

Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



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TickerTape - News in Brief

South Western Railway

Altered train services and buses replace trains in the New Malden area **Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 June**

The lines in the New Malden area will be closed all weekend due to maintenance work.

Saturday

- Some **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Richmond and Kingston** services will be **revised**.
- **London Waterloo to Hampton Court** services will be **revised** to run **hourly**. These services will start from **Surbiton**.
- Additional services will run between **London Waterloo and Hampton Wick via Kingston**.
- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will be **revised** to depart **London Waterloo earlier**.
- **Buses** will run between **New Malden and Surbiton**.

Sunday

- The afternoon and evening **London Waterloo to Kingston via Hounslow** services will **not** run.
- **London Waterloo to Hampton Court** services will start from **Surbiton** and will run **hourly**.
- Additional services will run between **London Waterloo and Hampton Wick via Kingston**.
- **London Waterloo/Wimbledon to Guildford via Cobham** services will start from **Surbiton**.
- **Buses** will run between **New Malden and Surbiton**.



The Tree Agency

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darryl parkin

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The Local Picture Postcard Page - Part 330

Barnes – Castelnau

By Alan Winter

Castelnau is a road in Barnes, within the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. It was developed after the opening of Hammersmith Bridge in 1827. It is approximately 5.1 miles (8.2 km) west from Charing Cross on the south side of the River Thames.

About 1.1 miles (1.8 km) long, it is the main road south from Hammersmith Bridge and forms part of the A306 road. It was originally named Upper Bridge Road. Our first postcard shows Castelnau leading to Hammersmith Bridge.



Major Charles Lestock Boileau built Castelnau Villas (now 84–122 and 91–125 Castelnau), designed by the architect William Laxton, in 1842. These are now Grade 2 listed. These buildings were then followed by rows of cottages called Castelnau Row, Castelnau Place and Gothic Cottages. After his death in 1889, Upper Bridge Road was renamed Castelnau.

The second and third postcards show Castelnau during Edwardian times (pre World War 1 in the early 1900's).

In 1926, London County Council built a cottage estate of 640 houses, called Castelnau Estate, on the site of a market garden. In 1971 these passed to ownership of Richmond upon Thames Council. Many are now privately owned.



Holy Trinity is a Church of England church in Castelnuu. The church dates from 1868. The church was built to serve the upper part of Barnes, or Castelnuu.



The name Castelnuu is also used informally for Castelnuu Estate and the area surrounding the road. It joins Church Road at its southern end, which then runs westwards beside Barnes Green until it meets Barnes High Street.

An area of Barnes including Castelnuu was designated a conservation area in 1977.

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Riverside Press Release Crosses the Line

By James Knight



Last week's *Twickenham & Richmond Tribune* carried a press release from Richmond Council celebrating progress on the Twickenham Riverside development.

Much of it was a straightforward construction update. Cranes have been installed, basement works are underway, demolition material has been reused, concrete has been poured, steel has been installed, and the long-delayed scheme is moving into its next visible phase.

Residents have every right to know what is happening on one of the most prominent sites in Twickenham. A factual update on construction progress is entirely proper.

But the council went further.

A council update or a political attack?

In the release, Council Leader Gareth Roberts criticised “a small amount of opposition” which, he claimed, had sought to delay the scheme and contributed to “unnecessary costs for taxpayers”.

That is a striking line for a taxpayer-funded council communication, particularly when published in a local newspaper read by residents who have followed the Riverside argument for years.

Twickenham Riverside has never been a simple case of progress versus obstruction. It has been one of the most contested local projects in the borough. Some residents supported the council's scheme. Others questioned the cost, the design, the loss of open space, the impact on the riverside and the use of compulsory purchase powers. They may have lost the argument. That does not make them troublemakers.

The trust was not just another objector

This is especially true of the Twickenham Riverside Trust. The Trust was established after a long residents' campaign to protect public open space on the Riverside. It held a 125-year lease over a substantial part of Diamond Jubilee Gardens.

Its role was not to applaud whatever scheme the council preferred. Its duty was to consider the open space it was created to protect.

Nor was the Trust simply anti-regeneration. It supported redevelopment of derelict buildings, better access to the Gardens and Riverside, and the removal of car parking from the Embankment. Its objections were specific: the compulsory purchase of the Gardens, the impact on public open space, and the height and massing of the Wharf Lane building. That is not obstruction. It is civic responsibility.

The council won, but that is not the whole story

The council won the compulsory purchase inquiry. That is not in dispute. The inspector concluded that the order should be confirmed and that the scheme had public benefits.

But the inspector also recorded significant objection as well as significant support. He noted hundreds of letters on both sides and a petition attracting more than 3,000 signatures.

That is not a “small amount of opposition.” It is a serious civic dispute, tested through a formal public process.

Who chose the costly route?

There is another way to look at the cost. The Trust held a long lease over land granted for public open space. If the council wanted to set that arrangement aside, it was always likely to require a formal, expensive and contested route.

Cllr Roberts now blames the opposition for the extra costs. Residents are entitled to ask a different question: were some of those costs caused by the council choosing a scheme that required compulsory purchase in the first place? Cllr Roberts chose the route. Taxpayers are now paying the bill.

Council publicity should inform, not blame

The problem is not that the council is pleased work is progressing. Any administration would want to promote a major project reaching construction.

The problem is that a council press release, published for the public, was used to settle a political score.

Local authorities should communicate with residents in a way that is fair, factual and even-handed. They can explain decisions. They can promote services. They can update the public on major works. What they should not do is use council publicity to imply that residents and trustees who raised legitimate objections are to blame for the bill.

Twickenham Riverside is now being built. The argument over whether it is the right scheme will continue.

But one principle should be simple: council communications should inform the public, not rewrite history at residents' expense.

Transformed

By Doug Goodman

St. Mary's Church in Twickenham underwent a transformation last weekend for the annual summer fair and flower festival with the themes of the centenary of A.A.Milne's Winnie the Pooh and the celebration by St Mary's School of The Animal Kingdom. The school's vision is 'True love shows itself in action' and several months' work went into preparing a display by the children on a project focusing on the world's creatures and how we look after each other. Over 600 children from every year group at the school were involved in making animals, birds and marine life from different regions of the world to hang across the balconies. This was one of their most ambitious projects and its aim was to highlight the importance of the conservation of creation, and to encourage support for charities working towards that aim. The school's chaplain The Revd. Donna McDowell said that tremendous support was provided by parents and church members to transform the building into a place of colour and joy. The entire school visited the displays the day before the fair to see their work. On Saturday the children brought their parents to view their amazing creations.



CELEBRATING POOH BEAR

The flower festival filled the church with colour and scenes celebrating the centenary of A.A.Milne's Winnie the Pooh and his friends. Owl's house greeted visitors at the church entrance while Pooh's house, Eeyore's and Christopher Robbin's homes along with other characters' houses and places mentioned in the wonderful book.

