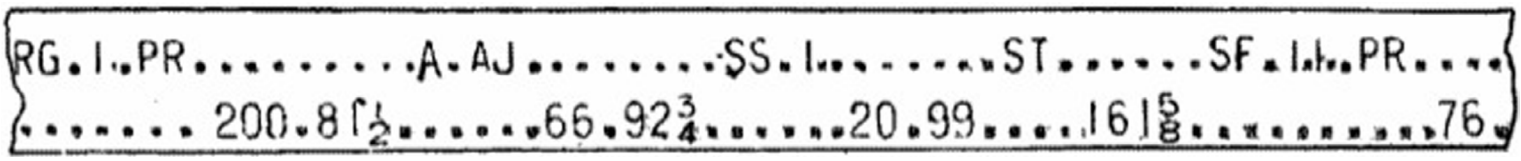
Est 2016 A newspaper for the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Edition 524

Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



Christmas ..., Twickenham Green
Photo by Berkley Driscoll

20th November 2026
T&RT



TickerTape - News in Brief

Rugby at Twickenham Stadium

From RFU Home Turf

On Saturday, we host England v New Zealand

This will be a capacity match.
Kick off will be at 14:10.

Whitton, Rugby & London Roads will close 12:10-14:10 and 15:40-18:30, although we will reopen earlier if safe to do so.

CPZ in operation 11:00-23:00

RIP Fraser Cullen

From RFU Home Turf

It is with great sadness that we have heard that Fraser Cullen, the former RFU Community Engagement Officer in Twickenham, has passed away.

Many of you will remember Fraser, who served in the role for 16 years from 1998 to 2014 and was involved closely in many community events, especially the Strawberry Hill Music Festival, about which he was deeply passionate.

Fraser also introduced the Rugby Post (now Lineout) newsletter and the residents' ticket ballot, which was then done by returning paper slips!

We extend our sincere condolences to his family and many friends in Twickenham and thank him again for all the work he did in our community.



The Tree Agency

darryl parkin

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The Local Picture Postcard Page - Part 353

Hampton Court – Tram Terminus

By Alan Winter

Three postcards today which all show busy tram activity outside Hampton Court gates by the bridge.



Trams began running to Hampton Court in April 1903. The Hampton Court railway station and the old London United Tramways terminus served the same iconic destination from opposite sides of the River Thames, representing two distinct eras of suburban leisure travel. If you arrived at Hampton Court railway station you had a five - minute walk over the bridge to access the palace. The tram terminus however dropped you off right outside the palace main gates.



When electric trams arrived in 1903, they offered a cheaper, direct-to-the-gate alternative for day-trippers. This stiff competition pushed the London and South - Western Railway (LSWR) to modernize and electrify the Hampton Court branch line by 1916.

The historical tram terminus at Hampton Court was operated by London United Tramways and served routes connecting the area to destinations like Shepherd's Bush, Richmond Bridge, and Twickenham.

The tram lines ran across Kingston Bridge and towards Hampton Court, featuring granite sett blocks on key approaches like the stretch from Kingston Bridge to Hampton Court.



In the 1930s, the tram routes around Hampton Court and local corridors were converted into trolleybus services (such as the 667 trolleybus), which later gave way to standard motor buses in the early 1960s.

Sections of the old Edwardian tram tracks have occasionally been unearthed during local engineering and roadworks in the surrounding Thames-side neighbourhoods.

In the 1930s, the tram routes around Hampton Court and local corridors were converted into trolleybus services (such as the 667 trolleybus), which later gave way to standard motor buses in the early 1960s.

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LETTERS

Dear Sir,

Open letter to the Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Committee Proposed changes to allotment charges

Borough of Richmond Allotment Group (BRAG) represents over 2000 plot holders, and their families across 23 allotment sites in the Borough. BRAG recognises the severe financial pressures facing Richmond Council and accepts that some allotment changes may be necessary as part of the Council's response to its wider financial pressures. Richmond's allotment rents are already at the higher level when compared to other Boroughs across London: https://share.google/ch12mGAEOvd3yF0rJ . Our concern is whether the proposed 19–22% increase in the fee per rod is necessary and proportionate in a single year, and whether the separate proposal to remove the universal over-60 discount is fair and appropriately targeted. With 53.7% of plot holders currently receiving the over-60 concession, the cumulative impact of the two changes could be material for a significant part of the allotment community.

These are the changes set out in the circulated [https://cabnet.richmond.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=799&MId=500000760]

Before approving the proposals, we ask the Committee to publish clearly the financial case for each change, including:

- the current allotments budget and funding shortfall;
  the additional income expected from the proposed rent increase and concession change respectively;
  the assumptions underlying the proposed 19–22% increase;
  worked examples showing the financial impact on typical plot holders;
  how many existing over-60 concession holders are expected to qualify under the Fairer Access Criteria; and
  the assessment that has been made of the affordability and equality impacts of the proposed changes.
  What other cost saving initiatives have been considered?

For Example: Plot clearances and Woody waste collections have added a huge amount of cost to the Allotments budget over the past 5 years – should this policy be reconsidered in light of the budgetary pressures and workable alternatives put in place?

BRAG would welcome the opportunity to work with the Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Committee, the Parks team and the Council directly in how alternative approaches could be implemented across all sites. BRAG therefore asks the Committee to consider a phased increase over two or three years, coupled with transitional protection for existing concession holders and a review after the first year. This would recognise the Council's need to improve the financial sustainability of the service while avoiding an unusually sharp

adjustment for plot holders in a single year.

Allotments deliver wider benefits through physical and mental wellbeing, social connection, biodiversity and sustainable local food growing. Households are feeling inflationary pressures like never before. This change will simply further add to those pressures. The ability to grow and provide fresh food for their families has benefits that extend beyond the household account. For many of our over 60's plot holders, the allotment site is one of the only opportunities for exercise and social interaction within the Borough. We know from first-hand experience and conversations, that the allotment can be a lifeline for those who live alone and suffer from social isolation. It is precisely these individuals who will be hit hardest by these proposals. We believe these benefits should form part of the assessment of a fair and sustainable charging policy.

A simple price rise may help a budget shortfall in the short term, but ultimately you shift the cost of this elsewhere on the Council's balance sheet, in terms of increased demand on physical and mental health care, and social support. We appreciate that there are no easy choices in the current financial environment. BRAG wants to approach this discussion in that spirit, recognising the pressures facing the Council while representing the very legitimate concerns of allotment holders who are passionate custodians of these spaces and manage them at their own expense.

We believe there is an opportunity to find a better balance: one that improves the financial sustainability of the allotment service without imposing an unnecessarily abrupt increase on plot holders. Moreover, allotment holders are being asked to disproportionately shoulder the burden of meeting the funding shortfall. Our view is this could be met through more proportionate cost increases to organisations that use municipal parks and facilities for group events, and paid events open to those from outside the Borough and which themselves often disrupt the enjoyment of these spaces for the Borough's residents.

We therefore hope the Committee will consider the alternatives we have proposed and invite BRAG into a constructive discussion before the changes are finalised. We are ready to work with the Council on a solution that is fair to taxpayers, workable for the Council and keeps allotments accessible to Richmond residents.

Yours sincerely,
BRAG Committee

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Petition on affordable housing presented to LBRUT 14 July 2026

I have submitted the following written question for the Council's ASSHHC tonight (17 November 2026). I will be attending the meeting.

It relates to Item 8 of the agenda : Richmond Corporate Plan (RCP) Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Proposals for 2026/27

"In the absence of any Affordable Housing Update report this year, what were the targets for completion and actual completions of affordable for the last four years, how many of the 229 target in 2026/7 are properties that were supposed to complete in 2025/6 and what steps are being taken to increase completions? (53 words)"

I hope you may be interested in covering this in the Twickenham Tribune.

Kind regards

Pam Marum

Dear Sir,

Opening of York House as the Civic Centre Nov 1926

Tribune readers may not be aware that 16 Nov. 1926 was an important date when York House became the Civic Centre?

Photo attached from Dick Cashmore's 'History of York House' book.

Best wishes,

Paul Leonard
Twickenham



Fig. 23. Group taken at the opening of York House, 16 November 1926

Front row (left to right): E.G. Stray, Town Clerk; Alderman E.C. Dyer; Queen Augusta; The Duke of York; Dr J.R. Leeson, Charter Mayor; the Duchess of York; King Manuel; Sir William Joynson-Hicks, M.P.; the Rev. W.P. Cole Sheane, Vicar of Twickenham

LETTERS

Dear Tribune,

God's Own Country.

Incredibly, Richmond has been named for the second time as the happiest place to live in Britain in an annual survey for reasons which include access to nature, the River Thames, and deer-spotting in Richmond Park.

Three good reasons, of course, but being named the happiest place in Britain doesn't say much for the rest of the country. And the survey fails to mention some of the lesser delights of our borough.

In fact, the true delights of Richmond have all been made by God, namely my God, your God, or whoever else made them. They certainly weren't made by the local Council which, unlike a benevolent god, acts as an overbearing and dictatorial supreme being for which it seems to imagine it deserves credit.

What it does deserve credit for is its offensive, arrogant, virtue-signalling councillors who ignore the views of residents, a Department of Transport 'Red' rating for the overall condition of its potholed and badly patched roads which were rated the second worst in England last year, money wasted by pointlessly widening pavements thus causing more traffic jams, rubbish left on the streets, and a woman fined for the heinous crime of tipping her coffee cup dregs down the drain rather than taking them on the bus and inconveniencing other passengers.

Plus the fact that it's now impossible to walk anywhere safely because of bicycles, rental and private, dumped dangerously on the footways or ridden illegally on them at speed by aggressive, violent people who, in the eyes of the Council, can do no wrong because of its fanatical obsession of *'Two wheels good – four wheels bad'.*

I've had to avoid these cyclists over 20 times, including having been threatened with serious violence three times merely because I was waiting for a bus or just walking, with two occasions necessitating 999 calls for offences under the Public Order Act 1986. Our invisible police did nothing and the Council, who foisted this blight on us and clearly condone such behaviour because they do nothing about it, pass the buck to the police.

