

# Twickenham & Richmond Tribune





# Contents

TickerTape

South Western Railway

The Tree Agency

Local Picture Postcard Column - White Lodge in Richmond Park. Royalty, Bankruptcy and Ballet

Alan Winter

Crusader Travel

Letters

Poem: Change Theory

James Haydn

Calling all artists to apply for free creative spaces this April

Artists Make Space

Not-for-profit celebrates 10 years of supporting young musicians

Powerjam Band Project

MP's misstep revives painful questions over grooming gangs and institutional denial

James Knight

Diamond Award for Richmond & Twickenham Community Group

David Tickner

Swim for SEEN this summer

SEEN

Spin Over Substance in Richmond: A Borough of Broken Promises

James Knight

Easter holiday waste and recycling collections

Richmond Council

Donate to a London Marathon challenge supporting Crossroads Care

Crossroads Care

Twickers Foodie - Easter Gifts

Alison Jee

Twickers Foodie - Lugma - A Feast of Arabic Bites

Alison Jee

Gibraltar Rocks Package

Sunborn Gibraltar

In The News

Teresa Read

Do we just need more shopkeepers in the world maybe?

Deep Patel

Mark Aspen Review: Dear Evan Hansen

Thea Diamond

Mark Aspen Review: Just Between Ourselves

Gill Martin

Mark Aspen Review: Wake

Susan Furnell

Radio Plays Competition opens for playwrights

Arts Richmond

Barnes Ward - Crime Update April 2025

Metropolitan Police

St Mary's Student Wins NCTJ Student Sports Journalism Award

St Mary's University

RuTC Comic Con Turns Three!

Richmond upon Thames College

Help us prevent plant theft at Chiswick House & Gardens

Chiswick House and Gardens Trust

Standard Chartered Weather Photographer of the Year competition 2025 launches today

Royal Meteorological Society

Red Roses Team to Play Ireland

RFU

Winners announced for this year's Allianz Stadium Takeover Day

RFU

Match Preview: Arsenal v Brentford

Brentford Football Club

Police whistleblower that exposed groomers targeting girls at children's home told by charity rep 'it's what goes on'

GB News

Government invests nearly £38 million to bring 319 new green buses to communities across England

Department of Transport

Editors: Berkley Driscoll, Teresa Read

# TickerTape - News in Brief

## South Western Railway

Altered train services and buses replace trains in the Richmond area **Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 April**

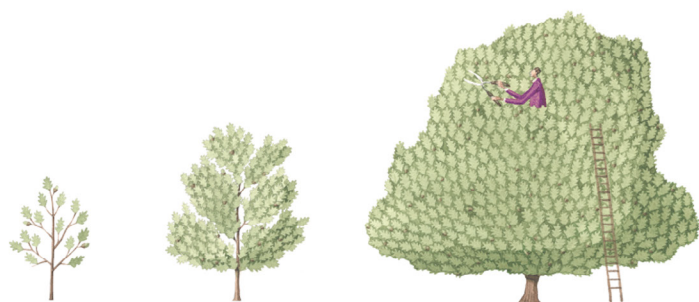
The lines in the **Richmond** area will be **closed all weekend** due to maintenance work.

### Saturday

- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will be diverted between **Barnes and Feltham** and will call additionally at **Barnes**.
- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will be **revised**. These services will be diverted between **Barnes and Feltham** and will make additional stops.
- **Buses** will run between **Barnes and Feltham via Richmond**.
- **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Richmond and Wimbledon** services will start from **Twickenham**.
- **Buses** will run between **Barnes and Twickenham via Richmond**.

### Sunday

- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will be **revised**. These services will be diverted between **Barnes and Feltham** and will call additionally at **Barnes**.
- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will be **revised**. These services will be diverted between **Barnes and Feltham** and will make additional stops.
- **Buses** will run between **Barnes and Feltham via Richmond**.
- **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Richmond and Wimbledon** services will start from **Shepperton**.
- The afternoon and evening **London Waterloo to Kingston via Hounslow** services will **not** run.
- **Buses** will run between **Barnes and Teddington via Richmond**.



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*The Tree Agency*

# The Local Picture Postcard Page - Part 296

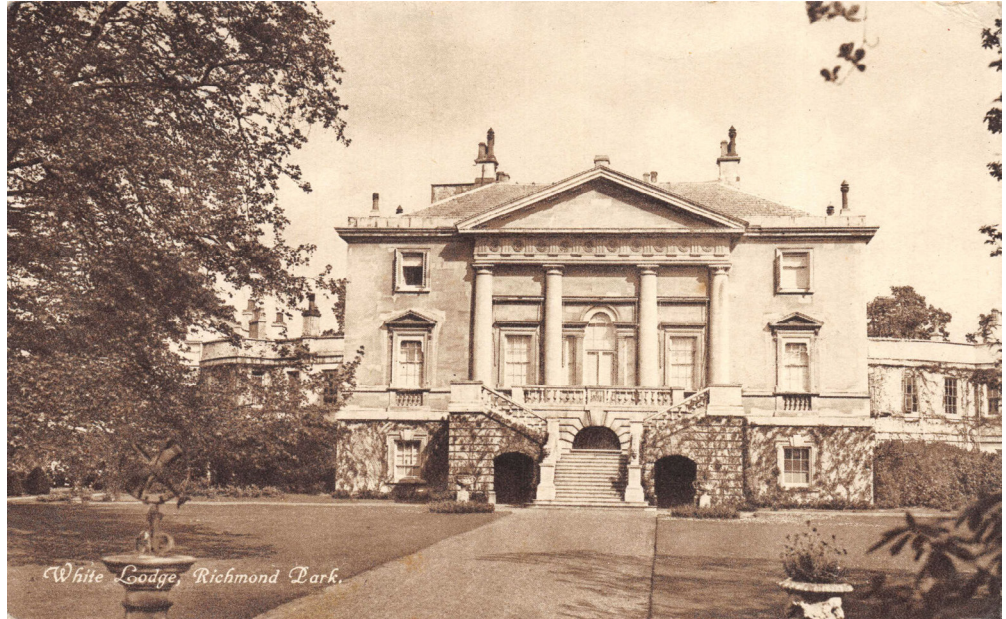
## White Lodge in Richmond Park. Royalty, Bankruptcy and Ballet

By Alan Winter

Nearly 300 years ago a grand house was built in what is now the Borough of Richmond upon Thames. If this house could talk it would no doubt become a source for many films, novels and newspaper headlines. Here is the story.

White Lodge is a Grade I listed Georgian house situated in Richmond Park. Formerly a royal residence, it now houses the Royal Ballet School, instructing students aged 11–16. Our first postcard shows the frontage of the lodge and was posted in 1924.

The house was built as a hunting lodge for George II, by the architect Roger Morris, and construction began shortly after his accession to the throne in 1727. Completed in 1730 and originally called Stone Lodge, the house was renamed New Lodge shortly afterwards to distinguish itself from nearby Old Lodge, which was demolished in 1841



Caroline of Ansbach, wife of George II, stayed at the new lodge frequently and, on her death in 1737, White Lodge passed to her friend Sir Robert Walpole, the prime minister. After his death, it passed to Queen Caroline's daughter, Princess Amelia, in 1751. Amelia also became the ranger of Richmond Park and closed the entire park to the public, except to distinguished friends and those with permits, sparking public outrage. In 1758, a court case made by a local brewer against a park gatekeeper eventually overturned Princess Amelia's order, and the park was once again opened to the public. Amelia is remembered for adding the two white wings to the main lodge, which remain to this day.

The prime minister, John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute, became ranger of Richmond Park after Princess Amelia's resignation in 1760. Although White Lodge remained Lord Bute's official address, he was also entitled to the use of White Lodge's neighbour, Old Lodge.

It was during the Bute-Meadows period that the name White Lodge first appeared, in the journal of Lady Mary Coke. In her entry for Sunday 24 July 1768, she says that she went to Richmond Park hoping to catch a glimpse of King George III and Queen Charlotte, "*tho' they are always at the White Lodge on a Sunday*".

After restoration of the house following disrepair at the close of the 18th century, George III gave the house to another prime minister, Henry Addington, 1st Viscount Sidmouth, who



enclosed the lodge's first private gardens in 1805. The King (affectionately called *Farmer George* for his enthusiasm for farming and gardening) made himself ranger, and Lord Sidmouth was made deputy ranger. On 10 September 1805, six weeks before the Battle of Trafalgar, Horatio Nelson, 1st Viscount Nelson, visited Lord Sidmouth at White Lodge and is said to have explained his battle plan to him there.

After Viscount Sidmouth died in 1844, Queen Victoria gave the house to her aunt – the last surviving daughter of George III – Princess Mary, Duchess of Gloucester and Edinburgh. After her death in 1857, Prince Albert decided on White Lodge as a suitable secluded location for his son the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VII of the United Kingdom, during his minority and education.

Queen Victoria's and Prince Albert made frequent visits to White Lodge when the future Edward VII was living there.

Although the Prince of Wales favoured stimulating company to hard study, Prince Albert kept him here in seclusion, with only five companions, two of whom were tutors, the Reverend Charles Fernald Tarver, his Latin tutor and chaplain and Frederick Waymouth Gibbs. Understandably, the Prince of Wales found the few years at White Lodge boring.

After the Prince of Wales was sent to Ireland to continue his training, Queen Victoria, desperately grieving the death of her mother, the Duchess of Kent, came to White Lodge with Prince Albert in the early months of 1861. This was only the first of two deaths in her family that year. On 14 December, Prince Albert died of typhoid fever. The Queen was devastated, and never came out of mourning during the remaining 40 years of her life.