St Mary's fair attracted a huge number of visitors to the displays and stalls selling books, jewellery, tea and cakes. Bands played in the garden, children enjoyed face painting, the fit climbed the tower and the Twickenham Brownies joined in. The beer tent and the hot-dog bbq were very popular. The fair was organised by Charlotte West and a group of 70 volunteers

who raised £6,000. The re-ordering of St. Mary's Church a few years ago reaped benefits as the flexible, newly designed space made possible such an action-packed and enjoyable day.



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10
Winnie-the-Pooh
faces at the fair
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to find them.**



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Armed Forces Week: Open day at The Poppy Factory

From The Poppy Factory

The Poppy Factory will hold a free open day at the start of Armed Forces Week on **Monday 22 June**, as the charity celebrates 100 years in Richmond upon Thames.



Residents and guests are encouraged to drop in between 10am and 4pm to explore the visitor centre, enjoy tea, coffee and cake and chat to expert hosts and team members.

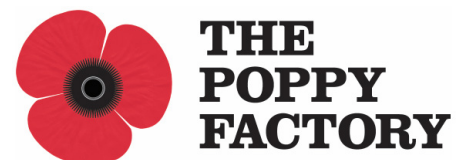
Small groups will have the chance to be shown around lesser-seen parts of the historic factory, which first moved to Richmond in 1926 after outgrowing its original premises in Old Kent Road. Remembrance wreaths, Royal Wreaths and large decorative poppies are still produced on site by a dedicated production team.

Guided tours of the building will be subject to availability on the day.

The visitor centre, off Petersham Road, tells the story of how the charity was founded to create employment opportunities for veterans who had been injured or wounded in the First World War, and how its community of veterans and families became established in Richmond.

In recent times, The Poppy Factory has grown into a national charity helping veterans and their families across the UK on the path to employment. Funds raised through the visitor centre go towards its Veteran and Family Services, which last year helped more than 1,200 members of the Armed Forces community to change their lives.

No tickets are needed for the open day on Monday 22 June. Guests are encouraged to contribute towards the charity's national services by making a donation online or on the day, and by visiting the café and shop counter with its unique range of gifts.



Richmond's One-Party Council Faces Its First Real Test

By James Knight



Richmond's Liberal Democrats may have achieved the sort of electoral dominance that earned them national headlines, Telegraph mockery and even a joke on *Have I Got News For You*. But the first Transport and Air Quality Committee of the new all-Lib Dem council told a less comfortable story: missed environmental targets, rising serious road casualties, weaker-than-needed public transport and a road network officers admit has been in "managed decline" for years.

The question now is not simply whether the administration has a transport strategy. It is whether, in a council chamber without a single opposition councillor, that strategy will receive the scrutiny Richmond residents deserve. On the evidence of this meeting, the answer is mixed.

Scrutiny, but not opposition

This was not a rubber stamp. There were intelligent questions from councillors, some useful probing of missed targets, and several moments when officers were asked to explain awkward facts. Yet the nature of the scrutiny has plainly changed. It was managerial rather than adversarial, collaborative rather than forensic. The committee asked how the administration could improve its programme, but rarely whether the administration had got the programme wrong.

Before May, the Liberal Democrats did not face a large opposition on transport, but they did face pressure from the Greens. That pressure was not Conservative in character. If anything, the Greens often tried to push the Lib Dems further left: faster on active travel, less willing to compromise, and more impatient with what they saw as half-measures. Their presence meant the administration's green credentials could not simply be assumed. They had to be defended against a party that claimed to be greener still. That pressure has now vanished.

Less radical than before

The result is not a rightward turn in policy. Richmond's transport agenda remains recognisably green-liberal: more cycling, more walking, school streets, cargo bikes, e-bikes, air quality targets, EV charging, and a long-term strategy to shift more journeys away from cars. But the tone has changed. Without the Greens pressing from the left, the Lib Dems sound less like campaigners and more like cautious

managers. The language is now one of balance, metrics, feasibility, resident engagement and funding constraints. That may make them more practical. It may also make them more comfortable.

The committee papers contained plenty that deserved challenge. Of the council's comparable transport and air quality indicators, only five improved, five declined and five stayed the same. Four of the ten targeted indicators were rated red. Only 28 per cent of reportable monitoring locations met the council's nitrogen dioxide objective. Only 67 per cent of particulate monitoring stations met the PM2.5 objective, with Richmond Town Centre exceeding the target level, though the monitor is positioned next to a taxi rank. Cycle parking delivery missed its target, while the proportion of residents living within 400 metres of the London-wide strategic cycle network fell from 9 per cent to 8 per cent. Most strikingly, killed or seriously injured casualties on borough roads rose from 91 to 106.

These are not minor blemishes. They go to the heart of the council's transport agenda. Richmond wants more walking, more cycling, cleaner air and fewer car journeys. Yet its own figures show that delivery is uneven, targets are being missed, and road safety is moving in the wrong direction. This is the awkward context for a party now entering its eighth year running the council. The Liberal Democrats can still point to funding constraints, TfL decisions and national pressures, and sometimes fairly. But the longer they govern, the harder it becomes to present every shortfall as something inherited, external or just around the corner from being fixed.

When a missed target becomes a better metric

To its credit, the committee did not ignore the red indicators. Councillor James Chard, the committee's vice-chairman, pressed officers on the missed cycle parking target. The council had aimed to add 400 on-street cycle parking spaces, but delivered 216. The chair, Councillor Alexander Ehmann, argued that the council may have been "counting the wrong thing", pointing to the Richmond Cycling Hub and its hundreds of spaces. But Councillor Chard pushed back, noting that the hub had not been intended to count towards the on-street target.

That was the meeting's strongest moment of scrutiny. It was polite, informed and fair, but it did not let the administration simply turn a missed target into a success story by changing the frame. The danger, however, is obvious. In a one-party council, failure can too easily become a problem of presentation, measurement or insufficient external funding. A target is missed, so the metric is questioned. A public transport service is poor, so TfL is blamed. A road network has been in managed decline, so the answer becomes a long-term recovery programme.

There is truth in all those explanations. But they should not become a shield against accountability.

The Greens are gone, and so is the pressure

This is where the absence of the Greens matters. The Greens were unlikely to attack the council for being too anti-car. Their challenge came from the other direction: why not go further, faster and harder? Without them, the Lib Dems no longer need to prove their radicalism to a rival progressive party. They can present the same agenda in more cautious, suburban language.

That was visible in the discussion on cycle parking. The committee did not respond to missed delivery by demanding a faster roll-out. Instead, members discussed whether the target was right, whether the balance between expensive bike hangars and cheaper Sheffield stands needed rethinking, and how future KPIs should be refined. That is not an abandonment of active travel. But it is a marked shift from political urgency to technocratic adjustment.

It was visible again when Councillor Michael Dingemans raised rumours that parking spaces in Barnes High Street might be removed for cycle stands. The chair was quick to reassure the meeting that

proposals of that kind would be discussed with ward councillors before reaching public consultation. That instinct is not especially Green. It is cautious, localist and electorally sensitive. The Lib Dems remain pro-cycling, but they now appear keener to show that change will be managed, moderated and filtered through resident acceptability.

