

Twickenham Tribune & Richmond



Rare February sunshine!

Photo by Berkley Driscoll

6th February 2026

T&RT

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HM Treasury

Editors: Teresa Read, Berkley Driscoll

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TickerTape - News in Brief

Rugby at Twickenham Stadium

ENGLAND v WALES

Saturday 7th February

KO 16:40

Expected attendance 82,000

CPZ in force 11:00-23:00

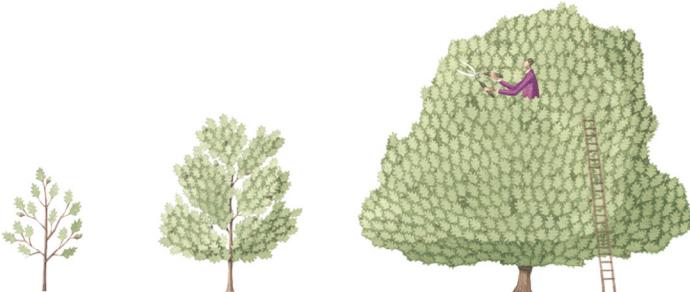
Whitton, London & Rugby Roads will close 14:40-16:40 and 18:10-20:40. Live traffic info on Twitter [@rfuhometurf](#) and on the Residents WhatsApp Channel.

South Western Railway

Sunday 8th, February the lines in the **Barnes** area will be **closed all day** due to maintenance work. **Queenstown Road** station will be **closed all day**. Please use other nearby stations.

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

- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will be **revised** to depart **London Waterloo earlier** and will be diverted between **Clapham Junction and Twickenham**. These services will call additionally at **Wimbledon, Kingston and Strawberry Hill**.
- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will be **revised**. An **hourly** service will be diverted between **Clapham Junction and Twickenham via Kingston** calling at all stations. An **hourly** service will start from **Richmond** calling at all stations.
- **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Richmond and Wimbledon** services will be **revised** and will run between **Richmond and Kingston only**.
- **Buses** will run between **Clapham Junction and Twickenham via Richmond**.
- **London Waterloo to Woking via Staines** services will start from **Kew Bridge**.
- The afternoon and evening **London Waterloo to Kingston via Hounslow** services will **not run**.
- **Buses** will run between **Clapham Junction and Kew Bridge**.
- **London Waterloo to Hampton Court** services will be **revised** to run **hourly**.

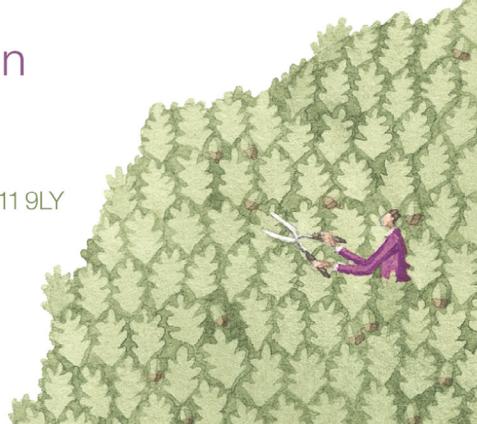


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The Tree Agency

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The Local Picture Postcard Page - Part 313

St. John's Hospital - Twickenham

By Alan Winter

This eighteenth century house at 60, Amyand Park Road, Twickenham was first occupied by William Rider (1723-1785) in 1743. He was an English historian, priest and writer as well as being a master at St. Pauls school. The house was then lived in by various members of the Amyand family.

In 1879 the philanthropist Miss Elizabeth Twining (1805-1889) who lived at Dial House, Twickenham, purchased Amyand House and its grounds for £3,000. She wished to establish a hospital in memory of her family, who had been associated with the area for seven generations.

She stated that "the institution be known as the Twining Hospital and shall be dedicated to St John the Baptist" and would contain an Out-Patients Department, male and female wards, rooms for nurses and a house for the Residential Medical Superintendent.

She gave almost the whole of her resources to the founding and erection of this hospital, which was built with the best materials and workmanship.

St John's Hospital was officially opened on 25th May 1880 by the Duchess of Teck.



The early years of St John's Hospital were dominated by crisis with management and staff issues and a constant lack of funds. There is too much to write about it in this column but it is an interesting subject for you to research if interested.

Our first postcard this week is a view of a hospital that many people under the age of 30 will never have seen before. Yes. It's been snowing. Back in the 1960's this sort of weather was often blanketing our area for a month or two every January and February. This postcard was

published and sent in 1907. The second postcard is from the same period but was taken earlier in the year before it snowed.

Our final postcard this week takes us into the Elizabeth ward at St. John's Hospital where women and children were cared for. This postcard is another pre- First World War card.



Let's now move into the 1930's and we find that in January 1932, due to the increasing number of road traffic accidents, the two main wards were extended and re-equipped. The new extensions were opened by the Princess Royal on 8th March 1932. The hospital now had 34 beds and the first X-ray Department was opened in 1935.



After the war, in 1948, the hospital joined the NHS. It remained a G.P. hospital with two wards of 16 beds each.

By 1965 the hospital had 36 beds for mainly acute patients.

In 1982, after another major reorganisation of the NHS the hospital found itself under the administration of the Hounslow and Spelthorne District Health Authority. It now had 33 beds.

It became Grade II listed in 1983

The hospital closed in 1985 despite great public protest. 3,000 personal letters had been sent to the Minister of Health and a petition with 28,000 signatures presented to Parliament – all to no avail.

Part of the former hospital site is now occupied mostly by St Mary's Primary School and the Bright Horizons Oak Lane Day Nursery and Pre-school.



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Council tax smashes through the £200 a month barrier in Richmond

By James Knight

For years, council tax in Richmond upon Thames has been defended in the language of percentages. Increases are described as four point something per cent, safely below the referendum threshold and broadly in line with London norms. The implication is one of reluctant necessity and technical compliance. But for residents opening their bills this spring, a more basic truth now asserts itself.

Richmond's council tax has crossed a psychological and financial threshold. The average Band D bill will rise to £2,486 a year, pushing the monthly cost to just over £207. What was presented as a marginal annual adjustment now feels like a permanent feature of household finances. In a borough where council tax was already among the highest in London, this is not a small change. It is structural.

The council describes the increase as £114 a year, or 4.8 per cent once the mayor's precept is included. Broken down monthly, this amounts to almost £10 more per month, added to a bill that already exceeds £200. Percentages may soften the presentation, but they do little to lessen the impact. Council tax is paid in cash, not in abstract ratios.

The significance of this shift lies not only in the scale of the increase but also in what it signals. Richmond is no longer edging upwards from a low base. It is entrenching a level of taxation that would once have been considered exceptional, and doing so as a matter of routine. Once such thresholds are crossed, they rarely retreat.

What this means in cash terms

When translated into cash terms, the implications become harder to ignore. Using the statutory valuation ratios, a Band D household will pay £2,486 per year, or approximately £207 per month. For higher bands, the figures rise sharply. Band E households will pay approximately £3,000 per year, around £253 per month. Band F approaches £300 a month. Band G households



will face bills of roughly £345, while Band H households will face bills exceeding £4,970 a year, equivalent to more than £410 a month. At these levels, council tax is no longer a marginal civic charge. For many households, it is now approaching the scale of a second mortgage payment: fixed, unavoidable, and rising steadily year on year.

The council's case, and its limits

The Liberal Democrat administration insists this outcome is unavoidable. The council leader, Gareth Roberts, says the authority has “planned responsibly” and put forward “a balanced budget” despite rising demand for adult social care, pressure on children’s services, and a funding settlement from central government that the council says is inadequate. More than 60 per cent of spending, it notes, is now directed towards vulnerable adults and children.

The Deputy Leader and finance lead, Jim Millard, is more direct. Government funding cuts, he argues, leave the council with “no choice” but to increase council tax, even as the authority pursues efficiency savings and a transformation programme intended to deliver long-term reductions in cost.

These arguments are not without force. Richmond, like other boroughs, faces genuine demand pressures and limited room for manoeuvre. Yet they do not fully explain why the borough continues to combine one of the highest council tax levels in London with increases that consistently push against the upper limit.

High bills, rising expectations

Context matters. A near five per cent rise does not land equally across London. In boroughs where council tax has historically been low, such increases remain uncomfortable but manageable. In Richmond, where bills were already high, the same percentage produces a materially different outcome.

Crossing £200 a month is not simply a technical milestone. It marks a shift in how residents experience council tax: not as a background contribution, but as a standing financial commitment that competes directly with housing costs, energy bills, and other essential expenditures. Once reached, such thresholds tend to reset expectations for both councils and those who pay.

Where confidence begins to fray

It is here that the council’s position becomes more vulnerable. Rising bills have coincided with growing criticism from residents who question whether sufficient internal restraint has been applied. Much attention has focused on councillor allowances, and while the total sums involved remain modest in budgetary terms, the underlying change has been structural. The council has steadily expanded the number of paid roles carrying Special Responsibility Allowances. More chairs. More vice chairs. More formally designated jobs attract additional pay.

This matters for two reasons. First, it increases the overall cost of political governance at a time when residents are repeatedly told that budgets are stretched to the limit. Second, it subtly reshapes power within the council. A higher number of paid posts strengthens the council leader’s position while weakening democratic oversight. When more councillors depend on appointed roles for additional income, independence is dulled, scrutiny softens, and challenge

becomes harder rather than stronger.

Allowances may be a small fraction of total expenditure. But governance is not only about sums of money. It concerns incentives, balance, and confidence that those setting the tax rate are themselves subject to robust internal scrutiny.

Borrowing today, paying tomorrow

Alongside governance sits a deeper and more enduring concern: debt. Richmond's capital programme now exceeds £280 million over six years, underpinned by borrowing projected to rise beyond £125 million, with the underlying need to borrow continuing to grow later in the decade.

