

Emma McClarkin, CEO of the British Beer and Pub Association, said: “We are pleased the government has listened to our concerns, and those of publicans, consumers and MPs who rallied to defend our locals. This pub specific package will stave off the immediate financial threat posed by accelerating business costs and will help keep the doors open for many. This additional support will provide certainty for tens of thousands of pubs, with many seeing their bills frozen or falling and there will be a sigh of relief from landlords across the country. We will now work closely with government to establish a transformative long-term plan that works for all pubs through permanent business rates reform to ensure they remain at the heart of communities.”

Heineken / star pubs: “Although we will need to fully digest the detail, this announcement is a huge boost for pubs and will ease the immediate concerns of publicans up and down the country. I am pleased that the Chancellor has clearly listened to the many Star Pubs licensees who expressed their objections to the plans published at the Budget. This support is a welcome acknowledgement of the pub as the cornerstone of British society, and we are committed to working with the Treasury in the coming weeks and months. This support means publicans and their staff are able to focus on the day job – running great pubs at the hearts of their communities.”

Anna Leach, Chief Economist at the Institute of Directors, said: “The Institute of Directors welcomes today’s decision by the government to provide targeted business rates relief for pubs, recognising the intense pressures facing this sector. This support will offer much-needed breathing space for businesses grappling with rising costs and tight margins. More broadly, the business rates system remains in urgent need of reform to address the disincentives to investment embedded in the current framework, and we welcome the government’s commitment to take action in this area. That said, stronger policy design at an earlier stage would deliver greater benefits for business confidence, planning and costs. We reiterate our call for more detailed, sector-by-sector analysis of the impacts of tax changes to be undertaken alongside each Budget. This would allow concerns to surface earlier in the process, enabling risks to be identified and addressed before they crystallise.”

Michelle Ovens CBE, CEO & Founder, Small Business Britain: “It is good to see the Government widen the business rates support available to pubs and music venues - many small, independent establishments will undoubtedly welcome this additional headroom. We also look forward to supporting the work of the newly announced High Street Strategy to ensure retail, leisure and hospitality businesses can thrive. Given the crucial role these sectors play at the heart of local communities it is vital small businesses are given as much support as possible and that we see swift action taken to address existing issues. The long-overdue work to reform the business rates system, which the government has already committed to and reaffirmed today, will be especially key.”

Kate Nicholls, Chair of UKHospitality, said: “We welcome the recognition by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the scale of the challenges facing the hospitality sector. They have listened to us about the acute cost challenges facing businesses, all of which is impacting business viability, jobs and consumer prices. The rising cost of doing business and business rates increases is a hospitality-wide problem that needs a hospitality-wide solution. The Government’s immediate review of hospitality valuations going forward is clear recognition of this. The devil will be in the detail, but we need to see pace and urgency to deliver the reform desperately needed to reduce hospitality’s tax burden, drive demand, and protect jobs and growth. We will work with the Government over the next six months to hold their feet to the fire to deliver this. This emergency announcement to provide additional funding is helpful to address an acute challenge facing pubs. The reality remains that we still have restaurants and hotels facing severe challenges from successive Budgets. They need to see substantive solutions that genuinely reduce their costs. Without that clear action, they will face increasingly tough decisions on business viability, jobs and prices for consumers. Those are costs borne by us all, and I hope the Government delivers on its promise to support the whole hospitality sector.”



HM Treasury

London Councils responds to affordable and social housing announcements

From London Councils

Responding to recent housing announcements from the government, **Cllr Grace Williams, London Councils' Executive Member for Housing & Regeneration**, said:

"London's housing emergency threatens its sustainability and success as a city. The chronic lack of affordable housing is the key factor behind skyrocketing homelessness rates. Boroughs are determined to help deliver the housing their communities are crying out for, but housebuilding in the capital has become extremely challenging in recent years. Rising construction and borrowing costs and a lack of funding for vital local infrastructure have made it more difficult to build the new homes we all want to see."

"Pressures on London's social housing finances are a major concern for boroughs and a key part of the wider housing crisis. For too long, the income available to social landlords has failed to keep pace with the fast-rising costs of providing social housing in the capital. The inevitable squeeze on resources has undermined boroughs' ability to raise standards and invest in new homes for social rent."

"Boroughs therefore welcome the government's decision to re-introduce a social rent convergence policy. This will help ensure fairness for social housing tenants and will better reflect social landlords' costs. However, the rent convergence rates announced by the government will not end the tough times for London's social housing finances. From our initial analysis of the government's approach to rent convergence, we estimate this will generate around £183m of additional income for London boroughs. This is not enough to cancel out the real-terms spending cuts of £269m we previously forecast boroughs would need to make in their Housing Revenue Accounts."

"We also welcome the government's commitment to high standards in social housing for decency and energy efficiency, although this will have an additional impact on boroughs' resources. Boroughs want to explore how the £2.5 billion in loans being made available to private registered providers of social housing at 0.1% interest could be applied to councils, as the borrowing rates for councils via the Public Works Loan Board are not as supportive. We are as committed as ever to working with the government and other partners to tackle the crisis. But to achieve this, boroughs urgently need more funding firepower if they are to overcome the challenges stalling development."

- London Councils estimates 210,000 Londoners (one in 50) are homeless and living in temporary accommodation arranged by their local borough. This figure includes 102,000 homeless children (one in 21; at least one in every classroom).
- Homelessness is the fastest growing risk to London boroughs' finances. Boroughs in the capital collective spend £5m every day on temporary accommodation.
- Boroughs are leading housebuilding projects across the capital. They have directly delivered more than 20,000 new council homes since 2018, and have granted planning permission for 300,000 potential new homes that have not yet been built.
- At the same time, London boroughs face enormous resource pressures that undermine their ability to boost housebuilding. For example London Councils has forecast that boroughs will need to make a real-terms spending reduction of £269m over the next four years in order to balance their council housing budgets.
- London Councils had called on the government to enable a [rent convergence rate of £3 per week](#) from April this year to reverse the projected spending cuts and boost investment in social housing. London Councils highlights that social housing is more costly to operate in London and that one in five of the country's social rented homes are in the capital.



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