There was a small but telling moment during the discussion. Tim Lennon, chair of Richmond Cycling Campaign, was watching the webcast and emailed in to say it was difficult to hear. The message was relayed in the room. Councillor Ehmann told members to use their “booming voices”, then joked that officers should “only stay quiet on things that Tim Lennon might not like.” It was meant lightly, but it caught something real about Richmond transport politics. The cycling lobby is not a distant pressure group shouting from outside the gates. It is close enough to email into the meeting, familiar enough to be part of the chair’s humour, and clearly part of the conversation.

Parking fines and the missing political challenge

Parking income provided another revealing example. The transport budget recorded an overall revenue underspend of £483,000. Parking policy was £491,000 favourable, largely because penalty charge income was higher than expected. The council had anticipated that higher PCN rates would improve compliance. Instead, issuance remained higher than budgeted.

Councillor Duncan Razor asked the right question: were motorists being encouraged to pay sooner, but not actually deterred from breaking the rules? Officers accepted that compliance had not improved as much as expected. The finance officer called it “a disappointing outcome”. That was a useful exchange. But there was little wider political challenge to the optics of a transport budget helped by motorists continuing to be fined in large numbers.

A Conservative opposition might have pressed harder on whether Richmond is becoming too reliant on penalty income. A Green opposition might have asked whether the fines were still too low to change behaviour. In the new one-party chamber, the question was narrower: why had the behavioural assumptions not worked as expected? That is the new scrutiny culture in miniature. The questions continue. The political jeopardy has faded.

Asking people to drive less, with fewer buses

The public transport discussion was perhaps the most important section of the meeting. The council’s own report admitted that bus mileage in Richmond is lower than in 2018/19 and that bus usage has also fallen. Since 2024, there has been no overall increase in bus service coverage or frequency. Route 111 has seen reductions. Barnes faces controversial changes. Ham, Hampton and Heathfield remain poorly served. A direct Twickenham to Kingston bus remains an aspiration rather than a plan.

This is the central contradiction in Richmond’s transport policy. The council wants residents to use cars less, yet public transport in parts of the borough remains too weak, too infrequent or too unreliable to make that realistic for many journeys. The committee did raise relevant points. Councillors questioned the effect of bus cuts, the Barnes changes, the position in Ham and the quality of bus stops. One officer fairly observed that “not a significant amount has changed” in underserved areas since the committee set its bus priorities two years earlier.

That should have been a sharper moment. Instead, the tone was mostly one of lobbying TfL for better provision, rather than asking whether local transport policy has become too dependent on promises that other bodies may not deliver.

When public transport is poor, the council can say it is pressing TfL. When cycling targets are missed, it can say the indicator is imperfect. When road safety worsens, it can promise another review. But an opposition party would ask a more uncomfortable question: after eight years in control, why are so

many outcomes still falling short?

Potholes, praise and managed decline

There was also notable praise for officers on highways. Several councillors said potholes had become less of a complaint during the election campaign. That may be a fair reflection of improved maintenance work.

But the council report also states that Richmond's highway asset has been in a "managed decline position" for years. That phrase should have prompted sharper questioning. How long has this been known? Were previous budgets adequate? How much would be needed to reverse the decline properly? Is the current programme genuinely enough, or merely a better class of sticking plaster? Instead, the discussion drifted towards congratulation. Praise for officers is often deserved. But scrutiny must not become a civic awards ceremony.

The chair as examiner and advocate

Councillor Ehmann is not merely a committee chair. By profession, he is a public affairs professional, someone trained in advocacy, political framing and the presentation of difficult arguments. That is not an insult. It is a skill, and in local government it can be useful. But it is also precisely why scrutiny matters. The more polished the advocate, the more necessary the cross-examination. In a council with opposition members, that counterweight would come naturally. In Richmond's new one-party chamber, it must come from within the ruling group, or from the public outside it.

The chair himself acknowledged the need for "more scrutiny not less" when discussing performance indicators. It was a revealing phrase, because it recognised the problem even as the committee worked within it. Without opposition councillors around the table, scrutiny now depends on the ruling party's willingness to make itself uncomfortable.

The meeting also showed how important public participation will become in this new political landscape. There was one petition, on vehicle and pedestrian safety at the Queens Road, Manor Road and Sheen Road junction. It was heard courteously, and the petitioner was given extra time. But there were no ward concerns, only one public question, and no opposition councillors present. After the petition, the meeting became largely an internal conversation within the ruling party.

The risk is comfort

In a borough now mocked as "Waitrose as a constituency", the danger is not chaos. It is comfort. Richmond's one-party council is unlikely to be crude or reckless. The greater risk is subtler: awkward evidence softened into process points, missed targets recast as flawed metrics, and political challenge replaced by internal improvement notes.

That should worry residents. The Liberal Democrats are now in their eighth year running Richmond Council. They cannot blame every problem on inheritance or delay. Roads in "managed decline", missed cycle parking targets, rising killed or seriously injured casualties, weak public transport in parts of the borough and air quality targets still out of reach are now part of their record.

A committee can ask sensible questions and still fail to provide real scrutiny. It can praise officers, refine indicators and blame TfL, while never quite asking whether the administration itself has fallen short.

Richmond's Liberal Democrats now have total power at council level. They also have total responsibility. If scrutiny is to survive in a chamber without opposition, they will need to do more than manage the narrative. They will need to make themselves uncomfortable. On this first showing, they are not there yet.

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From Twickenham Repair Café

The next Twickenham Repair Café will be open on Saturday 20 June, for the repair of household items.

The café does not charge for repairs, but asks for a donation based on what you think their time and expertise is worth. There's no need to book ahead, just drop in (only one item per person for repair).

While you wait, you can enjoy the café inside the Repair Café, serving tea, coffee and a selection of homemade cakes.



Event details:

- Date: Saturday 20 June 2026
- Time: 10.30am to 12.30pm
- Location: St Margaret's Church Hall, Twickenham, TW1 1RL

You can [find out more about the Twickenham Repair Café](#).

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Letters

Dear Tribune,

Spelling Pleeze!

'Well Done' to Sue Hamilton-Miller for exposing Richmond Council's press release about the Riverside development (Tribune 5 June 2026).

If they can't even get a simple word right, there's not much hope of them getting anything more ambitious right, either.

Maybe they're too busy blighting our lives with yet more restrictions such as dangerous, money-wasting road chicanes and unfair parking fines to bother about proper English?

Michael Jay
Hampton.

Residents invited to attend the Safer Neighbourhood Board meeting this July

From Richmond Safer Neighbourhood Board

Residents are invited to attend the next Richmond upon Thames Safer Neighbourhood Board (SNB) meeting, taking place at York House in Twickenham on **Thursday 9 July at 7pm**.

The Safer Neighbourhood Board brings together local police, partners and the community to help shape policing and community safety priorities across the borough.

The Richmond SNB is part of a London-wide network, established by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), to ensure residents have a voice in decisions that affect their neighbourhoods.