Borrowing on this scale is not neutral. Each £1 million adds approximately £70,000 in financing costs per year, placing long-term pressure on revenue budgets and, ultimately, on council tax. Critics argue that the council has relied too readily on borrowing to fund its ambitions, deferring political difficulties while locking residents into higher bills for years to come.

An above five per cent rise is now openly being contemplated

These pressures came into sharp focus at Full Council in a moment that deserves far more attention than it received at the time.

Asked what reassurance could be given that residents would not face a council tax increase above the five per cent limit if transitional government funding were not extended, no such reassurance was offered. Instead, the council acknowledged that its financial plans already assume annual increases at the maximum permitted level and that, if transitional arrangements are not renewed, an exceptional increase above five per cent would be required.

This was not a prediction, but it was a clear acknowledgement that an above-cap rise is now within the council's own planning horizon. The admission matters because it reframes the current increase not as a reluctant peak, but as a baseline from which even higher rises may follow. For residents already paying more than £200 a month, the prospect of an exceptional increase above five per cent is not a technical contingency. It is a warning that pressure on household finances may yet intensify.

Beyond the arithmetic

Council tax is not an abstract policy instrument. It is a monthly demand on household income, paid alongside mortgages, rent, energy bills, and food.

Richmond's problem is no longer simply that council tax is rising. It is that high bills, expanding political costs, and growing long term debt are now moving in the same direction. When taxation is normalised above £200 a month, borrowing is treated as routine, and even higher increases are quietly planned for, residents are entitled to ask whether the council is exercising the same discipline and stewardship it now expects of those it governs.



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From The Mayor of Richmond upon Thames

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Anthony Adkins piano concert

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- **Date:** Saturday 21 February 2026
- **Time:** Doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start
- **Location:** St Anne's Church, 31 Kew Green, Richmond, TW9 3AA
- **Price:** £25

[Book tickets for the piano concert](#)



Mayor's charity silent disco

Come and join the fun at the Mayor of Richmond's silent disco.

- **Date:** Saturday 28 February 2026
- **Time:** 4.30 and 7pm
- **Location:** Orleans Park School, Richmond Road, Twickenham
- **Price:** tickets from £10

[Book tickets for the silent disco](#)

Mayor's charity night with Thames TV Big Band

Join the Mayor of Richmond, Cllr Penelope Frost, for an uplifting evening of live music in support of the Mayor's Charities, Crossroads Care and Small Steps. This special Mayor's charity night features the sensational Thames TV Big Band, joined by international singer Debby Bracknell for a night of outstanding entertainment.

- **Date:** Monday 9 March 2026
- **Time:** 8.15 to 10.15pm
- **Location:** Teddington Constitutional Club, 5 Stanley Rd, Teddington, TW11 8TP
- **Price:** £15

[Book tickets for the charity night with Thames TV Big Band](#)

Mayor's Quiz

Save the date! The Mayor's quiz will take place on Friday 10 April 2026 from 7pm, at York House.

Tickets will be available from our [Mayor's charity events](#) page.

Is Richmond Council Risking A Slow Decline In Primary Education?

By James Knight

Falling rolls, one-form-entry schools and mounting SEND pressures demand decisive leadership. Instead, a Liberal Democrat administration appears to be managing contraction quietly, leaving standards and accountability to erode by default.

A routine education committee meeting in Richmond upon Thames last week offered a revealing snapshot of how local government manages decline. Nothing dramatic was announced. No schools were closed. No reorganisation was proposed. Yet beneath the procedural calm lay a council that has already accepted long-term contraction in its primary school system, is anticipating surplus space in existing schools, and is presiding over mounting SEND pressures, all while postponing the strategic decisions that London Councils has warned cannot be delayed without consequence.



This was not incompetence on display; it was caution. The problem is that repeatedly deferred caution begins to resemble drift.

Admissions cuts without a strategy

The committee approved permanent reductions in published admission numbers at five local authority maintained primary and junior schools. Officers were careful to stress that the changes apply only to community schools, noting that many primaries are now academies and therefore control their own admissions.

That distinction is technically correct but strategically incomplete. While councils no longer control admissions across the entire school estate, they retain a statutory duty to plan school places strategically and the power to lead area-wide reorganisation. London Councils has been explicit that piecemeal reductions, taken school by school, often store up greater disruption later.

In Richmond, the reductions were presented as reflecting schools that had been operating below capacity for several years. But permanent cuts are not neutral administrative acts. They lock schools into smaller, less resilient models. The borough now has a growing number of maintained primary schools operating with a single form of entry, a structure that offers little financial flexibility and limited capacity to absorb staffing pressures or fluctuations in demand.

What was missing was an overarching plan. There was no discussion of how one-form-entry schools would be supported, whether federations or mergers might be encouraged, or how maintained and academy schools would fit together within a coherent borough-wide strategy. Contraction was

acknowledged but not owned.

Standards quietly placed at risk

More striking still was what the committee did not examine. London Councils has warned that declining rolls threaten not only capacity but also educational quality, particularly in primary schools, where budgets shrink immediately as pupil numbers decline.

At Richmond's meeting, this dimension was barely explored. Funding pressures were acknowledged, but their educational consequences were not. In one-form-entry primaries, the risks are well understood: reduced access to specialist teaching in music, languages, and sport; fewer enrichment opportunities; heavier reliance on mixed-age classes; and diminished capacity for early intervention. These pressures do not fall evenly. SEND pupils are often the first to feel the effects of staff shortages and reduced flexibility. Early support becomes harder to sustain, specialist input more difficult to fund, and inclusive practice more fragile. By allowing contraction to proceed by default, the council risks narrowing provision precisely where stability matters most.

London Councils has warned that these pressures are not abstract. In its January report, it notes that "such reductions can affect school standards and pupil outcomes, for example by limiting access to specialist interventions for children with additional needs or reducing the range of extra-curricular activities on offer" (Managing school rolls and maintaining educational standards in London (January 2026), page 18).

Surplus space acknowledged, leadership deferred

The same pattern was evident in the discussion of school buildings. The committee approved more than £1.5 million in capital maintenance funding for safety-critical works. Officers rightly emphasised their duty to keep buildings safe, regardless of future plans. Yet councillors themselves questioned whether it made sense to continue investing heavily in buildings serving shrinking cohorts. The response was revealing. Maintenance would continue, members were told, until there was clear direction for a change of use.

The implication was unmistakable. Surplus space is anticipated, and repurposing is expected. What was not explained was how such decisions would be taken, who would decide, or how communities would be involved. London Councils has cautioned that failing to align estate strategy with place planning risks wasting public money and undermining trust. Richmond appears to be edging towards exactly that position.

Livingstone Academy and decisions beyond scrutiny

Governance concerns crystallised around Livingstone Academy, a proposed secondary school originally tied to the now-stalled Stag Brewery development. That scheme, like many large housing projects, has been undermined by tighter fire regulations, rising construction costs, and falling residential values.

That uncertainty was challenged by the committee's Green councillor, who asked: "Given this ongoing trend of reducing pupil numbers, I just wonder why we wrote to the DfE to ask the Livingstone Academy decision to be reviewed, when it is quite clear that running through the pipeline we are continuing to have declines in pupil numbers."

Despite this, the council has urged the Department for Education to reconsider its apparent reluctance to fund the school, even as secondary rolls fall. When asked to justify this stance, officers said they could not. The Chair confirmed that the correspondence was a political intervention and that no final decision had been taken.

The problem was not advocacy but process. The committee had not debated Livingstone, considering the stalled development, updated demographics, or alternatives, such as expanding existing schools. No paper was presented, and no options appraisal was shared. A strategically significant position existed, but it was outside formal scrutiny altogether.

Scrutiny from the margins

What is striking is that the most searching questions are coming not from within the administration but from its margins. Green councillors have pressed officers on how falling rolls, surplus space, and SEND pressures fit together into a coherent long-term plan. Those questions have largely gone unanswered. The risk, as the London Councils report has warned, is that contraction managed quietly becomes erosion by default, leaving schools weaker and communities with fewer choices.

The committee has only one opposition councillor, and the imbalance shows. Liberal Democrat members were courteous and informed but rarely pressed beyond the first answer. With local elections approaching in May, there was little appetite for unsettling debate.

SEND: moral certainty elsewhere, caution at home

On SEND, officers were candid about the finances. The Dedicated Schools Grant settlement was described as poor, with high-needs funding frozen despite rising demand and a deficit expected to grow towards £7 million. Parents' lived experience, however, featured only faintly, despite protests in late 2025 and earlier Ombudsman findings of systemic failings.

The most troubling contrast lay in tone. While SEND pressures in Richmond were discussed in committee as "risk", "challenge", and "national constraint", the committee's vice chair, Michael Wilson, has publicly shared campaign material condemning neighbouring authorities for alleged SEND failures, using the language of moral certainty and neglect. This matters because a delay in managing contraction does not affect all pupils equally. SEND pupils rely disproportionately on stable staffing, early intervention, and flexible provision, precisely the elements most at risk in under-enrolled primary schools. To condemn failure elsewhere while downplaying structural risk at home is not merely inconsistent. It diverts attention from the consequences of inaction.

The cost of delay

None of this amounts to misconduct. But it does amount to a failure of leadership. The council has accepted contraction, anticipates surplus space, and allows key decisions to drift beyond scrutiny, all while avoiding a clear public reckoning with what this means for the quality of education children receive.