All that plus the increasingly oppressive atmosphere with more and more cameras and street signs saying: *'Don't do this, Don't do that'* – almost every street sign tells you NOT to do something. Every restriction on freedom is made in the name of 'safety' yet crime, aggression and anger are everywhere.

This week, when meeting friends arriving from Switzerland at Richmond station (which, incredibly, does not have a train map on its wall for visitors) I was extremely embarrassed because what greeted us right outside the station was a 'Rainbow' crossing, initially much lauded by the Council but now just a disgusting, derelict eyesore. Another pointless, virtue-signalling waste of YOUR money. The high street was equally inspiring, with its trashy looking shops, some sad and untenanted, and over-priced restaurants. No wonder our high streets are dying.

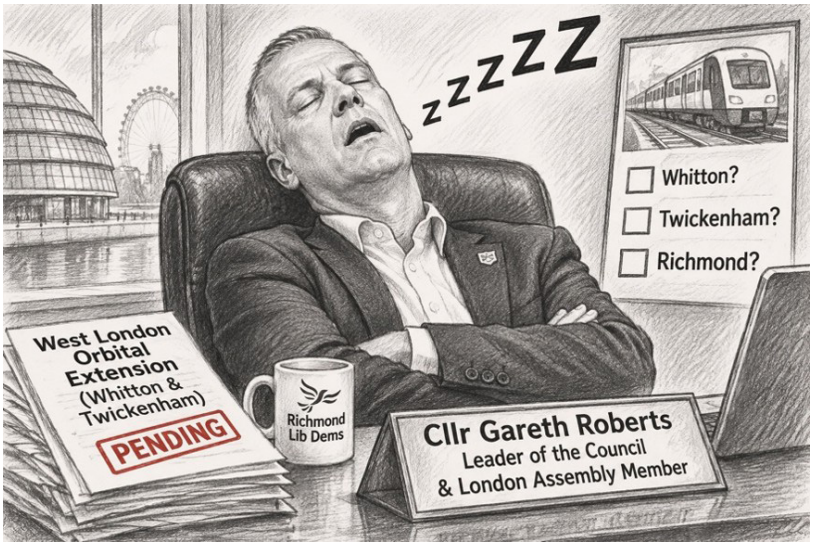
Like me, my friends could remember when Richmond really was a lovely town. But no longer.

That's why I avoid the 'Happiest Place in Britain'.

Michael Jay
Hampton.

Mind the Gap: Richmond Lib Dems Demand Answers, But Have Some of Their Own to Give

Michael Jones



Richmond's Liberal Democrats have accused Transport for London of overlooking the borough in its plans for the West London Orbital railway. But their complaints raise an awkward question: who has been representing Richmond's interests at City Hall?

A Railway Extension for Thousands More Residents

Thousands of residents could benefit if the proposed railway were extended beyond Hounslow to Whitton and Twickenham, improving access to jobs, education and major transport hubs. Richmond Council is urging TfL to reconsider its proposals, arguing that existing and underused railway lines could bring the service within reach of an additional 30,000 to 45,000 residents.

Cllr Alexander Ehmann, Deputy Leader of Richmond Council and Chair of its Transport and Air Quality Committee, declared: "The West London Orbital is an opportunity to make journeys across London easier, and its potential should not hit the buffers at Hounslow."
He added: "Our borough has waited nearly 20 years for major new transport infrastructure. Bringing this line to Whitton and Twickenham could make a real difference to the lives of our residents and beyond."

The proposed extension could improve connections to the Elizabeth line and future HS2 services at Old Oak Common. Links with South Western Railway at Twickenham could also benefit passengers travelling from further afield, including those using the Kingston Loop. Better connections to the Allianz Stadium would offer supporters an alternative to driving or travelling through central London, potentially reducing congestion on match days.

The council acknowledges operational challenges, including limited track capacity and difficulties turning trains around at Twickenham. Nevertheless, it argues that these obstacles should be weighed against the wider economic and transport benefits.

"Simply Not Good Enough"

Cllr Ehmann was particularly forthright in his criticism of TfL: "While we applaud the

broad ambition of the West London Orbital, it seems bizarre to boost Hounslow's extensive connectivity, while leaving our residents entirely overlooked. As things stand, it's simply not good enough."

But if Richmond has been overlooked, perhaps the Liberal Democrats should begin by looking a little closer to home. The borough's London Assembly representative is none other than Cllr Gareth Roberts, who also happens to be Leader of Richmond Council. He therefore occupies two positions from which to champion local transport interests, including a seat at City Hall scrutinising the Mayor and TfL.

An Awkward Question for the Council Leader

The council's criticism raises an obvious question. If extending the West London Orbital is so important, what efforts has Roberts made at City Hall to ensure Whitton and Twickenham were included in the plans?

The West London Orbital has been under discussion for years. This is hardly a new opportunity, and the case for extending the route westwards did not suddenly emerge with the council's latest consultation response.

Neither Roberts nor the council can instruct TfL to build a railway. But that is not the issue. The responsibility of an Assembly member is to scrutinise transport decisions, identify opportunities for investment and ensure that constituents' interests are represented while proposals are still being developed.

The relevant question is therefore not why Roberts has failed to deliver a railway, but what sustained representations he has made to secure an extension to Whitton and Twickenham. If the borough's needs have been overlooked, residents are entitled to know what was done to bring them to TfL's attention.

Too Little, Too Late?

The council is now calling for detailed feasibility and timetabling work, a transparent assessment of infrastructure requirements and a full comparison of costs and benefits. It also insists that any extension must not reduce existing services or undermine reliability on the Hounslow Loop.

TfL is being asked to work with Network Rail, South Western Railway, the Rugby Football Union and other partners to examine delivery and funding. These are reasonable demands. The question is whether they could have been advanced earlier, giving Richmond's case greater prominence as the proposals developed.

The Liberal Democrats are right to argue that the borough should not be left behind as London's transport network expands. But having declared the present situation "simply not good enough", the council must also be prepared to account for its own efforts to influence the plans.

After all, when the council leader also represents the borough at City Hall, the obvious question is not simply why TfL has overlooked Richmond, but what its elected representatives have done to prevent it.

Richmond's School Closures Raise Questions About the Future of Local Education

By James Knight



As falling pupil numbers force difficult decisions, parents are challenging whether Richmond Council has properly considered the alternatives, and whether the consequences for children extend beyond the balance sheet.

The proposed closure of Kew Riverside Primary School has brought Richmond Council face to face with one of the more uncomfortable responsibilities of local government: deciding when financial necessity should outweigh the value of an established community institution.

At the **Education and Children's Services Committee on 12 November**, councillors agreed to advance proposals to close Kew Riverside and amalgamate two schools in Hampton Wick, despite sustained objections from parents. Fifteen public speakers addressed the meeting, which also received two written questions. The decisions authorise the publication of statutory notices rather than the closures themselves, with final recommendations expected in April 2027.

Behind the immediate controversy lies a more difficult question. Richmond's declining birth rate is reducing demand for primary school places, pressuring budgets and making some schools increasingly expensive to operate. Yet while the demographic problem is real, the choices made in response remain political and administrative judgements, not inevitable consequences of arithmetic.

Kew Riverside School Closure

Council officers argue that falling admissions have undermined Kew Riverside's financial sustainability. Although the school has not yet accumulated a deficit, it is drawing upon reserves to meet expenditure, with further reductions in pupil numbers expected to worsen its position.

Henry Kilpin, the council's Associate Director for School Place Planning, reminded councillors that 90 schools across London had closed or amalgamated during the previous five years. "Our approach prioritises sustainability, treating closure as a last resort," he explained, emphasising that the recommendation did not reflect educational standards. Nevertheless, having assessed the alternatives, officers concluded that "closure is the only viable path".

Parents remain unconvinced. They have developed a recovery plan intended to rebuild admissions and restore financial stability, arguing that the school deserves an opportunity to demonstrate that it can survive. Officers questioned the reliability of the projected improvements, while the governing body supported the proposals in principle but did not formally endorse them.

The disagreement exposes an important distinction between identifying financial risk and demonstrating that closure is unavoidable. A school with falling admissions may be unsustainable under existing arrangements, but that does not necessarily establish that alternative arrangements cannot succeed. Equally, a recovery plan must be judged against credible evidence rather than understandable optimism. The council's responsibility is to subject both propositions to comparable scrutiny.

There is also the danger of a self-fulfilling decline. Once closure becomes a serious possibility, prospective parents may understandably hesitate to enrol their children, while existing families face uncertainty about the school's future. Admissions can deteriorate further, reinforcing the financial projections that originally prompted the proposal. Whether this effect has been adequately reflected in the council's assessment deserves careful examination.

For Richmond's Liberal Democrat administration, the challenge is therefore not simply to establish that Kew Riverside faces serious financial difficulties. It is to demonstrate that closure represents a better outcome than the realistic alternatives.

The Children Behind the Financial Calculations

Some of the most affecting contributions came from parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities, who described Kew Riverside as an environment in which vulnerable pupils had developed confidence, established friendships and made educational progress.

Iona Ferguson spoke on behalf of families of 25 children with additional needs, drawing attention to the importance of continuity and the relationships that had developed between pupils and staff. Officers acknowledged these concerns, promising dedicated support for children with Education, Health and Care Plans and other special educational needs should the closure proceed.

Yet the distinction between finding another school place and securing an equally suitable education is fundamental. For children whose progress depends upon familiar routines, trusted adults and carefully established support, relocation can represent a substantial educational disruption rather than a straightforward administrative transfer.

This does not mean that schools serving vulnerable children can never close. It does mean that the consequences must be assessed with particular care. Financial savings achieved in one institution may also be offset, at least in part, by additional support required elsewhere.
The quality of the council's decision will ultimately be measured not only by the strength of its financial forecasts, but by what happens to the children whose education is being reorganised.

Hampton Wick: The battle Over Religious Education

The committee also considered proposals to close Hampton Wick Infant and Nursery School and extend St John the Baptist Church of England Junior School into a single primary school accommodating 210 pupils aged three to eleven.