At the meeting, attendees will hear from Richmond's new Police Superintendent, Dan Cooper, and receive updates from Detective Inspector Sophie Howell on volume crime in the borough. There will also be an update on how local Safer Neighbourhood Team is tackling anti-social behaviour.

Residents will have the opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns during a dedicated Q&A session.

The meeting is open to everyone and there is no need to register in advance. Visitors are asked to check in at York House reception on arrival. Refreshments, including tea, coffee and biscuits, will be available.

The meeting is expected to finish at around 9pm.





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Teddington Together

ORGANISED BY TEDDINGTON TOGETHER

Sunday 31st May 2026

EVENT DATE

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Teddington Together

ORGANISED BY TEDDINGTON TOGETHER

Sunday 31st May 2026

EVENT DATE

A Very Richmond Rebellion

By Michael Jones



There are few places in Britain where graffiti can look quite so polite as in Richmond. Yet there it was, in bright white spray paint across the blue fascia: “WHSmith”, scrawled over the newly minted name TGJones.

It was vandalism, of course. No one should pretend otherwise. A shopfront was defaced and someone had to clean it up. But it was also something else: a small, sharp, almost perfectly judged piece of public commentary on one of the strangest rebrands on the modern high street.

From WHSmith to TGJones

The old WHSmith store had become TGJones after WHSmith’s high street business was sold to Modella Capital. The travel business still operates in railway stations and airports. WHSmith did not franchise the name, so the familiar high street branches were left to adopt a new identity. So, in place of William Henry Smith, Britain was introduced to TGJones, a name that sounds as if it were invented by a committee trying to recall what a family business once felt like. Richmond, it seems, was not convinced.

The picture that reached the national papers

The photograph of the defaced sign spread quickly online before appearing in the national papers. In the Daily Telegraph’s business section, the image appeared under the caption “An unhappy sign”, showing a cleaner preparing to remove the sprayed “WH Smith” from the TGJones frontage.

On Reddit, where the picture was posted under the title “Anarchy breaks out on the mean streets of Richmond”, the response was less moral outrage than collective recognition. One commenter, JedsBike, wrote: “I’m normally not a fan of most graffiti, but I must admit to being a

bit tickled by this!” Another, Fall3n-Fox, was more direct: “While I don’t condone the vandalism, literally no one is calling it TGJones.” That was the point. The shop may have changed its sign, but the public had not changed its mind.

The public verdict

Some of the sharpest remarks were reserved for the new branding itself. ZestyData called it “the most flagrant definition of manufactured corporate slop”, describing the name as something made to sound like “a real organic family name that wouldn’t come from a corporate boardroom”. ProfessionalMockery took aim at the look of the sign: “The font and everything. It’s like they did their branding in an hour using Microsoft Word.”

Others simply mocked the absurdity of the moment. AstroBearGaming adapted The Smiths: “There’s panic on the streets of Richmond.” Pure-Solution15 asked the question many shoppers may have been thinking: “What the hell is TJ Jones?” Garbidb63 summed up the public mood with enviable economy: “My first thought on seeing this picture: ‘Yes, Exactly!’”

Why the old name still matters

The episode would be easy to dismiss as a joke at the expense of a struggling retailer. Yet that would miss why it caught the public imagination. WHSmith has not, for many years, been a shop much associated with quality. Its high street branches could be chaotic, expensive and oddly melancholic. But the name had weight. It belonged to childhood magazines, emergency birthday cards, railway paperbacks, revision guides and hurried purchases before a bus home.

That is what TGJones lacks. The problem is its inauthenticity. It looks like a traditional high street name, but it has no real history behind it. WHSmith meant something because people had known it for generations. TGJones asks shoppers to accept a made-up name as though it has always been there.

That matters commercially as well as sentimentally. Recent reports suggest the rebrand has not persuaded the public. Like-for-like sales at the renamed stores have reportedly fallen sharply, while the business is now pursuing a restructuring plan and facing the possible closure of many branches. The name is not the only problem. The high street is difficult, the old WHSmith estate was already under pressure, and retail habits have changed. But it is hard to argue that the new identity has solved anything.

A lesson in branding

That is what the graffiti captured. Not a sophisticated critique, perhaps, but an effective one. The spray painter did not invent a new slogan or leave a manifesto. They simply restored the old name, crudely and illegally, to the place where many people still felt it belonged.

For corporate Britain, there is a lesson here. People may mock old brands, complain about them, avoid them and insist they no longer care. But take the name away, and they may realise they cared more than they thought.

In Richmond, the fascia still reads TGJones. But the graffiti tells a different story. For many shoppers, and certainly for Reddit, it remains WHSmith. The financial reports suggest that may not just be a joke. It may be the verdict of customers who never bought into the new name in the first place.



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Idyllic Dining at Idalia

If you haven't been up to Olympia for a while, you're in for a big surprise. The spectacular space that first welcomed Londoners 140 years ago has been restored. And this is quite a restoration, as it's part of Olympia's £1.3bn transformation and now houses Grade II* listed **Pillar Hall**. Being the scene of Britain's earliest film screenings and the venue for the first catwalk show from Vivienne Westwood, it is rather special. At 30,000 sq ft, this all day to late night destination - conceived by restaurateur **Des Gunewardena** (co-founder of D&D London) of D3 Collective - signals the start of Olympia's long-anticipated reinvention. Pillar Hall has recently unveiled **Idalia**, a glamorous all-day dining destination, so I couldn't wait to check it out.



It is almost directly opposite the Olympia station entrance and one steps up an elegant staircase into another world. It's an opulent, slightly theatrical place, with massive Corinthian columns draped with climbing plants, there's bold upholstery that oozes style, and a generally fashionable air that echoes its interesting history.

In the middle is a large oval bar, with an orangey, backlit crowning panel, giving a warm glow and a regal feel. There is an incredible mass of greenery everywhere, worthy of one of the greenhouses at Kew.

Alexandra, our friendly and highly efficient server, welcomed my pal Jacqui and me and we were offered a glass of refreshing **Coates & Seely** English sparkling wine. Jacqui doesn't drink, so was given an alternative - **Wild Idol**, in my opinion one of the best alcohol-free sparklings.

The place was buzzing. Quite a few tables of large groups in parties were near to us, but the noise carried well. Our table was right underneath a rather large tree, which wasn't ideal as it took a lot of the light, and was slightly overwhelming. The menu is well composed, not excessively large, based on modern British cuisine, with an international element that's quite Asian-influenced.

To start, Jacqui chose the **Crab salad, mango, chilli, ginger, coriander & shaved coconut**. I opted for the **Burrata, lovage pesto, broad beans, basil & pine nut**.

The salad was presented in the most incredible shell shaped dish, like something one would find in an Italian palace. Jacqui enjoyed her starter, but felt it to be slightly light on the mango, but the shaved coconut added an interesting texture and crunch to the dish.





My burrata...what can I say? The lovage pesto was a revelation. It had a crunchy topping and sat atop a broad bean purée. It was rich, yet cooling and refreshing and incredibly delicious. I grow lovage, and use it in a number of recipes, but this took pesto to another level.