London Councils has been explicit that delay is not neutral. When falling rolls are managed incrementally rather than strategically, the result is not stability but attrition. Staffing thins, curriculum breadth narrows, early support weakens, and the burden falls heaviest on those least able to absorb it. For Richmond's primary schools, and especially for SEND pupils, the risk is not dramatic collapse or sudden closure. It is something quieter and more corrosive: the slow erosion of educational standards, year by year, decision by deferred decision.

The committee papers and the webcast can be accessed [HERE](#)

The London Council's report can be accessed [HERE](#)



**Belly Dancing
Valentine's**

Sat. 7 Feb. at 7pm
ETNA Centre - Twickenham
£11 p/p or £20 Adult & Child
Dance To The Rhythm Of Love

Hosted by Noha
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Join us for a joyful evening of belly dancing and celebration of love this Valentine's season. A relaxed, welcoming space to meet other inspiring women, move together, and enjoy the magic of music and connection. No dance experience needed!
Children aged 6+ are welcome. Wear any shade of red

What's on at Holy Trinity

From Holy Trinity Church, Twickenham Green

Gardening Morning - This Saturday

Come and be part of the Holy Trinity gardening gang this term, as we continue to work on our exciting new planting scheme and preparing the grounds for the Spring. Gardening mornings run from 10.30am-12.30pm (please bring along gloves and tools if you have them) and will be taking place on the following dates:

- Saturday 7th February
- Saturday 7th March
- Saturday 18th April
- Saturday 9 May

Socials

Dates have been set for our first Socials of 2026 and we hope you can join for an evening of good food and friendly chat.

Men's Social - sign up [here](#)

- Date: Tuesday 24 February
- Time: 7.30pm
- Venue - Arthur's Pizzeria

Women's Social - sign up [here](#)

- Date: Thursday 5 March
- Time: 7.30pm
- Venue - Ristorante Sorrento

Service of Ashing - Wednesday 18th February

Please do join us for our Ash Wednesday service, as we formally mark the beginning of lent. Wednesday 18th February, 7:00pm **in the Church, and using the roadside entrance opposite the green.**

Foodbank Focus: February

Please do donate at the boxes outside the Vicarage if you are able.

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

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

The Green Pop Up Café

The Café is open on Thursdays from 10.30am-12 noon. Come along for refreshments and a chat. Everyone welcome, please encourage anyone you know who would enjoy meeting up with others to come along on Thursdays too.



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Dear Editor,

Affordable Housing Completions

You reported in Edition 482 on the 27 January 2026 Council meeting on my question about affordable housing completions. Cllr Varley was unable to answer me, as you accurately reported. I followed up with an email to the Cllr who has now confirmed that only 22 affordable homes of the 88 forecast for 2025/6 had been finished by the end of Q3. I thought you would be interested to hear this.

Kind regards

Pam Marum
Twickenham Labour Party Housing Champion

Dear Editor,

Question for Adult Social Services and Health and Housing Committee on 10 February 2026

You are the only publication in our borough covering the Council's decision making which I appreciate very much, both as resident and member of the Twickenham Labour Party. I am planning to ask the following question at Adult Social Services and Health and Housing Committee on 10 February 2026:-

"The Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2021/6 shows the second biggest cause of homelessness is losing a private sector tenancy. What additional resources is the Council putting into advice and support for private renters, newly empowered by the Labour Government's Renters Rights Act, on disrepair, eviction, unreasonable rent increases and selective licensing of landlords. (54 words)."

Kind regards

Pam Marum- Labour Party Housing Champion

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

Council reaffirms firm opposition to Heathrow expansion following latest Government developments

From Richmond Council

Richmond Council is restating clear and unwavering opposition to Heathrow Airport's expansion plans – including the proposed third runway – and any measures that would increase flight numbers or worsen disruption for residents.

The renewed position follows last night's meeting of the Council's Special Standing Committee on Heathrow, where councillors reviewed the latest developments in Heathrow's refreshed proposals and the Government's decision to restart the national policy process enabling expansion.

Council Leader Councillor Gareth Roberts said: "*Richmond Council has been absolutely consistent: expanding Heathrow – whether through a third runway or backdoor increases in flight numbers – will have devastating consequences for our residents and our environment.*

"The Government may have chosen to reboot Heathrow's expansion agenda, but we will not stand by while the noise, pollution and congestion problems our communities already face are made even worse."

Information presented to the Committee shows that Heathrow's plans remain largely unchanged from earlier iterations, including the construction of a 3,500m third runway, major new terminal infrastructure, and the potential introduction of mixed mode operations – a change Richmond Council warns would remove vital periods of respite for thousands of residents under flight paths.



The Committee heard from a range of local campaign groups who continue to highlight the impacts of airport expansion will have on residents.

The Government has also confirmed a full review of the Airports National Policy Statement, with consultation expected in summer 2026, paving the way for an accelerated approval process. Heathrow Airport plans to submit its Development Consent Order in 2027, potentially enabling a final decision as early as 2029.

Councillor Roberts continued: "*We will continue to oppose this at every level – locally, regionally and nationally. We are already engaging robustly with Government, pressing Ministers to recognise the environmental realities they continue to ignore, and making clear that Heathrow expansion is incompatible with climate commitments, air quality obligations and basic fairness for our residents.*"

Richmond Council pledged to intensify joint working with neighbouring boroughs, MPs and the No 3rd Runway Coalition, as well as continue its longstanding campaigning for reduced night flights and stronger protections for communities across west and southwest London.

Richmond's Transport Committee Talks Green but Runs on Parking Money

By Michael Jones

For a Twickenham resident who now circles longer for fewer spaces, pays more when they finally find one, and risks sharper penalties if they misjudge the rules, Richmond's transport policy already feels settled. The language may be about choice and sustainability, but the lived experience is one of steadily rising cost and diminishing tolerance.

That disconnect was on full display at the Transport and Air Quality Committee on Monday. The meeting was rich in the vocabulary of active travel and behaviour change. Yet listen carefully to what was said, rather than to what was promised, and a different picture emerges. This is not a committee dismantling car dependency. It is one carefully milking it.

Brown finances behind green language

In financial terms, Richmond's transport system rests overwhelmingly on motorists. Parking, permits and enforcement generate around £21 million a year. That income is not treated as a transitional necessity on the way to a greener future. It is treated as a stable and dependable base.



Officers openly acknowledged that higher Penalty Charge Notices have reduced non-compliance by only around 2 percent. "They have come down a little bit," the committee was told, "but not as much as we would have liked them to." The remark passed without challenge. A genuine environmental policy might have treated this as evidence of failure. Instead, continued non-compliance is quietly incorporated into future budgets. Deterrence is the public justification. Revenue is the private assumption.

Price signals or revenue smoothing?

The council insists that parking charges are being used as behavioural "price signals", deliberately raised to meet and exceed the cost of a return journey by public transport. On paper, this sounds like decisive green policy. In practice, the increases are modest, incremental and carefully smoothed.

They are high enough to raise income, but not high enough to collapse demand. That balance is deliberate. True demand suppression would introduce financial volatility. Richmond avoids that. Prices rise steadily, predictably and borough-wide, ensuring compliance remains just low enough to sustain enforcement income. This is not radical environmentalism. It is cautious fiscal management, dressed in green language.

Central Twickenham and the missing context

Nowhere is this contradiction sharper than in central Twickenham. As part of the Twickenham Riverside redevelopment, around 82 on-street parking spaces were removed from The Embankment, with a further reshuffling of designations across the surrounding area. While the council points to new bays created elsewhere, most replacement capacity has been pushed onto side roads, further from the town centre and less convenient for short-stay visitors.

Supply has been cut at the centre. Charges are now rising faster than the borough average. Enforcement is tightening. Yet these decisions are treated as separate policy strands. Their cumulative effect is never assessed in the room. For residents and visitors, the experience is simple. For the council, the fragmentation is useful.

Record spending and careful timing

The committee was keen to celebrate a major uplift in highways spending, repeatedly described as “record investment” after decades of underfunding. The Chair spoke of “political courage” in committing such sums. What went unspoken was timing. After years of managed decline, visible resurfacing arrives neatly in an election year. That may be coincidence. But the refusal even to acknowledge the context illustrates how thoroughly politics is being reframed as management.

Consultation without consent

The bike-hanger programme offers a revealing case study. On paper, consultation is emphasised. In discussion, its limits are acknowledged. Locations were described as “wobbling”, while the loss of parking was treated as “inevitable”. The Chair cautioned against waiting “until all the chips have fallen”.

At one point, the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Andrée Frieze, warned that pricing signals risked pushing residents towards unintended outcomes, telling the committee she was concerned that “if people look at these things purely from a cost point of view, they will choose what appears to be the cheaper option.” The concern was noted. The programme continued unchanged. Consultation here manages objection. It does not determine direction.

When green critique is absorbed

Perhaps the most revealing feature of the meeting was not the absence of green voices, but how thoroughly they have been absorbed. Green councillor Andrée Frieze raised thoughtful concerns about unintended consequences and distorted incentives. These points were acknowledged, even welcomed, then neutralised by process rather than argument.

Although opposition voices are present on the committee, they lack the numbers to shift outcomes. Environmental critique no longer functions as a check on power. It becomes part of the governing consensus. What looks like debate is, in reality, managed alignment. Political choices were recast as engineering constraints. Scrutiny was acknowledged, then deferred.

The unanswered question

Richmond’s transport policy is not built around a clear settlement with motorists. It is fiscally dependent on them, while steadily increasing the cost and friction of driving and parking. Nor does it amount to a decisive rebalancing of how people move around the borough. It is a cautious programme, calibrated to protect revenue while testing tolerance.

Green language plays a prominent role, but selectively. It frames incremental change as environmental progress while leaving the underlying financial model intact. What is presented as leadership often amounts to choreography, signalling action while preserving the income that underwrites the council’s finances.