The next occupants of the Lodge were Prince Francis, Duke of Teck and his wife, the former Princess Mary Adelaide of Cambridge, who were given use of the house by the mourning Queen Victoria in 1869. Princess Mary Adelaide, a granddaughter of George III and therefore first cousin to the queen, was famous for her extravagance. Requests for a higher income from the Queen were unsuccessful. Debts increased, and the family fled abroad during the 1880s to escape their creditors.

In 1891, the aged Queen, anxious to find a bride for her grandson, Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence, settled on Princess Mary Adelaide's daughter, Victoria Mary. Following Prince Albert Victor's death a few months before the marriage in 1892, Victoria Mary married his brother, Prince George, Duke of York, the future George V in 1893. In 1894, the Duchess of York gave birth to her first child, the future Edward VIII, at White Lodge. Queen Victoria visited the Lodge to see the Prince shortly afterwards. He was baptised Edward Albert Christian



George Andrew Patrick David in the Green Drawing Room of White Lodge on 16 July 1894 by Edward White Benson, Archbishop of Canterbury.

Three years later, the Duchess of Teck died, followed by the Duke of Teck in 1900. Our second image shows the Duke on a postcard published by Beagles in a series of Royal personages issued shortly after his death.

After Queen Victoria's death in 1901, the Lodge was occupied by Eliza Emma Hartmann, a wealthy widow prominent in London society who was declared bankrupt in 1909. The house returned to royal use in 1923, during the honeymoon of Prince Albert, Duke of York, the future George VI, and the Duchess of York. Queen Mary, who had lived at White Lodge with her mother, Princess Mary Adelaide, insisted that they make their home at the Lodge. In 1924, Prince Alexander of Yugoslavia, son of the Yorks' friends Prince Paul of Yugoslavia and Princess Olga of Greece and Denmark, was born at the house during the stay of his mother there. The duke and the duchess remained in the house until late in 1925 after which the building was leased out by the Crown Estate.

From then on, the house was occupied by various private residents including, from 1927, Arthur Lee, 1st Viscount Lee of Fareham. The last private resident was Colonel James Veitch, who lived at White Lodge until 1954.

In 1955, the Sadler's Wells Ballet School was granted the use of White Lodge on a permanent basis. The school was later granted a Royal Charter and became the Royal Ballet School in 1956. It is now recognised as one of the leading ballet schools in the world.

Classical ballet is the principal dance discipline taught at the school. It is the means by which students are prepared for a career with the world's top dance companies.

This seems a good time to look at our third photograph which shows a c1957 view of the students outside the front of the building. A photograph of a ballet class hard at work. (Courtesy Royal Ballet School Museum).

That pretty much brings us up to date. No wonder this area is called the Royal Borough. There were also palaces at Richmond Green as well as at Kew Gardens and Hampton Court.



If you trip over any old postcards or photograph albums that you would consider parting with, I'd be very interested in arranging to see them.

Please contact me on 07875 578398 or by email at: [alanwinter192@hotmail.com](mailto:alanwinter192@hotmail.com) I am happy to pay cash for anything like that which I find of interest. So don't throw old postcards etc. in the skip or recycling bins. Show them to me first!



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Dear Editor,

## Arts Richmond Poetry Prize 2025: 'Change'

This year's Arts Richmond Poetry Prize, to be judged by Roger McGough, invited entries on the subject of 'Change'. This was an appropriate subject, given that the nature of the Prize underwent significant change this year, I was informed by Arts Richmond. I did not become aware of the Prize until this year.

Apparently, in previous years, entries were restricted to those living in the Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames and numbered about 200 or less. The decision was taken that this year's Prize competition was to be open to anyone, wherever resident, with the result that over 800 entries were received. I am not aware of the thinking behind that decision. On the one hand, the Prize becomes one of many national poetry competitions, whilst, on the other, the opportunity for local poetry writers to reach the shortlist of 40 is numerically much reduced. With 200 entries, 20% will reach the shortlist, but with 800 entries only 5% will do so, 95% of poems not 'making the cut'.

I am ambivalent towards poetry competitions, as I find it unattractive to judge one poem as 'better' or more appealing than another, still less 'better' or more appealing than tens or hundreds of others. Perhaps self-evidently, people have different views on what poetry they enjoy or as to which poems make an impact on them. Declaring one poem 'the winner' risks falling into the trap identified by Stephen Spender of putting poetry on a pedestal, only to succeed in putting it on the shelf. In Dylan Thomas's words: *"Read the poems you like reading. Don't bother whether they're 'important', or if they'll live. ...say 'Poetry is what makes me laugh or cry or yawn, what makes my toenails twinkle, what makes me want to do this or that or nothing', and let it go at that."*

That said, a poetry competition encourages people to write and share poetry, which is a good thing. To that extent, I can see some benefit in the Arts Richmond Poetry Prize. However, it is the sharing that is important for me, not putting one poem 'on a pedestal'. The selection of 40 poems as a shortlist, to be published in an anthology by Arts Richmond, fulfils the aim sharing new poetry, in spite of the downside that only 40 poems can, pragmatically, be accorded that benefit.

The opening up of this year's Prize 'to all comers' unfortunately reduces considerably the chance of Richmond poetry writers getting the opportunity to 'share' their poems in the anthology of 40. That is a pity, not least as it could well discourage those in the Borough from submitting poems next year. It would have been better, in my view, if Arts Richmond had followed the example of at least one other national competition of having two prizes, one of them reserved for poems entered by people in the immediate locality of where the competition is based. Maybe Arts Richmond could consider that option for its Poetry Prize 2026?

The poem below is one I wrote and entered in this year's Arts Richmond Poetry Prize (with some minor changes), which did not 'make the cut' of 40. I'm glad that the competition prompted me to write the poem. Whilst I had no ambition to win the 'Prize' (and would have been embarrassed to have done so), I missed out on the opportunity to share the poem with potential readers. **So, I have decided to share the poem with readers of the Tribune and would encourage other Richmond Borough residents, whose poems were not selected for the shortlist, to do the same.**

Yours truly

James Haydn



## Change Theory

*'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose,'*

so the French epigram goes.

*'The more things change, the more they're the same'*

sounds, in translation, somewhat lame,  
lacking that silky, mellifluous ring,  
the Romance language's persuasive zing.

If too pessimistic that saying might be thought,  
Mark Twain's saw, with more nuance was wrought:  
*'History's not repeated, but it often rhymes,'*  
one of the best of his reputed lines,  
reflecting the focus the human mind brings  
to finding the similar in dissimilar things.

Another view of change was expressed by Heraclitus,  
in the sixth century BC city of Ephesus,  
that life is a flux that flows like a river,  
never the same from one moment to another:  
all is ephemeral, fleeting and impermanent,  
change is the only constant in the firmament.

So, if theories about change are what you seek,  
try French, American or ancient Greek.

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## Calling all artists to apply for free creative spaces this April

From Artists Make Space

The Artists Make Space programme is now open for artists who need space to develop their practice.

The programme welcomes applications from artists, artist organisations, and artist collectives. If you are looking for a workspace free of charge to practice your art, experiment with new creative techniques, hold meetings and more, apply by Wednesday 30 April 2025.

Priority is given to artists who live, work or study within the borough. Applicants must be aged 18 or over.

The programme aims to support artists who do not currently have studio space for financial reasons. It provides support to artists who do not have the appropriate type of space for a specific project or experimentation in expanding their practice.

To apply for the programme artists need to demonstrate that the programme will help to grow their practice in a way that would not otherwise be possible. Find out more [HERE](#)



# Not-for-profit celebrates 10 years of supporting young musicians

From Powerjam Band Project

Twickenham-based Powerjam Band Project is celebrating their 10th anniversary this year. The not-for-profit has many recent achievements to be celebrating in this special anniversary year.

## Main content: Music School of the Year Award 2025/26

South East Prestige Award recognises Powerjam's innovative approach and commitment to excellence in music education specifically acknowledging "the personalised service-driven focus that is often void from larger organisations".

Over the past 10 years despite the relatively small size of the Project's non-selective initiative and resources they have matched up young musical applicants and formed bands, provided weekly tutor-led band rehearsals and songwriting sessions, numerous gigs per year, and even professionally recorded and released their bands' music on all streaming platforms.

Powerjam was also recognised for its outstanding contributions at the 2024 Music and Education Awards in January 2025 and shortlisted in the Progressive and Inclusive Music Education category.

## The Big Issue Changemakers of 2025

Powerjam Band Project has been voted one of [The Big Issue Changemakers of 2025](#) by public vote. With disadvantaged young musicians and those with SEN now representing 40% of the Project's students, this recognition celebrates their decade-long commitment to inclusivity.



This unique approach has proven year after year that mixing socio-economic backgrounds is both inspiring and educational, leading to enhanced creativity, and that their music program transcends boundaries. Powerjam members learn to collaborate towards a common goal and gain invaluable life skills such as tolerance and teamwork.

## Royal Albert Hall headlining act

Following a nationwide Music For Youth competition, Powerjam band, Bluezd (ages 13-16) were selected and performed as the headlining act at The Royal Albert Hall at the end of 2024.

Bluezd have been a band at Powerjam for three years, from the ages of 10 to 13 performing on countless stages, and even graduated to the main stage of The Ealing Blues Festival last year at the sole youth band featured. You can [check out Bluezd at Royal Albert Hall](#).





# MP's misstep revives painful questions over grooming gangs and institutional denial

By James Knight

This week in Parliament, Twickenham MP Munira Wilson waded into one of the most emotionally fraught political debates in recent history—and came out worse for wear.

Her intervention came just as the Labour government faced sharp criticism for announcing, on the final day before Parliament broke up, that it would row back on five long-promised inquiries into the grooming gangs scandal. Instead of mandating local investigations, Labour now says it will leave it to individual authorities to decide whether to hold them—prompting accusations of retreat and betrayal from victims' advocates and campaigners.