For our mains, the signature dish of **Lobster Linguine with datterini tomatoes, chilli, garlic and basil** appealed to Jacqui, while I chose **Miso crusted black cod, bok choi, chilli & spring onion.**

The pasta was beautifully presented with the lobster removed from its shell and carefully replaced for ease of eating. The whole dish was well executed, with the lobster being very flavourful and the level of heat from the chili just right. The roast tomatoes added an element of sweetness. The bisque-like sauce was deemed excellent and the portion size generous.



My cod was served on a large bamboo leaf topped with a bed of bok choi. The amount of chillies was rather too plentiful for my taste, but easily spotted and moved to the side. It was a deliciously spicy dish. I should mention that the lovely Alexandra had suggested we share a couple of sides:

Heirloom tomatoes, blood orange & basil salad as well as a portion of **Beef tallow chunky chips, with rosemary salt.**

The salad sounded like a great idea and we both declined the chips: initially. Alexandra urged us to try a portion and we were so glad we did. They were probably the best chips I've tasted in a very long time - fat, crispy on the outside and gloriously squidgy in the middle - and so very moreish and tasty.

I enjoyed a glass of **Chablis, Domaine Jean-Marc Brocard 2024**, with my main, that paired perfectly. The excellent wine list has **28 different wines by the glass** and they are well priced, starting at £9.

Our decision to share a pudding was a sensible one. The signature desserts: Vivienne Heel - which is for two anyway - was sold out, but is, by all accounts, pretty spectacular. The **pistachio cheesecake** was really, really good. Served flanked by a pile of massive fresh raspberries and also with a rich sauce. This sauce was rather heavy and difficult for our server to pour (who did comment that it was usually much thinner and easier to pour). The dish wasn't too sweet, compared to many cheesecakes, but we still couldn't manage to finish our portion. We wondered if a portion of ice cream might be a better accompaniment instead of the sauce, but it wouldn't allow the theatrical pouring of the sauce at the table.



Our evening at Idalia was excellent and I'm keen to return soon. The whole place is very special indeed, and the service is friendly, yet highly professional. There's a brilliant value set lunch for £29 (two course) or £34 (three) that has the fabulous burrata starter as well as the Sri Lankan chicken curry that I nearly chose the other evening. There's also a Sunday roast menu that offers roast chicken or beef striploin with appropriate accompaniments.

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Eclipse of the Century

By Bruce Lyons

With all the talk of Elon's SpaceX float and the \$1.3.... it got me to thinking of eclipses.

So here is something new to think about.

It so happens that my Dive Friends Steve and Claire have this fantastic little Dive Resort in Quesir called Roots which is right there on the line of the 2nd August 2026 ECLIPSE.



Moreover, they will be transforming their dive resort into an intergalactic cosmic experience under the guidance of an Expert, Professor Thomas Hockey.

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Professor Thomas Hockey

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The Harder They Come

by Perry Henzell and Trevor Rhone, adapted by Suzan-Lori Parksby
 Washington Square at Theatre Royal Stratford East until 4th July

The Harder They Come is not merely a musical revival, it is a cultural eruption. Under Matthew Xia's confident direction, it feels like being swept into a living revolution as the theatre is transformed into Kingston's streets in seventies Jamaica.

Adapted from the landmark 1972 Jamaican film that introduced reggae to the world, *The Harder They Come* follows Ivanhoe Martin, inspired by the real-life outlaw, serial murderer Rhyging, who arrives in Kingston dreaming of becoming a music star. He transforms from ambitious singer into a criminal, but folk hero. It is both a rise-to-fame story and a tragedy.



This production balances darkness with overwhelming vitality. Scenes melt into one another with intoxicating momentum; characters emerge from crowds, dance sequences erupt organically; and the show moves with the rhythm of reggae.

Natey Jones delivers a star-making performance as Ivan, reckless, funny, vulnerable, and terrifying all at once. He dominates the stage with the swagger of a man convinced destiny belongs to him, yet beneath the bravado lies a desperate yearning to be seen. Every choice he makes feels combustible. Rachel John is phenomenal as Daisy, injecting

warmth, wisdom and vocal fire into every scene she touches, while Madeline Charlemagne brings heartbreaking tenderness to Elsa, her voice rich with longing and sorrow.

Visually, the production is breathtaking. Simon Kenny's towering set of corrugated iron rooftops, staircases and colour-washed streets transports us to "funky Kingston". Gritty yet vibrant, it allows scenes to shift seamlessly between the church, a recording studio or street corners. Jessica Cabassa's costumes burst with 1970s Caribbean colour.



Shelley Maxwell's choreography fuses reggae grooves, dancehall, revivalist folk traditions, and contemporary movement into sequences that never feel decorative. Every movement reveals character, conflict, and community. Bodies ripple across the stage like waves of protest or celebration.

The vocals are delivered with an aching vulnerability. Every lyric carries exhaustion, hope, pain and resilience all at once, as though years of heartbreak were being poured into a single song. The collective vocals do not feel performed; they feel lived.

The Harder They Come is political, heartbreaking and utterly exhilarating; a production that celebrates the legacy of reggae while feeling fiercely alive in the present moment.

Read Ravenna Vale's review at www.markaspen.com/2026/05/24/harder-come

Photography by Pamela Raith

Teachers

by John Godber

The John Godber Company at the Reading Rep Theatre until 13th June

John Godber's *Teachers* has long held a special place within British theatre. Its combination of sharp social observation, infectious humour and deep affection for education ensures its enduring popularity.

Framed through the perspective of pupils staging their own account of life at Whitewall School, *Teachers* explores the frustrations, absurdities and occasional triumphs of state education.

The cast brings Godber's world vividly to life, creating between them a gallery of memorable figures that feel exaggerated yet authentic. The teachers are larger than life, viewed through the playful lens of teenage perception. Equally, the pupils are portrayed with honesty and warmth, capturing their uncertainty, ambition and vulnerability.



Jo Patmore delivers a particularly memorable portrayal of the Head of RE. Wonderfully observed, balancing eccentricity and sincerity, it feels immediately familiar. Patmore's ability to capture the specific rhythms and mannerisms of a classroom teacher is impressive.

Levi Payne is equally compelling. As Salty, he brings warmth, charisma and a natural comic energy. In stark contrast, Payne's unsettling portrayal of Oggie introduces a darker edge, and his ability to switch between vastly different roles is hugely impressive.

Sophie Suddaby shines as Miss Nixon, bringing determination, optimism and genuine humanity to the role. Suddaby captures the passion that drives teachers to persevere despite the challenges they face, and her portrayal provides some of the most heartfelt moments.

The design is simple yet highly intelligent. Classroom furniture is used to establish a variety of locations. Equally effective is the use of costume, with quick additions and alterations signalling shifts between characters, without disrupting pace. The result is storytelling of impressive clarity and efficiency.



The production's closing moments are particularly moving. As the final scenes unfolded, I found myself reflecting on my own experiences as a teacher and the inevitable goodbyes that accompany the profession. Watching pupils grow, develop and eventually move on is one of teaching's greatest privileges, but it is also one of its most poignant realities. The production captures this beautifully, and its final moments carry an emotional resonance that lingers.