If this is meant to be a coherent transport strategy, why does it rely so heavily on creating friction for motorists while remaining dependent on their continued custom? That question was not asked in the room. It should have been.

You can read the papers for the meeting and webcast by clicking [HERE](#)

Twickenham Repair Café celebrates fourth birthday

From Twickenham Repair Café

70 volunteers packed St Margarets Hall to celebrate the enormous achievement of four years of the Twickenham Repair Café!

Over a four year period, the Café has achieved some remarkable numbers.

With the support of a [Richmond Council climate action microgrant](#) it has:

- Held 36 events each year.
- Carried out 3,000 Repairs
- Saved 3.8 tonnes from landfill
- Avoided 35 tonnes of CO2 emissions through repair
- Saved attendees £120,000 by repairing instead of replacing
- Touched the lives of 2,000+ people



Learn more about the [Twickenham Repair Café](#) and find out when it's next open.

Next week at Richmond Council

On Tuesday, 10th February, the **Licensing Sub-Committee** will hear and determine the opposed application for Kingston Off-Licence, 1 Hampton Court Way. The meeting will commence at 2 pm and be held online. Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

On Tuesday, 10th February, the **Adult Social Services, Health and Housing Committee** will meet to discuss: 1) the budget report and fees and charges for 2026/27, 2) the housing association's annual audit report, 3) the quarter 3 budget monitoring report, and 4) the joint health overview and scrutiny committee update. The meeting will commence at 7 pm at York House, Twickenham. Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

On Wednesday, 11th February, the **Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sport Committee** will meet to discuss: 1) update on delivery of the Richmond Climate and Nature Strategy, 2) Q3 monitoring report, 3) directorate budget report 2026/27 including fees & charges. The meeting will commence at 7 pm at York House, Twickenham. Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

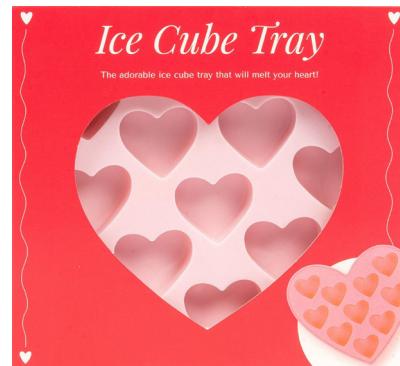
On Thursday, 12th February, the **Finance, Policy and Resources Committee** will meet to discuss: 1) the new Richmond Growth Plan, 2) Corporate Q3 monitoring report, 3) directorate budget report 2026/27 including fees and charges, 4) the 4.99% increase in council tax, 5) the Richmond capital programme and funding review, 6) treasury management strategy and capital strategy. 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](#).

Valentine's Day - Some 'Love'ly Suggestions

Of course the shops are now filled with all sorts of Valentine's Day items, from cards and chocolates to flowers, drinks, food and lots more. I've selected a few suggestions here for you, from the ultra reasonably priced to the more indulgent, but at the end of the day, it's not what you spend on a gift or meal, it's the love that it's chosen with.

Starting with a real bargain from **Tesco**, is an ice cube tray that will allow you to show your love in all manner of drinks, forever. At the bargain price of just £3, this will make ten heart shaped ice cubes. Tesco also has lots of other low cost gift items this year, including a great meal deal (see below)



Chocolates are always a popular gift, but for someone special, these rather indulgent heart-shaped ones from world famous chef and chocolatier **Pierre Marcolini**, are very special indeed. From his **De tout Coeur 'With all my Love'** Collection 2026 these coloured chocolate hearts are entirely natural, the shades having been created with powdered fruit and vegetables. Each box contains Raspberry, Passion, Caramel, Pistachio and Lime hearts filled with flavoured ganache. Two sizes of box are available, from £27. There is also a wonderful large praline heart in a gift box for £13.90: it's a duo of crunchy milk chocolate pralinés. The first layer combines the hazelnut praliné with *crépe dentelle* and whole Piedmont hazelnuts. The second is hazelnut and black sesame praliné, also with *crépe dentelle*. From Harrods (mail order available too) or from the Notting Hill or Marylebone High Street shops

How about surprising your beloved with a hamper of goodies so that you can cosy up and enjoy it together on Valentine's Day? [Hampers.com](https://www.hampers.com) has a fabulous range for all occasions, but I particularly like this **Wine, Cheese and Pâté Gift Hamper** at £55. Packed in a bamboo tray is a bottle of Finca Amalia Rioja, chosen for its fruity notes and depth, pairing with the rich, full flavours of two traditional English cheddars. The Mouse House vintage English cheddar, and its caramelised onion cheddar (bringing a sweet contrast). There's also an indulgent duck liver pâté from Cornish Charcuterie, fig and spelt sourdough crackers from Peter's Yard, olive oil and oregano

toasted bread bites and Tracklement's sticky fig relish.



If you're not planning to blow your budget and whizz over to New York for the weekend, maybe enjoy a Manhattan or two together? **Michter's** is a premium American Whiskey that's the perfect ingredient for this classic cocktail. Michter's is one of the oldest trademarks in American whiskey, with the first distillery founded in Schaefferstown, Pennsylvania in 1753 by John Shenk who made rye. It's been named **The World's Most Admired Whiskey** for three years running, and has a long legacy of offering traditional American whiskeys of uncompromising quality. First crafted in the late 19th century, the Manhattan has long been seen as a symbol of sophistication. Michter's US*1 range is available nationwide at various retailers including Whole Foods, Majestic and Amazon from around £56 a 70cl bottle.

For a gin aficionado, this beautiful bottle of Japanese gin makes a gorgeous gift. Roku is Suntory's premium craft gin. Roku is Japanese for the number six, and each bottle of Roku gin is infused with six special botanicals. Each one is sourced in Japan, at the peak of its season. This first expression in the Seasonal Festival Collection, **Roku Sakura Bloom Edition, is inspired** by one of the most celebrated Japanese festivals and one of Roku's key ingredients, the Sakura Flower (cherry blossom). Roku is a perfect balance of flavours with the gin's unique taste coming from six Japanese botanicals – Sakura flower, Sakura leaf, Yuzu peel, Sencha tea, Gyokuro tea and Sansho pepper. What's more, it's easily available - from Tesco - at £34 for a 70cl bottle.

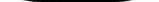


Appropriately named for Valentine's is a range of blended pre-mixed cocktails called **Gasm**. These aren't cheap, sugary disasters, but award-winning properly crafted premium drinks made with real spirits and quality ingredients. Available in bottles and handy cans, there are two flavours of gin-inspired cocktail available: SloeGasm (Fresh Sloeberry juice crafted with gin and sparkling wine); and PlumGasm (fruit-infused sparkling wine blended with plum-infused gin). At under £5 per can from gasmdrinks.co.uk (and free delivery on 12 or more cans)

And a special person deserves a special champagne, so celebrate love with **Champagne Drappier Clarevallis**, a refined cuvée defined by purity and understated elegance. Crafted from organically farmed vines on the limestone slopes of Urville, it offers fine persistent bubbles with delicate notes of elderflower and violet. Perfect for an intimate dinner or as a thoughtful gift Clarevallis is available for £54 from [The Finest Bubble](http://TheFinestBubble) and other fine wine stores



And of course, if you aren't planning to eat out, there are brilliant value meal deals in our supermarkets. Launching on 9 February, the **Tesco Finest Valentine's Dine In** range includes one starter, one main, two sides, one dessert and one drink for two, for £20 with a Tesco Clubcard. This year, the deal includes two sides instead of one, giving more choice when building our meal. Tesco also offers a £15 Valentine's Day Dine In option, available in Express stores. This includes one main, one side, one dessert and one drink, making it ideal for last minute plans.



Asda's meal deal is amazing value: at just **£12**, shoppers can choose one starter, one main, two sides, one dessert and one drink (alcoholic and non-alcoholic included) from an impressive range of 46 products.

Marks and Spencer's come up trumps with three courses plus a drink for just £25, (alcoholic and non-alcoholic options). For the first time, the full **Valentine's Dine In** is from **M&S's Collection range** showcasing restaurant-quality dishes. Try King Prawn and Lobster Thermidor Gratins, Fillet Steak Beef Wellington with spring greens, and finish with a French cheese selection. Plus a bottle of your choice – from classic Crémant de Bordeaux (so much nicer than Prosecco in my opinion) to Fizzero, the 0% sparkling alternative. There are pescatarian, vegan, veggie and GF options available too.





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Bluebells & Daffs...

By Deep Patel

~ Life through the eyes of a Twickenham shopkeeper ~



The heavy rain and mild weather has definitely been warming the ground faster this year in Twickenham as the grounds have already been exploding with splashes of blue, white and yellow as Twickenham is welcoming in Spring?! Well, I am not complaining, I mean who doesn't like a bluebell or two?

Of course not everyone feels that the coming of bluebells and daffodils is a positive thing did you know? One school girl told me she hated to see them arrive...she told me they make her nervous...I then thought perhaps she has a phobia...unsure of whether I should ask more, I decided to be brave and ask...she said they make her nervous as they remind her that exams are approaching...as each year when she sees them, exams are always approaching due to the way that the academic calendars are planned.

Another woman came into the shop and said she always buys herself a bunch of daffodils to cheer herself up and that they reminded her that better times were on the way...a real symbol

of hope and a true promise of positivity. Many buy a little pot of hyacinths to bring fragrance and colour into their homes...a promise of the season to come...

What else did this humble flower remind my customers of? Well one of my favourite answers was when one mature gentleman came to my shop and said a daffodil symbolises, birth, death, rebirth...the entire circle of life...forcing its way through the hard icy ground to tower above the grass and burst into pretty yellow trumpets announcing the end of winter and start of Spring... and after the message has been given, the humble daffodil collapses onto itself and renews the soil with its leaves and takes a rest, ready to reappear the following Spring...year...after year...after year...