The council argues that amalgamation would provide a more sustainable arrangement as pupil numbers decline. However, the proposed governance model would also replace existing community infant school provision with a Church of England voluntary aided school, prompting questions about parental choice.

The consultation recorded 74 responses favouring community or secular provision, compared with 60 supporting voluntary aided status. Although these figures cannot be treated as a representative ballot, they demonstrate that the proposed religious designation remains contested.

There is a political contrast here. The Young Liberals, the Liberal Democrats' youth organisation, published a manifesto in August advocating the phasing out of faith-based school structures. Three months later, Richmond's Liberal Democrat administration was advancing proposals that would extend such provision. The youth wing's manifesto is not binding party policy, but the difference illustrates the competing principles involved.

The right of parents to have their religious and philosophical convictions respected in education is also recognised under the European Convention on Human Rights, although it does not guarantee access to a particular type of school. Councillor Humphreys expressed her reservations plainly: "I'm extremely uncomfortable with the proposal that it would be a voluntary aided faith school.

Officers acknowledged that assurances about the proposed school's future arrangements could not be legally guaranteed. As Kilpin explained, "from a legal perspective we can't guarantee anything in terms of admissions, recruitment or governance". The council maintains that its recommendation reflects financial and educational considerations, rather than simply the preferences of the Church of England diocese. Nevertheless, the distinction between the financial case for amalgamation and the separate question of religious governance deserves greater clarity. One does not necessarily determine the other.

The Wider Problem: Are Secondary Schools Next?
Perhaps the most consequential discussion concerned a problem that has yet to attract comparable public attention. The smaller cohorts now passing through Richmond's primary schools will eventually reach secondary age, potentially creating similar pressures on staffing, budgets and educational provision.

"It is coming down the line for secondary schools," Councillor Humphreys warned. Referring to projections towards the end of the decade, she added: "It's three years away."
Her request for more detailed forecasts raised a question about the council's longer term planning. Demographic change is not unexpected. The children who will enter secondary education in three years are already attending primary schools, making future demand more predictable than many other pressures facing local government.

Secondary schools also have particular vulnerabilities. Reduced pupil numbers can make it harder to sustain specialist teaching, a broad curriculum and financially viable sixth forms. By the time these pressures become acute, the opportunities for orderly adjustment may already have narrowed.

The council cannot reverse demographic trends through administrative decisions, but it can anticipate their consequences. A coherent borough wide strategy would provide greater reassurance than a succession of individual school reorganisations prompted by financial difficulties.

Childcare, Affordability and the Limits of Council Statistics
A similar distinction between statistical provision and practical experience emerged during consideration of the borough's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. The report indicated that Richmond had sufficient childcare places overall, but Councillor Humphreys questioned whether this adequately reflected the difficulties facing parents.

"One of the biggest challenges is not just sufficiency, it's affordability as well," she observed.
Her point goes to the heart of how public services are evaluated. A childcare place may exist in official statistics while remaining inaccessible to a family because of its cost, location, opening hours or suitability for a child with additional needs.

In a borough with high housing costs, the difference between theoretical availability and practical affordability is particularly significant. Councillor Frost also questioned how future demand was being assessed, reinforcing the need for planning that looks beyond present capacity.

The meeting eventually ran out of time, leaving reports on financial monitoring and corporate performance indicators to be considered in December. "We've only got six minutes to get through four reports," committee chair Councillor Julia Cambridge acknowledged. There was an understandable need to allow parents to express their concerns. Nevertheless, the postponement illustrated the difficulty of maintaining effective financial scrutiny when committees face substantial and contentious agendas.

A Test of Political Responsibility
Richmond's Liberal Democrats are confronting pressures shared by councils across London. Falling birth rates, declining school rolls and constrained education budgets present genuine challenges, and preserving every existing institution regardless of cost would not necessarily serve children well.

But financial stewardship involves more than identifying savings. It requires weighing measurable expenditure against less easily quantified public benefits, considering the consequences for vulnerable families and distinguishing between what is unavoidable and what remains a matter of choice.

The coming months will test whether the council has applied those principles consistently. At Kew Riverside, the issue is whether closure has been established as the most credible option. At Hampton Wick, it is whether the proposed arrangements adequately respect parental choice. Across the borough, it is whether the administration is preparing for demographic changes that are already visible. A school is more than a collection of classrooms and a budget. Closing one may sometimes be necessary, but necessity should be demonstrated, not merely asserted.



The Postcard Pages

A history of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames seen through the pages of the Twickenham & Richmond Tribune

Reserve your copy HERE



The Twickenham and Richmond Tribune celebrated its 10th Anniversary on 11th November. To celebrate this, we are publishing a book based on the Postcard Pages, which have featured in the Tribune.

More details to follow but the book is scheduled to be ready towards the end of the month. The book will be a clothbound A4 hardback, with approximately 240 pages.

It will make an excellent local Christmas present and purchasing details will be announced shortly.







Closing an 'outstanding' Richmond school to grow a faith school is the wrong answer

From Humanists UK

Richmond Council is looking at closing an 'outstanding' school in Hampton Wick and moving its pupils to a nearby Church of England school. That would leave local families with just one school that isn't religious. Humanists UK is urging the council to listen to parents and keep a local school that is open to everyone.

Under the plans, the two schools would become a single Church of England voluntary aided primary school from September 2027. This would leave one school of no religious character in the planning area, alongside three faith schools.

An earlier consultation found 'strong community desire' for a school of no religious character that is open to all. Respondents were concerned that a faith school could put off non-religious families and could change who is admitted and who is employed. Parents say the council has ignored their views.

Not just a change of name

At a voluntary aided school, the governing body sets its own admissions policy. The Church of England appoints most of the governors. When such a school is oversubscribed, it is legally allowed to give priority to children on religious grounds. It can also take religion into account when hiring and promoting teachers. The diocese says faith would not affect admissions or recruitment at the merged school, but the council's own report admits this cannot be guaranteed: a future governing body could change the policy, and the proposal contains no permanent safeguards.

Richy Thompson, Director of Human Rights and Advocacy at Humanists UK, said:

'The fair option is a merged school of no religious character, open equally to every child in Hampton Wick whatever their family's religion or belief. That is what local families have asked for. Councils merging schools should not assume that the faith school's identity survives while the community school disappears, least of all when the community school is the "outstanding" one.

'Falling pupil numbers mean councils face hard choices, but those choices shouldn't leave families with fewer inclusive schools. We urge Richmond Council to listen to parents and properly consider a merged school with no religious character before it decides in April.'

A pattern across the country

Richmond is not an isolated case. Falling pupil numbers are forcing councils across England to merge and close schools. The same thing happens again and again: a school of no religious character is the one lost, and a faith school takes its place. Faith school takeovers are not the answer to falling pupil numbers.

- In Guildford, Surrey County Council paused plans to absorb Merrow Junior School into a new Church of England primary, after widespread opposition forced a rethink.
- In Bristol, the Department for Education rejected a plan to merge Hotwells Primary School, the only school of no religious character in its neighbourhood, into a Church of England school.
- In Southwark, plans to replace Charlotte Sharman Primary with a Church of England school were dropped, but the school was later threatened with closure.
- In Somerset, the High Court upheld a merger that left every local primary school religious.

Is your school under threat of a merger with a faith school? Get in touch.

Richmond's Housing Crisis: Fine Words, Too Few Homes and a Growing Bill for Taxpayers

By James Knight



Richmond's Liberal Democrat council speaks frequently about the importance of affordable housing and supporting vulnerable residents. But figures presented to councillors this week raise an uncomfortable question: how much of that compassion is being translated into homes people can actually live in?

Just 120 affordable homes have been completed over four years, housing association satisfaction remains troublingly low, and the council faces a growing financial burden as more than 700 households remain dependent on temporary accommodation. Meanwhile, rising demand for children's mental health services and increasing pressure on health visitors reveal wider difficulties confronting some of the borough's most vulnerable residents.

The figures emerged at Richmond Council's Adult Social Services, Health and Housing Committee on 17 November. Although many of these pressures reflect national circumstances, the meeting exposed a recurring tension between the ambitions expressed in council policy and the outcomes residents experience.

Affordable housing: exceeding targets, but failing to meet demand

Perhaps the most revealing figures emerged from a written question submitted by Pam Murrell, a Labour party campaigner who challenged the absence of the council's annual affordable housing update and requested details of housing targets and completions.

The council confirmed that 120 affordable homes had been completed between April 2022 and March 2026, an average of just 30 annually. Officers emphasised that this exceeded the Corporate Plan target of 88 homes over the same period. Yet that raises an obvious question: was a target averaging just 22 affordable homes annually sufficiently ambitious for a borough facing considerable housing pressures?

The figures also revealed that 63 of the 229 affordable homes forecast for 2026/27 were developments originally expected to be completed the previous year. Consequently, more than a quarter of this year's anticipated delivery consists of delayed completions rather than additional homes beyond the previous programme.

Officers cited construction inflation, building safety requirements and financial pressures on housing associations as reasons for delays. The council has also secured an indicative allocation of Greater London Authority funding under the forthcoming affordable housing programme, although final confirmation is still pending. These are substantial considerations, but they do not entirely explain why Richmond's published housing ambitions have been so modest.

The wider implications are particularly significant because Richmond is subject to the tilted balance in national planning policy, under which the presumption in favour of sustainable development carries additional weight when relevant housing delivery requirements are not met. The Government's 2025 Housing Delivery Test recorded the borough achieving only 63 per cent of its required housing delivery over three years, considerably below the 75 per cent threshold. The tilted balance does not remove statutory protections or mean that every proposed development should receive permission. Nevertheless, it places additional pressure on the council's ability to resist unsuitable development, making sustained housing underdelivery a matter not merely of social policy but of planning consequences.

There is an uncomfortable paradox in seeking to preserve Richmond's character while failing to provide sufficient homes for younger families and those on ordinary incomes. A borough's character is determined not only by its buildings and green spaces, but by the communities able to live within them.