During a statement on tackling child sexual abuse, Wilson accused Conservative MPs of “vilifying Muslims,” citing her own family background to suggest that criticism of the government's failure to protect vulnerable children was shading into racial hostility. She told the Commons: *“As somebody who has Muslim family and brown skin, I say that we feel increasingly uncomfortable in our own country, given the attacks that we hear, day after day, from the Conservatives on all Muslims.”* [Hansard, 8 April 2025]

But in making the issue about race, Wilson walked straight into a political minefield. The central horror of the grooming gang scandals was not only the scale of the abuse—it was that for years, it was ignored, downplayed or covered up precisely because officials feared being accused of racism.

The 2014 Jay Report: A National Scandal, an independent government-commissioned inquiry of national importance, found that at least 1,400 children were sexually exploited in Rotherham alone between 1997 and 2013. Girls as young as 11 were gang-raped, trafficked, beaten, and doused in petrol. Some were told they would be next if they spoke out. Boys were also among the victims, though vastly underreported.

The report was explicit: *“Several staff described their nervousness about identifying the ethnic origins of perpetrators for fear of being thought racist.” “By far the majority of perpetrators were described as ‘Asian’ by victims... councillors did not engage directly with the Pakistani-heritage community to discuss how best they could jointly address the issue.”*

This is what makes Wilson's intervention so troubling to critics. It reframes a child protection crisis—one marred by institutional cowardice and catastrophic failures of duty—as a political point-scoring opportunity on race. Twitter/X erupted in condemnation, accusing her of “weaponising identity” to deflect from systemic injustice.

A History of Denial As reported by The Independent, Tony Blair's Labour government is now under renewed scrutiny over what it knew and when. A suppressed Home Office report in 2002, which highlighted trafficking by predominantly Muslim gangs, was seized and buried. The whistleblower faced harassment. Ministers, like former MP Denis MacShane, admitted they were forced into public climb downs to avoid upsetting community relations.

Community cohesion trumped child safety. The children paid the price. Yet, despite this painful history, Wilson's language appeared to repeat the same deflections. As one former police officer told The Spectator, “When I raised it internally, I was told to shut up or face disciplinary action. We were being actively discouraged from doing our job”.

Of course, genuine concerns about anti-Muslim hatred must be taken seriously. But conflating criticism of specific patterns of criminality with racism—especially in a debate on systemic child sexual abuse—risks undermining the very accountability campaigners have fought for over decades.

Instead of showing moral clarity, Munira Wilson seemed to muddy the waters. In doing so, she inadvertently echoed the same rhetorical evasions that allowed these crimes to be ignored for years: an unwillingness to speak plainly for fear of offence.

For the thousands of victims—raped, silenced, and abandoned by the very institutions meant to protect them—this wasn't just tone-deaf. It was a step backwards.

You can see what was said in Parliament [HERE](#)

# Diamond Award for Richmond & Twickenham Community Group

From David Tickner, Chief Executive, The Civil Service Retirement Fellowship

Civil Service Retirement Fellowship (CSRF) Chief Executive David Tickner visited the Richmond & Twickenham Group yesterday to present them with a Diamond Group Award recognising their support of the CSRF's charitable services.

The group held a 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary lunch to mark the occasion at the Alexander Pope Hotel in Twickenham.

The CSRF is a national charity that provides friendship and support services to former civil servants and their dependents



and they are celebrating their 60th anniversary in 2025.

The CSRF Richmond & Twickenham Group has had a presence in the area for many years and regularly provided speakers, coffee mornings and trips to local retirees.

For more information on the group visit here:  
<https://csrf.org.uk/group/richmond-twickenham/>



## Swim for SEEN this summer

From SEEN

On Saturday 10 May, swimmers of all abilities and ages are invited to take on an exciting challenge in support of local charity SEEN.

Back by popular demand, SEEN is hosting a charity-sponsored swim this summer. Every penny raised will help ensure people can find and receive support when they are vulnerable.

The challenge is to swim as far as you can in time or distance! You can choose to swim a few lengths, cover a specific distance, or simply enjoy the water for a set amount of time.

Barbecue and drinks will be available for all attendees, whether swimming or spectating. Join the fun and swim for a good cause this summer!

- **Date:** Saturday 10 May 2025
- **Time:** 5 to 7.30pm
- **Location:** Hampton Open Air Pool, Hampton
- **Fees:** £10 per adult / £5 per child

Fee includes registration, barbecue, drinks and souvenir.

[Register now](#)





# Spin Over Substance in Richmond: A Borough of Broken Promises

By James Knight

By all appearances, Richmond Council's **Transport and Air Quality Committee** meeting on 7 April was an exercise in momentum: four significant items, grand ambitions, and a flow of well-rehearsed soundbites. But peel back the polished presentation and a more troubling picture emerges—of a borough adrift, where style outpaces substance and public services are caught in the undertow of glossy PR.

From the unresolved mess on Railshead Road to an air quality plan heavy on aspiration but light on enforcement, a crossover policy stripped of safeguards, and a highway maintenance programme playing catch-up, the common thread running through every agenda item was clear: spin triumphing over delivery.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the Committee's chair, Cllr Alexander Ehmann, describes himself as a "comms wonk"—a seasoned corporate spin doctor for the Tata Group, one of India's largest industrial conglomerates. That professional background may explain his aura of confidence and skilful use of presentation, but in Richmond's case, the gloss is wearing thin.

## **Railshead Road: A Cautionary Tale in Council Drift**

The meeting opened with renewed concern over Railshead Road in St Margarets, where a dangerous road and pavement design have plagued residents for years. The issue centres around a listed boundary wall, owned by a developer, which has prevented the Council from carrying out improvements that had been conditioned as part of a nearby development. Yet despite ample time and public pressure, no legal resolution has been reached.

This is not a one-off anomaly, but a case study in the Council's reluctance to confront difficult decisions. It has allowed a developer dispute to fester at the expense of residents' safety. Legal wrangling may be complex, but inaction is a choice. It is precisely this kind of issue that demands political resolve—not another press release.

## **Air Quality Plan: High Rhetoric, Hollow Policy**

Next on the agenda was the borough's Air Quality Action Plan (2025–2030)—a glossy document pledging to meet the World Health Organization's strictest targets for PM2.5 and nitrogen dioxide by 2030. These go far beyond the UK Government's own legal commitments, which aim for the same standard by 2040, acknowledging the sheer scale and complexity of the challenge.

Richmond, by contrast, has neither the tools nor the mandate to deliver such reductions. The Council has no control over emissions from Heathrow, no say over TfL's major roads, and no budget for serious public transport infrastructure. Instead, the plan relies on awareness campaigns, modest anti-idling



enforcement, and future consideration of Public Spaces Protection Orders—an instrument more typically associated with littering and antisocial behaviour.

What's more, the borough still lacks real-time air quality monitoring. In a supposedly "climate-conscious" borough, residents still can't check pollution levels outside schools or along congested roads. Other authorities have already introduced live dashboards and sensor networks. Richmond, meanwhile, seems more interested in public relations exercises than measurable outcomes.

### **Pavement Crossovers: Easier Conversions, Weaker Standards**

The crossover policy review exemplifies a quietly radical change flying under the radar. In April 2024, the Council significantly relaxed the rules for converting front gardens into private parking. The parking stress test was eliminated, the minimum garden size was reduced, and the required distance from a junction was decreased from 15 metres to just 5. The result? A deluge of applications—143 in under a year—with a striking 88% approval rate.

The consequences are now evident on countless residential streets. The Council's nominal requirement for 10% soft landscaping is regularly undermined, with gravel—an impermeable surface—presented as greenery. This has led to the gradual disappearance of front gardens and an increase in grey paving, surface runoff, and neighbourhood blandness.

CPRE London has raised the alarm, rightly criticising the policy for undermining biodiversity and flood resilience. Worse still, the Council admitted many of these newly approved conversions would have failed under the previous criteria. This wasn't a thoughtful environmental recalibration. It was a political manoeuvre to appease residents—particularly in parts of West Twickenham—frustrated by new Controlled Parking Zones. In short, it's planning by populism, not principle.

### **Highway Maintenance: Managed Decline**

The Committee approved a £7 million capital highways programme—claimed to be the largest in the borough's history. However, the fanfare surrounding this figure conceals an inconvenient truth: Richmond's roads have been in decline for years, with potholes and patchwork repairs becoming commonplace. Officers openly admitted that the network has been in a state of "managed decline," and this year's programme is a belated attempt to halt the deterioration.



Even now, despite years of complaints, not all priority areas are being addressed. While other boroughs are leveraging AI to map surface conditions and improve prioritisation, Richmond is only now considering such innovations. Again, the headlines are neat; the delivery is not.

### **The Politics of Presentation**

Across all four items, one truth emerged: this administration is skilled at presentation but sorely lacking in execution. Whether it involves setting unattainable air quality goals, relaxing planning safeguards, or delaying basic roadworks, the substance simply does not match the spin.



# Easter holiday waste and recycling collections

From Richmond Council

There will be no changes to the schedule of waste and recycling collections over the Easter weekend.

We will continue to collect residential waste on [your usual collection day](#). You can also find out your collection day by [downloading the free My Richmond app](#).

Find out [how to store and present your waste and recycling for collection](#).

Townmead Road Reuse and Recycling Centre will be open from 9am on Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday. The last available slot to book is 3 to 3.30pm.

Slots will be limited over the bank holiday weekend. It's advised to [book a slot](#) early.

## Recycling, reuse and DIY over the Easter holiday

Find out how to responsibly recycle your Easter celebration waste, like cardboard and foil off Easter eggs, in our [A-Z recycle guide](#).

Recycle any dyed Easter eggs and other food scraps from your celebrations through our [food waste recycling service](#). This page explains how to leave your food waste out for collection, order your caddy, what you can and can't recycle and how to contact our team with questions. You can still pick up a free roll of compostable food waste caddy liners from [your local library](#).