That afternoon, it occurred to me that the daffodil is therefore a perfect symbol of life... death... rebirth... resilience...faith...and hope...in a way, the underlying themes discussed by all the major religions of the world...

So next time you see a daffodil, remember...to know a daffodil...is to know life...

Remember...

***“Never give up, because even during the darkest of moments...
the daffodil blooms”***

CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP OF THE WEEK:

FOR ANY HOME OR GARDEN “PEST”...

Sprinkle talcum powder, essential peppermint oil or white vinegar around where they come (but not directly on them) and they will stop without having to harm or kill them...you will get blessings in your life or have good karma for choosing a kind way too! This remedy also works to deter virtually any insect without harming them...like it & share it!

For more tips, email: InsectLoversUnite@gmail.com or join my Facebook group: “Insect Lovers Unite” Thank you!



2:22 – A Ghost Story

by Danny Robins

Runaway Entertainment at Richmond Theatre, until 7th February

Robins' tremendously successful *Uncanny*, which investigates creepy paranormal experiences sent in by the public, is the ideal listening companion late at night, if you are that way inclined. And on the stage, we experience more vicarious thrills from his fertile imagination, "the supernatural of the suburban".

2:22 – *A Ghost Story* unfolds in an ordinary, mid-1930s house undergoing renovation. Anna Fleischle's set provides the perfect landscape for the chills to come. Half-rendered and painted walls, cluttered with builders' detritus, and strewn with baby toys, convey messy domesticity of growing family life.



Jenny knows that something eerily strange is happening in her home. She hears the same disturbing noises every night at precisely 2:22am, coming from their child's bedroom. Is this in her own mind, overtired with the demands of a new baby and extensive house restoration? Or is there something more sinister playing out?

A bright digital clock becomes an important stage device, ticking steadily through the hours, propelling us toward the significant moment of 2:22am, heightening anticipation and tension.

Jenny (Shvorne Marks) and her husband Sam (James Bye) are hosting Sam's old university friend Lauren (Natalie Casey), and builder boyfriend Ben (Grant Kilburn), for dinner. The general chat turns to a discussion of the paranormal and the existence of ghosts. Jenny outlines her recent experiences and fears and (after more wine and, yes, spirits), persuades them all to stay awake until 2.22 to see or hear the phenomenon for themselves.

What follows is an evening of tense conversation, clashing world-views, emotional revelations, and a carefully structured emotional escalation towards a dramatic denouement and shattering concluding twist.

Although tension gradually builds, there are laughs to be had, but they become more nervous as the narrative gets darker. Familiar tropes of the scary film make a major contribution to the escalating sense of dread and horror: sudden piercing screams, flickering lights, a violent thunderstorm, underpinned by an ominous score of discordant music and the menacing muted drums.



Oh, and there is a séance later on Is there life after death? Are "ghosts" a figment of our imagination, a comforting mechanism to cope with an increasingly stressful and fast-moving multimedia-driven world? Or is there a dimension beyond our own?

As the final flashing sign says "Sshhh! Don't Tell."

Read Harry Zimmerman's review at www.markaspen.com/2026/02/03/222-ghost-rt

Photography by Helen Murray



Dagmarr's Dimanche : Songs from the Cinema

Hersh Dagmarr at The Crazy Coqs, Soho and on tour until 24th March

At Crazy Coqs, in a room steeped in theatrical memory, *Dagmarr's Dimanche* unfolded like a séance for Hollywood's lost gods, as Dagmarr, a flamboyant restless spectre of cabaret, summoned a world of celluloid glamour with intelligence, irony, and genuine grit. Accompanied by the exquisite pianist Karen Newby, this was not nostalgia as museum piece, but cinema remembered through lived feeling and sharpened craft.

Dagmarr does not imitate the screen legends he reveres. Instead, he channels their essence, allowing their songs to breathe anew through his own singular persona. He can capture both Marlene Dietrich's smoky disdain and Mae West's wickedly suggestiveness, while adding a flicker of mischief entirely his own.



The programme was elegantly paced, moving between torch song intimacy and high camp bravura. *Laura* emerged as a moment of hushed reverence, its melody lingering like perfume in a darkened room. By contrast, the twin temptations of *Put the Blame on Mame* and *Amado Mio* were performed with sultry precision, Dagmarr relishing the theatricality without sacrificing musical discipline.

Karen Newby's role in this alchemy cannot be overstated. Her piano playing was both authoritative and responsive, shaping the emotional architecture of the night. Her

own vocal turn with *Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß* was a highlight of crystalline poise, delivered without affectation and with a deep understanding of the song's seductive restraint.

The programme cleverly refused to remain trapped in one era. Classic Hollywood returned in full splendour with *As Time Goes By*, rendered with understated sincerity rather than sentimentality. *Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend* sparkled without descending into parody, while *I May Never Go Home Anymore* offered a darker, more introspective Dietrich moment, beautifully judged. *Mein Herr* brought a flash of defiant swagger, while *Toi Jamais* introduced a cool, modern melancholy that sat comfortably alongside the older material.



Dagmarr's Dimanche at Crazy Coqs was a reminder that cinema songs, when handled with intelligence and respect, can still speak vividly to the present. With Karen Newby's musical sophistication and Dagmarr's magnetic storytelling, this intoxicating evening proved that glamour, danger, and wit never truly fade. They simply wait for the right artists to call them back into the light.

Read Ravenna Vale's review at www.markaspen.com/2026/02/02/dagmarrs-dimanche

Photography by Ian Archer



Ballad Lines

by Finn Anderson and Tania Azevedo

Aria Entertainment at The Southwark Playhouse, Elephant until 21st March

Ballad Lines is an exploration of the struggles of women and childbearing. These are reflected in the migration of traditional ballads and how they survived and evolved.

A discussion develops between a successful New York couple, Sarah (Frances McNamee) and Alix (Sydney Sainté) as they establish themselves in their new house and start to unpack, both literally and figuratively. Sarah is reluctant to open a ribbon-tied cardboard box left to her by her up-tight Aunt Betty (Rebecca Trehearn). When she eventually does she finds a cassette recorder (remember them?) and a collection of cassettes of Betty singing the traditional Scottish, Ulster, Appalachian ballads of their roots.



Under the ballads' reflections on experiences of womanhood and motherhood at various points in history, there is a veiled reference to infanticide. *The Four Marys* is beautifully presented by an ancestor, Cait (Kirsty Findlay). I would happily have heard more.

The script covers a broad range of issues from unfulfilled desire for motherhood, through unwanted pregnancy, termination, arranged marriages and abuse. These issues are well rehearsed in our information-rich society, but here the broadening of societal norms and the adaptation of the issues with the times is paralleled in the evolution of the traditional Scottish ballads into Appalachian arrangements. However, the "What about ..." approach is lacking.

The question of the rights of a child to its natural parents, or the role of fathers remains unaddressed.

As a fan of the small ensemble format, here is some of the finest that I have had the privilege to see. The characters are people you know, the dialogue is slick, authentic and elegant. The actors move between accents with ease and confidence. Notwithstanding the weighty themes, there is opportunity for humour and it is taken with alacrity.

The simple staging facilitates swift changes and movement. Tinovimbanashe Sibanda's choreography is fluid and expressive without being overly flashy. The four piece band, under the deft direction of Shonagh Murray, provides drive and support to the huge vocal talent with really tasty harmonies, which the vocalists execute with aplomb.



Ballad Lines is a high-energy, fast-moving piece that does what it says on the tin. It provides a thought-provoking, entertaining, musically belting production, that is enormously enjoyable.