Housing association satisfaction remains poor

The committee also examined the performance of Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing, one of the borough's major housing associations. Its representatives reported that satisfaction among rented tenants had reached 69.6 per cent in 2025/26, narrowly below its 70 per cent target, while satisfaction among homeowners, including shared owners and leaseholders, stood at just 33 per cent, although this represented an improvement from 30 per cent the previous year. These were figures for the housing association's wider operations rather than Richmond alone. Nevertheless, local residents provided troubling examples of the difficulties behind the statistics.

Mike Burton, a community ambassador at Cedar House in Kew, described a serious sewage leak affecting an underground car park used by residents, including wheelchair users and families with pushchairs. Despite being reported as an emergency, the problem took 22 days to resolve. MTVH's Director of Neighbourhoods, Dom Bryant, apologised and acknowledged that the delay was unacceptable.

The discussion also raised questions about whether repairs recorded as completed had necessarily resolved the underlying problem. It is a familiar weakness in public service performance reporting: measuring whether an action has been taken is not always the same as establishing whether the problem has been solved.

Although MTVH is responsible for maintaining its properties, the episode illustrates why housing associations require effective scrutiny. For residents, a satisfactory service is measured not by the completion of an administrative process, but by the condition of the homes in which they live.

Temporary accommodation costs contribute to £3.2 million overspend

Richmond's housing difficulties are also placing increasing pressure on council finances. More than 700 households are currently living in temporary accommodation, with approximately three-quarters of placements relying on costly nightly arrangements.

To reduce expenditure, the council proposes securing between 250 and 300 privately owned properties through longer leases over the next five years. Officers estimated average savings of approximately £6,000 per property annually, potentially reaching £1.8 million a year once 300 properties had been secured.

The proposal appears financially sensible, although the anticipated savings remain dependent on securing suitable properties at affordable rents. The scale of the challenge is evident in the committee's latest financial report, which forecasts an overspend of £3.248 million against an annual budget of £88.867 million.

This represents a substantial deterioration from the £514,000 overspend forecast just three months earlier. Housing services account for approximately £2.7 million of the latest projected shortfall, having moved from a modest forecast underspend in the first quarter.

Councillor James Chard questioned the recurrence of housing budget pressures and whether the financial forecasts had adequately reflected the likely costs. Officers explained that demand for temporary accommodation had stabilised, but that anticipated savings were taking longer to materialise.

The distinction is important. Where substantial expenditure pressures persist across successive financial years, the issue becomes not simply whether costs are increasing, but whether budgets and proposed savings are sufficiently realistic.

With Richmond already considering significant reductions in expenditure elsewhere, the growing cost of temporary accommodation demonstrates how the consequences of inadequate housing supply can absorb resources that might otherwise support other public services.

Children's mental health referrals more than double

The committee also received an annual report from South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust, revealing a sharp increase in demand for children's neurodevelopmental assessments.

Referrals in Richmond rose from 585 in 2020/21 to 1,234 in 2025/26, an increase of approximately 111 per cent. When responsibility for the assessment pathway transferred in November 2025, more than 250 children and young people were awaiting assessment, with some waiting up to two and a half years.

The Trust reported progress in reducing waiting lists for psychological therapies, while outlining plans for a £1.9 million mental health emergency department serving southwest London. Further proposals include neighbourhood mental health centres intended to improve access to treatment.

These services fall principally within NHS responsibility, but their effectiveness also depends upon cooperation with schools, social care and other local services. Delayed assessments can have consequences extending well beyond healthcare, particularly for children who's educational and family circumstances require coordinated support.

Health visitors face growing workloads

Further evidence of increasing demand emerged from proposals for Richmond's health visiting and school nursing services, with an annual contract value of approximately £3.5 million.

The council reported that targeted health visiting caseloads had increased by 202 per cent, while specialist caseloads had risen by 247 per cent. Health visitors were managing approximately 350 to 400 children each, compared with the Institute of Health Visiting's recommended caseload of 250. Although the borough's child population is declining, a growing proportion of families require additional or specialist support. The figures demonstrate why falling population numbers do not necessarily translate into reduced demand for public services.

The proposed contract would reorganise provision to reflect changing needs, including discontinuing the underused ChatHealth messaging service and redirecting resources towards frontline support. Such changes may be justified, but their success should ultimately be measured by whether families receive timely and effective assistance.

Are council performance targets sufficiently ambitious?

Questions about performance measurement arose again when councillors considered the council's proposed indicators. Councillor Kelvin Cheetham challenged the usefulness of setting targets without adequate information about existing performance, questioning how members could judge whether proposed objectives represented genuine improvement. The concern echoes the affordable housing figures. An authority can exceed a published target while making relatively limited progress towards addressing the underlying problem. Meaningful accountability therefore requires more than demonstrating that an administrative objective has been achieved; it requires evidence that the objective was sufficiently ambitious and that the resulting improvement matters to residents.

The committee also considered a new Co-production Charter, intended to strengthen residents' involvement in shaping adult social care services. Those involved in developing the charter emphasised the importance of consultation before decisions are made, rather than inviting public comment once the principal choices have already been settled.

The principle is welcome, but its value will depend on implementation. Genuine public participation requires residents to have a meaningful opportunity to influence decisions and to understand how their contributions have affected the outcome.

The difference between promises and delivery

The committee's proceedings revealed considerable pressures across housing, health and social care. Construction costs, national housing shortages, NHS waiting lists and increasingly complex care needs cannot reasonably be attributed solely to Richmond Council, and several of the services examined are delivered by organisations outside its direct control.

Nevertheless, after eight years of Liberal Democrat administration, questions about the council's housing ambitions, financial planning and performance measures are entirely legitimate. A borough delivering an average of 30 affordable homes annually, while more than 700 households depend on temporary accommodation, must confront the possibility that its stated objectives have not been sufficiently demanding.

The consequences extend beyond housing. Persistent underdelivery contributes to financial pressures, while the application of the tilted balance creates additional challenges for the council's planning responsibilities. These are not abstract administrative concerns, but matters affecting the borough's finances, its communities and its future development.

For a family waiting for an affordable home, a child waiting years for an assessment or a tenant waiting weeks for an essential repair, the distinction between political intention and practical achievement is more than academic. Compassion is a necessary quality in public life. But its worth is ultimately measured not by the promises made in its name, but by the difference it makes to those who depend upon it.

James Cleverly Selected as Conservative Candidate for Mayor of London

By James Knight



Former Home Secretary James Cleverly has been selected as the Conservative candidate for Mayor of London, securing an overwhelming 86 per cent of the vote in the first round of the party's selection contest.

The result, announced on Thursday 19 November, saw Cleverly defeat fellow contenders Festus Akinbusoye and Sara Gezdari, who stood as the Conservative parliamentary candidate for Richmond Park at the 2024 General Election.
Cleverly brings considerable political experience to the contest, having previously served as Foreign Secretary, Home Secretary and a member of the London Assembly. His selection gives the Conservatives a prominent national figure to challenge Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan at the next mayoral election.

In his acceptance statement, Cleverly made clear that crime, housing and London's economic prospects would be central to his campaign. "I love London. London made me. But Sadiq Khan is letting London down," he declared.

Cleverly criticised the Mayor's record over the past decade, claiming crime had risen by a fifth, housebuilding had fallen to its lowest level since the Second World War, and more Londoners were leaving the capital in search of better opportunities. "I will make sure Londoners can feel safe walking home at night, that they can afford to live here, and that they can see a future for themselves here," he said. "I will make London a city to be proud of."

Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch welcomed the result, arguing that London needed a change of political direction after more than a decade under Sadiq Khan. "Under Sadiq Khan, our capital has been in decline and Khan and Labour are to blame," she said. "It's time for change. It's time to build a city we're proud of again. It's time for James Cleverly."



A Significant Challenge Ahead
Cleverly's selection marks the start of what promises to be a closely watched contest over the capital's future direction. Although his substantial majority shows strong support among Conservative members, translating that enthusiasm into broader electoral appeal will be a much greater challenge.

London has been governed by Labour since 2016, with Khan securing a third term in 2024. The Conservatives will need to persuade voters beyond their traditional supporters that a change of leadership can deliver tangible improvements in public safety, housing affordability and the capital's economic competitiveness.

Cleverly enters the contest with considerable ministerial experience and an emphatic endorsement from Conservative members. Whether he can translate those advantages into a broader appeal across a politically diverse capital will determine whether his candidacy represents a genuine challenge to Labour's dominance of City Hall.

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MONTHLY EDITION

ISSUE 004 * PRINCE ALBERT TIMES * NOV 26

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England V Australia KO 3.10pm

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Saturday 21st
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England V TBC

Football

Thursday 12th
England V Croatia KO 7.45pm

Sunday 15th
Spain V England KO 7.45pm



We're looking forward to more match-day revelry in Twickenham.

We're getting ready for a huge month of rugby, with the Autumn Internationals bringing a packed schedule of action every weekend. We'll be showing every game live on our big screens, giving you the perfect place to catch all the action without the expense of a match ticket.

On Twickenham match days, our garden bar will be open, doubling our pouring capacity to keep queues moving and pints flowing. Expect quality, perfectly poured drinks and always served in a glass.

Heading to Twickenham? Make us your destination for a pre-match pint and a post-match catch-up. Not going to the stadium? Settle in, grab your spot and enjoy the rugby alongside fellow fans in the comfort of the pub.

Great rugby, proper pints and a brilliant atmosphere — join us this November for another fantastic season!



Our pergola area is getting weather proofed for larger gatherings

COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS

The weather is turning colder, and before you know it, you'll be settling in with a glass of mulled wine by our roaring log fire, surrounded by the festive magic of the best-decorated pub in town!

But that's not all we have in store this Christmas. We're gearing up for a fabulous festive season packed with live music nights, comedy, a craft market and more to get you in the holiday spirit.

Still planning your Christmas party? There's still time to get booked in! Ken is busy weatherproofing our pergola to make it extra cosy for those larger parties, so there's no excuse not to get everyone together for a festive celebration.