Funny, clever and deeply heartfelt, *Teachers* successfully updates a beloved classic while preserving everything that has made it endure. The exceptional performances, intelligent design and clear, precise storytelling combine to create an evening that is both entertaining and thought-provoking.

Read Sam Martin's review at www.markaspen.com/2026/06/05/teachers-rr

Photography by Ian Hodgson

RSS ALIVE! – Phantom of the Opera – Behind the Mask

Monday, June 15th at 7.45pm

In the latest of our RSS ALIVE! events, the Mary Wallace theatre welcomes Martyn Hayes, Production Manager of the original musical production of The Phantom of the Opera, who will reveal hitherto untold and fascinating details of the staging of the original show. Admission is free and all are welcome.

Join us at the Mary Wallace Theatre on Twickenham's Embankment, close to the barmy Arms.



Artist of the Year Competition

From Arts Richmond

The Arts Richmond Artist of the Year Competition will take place on Saturday 20 June 2026 at Ham House.

Arts Richmond has been invited to hold this year's competition in the National Trust's magnificent 17th century property and its grounds on the banks of the Thames.

There is a £5 entry fee to take part.

[See full details and timetable](#)



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Saturday 4 July 2026, 7.30pm

Musical Director - Emma Warren

Accompanist - Pam Kent and professional soloist

All Saint's Church, The Avenue, Hampton, TW12 3RG



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

Britain's Favourite Butterfly Revealed

From Butterfly Conservation

Wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation has today revealed that the colourful Peacock has beaten off fierce competition from a colourful cast of species to take the top spot as Britain's Favourite Butterfly.



Topping the first-ever vote to find the nation's champion, the garden favourite beat 59 other butterflies to claim the highly coveted title, in a vote that saw over 20,000 votes cast across the UK between 15 May - 7 June.

The top five was a rainbow of colour, with the Orange-tip coming a close second, Red Admiral third, Holly Blue in fourth, and the bright yellow Brimstone coming in fifth. But ultimately, the stunning Peacock, with its eye-catching and instantly recognisable beauty, stole the nation's hearts.

Butterfly Conservation's Head of Engagement, Kate Merry, said: *"The response to Britain's Favourite Butterfly has been absolutely wonderful, and we're not surprised. It's clear that people up and down the country love butterflies of all shapes, sizes and colours, and voted in their thousands for their favourites. "The Peacock is a worthy winner, it's a true showstopper and a species that I bet a lot of us picture when we think of butterflies. It's been really special seeing people get so passionate about their favourites and throw their support behind them! Now we can't wait to see how many Peacocks are spotted up and down the country in this summer's Big Butterfly Count."*

The result comes at a critical moment for the UK's butterflies. In 2024 Butterfly Conservation declared a butterfly emergency after numbers recorded during its Big Butterfly Count fell to their lowest ever.

Now the charity is calling on everyone, everywhere to take part in this year's Big Butterfly Count between Friday 17 July - Sunday 9 August to help conservationists get an updated picture of how Britain's most common butterflies are faring.

The winner - a showstopping garden icon

The Peacock, Britain's official favourite, is an iconic butterfly. This showstopper is instantly recognisable with its striking colours and stand-out eye-spots, a remarkable evolutionary defence mechanism designed to ward off predators many times its own size.

It is a regular visitor to gardens and green spaces across the whole of the UK, particularly where patches of nettles can be found as they are its caterpillars' favourite foodplant.

The top five - a rainbow of joy across the country

Completing the top five in the vote to find Britain's Favourite Butterfly are four species that between them create a kaleidoscope of colours and show why Brits love butterflies so much.

In second place, the **Orange-tip** is a worthy runner up, with its glowing white wings and vivid tangerine tips in the males, this uplifting species is a sure sign of spring and that warmer summer days aren't far away.

Taking third is the **Red Admiral** whose striking jet-black wings, bold red bands and white spotted tips make it one of the most iconic species in the UK. A long-distance migrant, it travels all the way from North Africa to flutter around UK gardens each year, although it is now commonly sticking around through the winter, a sign of our warming climate.

In fourth, the fairy-like **Holly Blue**, which counts British icons Dame Joanna Lumley and Geri-Halliwel Horner amongst its fans. Its powder-blue wings are a shimmering delight when spotted in gardens, this species has been steadily spreading northwards in recent decades, bringing its appealing beauty to gardens and hedgerows across more of the country than ever before.

And rounding out the top five, the **Brimstone**, whose sunshine-yellow wings may have given all butterflies their name - the original butter-coloured fly, whose appearance is often heralded as the first sign of spring.

The Peacock, Red Admiral, Holly Blue and Brimstone, along with 16 other butterflies and day-flying moths, can be recorded as part of this summer's Big Butterfly Count in July and August.

Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count is the world's largest butterfly survey, and this year it carries greater urgency than ever. Conservationists are hoping that a surge in public participation in 2026 will both improve the data picture and help galvanise support for butterfly-friendly habitats across the UK.

Kate Merry said: *"Taking part in the Big Butterfly Count couldn't be easier, simply spend 15 minutes in any outdoor space and count the butterflies and day-flying moths you see and submit your sightings to help build our interactive map.*

"This information will help conservationists to see how some of our more-common species are faring, which in turn helps to build a wider picture of how all butterflies and moths are doing. It's easy, fun for all the family, and a great excuse to get outside and experience the simple joy of spotting butterflies."

This year's Big Butterfly Count takes place from Friday 17 July - Sunday 9 August. Simply download the free app, spend 15 minutes in any sunny spot and record the number and types of butterflies spotted.

To find out more visit www.bigbutterflycount.org



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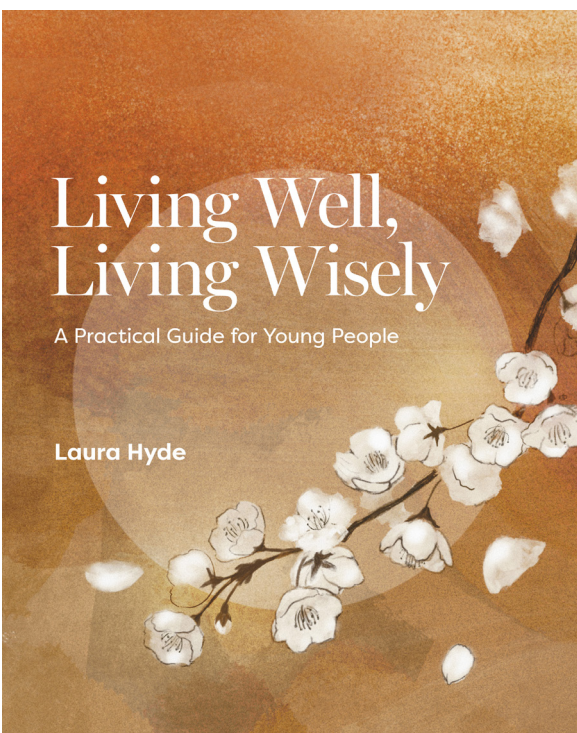
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Richmond upon Thames author Laura Hyde passes on invaluable insights from twenty-eight years of school leadership

Living Well, Living Wisely: A Practical Guide for Young People

A wonderful guide for all young people seeking meaning and purpose in their lives. An impressive blending of ancient and modern wisdom. - **Professor Lord Layard, Director, Wellbeing Programme, Centre for Economic Performance, LSE**



Living Well, Living Wisely provides young people with the opportunity to develop deeper insight into how to live well and responsibly as they approach adulthood. It's designed to be used by skilled teachers who can engage in reflective conversation with secondary school or college students. Teachers and parents will also find its contents valuable for providing support and guidance to the young people in their care.