Read Vince Francis's review at www.markaspen.com/2026/01/31/ballad-lines

Photography by Pamela Raith

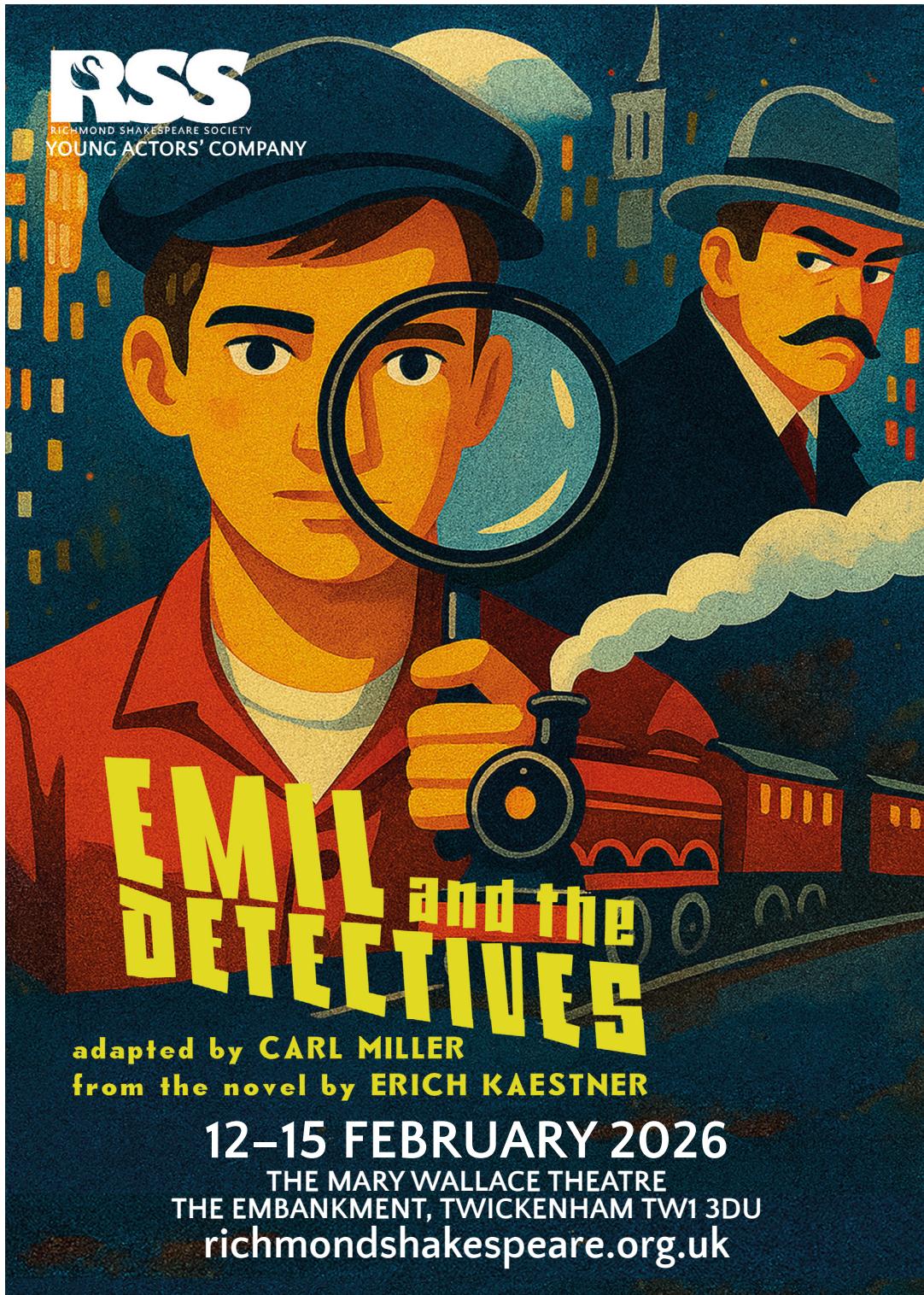
EMIL and the DETECTIVES

at the Mary Wallace Theatre - February 12th-15th

On a train journey to Berlin, young Emil has his money stolen and the sinister man in the bowler hat is the prime suspect. Emil, determined to get the cash back, teams up with a gang of young detectives.... So begins a hair-raising, breath-taking chase across Berlin in pursuit of the elusive Mr Snow. Comedy and excitement from our acclaimed team of young actors.

The RSS Young Actors' Company is proud to present this perennial favourite for four performances at the Mary Wallace Theatre.

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HAMPTON CHORAL SOCIETY

In association with Arts Richmond, festival of phenomenal female composers, presents:

Grand Mass in Eflat Major Amy Beach



A black and white portrait of Amy Beach, a woman with dark hair, looking slightly to the right of the camera with a thoughtful expression.

Saturday 21 March 2026, 7.30pm

Musical Director Emma Warren
with professional soloists & musicians
St James's Church, St James's Road,
Hampton Hill, TW12 1DQ



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

Charity Number 261788

The Eel Pie reopens following major six-figure refurbishment just in time for the Six Nations kick off

The Eel Pie in Twickenham has undergone a major £170,000 renovation ahead of the 2026 Six Nations Championship. The pub, which is loved by rugby fans and locals alike, has reopened its doors with a new look, refreshed dining space, and enhanced garden ahead of the first match of the Championship later this week.

The pub, which is owned by the family brewer and pub company, Hall & Woodhouse, is a popular match-day destination thanks to its close proximity to Twickenham Stadium. After the whistle has blown and between game days, The Eel Pie is the after-work and weekend destination of choice for many residents.

The community's rich history in music and sport is reflected in the pub's updated décor, retaining the much-loved character and charm of The Eel Pie. The Music Room to the rear of the pub has been reconfigured creating a warmer, more inviting dining space that can also be hired privately for occasions and celebrations.

Mark James, Director of Property at Hall & Woodhouse, explained: "*The Eel Pie is a fantastic pub in the heart of Twickenham that welcomes rugby-fans, families, groups celebrating, and tourists throughout the year.*

"The Eel Pie's new look has been designed to reflect this pub's chameleon nature. Our snug lounge area invites walkers to come in and warm up with a coffee, while the Music Room is a fabulous space for diners. When the game is on, the whole place comes alive with feel-good energy and anticipation."



The Eel Pie's new look also offers even more for its match day crowd. A number of smaller TV screens have been installed into booth seating, making for a new intimate and comfortable way to enjoy live sport. Outside, the courtyard garden has been reimaged as a covered and comfortable space allowing for major sporting fixtures to be shown outdoors, extending the match-day atmosphere beyond the walls of the pub.

Two bespoke murals have been hand-painted on the length of the garden walls by independent artist, Rachael Presky. The first mural celebrates Twickenham as the home of English Women's rugby and the recent success of the Red Roses. The second mural takes inspiration from the nearby Eel Pie Island's musical heritage, referencing the names who played there in the past, including The Rolling Stones and David Bowie.

Jon Moran, General Manager of The Eel Pie, said: "*I'm so proud of the new-look of The Eel Pie. The feedback we have received from our guests so far has been really positive. We're still the same team, in the same pub, serving the same pints, but our fresh look makes this pub even more special. My team and I look forward to welcoming back our loyal guests and meeting some new faces, now that we have reopened our doors.*"

The Eel Pie is open:

Monday – Thursday: 11:30am – 11pm

Friday – Saturday: 11am -11pm

Sunday – 12pm – 10.30pm

Follow The Eel Pie on Instagram @eelpiepub or on Facebook @theeelpie to receive the latest events, menus, and offers. Alternatively, visit www.theeelpie.co.uk for more information.

Fireaway Pizza relaunches Whitton restaurant under new ownership with FREE pizza giveaway

100 free Margherita pizzas on relaunch day, plus £5 ANY pizza for the first ten days

Fireaway Pizza, the UK's fastest-growing pizza franchise known for its authentic Italian ingredients and fresh, made-to-order pizzas, is set to relaunch its Whitton restaurant on Monday 9th February following a change of ownership.

Located at 75 High Street, Whitton, TW2 7LD, the restaurant is now owned by experienced chef and hospitality professional Emad Anwar, who brings decades of culinary experience to the store and a renewed focus on quality, consistency and customer care.

To celebrate the relaunch, Fireaway Whitton will be giving away 100 free Margherita pizzas on opening day (Monday 9th February), available for collection and dine in orders on a first-come, first-served basis. Customers will also be able to enjoy ANY pizza for just £5 for the first ten days after opening (from 9th February to 19th February), alongside a free garlic bread or potato wedges for anyone signing up to Fireaway's loyalty scheme on their first order. All locals need to do is register using [Fireaway's sign up link](#) and they'll receive a QR code for in-store redemption.



Emad has worked as a chef since the age of 20 after studying hospitality and management. Over the course of his career, he has held roles at prestigious venues including the Royal Opera House, OXO Tower, Marriott Hotels, Côte Restaurants and a range of Italian and French kitchens. At Fireaway Whitton, he works alongside Amr, Head Chef, who shares a similar culinary background and experience.

Together, they are bringing a renewed level of attention and care to every detail in the kitchen, ensuring customers receive the best possible Fireaway experience every time they visit.

“Many people think pizza is just pizza, but it’s so much more than that,” said Emad Anwar, owner of Fireaway Whitton. “For me, pizza is a craft. It’s about quality ingredients, technique and care. At Fireaway Whitton, we handle every single pizza with love and attention, because we genuinely care about what we serve. We’re proud to be part of the Fireaway family and excited to welcome the local community back into the store.”

“This relaunch is about more than just reopening a store, it’s about raising the bar locally,” added George Whiting, Head of Marketing at Fireaway. “Emad brings a huge amount of culinary experience and passion to Fireaway Whitton, and his commitment to quality and consistency reflects exactly what the brand stands for. We’re confident the community will feel the difference from day one.”

Fireaway Whitton will serve customers for dine-in, collection and delivery, with orders available via the Fireaway website and app, as well as Uber Eats, Deliveroo and Just Eat.

St Mary's University

St Mary's University Vice-Chancellor Announces Retirement

The Vice-Chancellor of St Mary's University Twickenham has announced that he will retire at the end of this academic year.



Professor Anthony Mcclaran joined St Mary's in April 2020. After navigating the University through the Covid pandemic and successive lockdowns, Anthony has led St Mary's through a period of sustained development and success. St Mary's registered its strongest-ever research performance in the Research Excellence Framework 2021 and in 2023 broke into the top 50 of The Times Good University Guide. Academic restructuring and renewal of the portfolio have resulted in new areas such as Physiotherapy, Computer Science and the launch of SMU Online, alongside long-established strengths in Teacher Education, Sport and Health Sciences, and Theology. In September this year, St Mary's will open its School of Medicine in the newly constructed Centenary Building, the latest in a series of capital developments that have seen major improvements to, and restoration of, the University's historic campus.

In 2025, Anthony led St Mary's in the celebrations of the 175th anniversary of its foundation and the centenary of the move to Strawberry Hill, celebrating all that had been achieved since its founding by the Catholic Poor Schools Committee in 1850. While reflecting on the strength of St Mary's foundation and values, the University also looks forward to the future as it plans its first overseas campus, in Dubai, due to open in 2027.

During a 40-year career in higher education Anthony has served in three universities (Warwick, Hull and St Mary's) and three HE agencies in the UK and internationally, successively leading as CEO the

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA),

Australia's national statutory regulator for HE. Among many non-executive appointments, he was Chair of Council and Pro-Chancellor of the University of Gloucestershire from 2007 to 2009 and Chair of GuildHE from 2021-24. Anthony currently serves on the boards of GuildHE and the Cathedrals Group, and of AVEPRO, the Holy See's HE quality assurance agency. He is Upper Warden of the Worshipful Company of Educators in the City of London.