So, what are you waiting for? Get in touch and book your spot before the diary fills up!

IN LOVING MEMORY OF JANE CARRICK

We are very sorry to share the news of the passing of our lovely regular, Jane Carrick. We will remember Jane for her kindness, her cheery spirit and the warmth she brought to those around her. She will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by all of us here at the Prince Albert.

THE PRINCE ALBERT, TWICKENHAM TW2 5QB | princealbert@fullers.co.uk | 020 8894 3963

Twickers Foodie – By Alison Jee

Mail Order Christmas Gifts for Foodies

This year you can surprise family and friends with some really fabulous festive gifts, even if not in person, and here are a few that I've identified for you.



A great family present to tide them over the Christmas festivities is a gift box from **Spudos**. Many of us will have seen them on Dragon's Den and this **Dragon's Den selection** is a lovely family gift. The company supplies giant bags of unflavoured crisps, so you can add various 'spud dusts' to flavour them. This pack contains 1kg of hand-cooked crisps + 8 flavours of Spud Dust. That's **30+ bags worth**, minus the plastic. I've tried these and they are really delicious. £22.99 with free UK delivery from spudos.com

We're great fans of pulses and **Bold Beans** has long 'bean' our favourite brand. The idea of sending a hamper full of beanie goodness and recipe ideas is such fun, and really unusual. Containing six different jars of beans, plus a ceramic bean obsessed bowl and plate, a spoon, tea towel and the **Full of Beans** cookbook (which I reviewed earlier this year). And it's tucked into a lovely hamper (no wrapping required!) £130 from boldbeanco.com and you can add a personal gift message at checkout. There are lots of other beanie gift ideas on the website too.



Independent London wine and cheese specialist **Provisions** has just launched its new Christmas hamper collection, filled with carefully sourced wines, artisan foods and delicious discoveries from small producers across Europe. There are seven **Provisions** hampers, priced from £39 to £199, all reflecting Provisions' passion for exceptional produce, independent makers and good taste. All are available for delivery nationwide and offer something a little different from the usual hamper offering. I love the idea of this **tinned fish hamper** - perfect for anyone who loves Portugal and Portuguese fish products. It has eight different types of fish and it's £65 with delivery across the UK. provisionslondon.co.uk





The world of port can be rather overwhelming, albeit delicious and rather special. An annual subscription to **Churchill's Port Club** is a wonderful gift - one that lasts all year. Membership is £199 per year and includes two seasonal deliveries of three bottles each, live winemaker tastings and access to early releases, plus a welcome tote and notebook. The first delivery includes the Cellar Aged Quinta da Gricha Vintage Port 2006, ahead of its wider release in late 2027, alongside a 20-Year-Old Tawny. drinkchurchills.com



Sous Chef has a host of fabulous products that you can send as a gift by mail order (or just treat yourself!) There is almost everything that a foodie could desire. In particular I love this wonderful Milano panettone, a whole kilo of deliciousness for £29 - just one of a whole range available on the website. **Sous Chef** has so many panettone to choose from, with a great array of tins, and all beautifully wrapped and top quality. souschef.co.uk

The Olive Boffin specialises exclusively in carefully selected extra virgin olive oils and balsamic vinegars, working with small and medium-sized producers and placing provenance, flavour and education at the heart of its range. The company has a superb selection of premium extra virgin olive oils and aged balsamic vinegars, ranging from beautifully presented oils under £30 to some very special 25-, 35- and 50-year-old balsamics. Some of the products come in beautiful boxes as standard, such as the Gonnelli Profumo d'Oliva, Centonze Organic Nocellara del Belice 500ml and the Giuseppe Giusti Balsamic Vinegar of Modena 3 Gold Medals. theoliveboffin.com





The height of indulgence is to send a caviar gift set from the leading company that supplies our top hotels and restaurants - **Kings Fine Food**. Sevruga is often the preferred choice for caviar dealers around the world because of its resemblance to wild caviar. This King's Caviar Gift Box includes King's Sevruga Caviar, a 2.5-inch Mother of Pearl Spoon, King's Caviar Tin Opener and reusable ice pack. From £42.50 but there are lots of other types and sizes of caviar available at kingsfinefood.co.uk

Treat someone by giving them a box of fine, handcrafted **Chococo** chocolates filled with new flavours, annual festive favourites and award-winners, all hand-decorated in natural colours. They're presented in Chococo's festive boxes which are 100% plastic-free. The boxes are super sturdy to protect the chocolates and also incorporate a grid inside made of cardboard that includes fibres from upcycled cocoa bean shells. The Large Festive Collection box (£29) contains 25 different flavours including new flavours including the ever-popular *Fizzy Pudding*, spiced hazelnut praline, orange and popping candy for a festive fizz! Medium (16 chocs) is £22.50 or the small box (nine chocs) is £15. chococo.co.uk





Another sweet and unusual indulgence is a box of stuffed dates from **Cocomelt**, London's premier chocolate café. Cocomelt now has a nationwide delivery service, making its bestselling products available to customers across the UK for the first time. Fans who visited the Soho café and others who have heard about these can order a curated selection of Cocomelt's most loved products online, with next day delivery for customers who order by 2pm on Sunday-Thursday. These include Cocomelt's viral cookie range, London-themed cookie tins and indulgent treat boxes of these chocolate covered Mejdool dates filled with premium ingredients. cocomelt.uk

And last, but by no means least, this gorgeous bouquet of Christmas flowers, together with some champagne and even a Christmas card. This lovely gift is from **Appleyard Flowers** and includes a festive red bouquet of roses, carnations and chrysanthemums, with a shimmering finish of copper ruscus leaves and pine cones. With the inclusion of the 75cl bottle of Moet et Chandon champagne, you're sorted! From £158 depending on size of bouquet. But Appleyard also has a selection of hampers from £36 as well as the facility to send gift cards, so that the recipient can choose their own gift and timing for delivery.



Twickers Foodie – By Alison Jee

Some Christmas Beauty Gift Ideas

Good hand cream is always a welcome gift and this range from FYG is gorgeous. **FYG** is an award-winning British fragrance house creating design-led home fragrance, bath and body, and gifting collections. This deeply nourishing hand cream scented with FYG's Back to Basics fragrances. Choose from nine different fragrances - great value at £13 each. fyghome.com And there is a great range of diffusers, candles and other gift ideas on the website.



A new hairdryer? These are great gift ideas from Revlon:



UNDER £50: One-Step™ Volumiser Glow | £44.99
A fun, Gen Z-friendly take on Revlon's bestselling hot brush, in a community-chosen pink colourway.

It dries, smooths and volumises in one step, and comes with a removable mirror and stickers for a really fun unboxing moment – a great pick for teen gifting and beauty lovers.



UNDER £100: One-Step™ PowerMove Dryer | £69.99

A super lightweight, compact dryer that's half the size with double the power*, with four attachments for everything from curls and volume to sleek blow-dries.

At just 280g and complete with a premium storage pouch, it's a lovely option for frequent travellers, or anyone looking for a premium-feeling hair too.



UNDER £100: One-Step™ 5-in-1 Multi Air Styler Pink Titanium Edition | £84.99

A brilliant affordable alternative to high-end multi-stylers, with five attachments to dry, diffuse, curl, smooth and volumise.

The new Pink Titanium colourway makes it feel particularly giftable, while offering 50% less heat exposure[1] and 22% more shine.

Rosard Parfum draws its inspiration from the Middle Eastern ritual of scenting homes, a cultural practice that intertwines warmth, artistry, and storytelling. Central to this tradition is the use of real oud, a rare and precious essence revered for its deep, smoky richness and transformative power.



Rosard Parfum believes true luxury should respect the planet, creating **paraben-free** and **cruelty-free** fragrances with **ethically sourced oud oils,** responsibly harvested in close partnership with oud farmers. With **recyclable packaging** and **eco-conscious production**, Rosard Parfum each fragrance is crafted using the **finest raw materials**, blending Eastern tradition with Western sophistication to create scents that are timeless and contemporary. The Rosard Oud Wajj Room Spray at £40 gives a deep, sophisticated fragrance that fills your home with rose, warm incense, rum, and cacao, grounded by rich oud. A few spritzes instantly turn ordinary rooms into luxurious, sensory escapes, ideal for simply gifting someone a moment of calm and elegance. rosardparfum.com


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Dream It Book It Live It.

The very Best of the Black Friday Offers

By Bruce Lyons

With just one week to go I thought |I would summarise the best offers that came my way.

But there are hundreds of good deals available to book by 1st or perhaps the 4th of December (it varies - check with me).

Taking a lead from the Virtuoso survey from 3,000 travel professionals who unilaterally said that travellers today seek high end value in destinations where there budgets deliver best standards and value. It also emphasised the desire of today's travellers to want experiences. Most sought after destinations were Japan and then Vietnam, Thailand, Mexico and Costa Rica - notice, they all have favourable exchange rates!! So here is my list of best offers.



Japan. Small group tour by Rail 18 days Fukuoka to Tokyo new price (saving £1,600) £6,676 or with flights £8,175 - Perfect for Autumn colours - escorted and max size 16.
But I have loads of Japan Specials ok by 30 November.

Seabourn Luxury Cruising. Selected sailings $2,000 on board spending credit per suite. Veranda Upgrade.
Example; Seabourn Ovation- 13th March thru March 27th £8,999 plus the upgrade and on board spending - flights extra.

Uniworld River Cruising on S S Antoinette guest Tenor Russell Watson on the "Castles Along The Rhine 4th to 11th April, £2,400 (normally £3,549) flights extra.



HX Expeditions this famous Expedition Cruise Company who have both Arctic & Antarctic sailings as well as Northwest Passage and Greenland.
Galapagos and Svalbard and more are offering 35% discounts till 4th December - flights extra.
This cruise company (sister to HX) sails from Bergen to Bergen and Kirkenes to Bergen (South) and includes flights in the offers. This is for the Winter now thru April - good chance to see the Northern Lights.
Book by December 4th

Finally, the Luxury Yacht SeaDream with cruising itineraries on SeaDream 1 & 11 have 25% off selected sailings - they don't have a book by date - just say for a limited time!! Various dates but one Celtic Homeland Glasgow to Dublin is Celtic Homelands.