The hearts and minds of the young openly search for meaning, hope and purpose. Idealism is hungry for expression but only too often lacks depth of understanding. Experience teaches that unless we provide young people with the opportunity to discover a deeper wisdom, we leave them bereft and confused.

The global challenges which lie ahead will require our young to be equipped with clarity, fortitude, and love so that they can learn what it truly means to flourish in a spirit of unity. A life which is inspired by love and service finds fulfilment; it is time to liberate the attention of our young from 'me' to 'we'.

Intended to be delivered through attentive reading, reflective questioning, and conversation, *Living Well, Living Wisely* aims to serve the needs of young people and those who guide them.

Laura Hyde, MEd, Cert Ed, trained and worked in London initially as a primary school teacher, then as headteacher of a secondary school for twenty years. Following this, she was a director of education for eight years. Laura was also a schools' inspector and a governor of a coeducational secondary school. In addition to her work in education, Laura is a qualified life-coach. Her interests and passion focus on providing an educational environment where the best of human potential can flourish.



Laura explains: *"The purpose was to pass on, as best I could, all that life had so far shown to be of importance for young people emerging into adulthood. Twenty-eight years of school leadership has shown me that when young people are given the opportunity to be nourished with wisdom, from a broad range of sources, and to engage attentively with the inspirational insights it contains, their lives are enriched with meaning and purpose."*

St Mary's University

St Mary's Awarded £1.2m Funding to Develop Defence Programmes

St Mary's University, London, is one of 24 universities awarded funding by the Office for Students and the Ministry of Defence to develop new academic programmes to support the development of the defence workforce in the UK.

and mathematics (STEM) industries, as they build expertise to support national priorities in cyber security, AI, secure digital infrastructure, autonomous systems, and advanced engineering.



Responding to the funding announcement, St Mary's Vice-Chancellor Professor Anthony McClaran said, *"I am delighted that the University has been awarded this significant funding to develop these programmes, which are critical to the future resilience of defence infrastructure in the UK. Increasingly, the defence threats we face are digital, and we are proud to play our part in the development of the defence workforce of the future."*

Speaking in the announcement, Minister for Skills Jacqui Smith said,

"By expanding access to high-demand courses in the defence sector, we are creating new opportunities for learners across the country while helping employers access the skilled workforce they need."

"This is a clear example of education and industry working together to deliver growth, strengthen Britain's defence capability and support the jobs of the future."

The funding, which exceeds £1.2m, will support the University to develop specialist facilities and deliver an additional 60 student places between 2026 and 2029 on new and enhanced defence-focused programmes. This will see the University introduce new BSc Defence Systems, BEng Defence Systems Engineering, and Digital & Technology Solutions Professional Apprenticeship programmes, alongside an expansion of existing computing and engineering programmes.

The University will use the funding to develop specialist facilities, including a new Cyber and Defence Simulation Laboratory, and to upgrade existing computing and engineering laboratories. These facilities will provide hands-on learning in cyber defence, embedded systems, robotics, AI-enabled systems, digital twins, and secure network environments.

The new facilities will enable students to develop practical skills aligned to defence and wider science, technology, engineering

The University will also establish a Defence Industry Advisory Board with defence and industry specialists to support curriculum design, mentoring, and applied projects.

St Mary's has a proud history of supporting the defence industry and is a signatory of the Armed Forces Covenant. Last year, as part of its 175th Anniversary celebrations, St Mary's launched the inaugural Remembrance Cup rugby fixtures with Royal Artillery, with the next fixture planned for later in the year.



St Mary's
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London



Community BlueScapes Fair

Celebrate water, nature and community wellbeing in our local area

When: 10am-1pm on Saturday 20th June

Where: The OSO Arts Centre, Barnes, SW13 0LF

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Website: communitybluescapes.commonplace.is



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INSTAGRAM



Heyes and Harrison named England players of the season at The Rugby Awards 2026

Prop Joe Heyes was named England Men's player of the season, while Grand Slam-winning fly half Zoe Harrison won the Women's prize.

The Rugby Awards recognises players from across PREM Rugby and Premiership Women's Rugby (PWR) for their work during the 2025/26 season, and this season a number of England players celebrated.

World Cup winner Harrison led Saracens to a place in the play-offs thanks to a second-place finish. Her metronomic kicking became a feature of the Guinness Women's Six Nations and saw her finish as the PWR's highest points scorer with 146 points.



Heyes enjoyed a stellar year in international colours, making the No. 3 shirt his own, while also helping Leicester Tigers into the play-offs for the second year in a row.

No 8 Tom Willis scooped the award for PREM Rugby player of the season, while his Saracens teammate Noah Caluori was named breakthrough player of the season as the 19-year-old also finished as the league's top try scorer with 18.

The PWR breakthrough player of the season was awarded to Loughborough Lightning's Haineala Lutui, who broke into the Red Roses' squad to win her first cap during the Six Nations.

Red Roses hooker May Campbell, wings Mia Venner and Bo Westcombe-Evans shared the PWR top try scorer title with Rhona Lloyd, each with 12 tries.

Former England international and current Northampton director of rugby Phil Dowson was also named director of rugby of the season.

The award winners can be found below:

- England Men's Player of the Season: Joe Heyes (Leicester Tigers)
- England Women's Player of the Season: Zoe Harrison (Saracens)
- Gallagher Player of the Season: Tom Willis (Saracens)
- Gallagher PREM Breakthrough Player of the Season: Noah Caluori (Saracens)
- Gallagher PREM Director of Rugby of the Season: Phil Dowson (Northampton Saints)
- Gallagher PREM Community Player of the Season: Tom James (Northampton Saints)
- Gallagher PREM Try of the Season: Josh Kemeny (Northampton Saints) vs Sale Sharks in Round 7
- Gallagher PREM Top Try Scorer: Noah Caluori (Saracens) – 18 tries



Brentford appoint Damien Duff as first-team assistant coach

Written by Brentford Football Club

Damien Duff has joined Brentford as first-team assistant coach.

Duff, who led Shelbourne to the League of Ireland Premier Division title in 2024, will begin work with the Bees later this month.

“I’ve known Damien for a long time,” said head coach Keith Andrews.

“I’ve seen him up close throughout his coaching journey. We’ve been on courses together and worked together as coaches with the Republic of Ireland national team.”