Planning your spring clean over the bank holiday weekend? Recycle unwanted small electrical items at one of our 30 community banks or through [your weekly kerbside collections](#).

You can also now drop off certain items in good condition at [Townmead Road's new reuse point](#). Donated items will be redistributed back into the community by local groups.

If household and garden DIY plans are in store, rent over 30 useful items—like a pressure washer, carpet cleaner, drills and hedge trimmers—instead of buying new at our [Library of Things in Twickenham](#). Use code BANKHOLIBORROW25 for 25% off bookings made before 18 April.

# Donate to a London Marathon challenge supporting Crossroads Care

From Crossroads Care Richmond and Kingston

In less than three weeks, Grace Ramsay will be taking on the London Marathon in support of Crossroads Care.

Grace was inspired to raise money for [Crossroads Care](#) because her mum, Teddington resident Debbie, is one of Crossroads' trustees.

'I'm taking on the London Marathon for the second consecutive year, this time for Crossroads Care - a fantastic charity that provides much-needed support for unpaid carers in the Richmond and Kingston area,' said Grace.

'Being an unpaid carer can be an exhausting and isolating task, and Crossroads provides invaluable, professional support and respite to those that really need it.'



The charity is incredibly grateful to Grace who is training hard for the 26.2-mile race to raise funds for unpaid carers. With over 10.6 million unpaid carers across the UK and 2 in 3 people expected to become carers by 2031, Crossroads' services, which support those most at-risk and vulnerable, have never been more in demand.

Since 1987, Crossroads Care Richmond and Kingston upon Thames has provided high-quality home and community respite care services. It supports carers and those they care for of all ages and disabilities, including debilitating conditions from dementia to profound disability.

[Donate now](#)

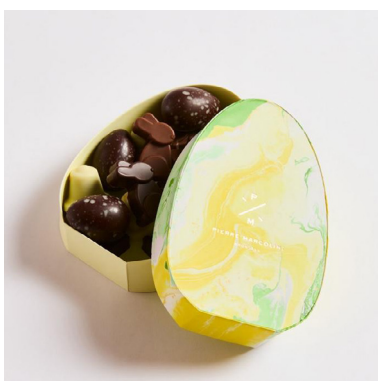
**CROSS  
ROADS  
CARE**  
Richmond & Kingston  
upon Thames



## Easter Gifts

I think this year we should be looking for quality and a 'less is more' philosophy when it comes to consumables at Easter. If you stop to look at the ingredients lists on some of the major brands of chocolate, you will be horrified. So I've done some research for you to enable you to find a good selection of products with quality ingredients, so that we can avoid 'nasties' like palm oil, seed oils and some of the other rather weird ingredients found in so much of our food.

First of all, let's look at Easter chocolate and eggs. **Venchi** (which has a shop in Richmond) prides itself on creating masterpieces from top ingredients and Italian raw materials. It has its BLOOMING WONDER collection that boasts [a range](#) of premium chocolate eggs and gift boxes featuring whole Mediterranean pistachios and Piedmont Hazelnuts. This cute little gift tin contains two-flavour dark hazelnut and white salted chocolate eggs with pistachios and almonds, finished with Piedmont hazelnuts. £12.50 instore or at [www.ukvenchi.com](http://www.ukvenchi.com)



**Pierre Marcolini** is a pioneer of the Bean-to-bar movement, and enjoys an excellent reputation for buying its raw materials directly and ethically from independent cocoa producers in Cuba, Indonesia, India, São Tomé and Príncipe, Peru, Venezuela, Madagascar and China. The Pierre Marcolini Easter 2025 collection includes a range of lovely chocolates and eggs ranging in price from £12.90 to £159 if you really want to push the boat out. But I rather like this elegant small coloured box in the shape of an Easter egg, filled with several of his creations. It contains an assortment of 11 chocolates including: almond-hazelnut praline eggs; small caramel and praline rabbits,

and Easter bells. It costs £16.90 and is available from the company's London stores or online from [marcolini.co.uk](http://marcolini.co.uk)

British company **Chococo** has long been a favourite of mine. This year you can discover golden eggs inside this delicious, new Nest egg. In Chococo's unique faceted egg shape, it's handcrafted with their award-winning signature 47% Colombia milk chocolate, studded inside with new Colombia origin 'blonde' caramel white chocolate mini eggs and hand decorated with bronze shimmer speckles. Presented in a stylish patterned, plastic-free box that really stands out this Easter. **Nest Egg (£16.50/175g)**



I was pleasantly surprised to discover that **Tesco Finest** chocolate eggs are made with tip top ingredients. There's an added bonus at the moment in that Clubcard holders can buy them for half price (£6 down from £12...a bargain!) The eggs are made with expertly sourced rich cocoa beans from Cote d'Ivoire in support of Rainforest Alliance certified farms and contribute to improving the livelihood of farmers through the Transparence Cacao programme. The Rainforest Alliance seal stands for a better future for people and nature. The eggs are dark chocolate and there is a dark chocolate and orange hollow egg or a dark milk chocolate one. Both are 228g and made with high quality, more sustainably sourced cocoa and neither contains any 'nasties'.



Liquorice sparks strong opinions, but **LAKRIDS BY BÜLOW** is on a mission to convert liquorice haters with its gourmet Danish creations. Defying tradition and typical chocolate eggs found at Easter time, the standard Easter flavours are Crunchy Toffee or Crispy Caramel. But this year sees a new addition: appropriately named for Easter is **Passion Fruit**. These combine white chocolate with vibrant passion fruit and liquorice in just one juicy bite. All the flavours are available in regular jars, as well as these beautiful **ÆGGS**, which now come in special illustrated stands featuring a magical spring wonderland. A 480g egg is £24.95 available [online](#), and in-store at John Lewis, Selfridges, Fenwick, and at the new stores in Canary Wharf and Monmouth Street.



But what if you don't want to give an Easter egg? How about some delicious



artisan, organic honey? **Honey Heaven** has the perfect product for Easter – **Organic Honey with Raw Cacao** – an indulgent alternative to traditional chocolate spreads that's delicious and nutritious. It's made using organic unprocessed wildflower honey from Hungary, and natural raw cacao powder from South America, is 100% natural, organic, free from artificial additives and preservatives, and contains neither palm oil nor refined sugars: a guilt free treat.

**Honey Heaven's Organic Honey with Raw Cacao** combines the thick, velvety richness of raw cacao with nature's creamy, golden sweetener, delivering two superfoods, also a natural source of antioxidants, vitamins and minerals to support well-being and the body's natural defences. It's delicious, and can be swirled into porridge, drizzled over

desserts, stirred into coffee for a natural mocha taste, be used as a dip for fruit, or simply try licking a spoonful for a moment of pure decadent pleasure! Available from [www.honeyheaven.co.uk](http://www.honeyheaven.co.uk), a 300g jar of Organic Honey with Raw Cacao is around £12.00.

Hampers are always a lovely surprise for the recipient, and I think this idea from **Snowdonia Cheese** is



fabulous. Created in collaboration with the artisan chocolate maker **Willie's Cacao**, this cheese and chocolate tasting experience is perfect for sharing with friends at Easter. Presented in a smart gift basket are four award-winning Snowdonia cheeses – Black Bomber, Red Storm, Green Thunder and Red Devil Leicester - and four single-estate chocolate bars, handpicked as unexpectedly delicious flavour pairings. There's also a cheese and chocolate tasting guide to walk you through each one. £45 for a basket hamper including a slate cheeseboard, this is a fun and memorable Easter gift for a family (or serious foodie). [www.snowdoniachese.co.uk](http://www.snowdoniachese.co.uk)

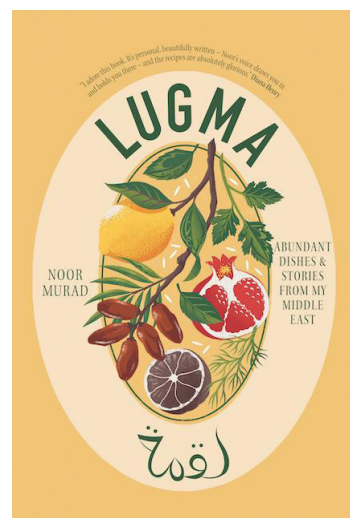
If a more traditional hamper is more to your taste, then how about **Hampers.com's Easter Egg Gift Box**? The ultimate treat for chocoholics. Packed with artisan delights, this selection is guaranteed to make this Easter egg-stra special! At the heart of this luxurious lineup is the Monty Bojangles Flutter Scotch Easter egg, elegantly housed in a reusable keepsake tin, and featuring show-stopping butterscotch truffles hidden inside. But that's not all! They've also included a mix of mini eggs, a mini egg white chocolate shortbread, and even more mouthwatering surprises. All of these sweet treats are packed in a signature gift box: an egg-ceptional Easter treat. £40





## Lugma - A Feast of Arabic Bites

**Lugma** in Arabic means a bite. For **Noor Murad**, as a chef and co-author of two Ottolenghi Test Kitchen cookbooks, her career has been centred around taking bites of food and analysing them to create the perfect dish. Raised in Bahrain and now based in London, Noor takes us on a culinary journey to celebrate her own food culture. Her recipes are inspired by the foods of her upbringing: the elaborate rice dishes and black limes of the Gulf, an abundance of herbs and sour flavours from Iran, liberal spice and chilli heat from India and the vibrant foods of the Levant – to create a unique collection of traditional and re-imagined dishes from the Middle East. In this fabulous, recently published cookbook, Noor offers over 100 recipes as an ode to the food she grew up eating – traditional flavours and modern recipes from Bahrain, the surrounding Middle East and beyond. We're lucky here in Twickers as we have the fabulous **Mediterranean Supermarket** which should be able to fulfil all our Middle Eastern recipe requirements. From Spring Time Fattoush and Stuffed Baby Aubergines to Slow-cooked Fenugreek Lamb with Pickled Chillies and Pistachio Cake with Labneh, these beautiful and inspirational recipes are full of love and warmth to be recreated in our own kitchens. *Lugma* is a triumphant debut solo cookbook. *Lugma* by Noor Murad (Quadrille, £28), Photography © Matt Russell



Here are a couple of recipes to tempt you to invest in a copy of this lovely book.