There are loads more so just call with your needs.
Crusader Travel, 58 Church Street, Twickenham TW1 3NR - 020 8744 0474

Traveller's Tales 188

Warwickshire Weekend

Doug Goodman Takes a Break in Shakespeare Country.



After a 100 mile drive from Twickenham, which took two and a half hours, I arrived in the village of Long Marston near Stratford-upon-Avon. Staying with friends for two nights provided an opportunity to visit one of the many Shakespeare sites and to explore a few antique shops. Promptly at 10.00 we arrived in Shottery to find an empty car park almost adjacent to Anne Hathaway's Cottage. The cottage was undergoing external rebuilding but on a bright sunny day it looked magnificent. The guides were very helpful and caring especially towards visitors with mobility problems who found the steep, narrow stairs rather demanding. The guides spent a lot of time talking about the history of the building and the life of Anne Hathaway. Anne's father died in 1581 and left his daughter £6 13s and 4p -a healthy amount. Her brother bought the family home and farm with the money left to him. William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon where his family lived in a grand house in Henley Street. After marrying Anne when he was 18 and she was 26, Shakespeare lived in Shottery until fame and fortune allowed him to purchase New Place in 1597. New Place or The Great House had extensive grounds with two gardens and is the second most visited site in the town. Holy Trinity Church, Shakespeare's resting place, shouldn't be missed. But with little time I concentrated on the visit to the cottage and will save the other gems for a spring return.



The Cottage in Shottery



Ready for Supper

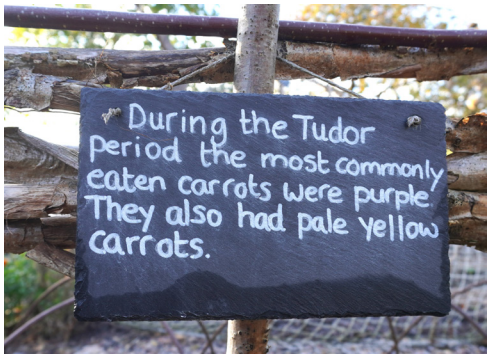


Writing Desk and Four Poster Bed



The Parlour

You step back into the late 1560's on entering The Cottage. A table set for supper in the kitchen is the first sight followed by the parlour and wash room. Up a steep flight of stairs is the main bedroom with Shakespeare's writing desk and a four- poster 'tester' bed. I always thought that the canopy above the bed and curtains were to keep the bed warm and to ensure privacy. But the top covering was also designed to prevent insects living in the straw roof from dropping onto the bed clothes.



Cottage Garden


Wash Room


The Bedroom

FOOD AND ANTIQUES

I'd like to think that The Bell, a few minutes' walk from Anne's cottage, would have been William's favourite drinking spot when he walked from town centre to Shottery across the fields. The pub has mediaeval characteristics and was welcoming and comfortable. I always enjoy the atmosphere in old inns and here it was easy to imagine Shakespeare ordering a pint of 'small beer'; a weak drink taken in preference to water which was unsafe to drink. I sampled a Warwickshire brew called Butty Bach which was delicious. A wide choice of dishes is served at The Bell at reasonable prices to satisfy hungry lunch-time visitors.



Beer at The Bell


Top Dog Antiques



The Barn

Three antique shops – more like warehouses- were within a short drive of the town and all were full of treasures. From the usual range of glass items, ceramics and jewellery, paintings, posters and metal signs to period furniture, garden statues and pots, each was an Alladin's Cave. Top Dog is a purpose- built 5,000 square feet contemporary centre. The Barn specialises in retro and vintage items with some beautiful Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian furniture, A final visit to Mickleton Antique Centre ended a very productive day. On the drive home before reaching the road to Banbury I spotted the familiar colours of our local rail carriages. Retired last year by SW Rail I wondered if they were to be broken up or sold to another rail company.

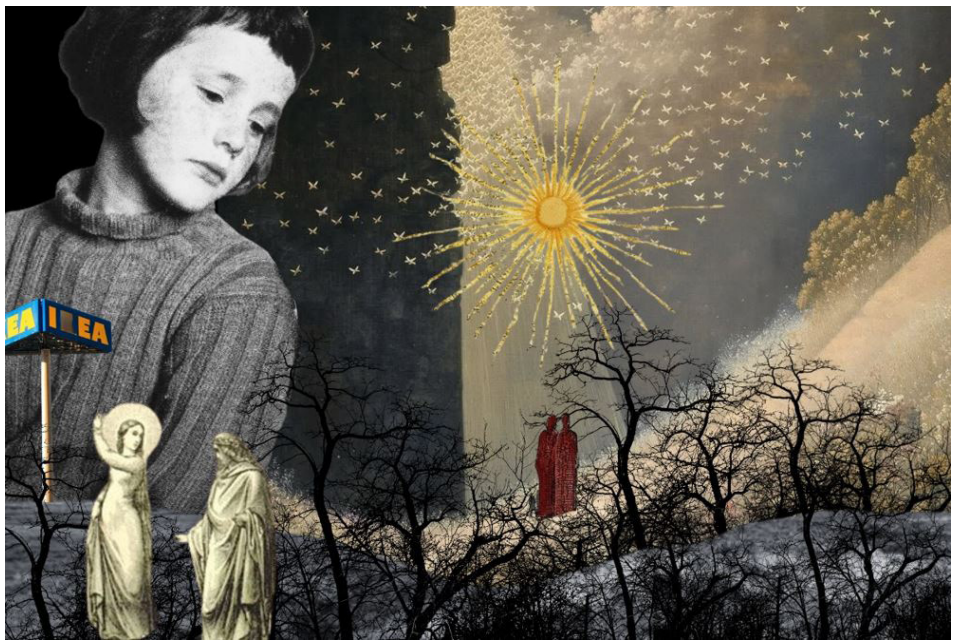
Information: The car park in Shottery was £5 for a whole day. That would allow time to walk into the town centre. The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust www.shakespeare.org.uk. The Bell Shottery https://www.greeneking.co.uk/pubs/warwickshire/bell Top Dog Antiques www.topdogantiques.com The Barn www.barnantique.com

Mark Aspen
www.markaspen.wordpress.com
Expressing the art of the theatre critic

I Can See the Sun

by Tania Khan
Light The Night at the Hope Theatre, Islington until 21st November

Taking its inspiration from *The Divine Comedy*, Dante's 14th century Italian poem, *I Can See the Sun* assumes one is familiar with Dante's journey through the afterlife, guided firstly by the poet Virgil and later by Beatrice, the woman he loves.



With eerie lighting from the blood moon, the design creates a convincing atmosphere, as the tiny theatre becomes a forest, "the dark woods", with autumnal leaves and branches.

Having taken a wrong turn at Goole, a mother and daughter become lost in the woods after their car breaks down on a trip to IKEA. During the long opening section, we sit in darkness only listening to their conversation, before the lighting gradually reveals the dusky woodland, the two women and their IKEA bag. Why they left their car to walk through a forest is a mystery. Nevertheless, it makes a spooky atmosphere.

Writer-director Tania Khan takes the role of Grace, with her mother Lucy played by Karen Cass. Grace reflects on *The Divine Comedy* to explore the tensions within her family, using both her life experiences and their current predicament.

Lost in the darkness of the wood, the pair come across a balaclava-wearing hiker. They set upon him and tie him up, but eventually, the hiker, Noah becomes part of a triumvirate who work together to stay safe until daybreak. Is he Virgil? Is he Beatrice? Who knows, but Noah is on a pilgrimage to return his grandfather's ashes to his birthplace.

Noah, played by Ethan Dillon, carries a guitar in his bag and performs Guetta's *Titanium*, accompanied by Grace, referencing some earlier discussion of Saturn's moon. It makes an enjoyable diversion, but is symptomatic of a disjointed play that contains rhyming sections, philosophical musing, discussions of etymology, strange malapropisms, and an indictment of the English psyche linked to the weather.

The pacing and dialogue are decidedly slow. Why, even before the action starts, do mother and daughter huddle down while loud music is played in the dark? Why were there ten minutes of the cast silently building a shelter from twigs?

There are moments of promise and flashes of humour, but its ideas are never developed.
I Can See the Sun is an ambitious but ultimately unsuccessful production that leaves one totally bemused.

Read Fi Mead-McNish's review at www.markaspen.com/2026/11/14/can-see-sun

Photography courtesy of Light the Night

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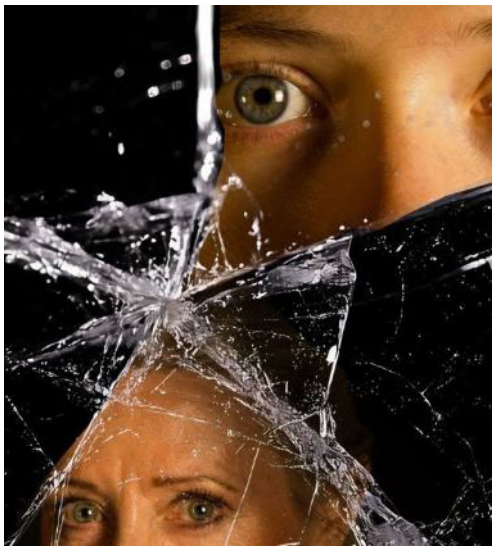
That Face

by Polly Stenham
Putney Theatre Company at the Putney Arts Studio



A minimal set of just of a bed is undeniably a strong focal point, and in the intimate studio space, it impresses with its symbolism and incipient emotion. Packed underneath is an array of clothes, coffee mugs and cigarettes.

That Face is an intense play. It opens with a disquieting tableau of two schoolgirls, Mia and Izzy, who have tied a younger girl, Alice, to the bed in a bullying initiation ritual. But something goes terribly wrong.