“Damien will bring experience, presence and a real level of detail to our coaching department. He will add to the great group we already have and I’m very pleased that he is joining us.”

Duff enjoyed an illustrious playing career spanning almost two decades, making more than 600 senior appearances and earning 100 caps for the Republic of Ireland.



Starring under José Mourinho, the winger won two Premier League titles, the League Cup and Community Shield during three years with Chelsea.

Duff also represented Blackburn Rovers - where he lifted the League Cup in 2002 – as well as Newcastle United, Fulham, Melbourne City and Shamrock Rovers.

After retiring from playing in 2015, Duff moved into coaching with Shamrock Rovers before joining the Republic of Ireland set-up as a coach in 2018.

He later became first-team coach at Celtic, helping the club secure a domestic treble during the 2019/20 campaign.

Duff took charge of Shelbourne in November 2021 and oversaw a significant period of progress at the Dublin club, guiding them into UEFA Conference League qualifying before delivering the League of Ireland Premier Division title in 2024 - Shelbourne’s first league championship in 18 years.

He now joins Keith Andrews’ first-team staff ahead of the 2026/27 Premier League season.



Thames Water Dumped Raw Sewage 9,000 Times In 2025 As GMB Congress Calls for Worker Seat on New Super Regulator

Thames Water dumped sewage into waterways 9,189 times in 2025 – as GMB calls for workers to have a seat on the new super regulator.

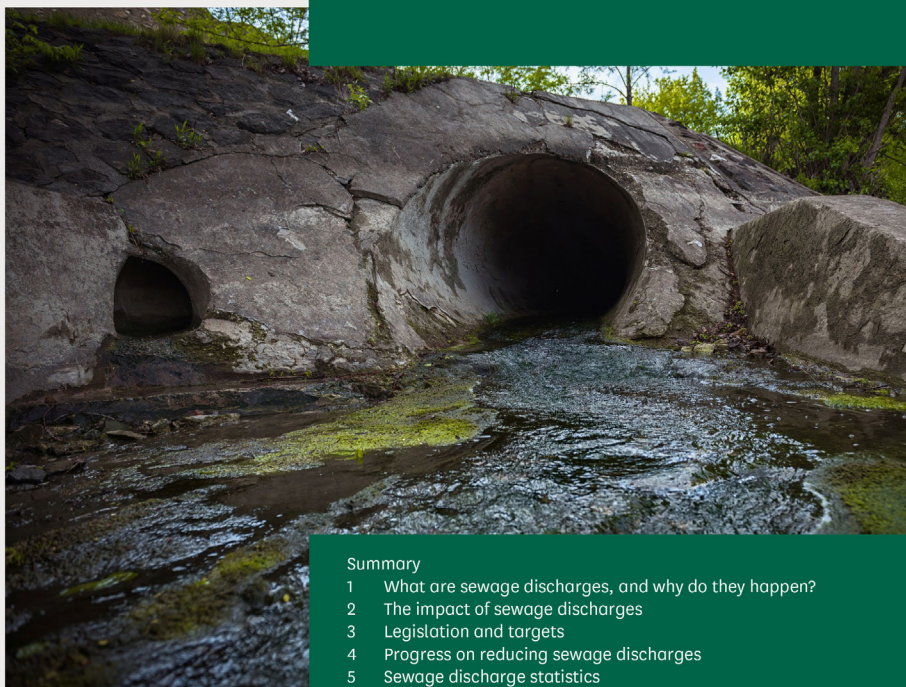


Research Briefing

31 March 2026

By Nuala Burnett,
Paul Bolton

Sewage discharges



Summary

- 1 What are sewage discharges, and why do they happen?
- 2 The impact of sewage discharges
- 3 Legislation and targets
- 4 Progress on reducing sewage discharges
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commonslibrary.parliament.uk

The spills – which are recorded by the Environment Agency – pumped out raw, untreated sewage for a total of 107,822 hours.

Earlier this year, the Government announced Ofwat would be scrapped and a new ‘super regulator’ would take its place.

GMB’s annual congress in Blackpool today [8 June] discussed the figures and supported a motion calling for ‘a permanent worker seat on the board to safeguard from future failures.’

Cliff Roney, who worked for Thames Water for over 40 years and was recently featured in Channel 4’s *Dirty Business*, told GMB Congress:

“Over the last 37 years, the ineptitude and failure of Ofwat to regulate the water industry across the UK has cost billpayers dearly as bills rise indefinitely and our waterways are polluted with filth.

“GMB has been instrumental in calling for the abolition of Ofwat so that a new single, powerful regulator can be established.

“Now that this is in progress, it is vital that the new regulator sets aside a permanent worker seat to safeguard from future failures and protect customers.

“GMB has had a trade union seat on other government regulators and independent industry bodies, ensuring that workers voices cannot be silenced.”



Review into access to banking services begins

Communities, businesses and organisations have been invited to share their views on accessing face-to-face banking services, as the independent review launches a Call for Evidence today.

The Review, commissioned by the Treasury last month, is examining the impact of changes in access to in person banking services and identifying whether this is causing detriment to consumers, communities and businesses.

The Call for Evidence sets out the key themes the Review is examining and is open to anyone with relevant views or experiences – including individuals who rely on in-person banking, community groups, businesses, and organisations working in financial services and inclusion.

Rachel Blake, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said:

Banking services matter to communities and businesses across the UK – and that includes face-to-face services. Whether you are responding as an individual or a business, your experience could shape the recommendations this review makes to Government.

Where evidence shows people are being left behind, we will act – including through legislation if necessary.

Richard Lloyd OBE, Chair of Access to Banking review, said:

Banking is an essential service needed by every consumer, community and business in the UK. The Access to Banking Review wants to gather the best possible up-to-date evidence of the challenges faced by those who need in-person banking services. This evidence will help to establish the impact of changing services, identify who is most affected, and underpin our assessment of what further action may be required.

The Call for Evidence will remain open for six weeks, closing on 20 July 2026.

Responses should be submitted no later than 20 July via the online [Smart Survey](#).

The Review will use the evidence to assess customer needs, the scale of any detriment, and the future trajectory of in-person banking services, before making recommendations to Government in October 2026. The Call for Evidence is available on the Review's GOV.UK [page](#).

The Review follows the announcement of the Financial Services and Markets Bill in the King's Speech, in which the Government has committed to act where necessary, including taking legislative action where the evidence supports intervention to protect access to banking services.

The Bill will also take forward some of the credit union common bond reforms announced in March, making it easier for credit unions in Great Britain to expand and broaden their membership.

The changes will see more people access affordable credit and a safe place to save. The move will strengthen community-based financial services, delivering on the manifesto pledge to grow the mutuals sector.

As part of the Bill, the Government is also introducing Commercial Credit Data Sharing (CCDS) to help small businesses access finance more easily. It works by requiring certain banks to share SMEs' credit information (with their consent) with credit reference agencies, who then make this available to other lenders – helping them make better decisions and boosting competition.



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Published by:

Twickenham & Richmond Tribune (in association with World InfoZone Limited)
Registered in England & Wales
Reg No 10549345

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

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