### ‘Cheese and Olives’: Halloumi with Spicy Olives and Walnuts Serves 4

*“This works really well for brunch, alongside soft-boiled eggs, but can just as easily be eaten as a light lunch or dinner. Feel free to make this vegan, by swapping out the halloumi for fried and salted tofu.”*

#### For the salsa

- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 tsp coriander seeds, roughly crushed using a pestle and mortar
- 1 tsp Aleppo chilli flakes
- 70g (2 1/2oz) jarred red (bell) peppers, very finely chopped
- 1 tbsp rose harissa
- 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 2 tsp maple syrup
- 50g (1 3/4oz) walnuts, well toasted and roughly chopped into 1cm (1/2in) pieces
- 70g (2 1/2oz) pitted Nocellara olives, roughly chopped
- 5g (1/8oz) mint leaves, roughly chopped
- 10g (1/4oz) parsley leaves, roughly chopped
- 2 tsp pomegranate molasses

#### For the halloumi

- 2 x 225g (8oz) blocks of halloumi, drained
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp maple syrup



1. Make the salsa by adding the oil and garlic to a small frying pan (skillet) and placing it over a medium heat. Cook until beginning to bubble and smell fragrant, about 1 1/2 minutes, then add the coriander seeds and chilli and cook for about 30 seconds more. Stir in the peppers, harissa, vinegar and maple syrup and cook for 5 minutes. Set aside to cool to room temperature, then transfer to a large bowl, add the remaining

ingredients and mix to combine.

2. Preheat the oven to 180°C fan/200°C/400°F/Gas mark 6.
3. Halve each of the halloumi blocks lengthways (so they are the same shape, but thinner now) to give you four rectangular pieces. Pat them well dry. Use a small sharp knife to make a criss-cross pattern across one side of each piece, with incisions about 1.5cm (5/8in) deep.
4. Heat the oil in a medium frying pan over a medium-high heat. Add the halloumi pieces and fry until nicely golden on both sides, about 4–5 minutes in total. Transfer to a small tray, criss-cross side up, and pour over the excess oil left in the pan, followed by the maple syrup. Bake for 7 minutes, or until really nicely softened through the centre.
5. Transfer to a plate, pouring over any juices left in the tray, then spoon over the salsa. Serve right away, while the halloumi is still warm.

### **Sweet Date and Sour Tamarind Sea Bass** Serves 2

*"I adore sweet and sour flavours together but especially the combination of dates and tamarind, which is a match made in (food) heaven. This is a wonderfully easy dish to make, with super-punchy flavours. Serve as a light lunch with some lightly dressed greens."*

- 60g (2¼oz) tamarind pulp (from a block)
- 220ml (7½fl oz) boiling water
- 60g (2¼oz) pitted Medjool dates (about 3)
- 1 small red onion, very finely chopped (90g/3¼oz)
- 1 small green (bell) pepper, stem and seeds removed, finely chopped into 0.5cm (¼in) cubes (120g/4½oz)
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1–2 green chillies, finely chopped, seeds and all (depending on your heat preference)
- 30g (1oz) coriander (cilantro) leaves and soft stems, finely chopped
- 3½ tbsp olive oil, plus extra to serve
- 4 medium unskinned sea bass fillets
- 1 tsp mild curry powder
- ½ lime
- fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 210°C fan/230°C/450°F/Gas mark 8. Line a shallow baking dish (roughly 30 x 20cm/12 x 8in) with baking paper.
2. Place the tamarind in a small heatproof bowl and pour over 120ml (4fl oz) of the boiling water. In a separate small heatproof bowl, add the dates and the remaining 100ml (3½fl oz) of the boiling water. Set both aside for 15 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl mix together the onion, green pepper, garlic, chilli, coriander, 2 tablespoons of the oil, ¼ teaspoon salt and a good grind of pepper.
4. When ready, remove the dates from their water and place them in the bowl of a small food processor along with 2 tablespoons of their water, then blitz until the dates are finely chopped and you have a paste (you can also do this with a hand-held blender).
5. Use your fingers to loosen the tamarind pulp from the seeds, then pour this through a fine-mesh sieve (strainer) set over a separate bowl. Push down on the solids to extract as much of the tamarind liquid as possible, scraping at the bottom of the sieve as well. Discard the solids and then mix in the date paste.
6. Pat dry the sea bass fillets and place them, skin-side down, in the lined baking dish (don't worry if they're slightly overlapping). Sprinkle the flesh all over with the curry powder, ¾ teaspoon salt and a good grind of pepper. Spoon over all the tamarind and date mixture, using your fingers to coat the flesh, then pour over the remaining 1½ tablespoons of oil. Lastly, spoon the onion and pepper mixture down the fillets. Bake for 17–20 minutes, or until cooked through and lightly coloured. Transfer to a plate, squeeze over the lime and drizzle with some extra olive oil.





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## Three Million Americans Say, “Hands Off” To Their President

Last weekend mass demonstrations took place in every State in the USA with an estimated three million protestors nationwide: the “Hands Off” campaign against President Donald Trump and Elon Musk.

The theme of the protests was an end to what has been called the “billionaire power grab”.

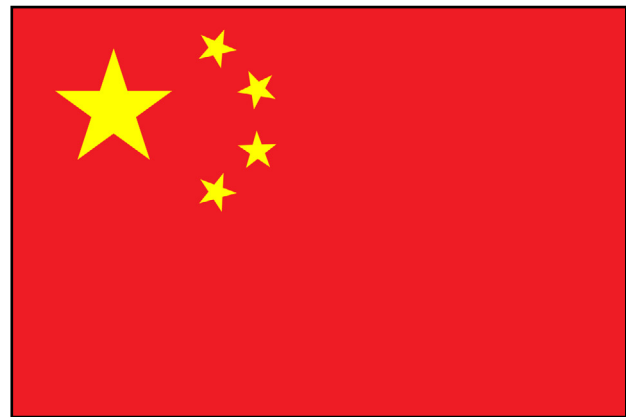


It has been estimated that over 1,200 demonstrations were planned in fifty US states and Washington DC. Hundreds of protestors gathered at Palm Beach Gardens, Florida - just miles away from where President Trump played golf that weekend. Some protestors were just four miles from Mar-a-Lago, Trump’s retreat.

Although the situation was reported on the internet there seemed very little television reporting by tv stations such as the BBC as the demonstrations took place. Considering the enormity of a demonstration of this size in the USA I would have expected breaking coverage at the time. News was available on the internet, especially on X (formerly Twitter).

## China responds to tariffs

A Chinese journalist reported on Twitter, in reply to “China will lose the US market” as follows: We don’t care. China has been here for 5,000 years, most of the time there was no US and we survived. If the US wants to go in that direction of completely shutting itself out of the China market – Be my guest!



<https://worldinfozone.com/country.php?country=China>



# Do we just need more shopkeepers in the world maybe?

By Deep Patel

~ Life Through the eyes of a Twickenham Shopkeeper ~

Being a shopkeeper, I think I have one of the best jobs in the world perhaps...there are very few jobs that enable a person to interact daily with people from every single culture, religion, profession, country, orientation, gender, race, age group, orientation and general background perhaps more than most jobs enable an individual to do so...and I love it! I truly believe it is this wide and varied interaction that occurs for a shopkeeper on a daily basis that helps shape a person to be a better rounded, fair, rational and well-grounded individual (in my case I bet my family would disagree, but it's true I say). One very valuable skill that has come about as a result of this daily varied interaction is the skill of being tolerant.

Of course, there are many who claim that their jobs are varied...that every day is different...life as a shopkeeper goes one step further...not only is every day different...but every minute is different too...one minute you are serving someone who genuinely believes King Charles is actually an alien and the next someone who thinks everyone from overseas are benefit frauds...then after that someone who thinks Simon Cowell is in reality a woman and after that another person who swears that Donald Trump is God...which other job would enable you to experience all of this and more within the very same hour of any given day?

Sometimes it's difficult...sometimes customers come in and really "push all your buttons" by being borderline racist, homophobic, sexist and so on but I don't give them the satisfaction...you see, over the years, I have developed that unique skill...one that if they are to be successful in their jobs, ALL good shopkeepers very quickly learn...that is the skill of tolerance...as a shopkeeper, I am not there to pass judgement on those who enter my shop when they strike up a conversation with me...I have to remain impartial...I have to smile and accept their view and not offend anyone...I have to be super tolerant, even when I really don't feel like being so...I have to be nice...even when the person talking to me is clearly everything but, I have to listen to peoples' thoughts, ideas and beliefs (no matter how ridiculous they may be) putting aside what I may personally think in doing so...more than having great knowledge of the top selling chocolate bar of the year, or which biscuit is Twickenham's top biscuit (it's the chocolate Hob Knob according to Meet & Deep Newsagent customer trends by the way)...

But even more than having such key knowledge, as a shopkeeper the single most valuable skill that I have accrued is definitely that of tolerance...it's such an under-rated skill and hardly ever talked about or celebrated...but I have come to realise that it is perhaps the most important skill to foster in a world like the one we all live in today perhaps. In Buddhism, tolerance is referred to as "kshanti"...a very sought after virtue that emphasizes acceptance and understanding, particularly

towards diverse viewpoints and beliefs...in relation to this...the overall realisation that I had on this topic occurred whilst I was restocking KitKat bars on the chocolate shelf...it was exactly then that it dawned upon me that a successful man is not one who speaks and makes others follow his way of thinking...rather it is one who can listen to others ways of thinking...yet still remain at peace and follow his own...Then came another realization... if we want to make the world a better place with more tolerance could the answer be simply to create more shopkeepers...?