Speaking of his retirement, Anthony said: *"It has been an honour and a privilege to lead St Mary's University over these six years. Since 1850 we've been a community that places our students and their well-being and success at the heart of everything we do. The sense of common endeavour and strong support is very clear, not least in our excellent student feedback. We're ambitious for excellence, as our rise up the rankings shows, and the opening of the School of Medicine will be another great step forward. Our achievements are those of a strong, committed team at every level across the whole community, from governors to senior leaders to outstanding academic and professional staff – my deepest thanks go to all of them."*

The Archbishop Elect of Westminster, Richard Moth, Chair of St Mary's governing body, commented: *"Anthony Mcclaran has given outstanding service to St Mary's University since joining us in 2020. His experience and vision for education at the tertiary level has enabled him to direct the continuing development of the University, not least the progress towards the opening of the School of Medicine later this year."*

While the university community will be very sad to see Anthony leave us, we know he will bring his many gifts and skills to new opportunities and we wish him and his family well in all that lies ahead."

Anthony will step down at the end of the 2025-26 academic year. The search for his successor now begins.



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

England Team To Play Wales at Allianz Stadium

England men's head coach Steve Borthwick has named his team to play Wales at Allianz Stadium on Saturday 7 February (kick-off 4.40pm, live on ITV1). Saturday's fixture will mark the 144th meeting of this historic rivalry, which dates back to 1881.

Jamie George will captain England for their first fixture of the 2026 Guinness Men's Six Nations Championship, supported by vice-captains George Ford and Ellis Genge.

"England versus Wales is always a special occasion in the rugby calendar. It's a fierce rivalry with a long history, and one that brings a huge challenge every time we meet," said Borthwick.

"We expect Wales to bring a kicking game, so we'll need to be accurate in how we respond to that challenge. For us, our focus is on executing our game plan and maintaining discipline throughout the match."

"We're excited to get the Championship underway at a packed-out Allianz Stadium. The support we receive at home is outstanding and always gives the players a huge lift."

ENGLAND v WALES

Saturday 7 February 2026

Allianz Stadium, Twickenham

Kick-off: 4.40pm

15. Freddie Steward (Leicester Tigers, 41 caps)
14. Immanuel Feyi-Waboso (Exeter Chiefs, 13 caps)
13. Tommy Freeman (Northampton Saints, 22 caps)
12. Fraser Dingwall (Northampton Saints, 7 caps)
11. Henry Arundell (Bath Rugby, 11 caps)
10. George Ford (Sale Sharks, 105 caps) – vice-captain
9. Alex Mitchell (Northampton Saints, 27 caps)
1. Ellis Genge (Bristol Bears, 75 caps) – vice-captain
2. Jamie George (Saracens, 105 caps) – captain
3. Joe Heyes (Leicester Tigers, 17 caps)
4. Alex Coles (Northampton Saints, 14 caps)
5. Ollie Chessum (Leicester Tigers, 30 caps)
6. Guy Pepper (Bath Rugby, 7 caps)
7. Sam Underhill (Bath Rugby, 45 caps)
8. Ben Earl (Saracens, 46 caps)

Replacements:

16. Luke Cowan-Dickie (Sale Sharks, 53 caps)
17. Bevan Rodd (Sale Sharks, 10 caps)
18. Trevor Davison (Northampton Saints, 3 caps)
19. Maro Itoje (Saracens, 97 caps)
20. Tom Curry (Sale Sharks, 65 caps)
21. Henry Pollock (Northampton Saints, 5 caps)
22. Ben Spencer (Bath Rugby, 14 caps)
23. Marcus Smith (Harlequins, 46 caps)



Newcastle v Brentford FC

By Ron Brand

Deep Pockets certainly help at a Premiership club but are by no means always the answer!

The Bees visit Newcastle United for the late game on Saturday. The Magpies owned by a Saudi Investment bank sit 4 places and 3 points behind Brentford FC.

In the week Newcastle exited the Carabao Cup by losing to Man City owned by an actual member of the Saudi Royal family. Once again as Greaves said, 'It's a funny old game'.

Brentford need fear nobody, a win at 3rd placed Villa last week confirmed that. Villa are playing well and look to me the only team likely to challenge Arsenal for the Premiership Title right now?

It will be interesting to see how Head Coach Keith Andrews sets up the BEES for Saturdays game? As already stated here, everyone at Brentford FC can be proud of the first half of the season.

Fear of relegation a thing of the past. Hopes of a European Spot a realistic ambition.

We will see?

If Igor Thiago stays fit and continues to perform, everything is possible.

The challenge for the clubs on a tight budget is always keeping a smaller squad fit. No Coach has yet come up with a formula for replacing the losing of key players to injury or suspension. That I guess is the Luck you need?

Let us hope Keith Andrews and Brentford FC get that luck to match the good management decisions the Club are making.

To be on 36 Points and one place behind Liverpool at this stage of the season for a club like Brentford FC cannot be overstated.



Match Preview: Newcastle United v Brentford

Written by Brentford Football Club

Brentford face Newcastle United at St James' Park in the Premier League on Saturday (5.30pm kick-off GMT, live on *Sky Sports*).

The Bees have won four of their last five away games across all competitions, while Eddie Howe's side will be seeking their first league victory in a month.

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*: Newcastle's formidable home form v Brentford's away run

Brentford have been waiting to win at Newcastle for almost a century - but the Bees' away form of late has been impressive ahead of Saturday's clash between the two sides.

A 5-2 win back in 1934 remains Brentford's solitary victory at St James' Park, the Magpies' home since 1892.

Keith Andrews' side take on the Toon buoyed by a [1-0 win at high-flying Aston Villa last weekend](#) - their fourth away victory in five across all competitions. However, the Bees breaking their hoodoo in the north east represents a tall order.



Eddie Howe's men have struggled without their vociferous home support this term - only Wolves, Burnley and Leeds have collected fewer away points. At home, however, Newcastle have been formidable: only a handful of teams have picked up more points on their own patch than the Magpies' 23 - Brentford (24) among them.

Two-thirds of Newcastle's 33 top-flight goals have been scored at home, with captain Bruno Guimarães notching all but one of his career-high eight Premier League goals this term in front of the St James' Park faithful.

Midfielders who blend bite, poise and goals are scarce, but Guimarães is one of them - and the third most-fouled player in the top flight this season is set to feature after recovering from an ankle injury.

While Guimarães has contributed from central areas, Newcastle have suffered a notable drop-off in output from wide positions. Jacob Murphy, Lewis Hall, Anthony Gordon, Kieran Trippier, Harvey Barnes and Tino Livramento combined for 30 assists last season, but those same players - plus Anthony Elanga - have supplied just five Premier League assists between them this time around.

The statistics suggest that this slump is not for want of trying. Newcastle lead the Premier League for attempted crosses this season, but only 3.83 of the 18.79 they average per game find their target.

The Magpies are also one of only two sides to strike the woodwork on 10 or more occasions, with Manchester United the other.

One of the more possession-based sides in the division, Howe's team are noticeably more direct at home, averaging 52 per cent possession at St James' Park compared to 56 per cent on their travels.

Opta's direct speed metric therefore suggests that Saturday's encounter will be a fascinating battle between two of the top tier's most 'vertical' sides. 'Direct speed' measures how quickly teams move the ball upfield towards their opponent's goal, and Newcastle rank behind only Crystal Palace (2.10) and Brentford (1.95) in this regard this season.

Brentford (14.57 per cent) may have the best shot conversion rate in the Premier League, but the Bees may need patience if they are to end their 92-year wait for victory on Tyneside.

Newcastle are one of only three teams - alongside Fulham and Manchester City - yet to concede in the opening 15 minutes of a Premier League match this term.

Conversely, the Magpies have shipped more goals in stoppage-time time than any other side (seven), a statistic that will not go unnoticed by Brentford, who lead the league with six goals scored after the 90-minute mark.

Scout Report

Dan Long, Sky Sports: Newcastle facing the consequences of competing on multiple fronts

To say Newcastle have become victims of their own success would be too strong when there is so much going for them in 2025/26.

But right now, they are experiencing just how hectic a season can be when you compete on multiple fronts - and compete well.

Brentford's visit to St James' Park on Saturday will mark their 39th game of the season. There are still another 13 to play in the Premier League, at least one more in the FA Cup and at least another two in the Champions League.

They have reached the knockout stages of the latter competition for the first time in their history, but a trip to Azerbaijan to face Qarabag is, arguably, the last thing they need right now. As the crow flies, Newcastle and Baku are around 2,500 miles apart, and there's also a four-hour time difference to contend with.

"I don't think we'll look at those games as a negative; we'll look at them very much as a positive," Eddie Howe said, speaking to TNT Sports after the Magpies' final league phase game against Paris Saint-Germain.

"We're in a busy schedule, we've had a lot of games this season and, I've got to say, the players are responding brilliantly to it. This is just another challenge they are going to have to rise to."

Over the past three seasons, Howe's side have thrived in the Premier League, with fourth, seventh and fifth-place finishes, but this might well be a year where they forgo such a lofty league position, as a result of their grind elsewhere.

The away form was poor before the trip to Brentford in November, and while it has improved, the

record is still among the worst in the division at two wins, four draws and six defeats. As a result, Newcastle sit 11th on 33 points which, in fairness, is far from the end of the world.

But according to Opta Analyst data, they are fifth in the Expected Points table, with 38.7 - almost six more than their actual tally. In the current iteration of the predicted final table, they are finishing eighth with 53.32 points. Should reality pan out the same way, it would represent their lowest finish since 2021/22.