In a powerful performance, the older girls are portrayed as disturbed and arrogant. The ingenuity of the overall design (Roger Beaumont's set, moody lighting by Hayden Lee and apt sound by Jake Franklin) creates an unsettling atmosphere.

What follows results in Mia, played in a natural style by Olivia Jackson, fleeing back to an already turbulent home life, with an alcoholic unbalanced mother, Martha, played hauntingly by Penny Weatherall, and Mia's long-suffering older brother, Henry.

Matt Rimmington has great stage presence as the eighteen-year-old Henry, burdened with family issues before his time. Holding onto so much, the surprise appearance of his sister only adds to the volatile situation. In this claustrophobic setting, the tangible sense of anguish is exacerbated by the imminent return of their father from abroad. Stephen Grist convincingly plays their father Hugh, a man out of his depth and in a mindset that money is the answer to everything.



Camille Thiaudiere's Izzy reappears at the hospital bringing flowers. But she doesn't bring any trace of remorse for the unconscious Alice, played by Sion Collins. Henry finds her sleek and enviable confidence alluring, but his bond with Martha, his very troubled and unstable mother, is stronger. However, Mia has a more conflicting and resentful attitude.

These are all scenes with great potency, but the slow-burn to the volatile climax seems a mite too long. Nevertheless, Paula Robinson directs with sensitivity and enlightenment. Their feelings of loss are put over clearly, each in different ways, the violent and revealing Henry, Mia's despair and Martha's breakdown.

Centring on neglect in a middle-class family, *That Face* takes a very close look at responsibility and love, and at love and damage. It is very strongly written and is performed with sensitivity and with power.

Read Heather Moulson's review at www.markaspen.com/2026/11/12/that-face

Photography courtesy of Putney Arts Theatre

Mark Aspen
www.markaspen.wordpress.com
Expressing the art of the theatre critic

Cranford

by Lin Coghlan and Shaun McKenna, based the novel by Elizabeth Gaskell
OT Productions at the Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond until 16th January



Curtsies and candlelight, frills and flounces, bonnets and bows.

Elizabeth Gaskell's 1853 novel *Cranford* celebrates the complexities of everyday life with humour, warm heart and laser focus insight. We meet the Victorian women of this Cheshire town, where gossip travels fast and prejudices run deep. All have their own baggage of bereavement, love lost and thwarted desires. There isn't a dry eye in the house . . . mainly through tears of laughter, for this re-working has warmth and humour. Its script, full of one-liners delivered by a talented cast, is fast-paced and skilfully directed by Josh Roche.

Designer Natalie Johnson takes the wooden floor up to the balcony, creating a claustrophobic space, intimate yet stark. However, with lots of candlelight in the storytelling, it has a Christmassy warmth.



We lurch from the hilarious to the tragic. The baby born to Eliza (Phoebe Pryce) dies before taking her first breath. But the ridiculous Mrs Forester (Sara Crowe) recounts dosing her choking cat to retrieve a lace collar. A cow is rescued from a lime pit, and the women fashion a flannel costume to protect the bald bovine from the cold. Flaps are left for bodily functions too rude to name . . . decorum must be observed.

Matty's unmarried maid is expecting a baby and in danger of losing home and job, yet she's unfettered by the rules. 'I won't listen to reason. Reason always means what someone else has to say.' In Cranford there's always something to say. With the advent of the railway and an encroaching Manchester, change is threateningly inevitable.



Tamsin Greig leads as Matty Jenkyns, the centre of this close-knit community of women, widows and spinsters, some forlorn, some formidable, all with strict ideas. Their constrained lives are governed by custom and unspoken rules, where trade is deemed vulgar, as is eating an orange in public.

The women, genteel but lacking formal education, outnumber the men. One proposes a trip to Paris to Miss Matty, who ruefully declines. 'I'm certain that would be improper. So many things are,' she says.

Cranford must navigate lost love, economic disaster, scandal, entrenched snobbery and the challenge of holding on to what matters most — female friendship.

Read Gill Martin's review at www.markaspen.com/2026/11/14/cranford
Photography by Marc Brenner


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Three St Mary's University

St Mary's students appointed roles at Chelsea Academy



Three St Mary's University, London students on the Chelsea FC Foundation Coaching and Development degree have been appointed roles at the Chelsea Football Club Academy.

Second year student Scarlett Price has been appointed as a Pre-Academy Coach for the boy's Academy. Scarlett will be coaching across the U7s and U8s. She is the first female coach to be appointed within the boys' Academy.

Joining her at the boy's Academy, final year student Ellie Luscombe has been appointed as a movement skills coach.

First year student Orion Temperley had been employed by the Academy as a Casual Parent Liaison Support Worker. He will be working across coaching evenings and weekends.

Ellie said,

"Getting the role as an athletic development coach within Chelsea's academy was such a proud moment for myself. Being able to achieve this has been a highlight so far and something I am very grateful towards the course for.

"The course and the lectures played a significant role in giving me not only the opportunity, but the understanding, confidence, and a lot of advice to thrive within a high-level environment."

Course Lead for the Chelsea FC Foundation Coaching and Development degree Alex Cattini said,

"Students progressing into the world of employment is hugely important for us on the course as well as the broader University, so to see students moving into roles such as the ones highlighted is a testament to their energy, the hard work of staff, as well as the continuing links to Chelsea Football Club which we are extremely proud of."

St Mary's University Twickenham London

England Team To Play New Zealand at Allianz Stadium

England men's head coach Steve Borthwick has named his team to face New Zealand in Round 6 of the Nations Championship on Saturday 21 November at Allianz Stadium, Twickenham (kick-off 2.10pm GMT).

Maro Itoje captains a side featuring nine personnel changes to the starting XV that beat Japan last Saturday. Fin Baxter, Jamie George, Joe Heyes, Ollie Chessum, Ben Curry, Fin Smith, Seb Atkinson, Tommy Freeman and George Furbank all return to the starting line-up.

"There are few bigger occasions in international rugby than facing New Zealand," said Borthwick.

"It's a fixture that always carries a special significance, and one that the players are hugely looking forward to.

"We know the quality New Zealand have in their team. We've prepared for the very best version of them, knowing the challenge they will bring and the level we'll need to reach to get the result we want."

Following Saturday's fixture, the inaugural Nations Championship will conclude with a Finals Weekend, taking place from Friday 27 to Sunday 29 November.

All of England's Nations Championship fixtures will be broadcast live and exclusively on ITV1.

ENGLAND v NEW ZEALAND
Saturday 21 November 2026
Allianz Stadium, Twickenham
Kick-off: 2.10pm GMT

15. George Furbank (Harlequins, 15 caps)
14. Tommy Freeman (Northampton Saints, 31 caps)
13. Henry Slade (Exeter Chiefs, 79 caps)
12. Seb Atkinson (Gloucester Rugby, 8 caps)
11. Will Joseph (Gloucester Rugby, 2 caps)
10. Fin Smith (Northampton Saints, 20 caps)
9. Jack van Poortvliet (Leicester Tigers, 29 caps)

1. Fin Baxter (Harlequins, 19 caps)
2. Jamie George (Saracens, 114 caps) – vice-captain
3. Joe Heyes (Leicester Tigers, 27 caps)
4. Maro Itoje (Saracens, 104 caps) – captain
5. Alex Coles (Northampton Saints, 24 caps)
6. Ollie Chessum (Leicester Tigers, 39 caps) – vice-captain
7. Ben Curry (Sale Sharks, 16 caps)
8. Ben Earl (Saracens, 56 caps)

Replacements:
16. Luke Cowan-Dickie (Sale Sharks, 63 caps)
17. Ellis Genge (Bristol Bears, 85 caps) – vice-captain
18. Will Stuart (Bath Rugby, 54 caps)
19. George Martin (Saracens, 26 caps)

20. Greg Fisilau (Exeter Chiefs, 2 caps)
21. Henry Pollock (Northampton Saints, 15 caps)
22. Ben Spencer (Bath Rugby, 20 caps)
23. Marcus Smith (Harlequins, 55 caps)

Match Preview: Brentford v Everton

Written By Brentford Football Club

Brentford return to Premier League action following the November international break with a home clash against Everton on Monday night (8pm kick-off GMT, live on Sky Sports).

The Bees lost 2-0 at Brighton and Hove Albion in their last outing, while David Moyes' side have won their last three games across all competitions.



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: Will Wilson shine in Thiago's absence?

After the latest international hiatus, Brentford welcome David Moyes' Everton to Gtech Community Stadium - where the Bees will have to contend with arguably the Premier League's most in-form striker.

Igor Thiago ran the Toffees ragged in both top-flight fixtures between the two clubs last season: the Brazilian netting a hat-trick in Brentford's 4-2 win at Hill Dickinson Stadium at the start of the year followed by a brace in April's 2-2 draw back in TW8.

With Thiago suspended following his red card at Brighton, Brentford will be without their Brazilian striker this time round - but face an Everton striker in a purple patch.

The rangy Thierno Barry reached double figures for the season with two strikes against Coventry before the break and the 24-year-old Frenchman has hit his stride after a slow-burning start to life on Merseyside, scoring four goals in his last three appearances for the Blues.

Brentford may trail only Leeds United in the Premier League when it comes to successful aerial duels this season, but the Bees' backline will need to gear up to face Barry - who has won more aerials (45) than any other player in the division over the first 10 matchweeks.

With six top-flight goals to his name this season, the former Basel and Villarreal striker sits behind Erling Haaland (nine) and Alexander Isak (seven) in the Premier League scoring charts - but his underlying numbers highlight his knack for getting into dangerous goalscoring positions.

Barry has accumulated more expected goals (9.53 xG) than any other player in the division - his xG per shot of 0.26 underlining the high quality of the chances coming his way.

The Frenchman has also fired home four Carabao Cup goals to help Everton reach the quarter-finals, but hot on his heels in the competition's scoring charts is Brentford's Callum Wilson - who could lead the line for the Bees in Thiago's absence.