**Remember...**

***“Your level of tolerance is a sign of your strength...not of your weakness...”***

MY CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP:

STOP MICE KINDLY (GOOD KARMA):

Place empty bowls filled with white vinegar around places where you don't want them to come...they will go without you having to harm them...use humane mouse & rat traps and release them back in our parkland areas. Use electronic plug in deterrents with good reviews around your house to stop them coming (the smell of white vinegar placed around places in empty bottle caps also stops ants, rats, mice, squirrels and rabbits and many more kindly too).

For ANY specific tip to stop any “pest” or insect KINDLY (for good karma/blessings), email me: [thedeepatel@gmail.com](mailto:thedeepatel@gmail.com) or join my Facebook group: “INSECT LOVERS UNITE”

Until next time...have a good-karma week Twickenham



# Dear Evan Hansen

by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul

Nottingham Playhouse Productions at the New Wimbledon Theatre, then on tour until 5<sup>th</sup> July

Whilst *Dear Evan Hansen* concerns mental health, bullying, drug use and suicide, its characters, including Evan's single mother and classmates, embody complex emotional realities.

It tells the story of American teenager Evan, a self-proclaimed 'loser' and chronic people pleaser, who is crippled with social anxiety and struggles with his mental health. Ryan Kopel's standout portrayal of Evan is top notch. His mannerisms and body language, covering from any simple interaction and struggling to speak, powerfully depicts the challenges Evan faces in navigating the world around him. The song *Waving through a Window* describes how he deals with his insecurities by putting on the brakes to avoid failure or drawing attention to his own shortcomings.



Evan has lived with his mum Heidi (Alice Fearn), after his dad moved out and started a new family in a different State. She struggles with knowing how to overcome the challenges of parenting (*Anyone Have a Map*).



After one of Evan's therapeutic self-affirming letters is taken by the group's troubled teen, Connor (Killian Thomas Lefevre), Evan gets caught up in a snowballing fabrication of their fictitious friendship. Following Connor's death by suicide, Evan is overcome with anxiety, but he realises that re-writing the past gives Connor's parents hope and comfort in their loss. The frequent apparition of Connor, most memorably and humorously in *Sincerely Me*, spurs Evan on.

Evan's 'family friend' Jared (Tom Dickerson) views himself as too cool and superior to be known as an actual friend to Evan, but his constant mordant quips hide his own lack of social skills.

One of the beauties of this musical is that the characters have deeper motivations than initially obvious, with defence mechanisms abounding. They are complex and multi-dimensional and, as in real life, there are no obvious 'goodies' or baddies'.

*Dear Evan Hansen* invites empathy and understanding, offering an emotional journey filled with both heartbreak and hope, reminding us of the healing power of music and storytelling. Its dark humour cleverly has the audience lurching between tears and laughter, and reminds us that music and the arts have the power to provide emotional catharsis. Bring your tissues and be ready to become gripped by this powerful, poignant piece.

Read Thea Diamond's review at [www.markaspen.com/2025/03/28/evan-hansen](http://www.markaspen.com/2025/03/28/evan-hansen)

Photography by Liam Rudden Media

# Just Between Ourselves

by Alan Ayckbourn

London Classic Theatre at the Theatre Royal, Windsor, then on tour until 12<sup>th</sup> July

Birthday “celebrations” are imminent; not joyful occasions, but times for recriminations and frustrations.

Dennis’s Mini car has had a breakdown, his wife Vera is about to. He is totally unaware of her state of mind. Dennis fiddles and frets, Vera fluffs and frets, and his live-in mother Marjorie fusses and finds fault.

Their neighbour Neil is equally blithely indifferent to his wife, Pam’s feelings. Could he buy Dennis’s Mini as her surprise pressie? But Pam has enough problems without a clapped-out car. While Neil haggles, Pam niggles.

Michael Cabot’s production of Ayckbourn’s 1976 social satire does not make for a jolly night out. Its undercurrents of tension and unhappiness in the long-suffering women in *Just Between Ourselves* makes it arguably his bleakest offering.

Designer Elizabeth Wright’s set is simple, Dennis’s garage with broken doors. Broken doors, broken relationships.



Dennis (Tom Richardson), is a cheery blunderer who spends his time tinkering in his garage. But Dennis’s incapacity to make the ageing Mini function, or even to get the garage doors to open, is matched by his utter failure to see that his wife, Vera, is suffering. Vera is sensitively played by Holly Smith, her fragility underlined by her clumsiness, as she heads for a nervous breakdown. Dennis unwittingly demolishes Vera’s confidence by belittling her. He understands the workings of the emerald green Mini better.

Hypochondriac neighbour Neil (Joseph Clowser) mirrors Dennis, admitting that whereas women need a rock he is more of a marshmallow. He puts down the downward trajectory of his relationship with the sexually and professionally frustrated Pam (Helen Phillips) to “people get demagnetised”.

Ever cheerful and jokey, Dennis is sad, not bad, but you still want to slap him as he shuts himself off from emotions in his man-cave garage, his refuge from the messy stuff of relationships. He reckons his wife’s “always happiest at home.” How painfully, wildly wide of the mark.

Vera’s crotchety mother-in-law Marjorie (Connie Walker) adds to her marital woes in this suburban tragedy of neglect.

*Just Between Ourselves* is starkly poignant in its meticulously observation of human frailty, just occasionally crackling with humour. But unless you love Ayckbourn, this play feels past its prime.

Read Gill Martin’s review at [www.markaspen.com/2025/04/02/just-between](http://www.markaspen.com/2025/04/02/just-between)

Photography by Will Green





## Wake

by Jennifer Jennings and Phillip McMahon

This is popbaby at the Peacock Theatre, Holborn and on tour until 21<sup>st</sup> April

*Wake* hits the stage with raw Irish energy where mourning and celebration clash, where unseen people are seen and unvoiced emotions released. It opens with a funeral scene, mourners gathered with umbrellas, a man stretched out on a grave, while a singer's wail sets the tone. Then a vibrant explosion of life unfolds under a large sun which slowly changes magnificent colours from sunset to sunrise to mark the march of time of the all-night wake.

The stage hosts a series of vignettes. A gay man channels Noël Coward in a camp striptease; trapeze artists glide on a simple rope, while a pole dancer moves with fish-like agility. Irish dancing gets weird: performers in yellow spotty suits and tight onesies (one sinks waist-deep into a pink sphere but keeps jigging) make my friends laugh at something vaguely phallic. It's clever, fresh, and fun.



Under fiery red light, the music catches the physical feelings of grief with the high notes of lament, choking a tight throat and chest, while the bass electronic notes physically drop into the despair of a sinking stomach.

As the light shifts from orange dusk to morning light, disco flashes spark cheers for a *Riverdance* style performer in glittering briefs, athletic, magnetic, born to please crowds. A moustachioed dancer gets us clapping along, caught up in the party. The opening funeral tones give way to club-night energy where flirtation flows freely. Yet grief is here, raw and real, present in every beat.

The cast feels authentic. A bold exposure causes discomfort, while a naked man carries quiet sadness. Strong women flank an androgynous DJ. Lisette Krol stuns on the pole, with the strength of a gymnast, though its uncomfortable to watch, but everyone shines: men in sporty gear, wild costumes everywhere, and a singer with perhaps too much glittery eye make-up.

This is Irishness boiled down and blown up; dance, rhythm, fiddle (the fiddle solo is beautiful), and heart wrapped in colour and light. *Wake* is a beautiful contradiction, a funeral where the living dance hardest, where we leave grateful to have joined the wild ride.



Read Susan Furnell's review at [www.markaspen.com/2025/04/04/wake](http://www.markaspen.com/2025/04/04/wake)

Photography by Ruth Medjber and Allen Kieley

# Radio Plays Competition opens for playwrights

From Arts Richmond

Arts Richmond's Radio Plays Competition has returned and is open for writers to enter their short plays by Friday 30 May 2025.

The competition welcomes all local writers, regardless of experience. Submit your short play for a chance to share your story and let your creativity shine!

Finalists will be asked to record their play with such recordings to be sent to Arts Richmond by 29 August 2025. The overall winner, as decided by panel of judges, will be presented with the Colin Skipp Arts Richmond Radio Play Trophy and will receive a prize of £100 at the Arts Richmond Drama Party on 20 September 2025.

Entry criteria:

- The play must be original, unpublished, and previously unperformed
- The writer must live or study in the borough
- The play must be no longer than 15 minutes maximum performance time
- The play should require no more than 4 actors



Visit the [Arts Richmond website](#) to find out more.

Arts Richmond is an independent charity with over 100 affiliated societies based in the borough. The charity provides a wide variety of services and events aimed at promoting local arts and cultural activity.

Mark your calendars for a line-up of exciting shows and events ranging from dramas and classic comedies to unique retellings and thought-provoking performances. Find out about [upcoming events](#).





# Barnes Safer Neighbourhood Team

Crime Update April 2025

*For the past four weeks, where has it happened?*

## Burglary X1

- Business burglary, 27-28/3, 19:00-07:00 hours, Barnes High Street, SW13.

## Vehicle Crime X8

- Theft from motor vehicle, 3/3, 20:46-20:48 hours, Lonsdale Road, SW13.
- Theft from motor vehicle, 5/3, 20:25-20:37 hours, Barnes High Street, SW13.
- Theft from motor vehicle, 10/3, 19:13-20:13 hours, Church Road, SW13.
- Theft from motor vehicle, 10/3, 19:00-20:00 hours, Ranelagh Avenue, SW13.
- Theft from motor vehicle, 12/3, 10:00-11:49 hours, St Hilda's Road, SW13.
- Theft from motor vehicle, 18-19/3, 20:00-07:30 hours, Boileau Road, SW13.
- Theft from motor vehicle, 23/3, 00:01-09:30 hours, Stillingfleet road, SW13.
- Theft of motor vehicle, 21-22/3, 18:30-00:00 hours, St Anns Road, SW13.