That should serve as a wake-up call, though. Newcastle are getting used to playing in Europe again, with this being their second season in three playing on the continent. Finishing outside the top seven places puts greater pressure on winning a trophy - after last season's Carabao Cup success - to qualify again.

If they can get the job done domestically, they will be able to enjoy the fruits of what has been a relentless schedule. If not, this season may serve as a reminder that competing on multiple fronts can come at a significant cost.

In the Dugout

Eddie Howe

Before turning his hand to management for the first time, Eddie Howe had a 13-year playing career as a defender, with all but two of his 312 senior appearances having been made in a Bournemouth shirt. He was, however, forced to retire prematurely at the age of just 29 at the end of the 2006/07 season.

By this time, he was already managing the Cherries' reserve team, which he continued to do until September 2008, when manager Kevin Bond was sacked, concluding his time at the club, too. Before long, he had been re-hired as a youth coach and, in January 2009, was appointed first-team manager after a short spell as caretaker, following Jimmy Quinn's sacking.

The odds were stacked against Howe; Bournemouth were second bottom of League Two on New Year's Day - having been handed a 17-point deduction at the start of the year. Yet, he managed to guide his team to 12 wins from the final 21 games, which saw them miraculously survive by nine points.

Howe's side were promoted to League One the following year but, in January 2011, he left the south coast for Burnley, where he stayed until October 2012, before returning to Bournemouth to take over from Paul Groves. He, essentially, picked up where he left off, securing promotion to the Championship in April 2013 and to the Premier League for the first time two years later.

Bournemouth were relegated from the Premier League, after five consecutive seasons, in 2020, leading to Howe's departure from Vitality Stadium by mutual consent. After a 15-month break, he took over from Steve Bruce at Newcastle in November 2021, with the 3-3 draw against Brentford his first official game in charge, though he had to watch the game from a hotel room after contracting Covid-19.

Howe is currently the fourth-longest serving manager in the Premier League, after Pep Guardiola, Mikel Arteta and Marco Silva, and one of only 11 in the top four divisions to have held his post for four years or more. He reached 200 games in the job with the 1-0 defeat to Manchester United on Boxing Day and the Brentford match will be his 212th, which puts him just 43 behind Sir Bobby Robson and 60 behind Kevin Keegan.



'Keep the levy local' – London Councils calls for boroughs to keep at least 50% of overnight visitor levy to support services and boost growth

London Councils is calling for the government to ensure that boroughs are able to retain at least 50% of funds raised in their area by a future overnight visitor levy in order to fund local services that support tourism and invest in measures to support growth in the capital.

The government is currently consulting on proposals which would allow Mayoral Strategic Authorities in England to introduce local overnight visitor levies, devolving new fiscal powers to London and other regions – [a long-standing priority for London Councils](#).

As part of the national framework for the overnight visitor levy, London Councils is proposing that – by default – local authorities are able to retain at least 50% of revenues collected in their area.

This would ensure councils receive a share of funding that reflects the additional resource required to support the tourist economy in their area and manage its impact on the local community through extra investment in services such as street cleansing, licensing, local business support and community safety.

It would provide assurance to hotels, businesses and the hospitality industry that the introduction of an overnight visitor levy would directly support and benefit them, knowing that a portion of the money raised would be invested back into the specific areas they operate in to fund services they rely on and support local economic growth.

A minimum revenue share for local authorities would also act as a pro-growth incentive for councils to support the growth of the tourist economy in their area.

The remaining funds could then be used in partnership between the Mayor of London and boroughs to support pan-London services that are critical to the tourist economy and invest in measures that would support growth and boost tourism in the capital. Boroughs would want to work closely with the Mayor to decide how these funds were spent, in line with the jointly-developed London Growth Plan that the GLA and London Councils launched last year.

This money would need to be spent in a way which supports all parts of the capital to grow their tourist economy and recognises that some areas with lower levels of visitor accommodation still experience the impact of tourism in other ways – for example, through high numbers of day-time visitors to significant attractions.

Cllr Claire Holland, Chair of London Councils, said:

"It is vital that London boroughs retain a fair portion of funds raised by an overnight visitor levy to ensure we are adequately equipped to invest in local services which both support the tourist economy and mitigate the impact of tourism in our local areas.

"Boroughs shoulder many of the day-to-day costs associated with tourism – from maintaining streets and transports hubs, to supporting cultural venues and managing community safety pressures – helping to keep London attractive, clean, and safe.

"By allowing boroughs to retain 50% of the revenues raised in their area to reinvest directly in the local services and public spaces that visitors depend on, we will be able to support the growth of tourism in our city and provide confidence to businesses that this will benefit them.

"We look forward to working with the government and the Mayor on the design and implementation of the levy to ensure this is a success for Londoners and our tourist industry."

London Councils welcomes the government's proposal that any overnight visitor levy would apply to all forms of commercially let short-term accommodation, including short-term lets.

The cross-party organisation also highlights the importance of boroughs having a formal role in the design, implementation and operation of an overnight levy, in partnership with the Mayor, and the need for levy revenues retained by boroughs to be excluded from any government resource equalisation or funding offset.



New Green Book to ensure that investment in all parts of the UK given a “fair hearing”

Overlooked regions and communities across the country are to be finally given a “fair hearing” in public spending decisions, as the Treasury today releases its revamped Green Book.

The new guidance will support fairer and more balanced decisions on investment in every part of the country, including outside London and the South East and across urban, rural and coastal communities.

For too long, decisions made by previous governments meant that parts of the UK have lagged behind others when it comes to public investment. This government has made clear its intention to address these years of underinvestment and unfair allocation of spending and give them the “fair hearing” they deserve, so that every region can realise its full potential and thrive economically.

The revamped Green Book comes after the Prime Minister today announced 40 new areas across England will be able to decide where up to £20 million is invested in their neighbourhood, through a new £800 million package that will restore pride into local communities and breathe new life into high streets, save much-loved community spaces, and bring people together through local events and activities.

The new Green Book makes sure that investment decisions are no longer based solely on single metrics such as benefit-cost ratios, and that these metrics are not wrongly used to compare investment choices across different regions or between urban, rural and coastal communities. Instead, decisions must take into account the full range of impacts of different investment options, giving a fair hearing to every part of the UK.

This will affect the way government assesses all capital spending. That means projects that matter to people’s everyday lives – from new and upgraded transport links to the regeneration of town centres and high streets to new housing and local infrastructure. The move is an integral part of the Government’s plan to deliver change and opportunity across the whole of the United Kingdom.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves said:

“For too long, people outside of London and the South East will have felt the system is working against them and their community, not for them. I know full well that everyone has the potential to contribute to our country’s growth and success regardless of where you live.

“These groundbreaking reforms are part of a new approach from the Treasury that truly makes a long-lasting difference for all areas across the country – ensuring they get the fair hearing they deserve and can have confidence in how government invests into where they live.”

The new Green Book still recognises the importance of robust evidence and analysis, and metrics like benefit-cost ratios – but is clear these must not be used as a crude pass/fail test. Ministers will now see a more rounded assessment of a proposal’s impacts, rather than being guided by one headline number.

The new guidance has been developed hand-in-hand with devolved administrations, mayoral combined authorities and local councils, and supports the aim of this government to change the way the state makes decisions: promoting decision making that supports higher, more productive and more balanced growth across the whole of the United Kingdom.

Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, Steve Rotheram, said:

"For years, areas like ours have lost out because the system was stacked against us. It meant projects that could genuinely change lives in the North were too often overlooked – marked down by a rulebook that didn't understand local needs and told communities up here that they were literally worth less.

"I've fought hard to change that – and I want to pay tribute to Rachel Reeves for listening, and for taking action. This might sound like a technical change, but we shouldn't underestimate just how big a difference it could make. This could unlock billions in investment for the North in the years ahead.

"The new Green Book is a massive step towards fairness. It means our ideas and ambitions will finally get a fair assessment and that places like the Liverpool City Region will start to see the investment and opportunity they've long been denied."

Following the Green Book Review 2025, which found the old Green Book was too long and too complex, the new version is also clearer, more accessible and more than 40% shorter than the previous version. This new guidance will save public servants time so they can get on with their jobs delivering for the public.

The new Green Book – government guidance on options appraisal and value for money – can be found [here](#).

The new Green Book is just one of the ways the Government is changing how the state makes decisions to support growth in every part of the country. HM Treasury is continuing to progress new place-based business cases, to enable the more effective assessment of regional investments and delivering the actions set out in the [Green Book Review 2025](#). The Chancellor [announced](#) in October that Liverpool, Plymouth, Port Talbot and Birmingham would be the first four locations to trial this new approach.

Richard Parker, Mayor of the West Midlands, said:

"This is a big step in the right direction and I welcome today's announcement. By simplifying and cutting red tape, it becomes easier to back the projects that actually make a difference to people's lives.

"For regions like the West Midlands, it means decisions can be based on what works locally - creating jobs, fixing transport, investing in infrastructure and supporting skills. I'm very excited to be working with Government to pilot place-based business cases to quickly progress projects like the East Birmingham Mayoral Development Corporation."

"This will bring power closer to the region and gives local leaders the freedom to invest in regeneration that people can see and feel, rather than relying on narrow calculations that have held back growth for too long."

Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire, said:

"Having a simpler and more accessible Green Book will help to drive investment and open opportunity across the country.

"The changes provide great clarity and certainty, making it easier for places like West Yorkshire to grow and succeed."

The Government is also delivering on its commitment to publish business cases for government projects, meaning the public can hold government to account and be confident that every pound of taxpayers' money is being spent on projects that deliver best possible value. The first set of published business cases can be found [here](#).



HM Treasury

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