Signed on a free transfer from West Ham in the summer, Wilson struck in all three of the Bees' Carabao Cup fixtures, demonstrating that his eye for goal remains undimmed.

A sharp finish from outside the box in the 6-1 win over Birmingham City in round two showcased the 34-year-old's ability to fashion a yard of space and pull the trigger from distance.

A clinical strike at the end of a sweeping counter attack against Reading and a close-range effort versus Sunderland further demonstrated the variety in his finishing repertoire.

One of the Premier League's most prolific substitutes last season, Wilson will look to pounce if handed a first top-flight start for the Bees - and his set-piece smarts could prove particularly valuable.

Last season, only Manchester United's Casemiro (eight) and Liverpool's Virgil van Dijk (six) scored more goals from free-kicks, corners and throw-ins than Wilson, who netted five of his seven Premier League goals for West Ham in 2025/26 from set-piece situations.

Will Wilson make life sticky for the Toffees? Will Barry make it a Blue Monday for the Bees? We'll find out under the Gtech lights.

Scout report
Dan Long, Sky Sports: Barry firing Everton to strong opening to campaign

It looked as though Everton were in with a great chance of ending their near-decade-long exile from European football at the end of last season.

They blew Chelsea away at Hill Dickinson Stadium on 21 March and moved into eighth, five points behind Aston Villa in fourth, with seven games left to play.

Speaking to the BBC after that game, manager David Moyes said: "We're here now, I don't want to step away because you don't get many chances, so I think every game we have to see if we can get points and see if we can give ourselves a chance of getting into one of the European competitions."

They subsequently buckled, however, falling behind in five of those seven and only clawing back three points, on the way to finishing 13th for the second season in a row.

But the table was so congested that two more wins would have seen them finish in the top seven and return to Europe for the first time since 2017/18.

Moyes admitted his frustration after the 1-0 defeat to Tottenham on the final day. "For three quarters of the season we've been very good; the last six or seven weeks we've been really disappointed," he said. "If we were coming here with two points more we'd come here with a different mindset."

His frustration extended to Everton's summer recruitment. According to Sky Sports data, the Toffees were the fourth-lowest spenders in the division - and were left with just one out-and-out striker. "We don't have a huge squad but sometimes you need to do something special in football and we will attempt to do something special," Moyes said in September.

To his credit, the beginnings of something special have been on show.

Stoppage-time equalisers against Bournemouth and Manchester United helped them to go unbeaten in the first six. A difficult October, during which they collected just one point from a possible nine, has since given way to two consecutive league wins for the first time since March.

They've kept four clean sheets in 10, have conceded the joint-fourth fewest goals in the Premier League (10) and have reached the Carabao Cup quarter-finals, where they will face League Two Fleetwood Town.

And that one out-and-out striker? Thierno Barry - who scored eight goals last season - has 10 in 13 in all competitions already. "I want to make this season mine, so I just work a lot every time to do my best," he told evertontv after his double in the 3-1 win over Coventry in October.

Moyes wants to get Everton back into Europe - it's the natural next step. And in Opta Analyst's current predicted table, they sit eighth. That would be the best finish since 2018/19 under Marco Silva - and potentially be enough to secure that spot the Scot craves.

But that ambition may hinge on how much backing Moyes receives in January.

In the dugout
David Moyes

Like the majority of his managerial colleagues in the Premier League, David Moyes had a long and successful playing career before turning his hand to coaching.

He started at Celtic as a professional in 1980, where he won the Scottish league title in 1981/82, and went on to play for Cambridge United, Bristol City, Shrewsbury, Dunfermline Athletic, Hamilton and Preston.

He was part of the North End squad that won the Third Division in 1995/96 and he retired at the age of 35, having played his last game in February 1998.

By this point, he had been appointed Preston manager, a role for which he was well-equipped, having started taking his coaching badges in his early 20s.

Just over four years later, in March 2002, he was approached by Everton and soon swapped the First Division for the Premiership.

During his first spell on Merseyside, Moyes brought a 16-year-old Wayne Rooney into the first team and into the eyes of the world and, from 2006/07 to 2012/13, steered the Toffees to seven straight top-eight finishes, as well as reaching the 2008/09 FA Cup final, which they lost 2-1 to Chelsea.

In the summer of 2013, he was given the unenviable task of replacing Sir Alex Ferguson at Manchester United, but lasted less than a year of the six-year deal he signed and was sacked in April 2014.

A year in La Liga with Real Sociedad followed, where he won only 12 of his 42 games in charge, before he returned to England with Sunderland. It was just eight victories from 43 matches there, with his spell ending in the Black Cats' relegation after a decade in the top flight.

Moyes was handed a six-month deal to take over at West Ham in November 2017 and tasked with securing survival after the sacking of Slaven Bilić, which he did. However, his contract was not extended in the summer and he departed London Stadium after 31 games and a 29 per cent win ratio.

The Scot returned to east London in December 2019 and was in charge of the Hammers until the end of the 2023/24 season, when his contract was not renewed.

He oversaw the historic Europa Conference League win in 2022/23 and left with the highest win percentage of the club's permanent managers, with 44.59 across 231 games in his second spell.

Moyes returned to management after a short spell away from the game, returning to Everton on a two-and-a-half-year contract on 11 January 2025. The 63-year-old has managed 764 Premier League games.

The Access Self Storage Business Awards 2026

Vote for Your Local Twickenham Finalist

From Access Self Storage Twickenham

The Access Self Storage Business Awards 2026 has revealed the shortlist of eight regional finalists from across England, and now it's time for the public to get involved, and cast their votes for the winner.

Residents of Twickenham are encouraged to vote for their friends, family, or favourite local business to help them win the accolade of 'Access Business of The Year' and win the big Business Package prize, worth over £2,000, helping with the ongoing growth of their business.

Among this year's finalists is Airport Online Ltd, a professional transport and private hire company based in Twickenham, specialising in airport transfers, executive travel, school transport, wheelchair-accessible transport and private hire services. They provide reliable, safe and comfortable transportation for individuals, families, businesses, schools and local authorities and in particular, they take pride in providing essential school transport and accessible travel services, helping children, vulnerable passengers and individuals with additional mobility needs travel safely and comfortably.

The Access Self Storage public vote voting window is now open, giving supporters a chance to be the UK judging panel, and help their local business take home the top prize. Votes can be cast until midnight on Sunday 22nd November.

Celebrating UK Business Excellence

The Awards, running since 2015, celebrate the very best of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across England, recognising their hard work, innovation, and contribution to their local communities. This year's competition saw over 100 businesses longlisted, beating off competition from more than 7,300 companies currently using Access Self Storage business facilities nationwide.

The Awards have attracted a strong pool of applicants from across the country, highlighting the incredible diversity and creativity within the UK's small business sector.

Speaking about the quality of the applicants in this year's competition, Jan-Albert Fourie, General Manager of Operations, Access Self Storage, said, "We have thousands of unique small businesses that store with us at Access Self Storage, and this gives us the opportunity to reward them for their hard work. We've loved reading through all the applications and learning about the business gems within our network. We look forward to growing with all the finalists and await the UK's verdict on the winner."

The winner of the public vote, and 'Access Business of The Year' will receive a £2,000 business package, which can be spent across the business services provided by Access Self Storage. This valuable support will allow the winning business to expand and grow, along with an additional Amazon shopping voucher to celebrate their victory.

How to Vote

To be the judge, and vote for your local finalist, visit https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/M9WZJZZ and select your favourite business from the shortlist. **Voting closes on 22nd November,** so don't miss out on your chance to support your local entrepreneur.

Airport Ontime Ltd employs the services of Access Self Storage Twickenham, 30 Rugby Rd, London TW1 1DG.

Fridge collections suspended as councils struggle with national waste disposal shortage

From the Local Government Association

Nearly a third of councils are unable to meet demand for fridge and freezer disposal services, with collections suspended, thousands of appliances awaiting collection and reports of increased fly-tipping, new Local Government Association research reveals today.

A survey of 153 councils in England by the LGA found that 29 per cent were unable to meet demand, while a further 50 per cent were operating close to or above normal capacity.

Among councils with collection responsibilities experiencing increased pressure and struggling to meet demand comfortably, more than four in 10 (43 per cent) had suspended fridge and freezer collections at some point since June, with nearly a third (30 per cent) still reporting suspended services at the time of the survey in October.

The findings reveal the scale of disruption caused by a national shortage of facilities to process and recycle old fridges and freezers, leaving councils struggling to collect, store and dispose of unwanted appliances.

Nine in 10 councils experiencing increased pressure said reduced disposal or treatment capacity was a major contributing factor, compared with four in 10 who cited increased demand from residents.

In some council areas, backlogs of 3,000 or more appliances were reported, while others have been forced to use temporary storage facilities, store fridges beyond normal operating levels or restrict the number of appliances residents can dispose of at recycling centres.

The disruption is also having an impact on residents and council finances. Among councils experiencing increased pressure and struggling to meet demand comfortably:

- 30 per cent reported an increase in fly-tipping among feedback received from residents.
- 34 per cent had received complaints about the lack of collections, while 27 per cent had received complaints about delays.
- 46 per cent had incurred additional costs, including for transportation, storage, staffing and contractors.

The LGA is calling for urgent national action to increase fridge and freezer treatment capacity, alongside reforms to ensure manufacturers and producers meet the full costs of disposing of their products.

More than three-quarters of councils (77 per cent) said additional treatment and recycling facilities would help address the problem, while 72 per cent supported reforms to the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) regulations to ensure producers take full responsibility for the cost of processing appliances.

Cllr Jon Hubbard, Chair of the LGA Neighbourhoods Committee said:
"With thousands of appliances piling up, councils are being forced to suspend collections, find additional storage space and meet extra costs simply to manage the backlog.
"This is putting an unacceptable strain on local services and causing real frustration for residents, with some councils also reporting an increase in fly-tipping.
"Councils cannot solve a national shortage of disposal capacity on their own. We need urgent action to increase the number of facilities able to process these appliances, alongside better national coordination and reforms to ensure producers meet the full costs of recycling their products."

Local Government Association

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