## Criminal Damage X2

- Criminal damage to a building other than dwelling where value of damage is under £500, 21/3, 20:37 hours, Church Road, SW13.
- Criminal damage to dwelling where value of damage is £500 or over and under £5000, 24/3, 12:00 hours, Lonsdale road, SW13.

## Robbery X1

- Robbery, 7/3, 20:10 hours, Everdon Road, SW13

## Violent Offences X8

- Assault occasioning actual bodily harm, 14/3, 21:15 hours, Hammersmith Bridge, SW13.
- Assault occasioning actual bodily harm, 16/3, 11:07, Nowell Road, SW13.
- Assault occasioning actual bodily harm, 24/3, 08:00 hours, Suffolk Road, SW13.
- Assault without injury – common assault and battery, 7/3, 14:55 hours, Castelnau SW13.
- Assault without injury – common assault & battery, 21/3, 11:04 hours, Castelnau, SW13.
- Assault without injury – common assault & battery, 21/3, 20:37 hours, Church Road, SW13.
- Assault without injury – common assault & battery, 28/3, 19:32 hours, Stillingfleet Road, SW13.
- Assault without injury – common assault & battery, 31/3, 19:45 hours, Church Road, SW13.

## Drugs X0

## Officers covering Barnes

PS Michael Hirsch, PC Darren Meakins, PC May Moody, PCSO Matthew Morbey

*Barnes Safer Neighbourhoods Team*

Email	Barnes@met.police.uk
Telephone (not to be used for emergencies; not available 24 hours)	02078072014
Twitter (Barnes ward)	@MPSBarnes
Twitter (Richmond borough)	@MPSRichmond
To report a crime, non-emergency	Dial 101 or use <a href="http://www.met.police.uk">www.met.police.uk</a> , adding your postcode
Emergency / Crime is happening now	999

## WHATSAPP CHANNEL

MSP Barnes Safer Neighbourhood Barnes team



**METROPOLITAN  
POLICE**

# St Mary's University

## St Mary's Student Wins NCTJ Student Sports Journalism Award

Evie Ashton, a recent graduate of Sports Journalism MA at St Mary's University, Twickenham, has won the NCTJ Student Sports Journalism Award, recognising her as a promising and emerging talent in the field.



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The [National Council for the Training Journalist \(NCTJ\) Awards for Excellence](#) recognises young journalists making an impact through their coverage of pressing social issues, global events, and local stories.

Evie's [winning article](#), which delves into Olympic swimmer, James Guy's, late ADHD diagnosis and his experience with health anxiety, earned high praise for its insightful approach to mental health in sport.

The award, sponsored by [Sky Sports News](#), was presented to Evie by Alex Crawford, special correspondent for Sky News. This latest accolade follows Evie's earlier triumph in winning the [Young Journalist category at the ECB Domestic Cricket Journalism Awards](#), where the judging panel was 'highly impressed' with 'her willingness to tackle difficult issues with both flair and journalistic discipline'.

Speaking on winning the awards, Evie said, *"I am beyond thrilled. It means a lot to be recognised for covering historically marginalised issues in sport, such as disability and LGBT+ experiences. I'm grateful to my St Mary's lecturers for building my confidence in working in sports media and digital*

*skills, and the [Sports Gazette](#) for giving me an outlet to improve on creative and critical writing."*

Evie wasn't the only St Mary's Sport Journalism MA student to gain recognition at the NCTJ Awards:

- Oscar Pick, received high commended in the Student Sports Journalism category for [his articles](#) on boxing.
- Eduardo Tansley, who currently [works as a sports journalist for The Atlantic](#), was also highly commended for [his piece](#) on the Dominican Republic Women's football team, the first senior side to represent the country at a major tournament.
- Laura Howard, currently working at [Sportsbeat as a Multimedia Content Producer](#), was highly commended for Student of the Year.



Associate lecturer at St Mary's and award-winning sports journalist, Dan Gallan, expressed his pride in the students: *"It's brilliant seeing so many St Mary's students recognised for their excellent work over the years. I can't remember who told us that we're like the La Masia of the sports journalism world, but it's a line I feel vindicated using. All these years later and I'm still chuffed when I won at the NCTJ Awards, and I feel equal pride every time a student of ours scoops any top prize. It's a testament to the course and all the hard work we put in. I couldn't think of a better advert for the University."*

Evie, who currently works as a freelance writer, continues to raise awareness of social issues through her weekly newsletter, [It's Just a Game](#). The newsletter provides critical commentary on major topics in sports media, aligning with [St Mary's core value](#) of inclusiveness.



# RuTC Comic Con Turns Three!

Richmond upon Thames College (RuTC) celebrated its third annual Comic Con event on the 2nd of April. This was a chance for students and staff to come together to celebrate their love of comic books and science fiction culture, and to champion their creativity.

To kick off the day, Principal Gavin Hughes and Assistant Principal Kai Barnes welcomed students to college in their Mario and Luigi outfits, complete with office chair go-karts. Students were then given a scare by our reception team of Nicky Ross and Victoria Davies, who came dressed as The Guards from Squid Game.



Plenty of fun-filled activities took place throughout the day, including an outdoor gaming bus and ice cream van, a Mario Kart tournament and screening of the Nintendo Switch launch in our Immersive Room, the masked singer/teacher, and the much-anticipated cosplay runway competitions.

In the morning, we welcomed David Haddon from Sony PlayStation to share his story and wisdom with aspiring gamers and students alike. It was a wonderful opportunity to inspire students and give them a real insight into what their futures could look like if they choose to follow a similar path.

Our lunchtime cosplay costume competition gave dressed-up students the chance to strut their stuff down the runway in our auditorium, showing off their amazing costumes to fellow students and staff. Five runners up were named,



with A-Level student Ella Brooks, and Aaliyah Alibo coming out on top! Both students won tickets to the upcoming MCM Comic Con event at ExCel London for their efforts.



Staff members also put in a huge effort with their brilliant costumes. In the afternoon runway competition, first prize was given to Shona Corben, dressed as Luigi; the three runners-up were Kirsty Mclean, Lisette Barlow, and Rhys Slyfield, Christina Button and Anastasia Di-Modugno, who entered as a group. First prize vouchers were kindly donated by The Crane Tap for the third year in a row.

Our Student Services team, headed by Student Experience Manager Cait Orton, along with dedicated staff members across the college worked exceptionally hard to create an outstanding event for communities across the college to participate in. Huge congratulations to all involved in making the whole day such a success!





# Help us prevent plant theft at Chiswick House & Gardens

From Chiswick House and Gardens Trust

We are deeply saddened to report that plant theft is continuing in the gardens, and that plants to the value of several hundred pounds have recently been stolen from the wilderness areas. They were all part of the work undertaken by our gardeners and volunteers this spring as part of the [‘Letting the Light In’](#) project.



We know that, as someone who loves Chiswick House & Gardens, you will be as disappointed and upset as we are by these thefts. If you are a regular visitor, we'd therefore like to ask for your help in preventing them.

All our gardeners and volunteers wear high vis vests with the Chiswick House & Gardens Trust logo on them. If you see anyone removing plants while not wearing a CHGT hi vis vest, please do let us know by emailing [info@chgt.org.uk](mailto:info@chgt.org.uk) with a description. Please do be mindful of your own safety and avoid approaching anyone directly.

Thank you again for your interest in this beautiful and historic green haven. Knowing that people love these gardens as much as we do makes a big difference, particularly when we are forced to tackle vandalism and theft.



**CHISWICK**  
HOUSE & GARDENS



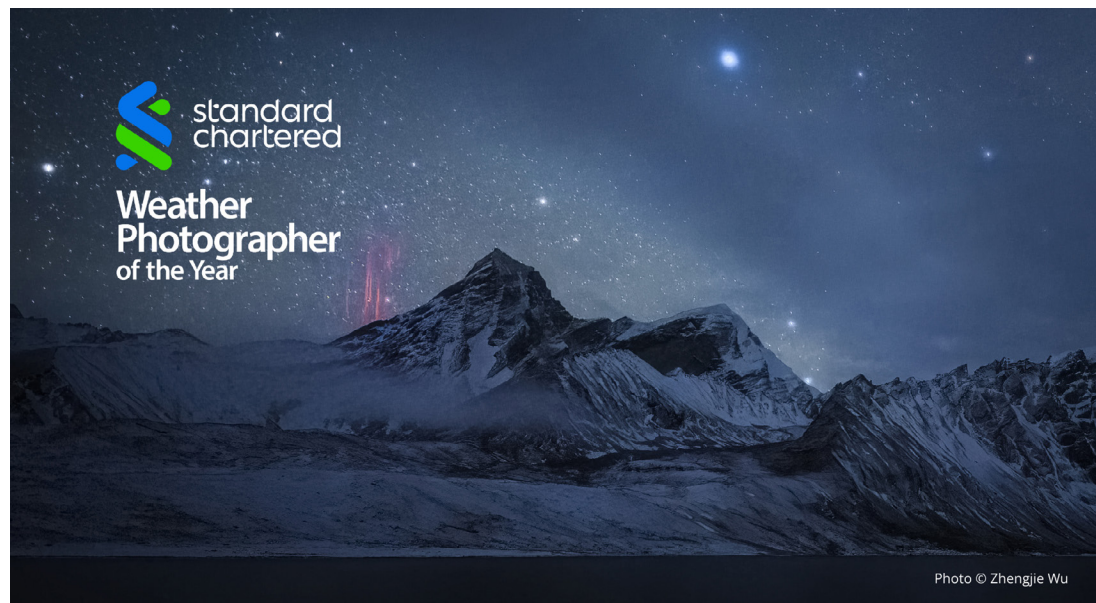
# Standard Chartered Weather Photographer of the Year competition 2025 launches today

The [Standard Chartered Weather Photographer of the Year](#) competition 2025 launches today (10 April), aiming to showcase the world's most striking weather and climate photography.

Now in its tenth year, the competition is run by the UK's Royal Meteorological Society and serves as an international platform to raise awareness of environmental issues putting our planet at risk – including heatwaves, extreme flooding and cyclones – while showcasing the awe-inspiring beauty and power of our weather.

The competition is open for entries from 10 April to 19 June 2025 and is free to enter for amateur and professional photographers of all ages and abilities.

Following its successful debut in 2024, the Standard Chartered Climate Award has now been elevated to its own category within the competition. The award was created to underscore the connection between weather patterns and the broader impacts of climate change, illustrating how these global shifts impact businesses, people and communities. Photography, as a powerful visual medium, provides a unique platform to communicate these complex narratives, underscoring the importance of efforts to reduce emissions.



The competition is open to all ages and photographic abilities, attracting novices through to some of the best professional photographers. In addition to the main prize of £5,000, there are additional prizes of £2,500 for the mobile category, £750 for the under-18 category, and £1,000 for the Standard Chartered Climate Award.

Shortlisted entries from the main and smartphone categories will be announced in mid-September. The public will then have the chance to vote for their favourite, with the winners for all categories announced on 30 October 2025.

[Enter the competition.](#)

**Prof Liz Bentley FRMetS, Chief Executive of the Royal Meteorological Society, said:**

*"As the Royal Meteorological Society celebrates its 175th year of leadership in weather and climate, the competition has become a vital platform for outreach and engagement. We are delighted to have the continued support of Standard Chartered in raising global awareness of climate change and its impact. Photography has the power to capture both the beauty and intensity of weather while telling important stories about our changing climate. Through this competition, we continue to inspire people worldwide to appreciate, understand, and engage with the science behind weather and its effects on our planet."*

**Marisa Drew, Chief Sustainability Officer at Standard Chartered, said:**

*"Standard Chartered is proud to support the Weather Photographer of the Year competition for a third year. This is an opportunity to capture and showcase captivating images of extreme weather events, and the impact our changing climate has on the environment and across our markets. By visually highlighting these impacts, we hope the competition will continue to build awareness of the importance of embedding adaptation and resilience into financial decision-making, particularly in markets most exposed to the negative effects of extreme weather."*

# Red Roses Team to Play Ireland

Abby Dow will earn her 50th Red Roses cap on Saturday when John Mitchell's side take on Ireland at Virgin Media Park, Cork.

The Trailfinders Women wing scored twice last time out against Wales, taking her try tally for England to 43 in 49 games to date since her two-try debut against Canada in 2017.

She forms part of a backline which is unchanged from Round 2 with head coach Mitchell making three changes to the pack.

Gloucester-Hartpury back row Alex Matthews returns for her first appearance of the tournament with club teammate Maud Muir and Bristol Bear Hannah Botterman coming into the front row.

## Red Roses team to play Ireland

- 15 Ellie Kildunne (Harlequins, 50 caps)
- 14 Abby Dow (Trailfinders Women, 49 caps)
- 13 Megan Jones (Leicester Tigers, 22 caps)
- 12 Tatyana Heard (Gloucester-Hartpury, 27 caps)
- 11 Jess Breach (Saracens, 44 caps)
- 10 Zoe Harrison (Saracens, 55 caps)
- 9 Natasha Hunt (Gloucester-Hartpury, 77 caps)
- 1 Hannah Botterman (Bristol Bears, 53 caps)
- 2 Lark Atkin-Davies (Bristol Bears, 63 caps)
- 3 Maud Muir (Gloucester-Hartpury, 37 caps)
- 4 Morwenna Talling (Sale Sharks, 19 caps)
- 5 Abbie Ward (Bristol Bears, 71 caps)
- 6 Zoe Aldcroft (Gloucester-Hartpury, 60 caps) - captain
- 7 Sadia Kabeya (Loughborough Lightning, 20 caps)
- 8 Alex Matthews (Gloucester-Hartpury, 72 caps)

## Replacements

- 16 Amy Cokayne (Leicester Tigers, 81 caps)
- 17 Kelsey Clifford (Saracens, 10 caps)
- 18 Sarah Bern (Bristol Bears, 68 caps)
- 19 Rosie Galligan (Saracens, 21 caps)
- 20 Maddie Feaunati (Exeter Chiefs, 12 caps)
- 21 Lucy Packer (Harlequins, 28 caps)
- 22 Holly Aitchison (Bristol Bears, 37 caps)
- 23 Helena Rowland (Loughborough Lightning, 36 caps)





# Winners announced for this year's Allianz Stadium Takeover Day

As part of England Rugby's Play Together, Stay Together campaign, eight teams will take over Allianz Stadium on Sunday 27 April 2025.

The teams were selected due to their innovative ways of inspiring adults to begin or to continue playing rugby.

## North

### Driffield Rugby Club

Last season, Driffield's fourth XV had an impressive 107 players involved – a number they're aiming to exceed this year.

The club has built its team through a season preview in a weekly newspaper and by running pre-season sessions separately from 1st XV training, creating a low-pressure environment for those looking to get involved.

Throughout the season, the team

focuses on fostering a welcoming and enjoyable atmosphere, valuing camaraderie as much as rugby itself.

The 4th XV has acted as a stepping stone for many players to progress to other teams within the club, including the current 1st XV captain, and has provided a pathway for Colts moving into senior rugby.



### Doncaster Phoenix RUFC

Doncaster Demons, the women's team at Doncaster Phoenix RUFC, has grown significantly over the past couple of years.

Through Pitch Up and Play events, charity days, friendly matches, and additional coaching sessions, they've worked hard to retain current players, welcome back lapsed players, and attract new ones.

They've also established a link with the High Performance Centre at University Campus Doncaster to support players' fitness, and have brought in new sponsors, volunteers, and supporters.

So far this season, they've welcomed 19 new players and now average over 25 players at training each week. For the first time in the club's history, they're successfully running two women's teams.

## Midlands

### Daventry RFC

Since welcoming new board members and coaches a few seasons ago, Daventry RFC has seen its 1st XV promoted twice and is now fielding four men's teams, a women's team, and a thriving mini and junior section.

They've reached players through social media, WhatsApp groups, and printed materials –

particularly targeting parents of mini and junior players to encourage them to get involved. They've also used personal connections within the club to engage members of the wider community who could benefit from social rugby.

### **Ashby RFC**

After launching a women's side in June 2024, Ashby RFC has successfully encouraged over 30 women aged 19–55 to take up rugby.

Led by Club Secretary Claire Kurpil, the club promoted rugby through social media campaigns and ran dedicated 'Give Rugby a Try' T1 sessions tailored for complete beginners.

Women are now represented at all levels of the club, including on the committee and coaching staff.

## **South West**

### **Gosford All Blacks RFC**

This season, Gosford All Blacks RFC focused on two things: creating a positive club environment and offering flexible playing options.

They've fostered a low-pressure atmosphere both on and off the pitch, including reducing the focus on alcohol at social events.

While they still offer twice-weekly training for those aiming to play league rugby, they've also launched a social third XV, allowing more flexibility with attendance and fixture timings.

The club has re-engaged former players, with six returning in the past 18 months, and has attracted parents from the junior section – including one prop in his 50s who now plays alongside his sons.

### **Ashley Down Old Boys RFC**

Ashley Down Old Boys women's team pride themselves on their club's supportive atmosphere, which they believe is key to retaining players and supporting development.

After a challenging post-COVID season – often fielding just 10 or 12 players and facing heavy defeats – the team rebuilt by reaching out to local organisations such as universities and the local hospital, and by holding an Inner Warrior event.

Their hard work has paid off, with numbers steadily increasing. They recently fielded a full squad of 22 players for the first time this season.

## **South**

### **Egham Hollowegians RFC**

Egham Hollowegians RFC boasts a wide age range of players, from 18 to 60.

The club has strong links with Royal Holloway University and fully funds regular social events, including fancy dress parties, barbecues, dinners, Christmas meals, and fundraising events.

They've also made club subscription fees optional to ensure financial barriers don't prevent participation.

To attract new players, they distribute leaflets in local shops and have ramped up their social media presence with player-focused content.

### **Harlow RFC**

Harlow RFC women's team places a strong emphasis on community and creating a family feel. They welcome players of all abilities, and members of the senior side also coach the girls' team.

The U18s take part in weekly non-contact sessions with the senior team to build connections and demonstrate the pathway to senior rugby.





# Match Preview: Arsenal v Brentford

Written by Brentford Football Club

Analysis, team news, match officials and more. Here's everything you need to know ahead of Brentford's Premier League game against Arsenal at Emirates Stadium on Saturday (5.30pm kick-off BST)

Brentford face Arsenal in the Premier League at Emirates Stadium on Saturday (5.30pm kick-off BST).

The west Londoners' five-game winning run away from home was ended by Newcastle United before a goalless draw against Chelsea at Gtech Community Stadium last time out. Mikel Arteta's side, meanwhile, defeated Real Madrid 3-0 in the UEFA Champions League quarter-final first leg on Tuesday evening.

Analysis, team news, match officials and more. Here's everything you need to know before the Bees' latest test.

## Pre-match analysis

Stephen Gillett, Playmaker Stats: The fascinating set-piece battle on Saturday

Brentford travel to the Emirates this Saturday with Arsenal in dreamland after an emphatic victory over Real Madrid in the quarter-finals of the Champions League on Tuesday.

On the back of what was a famous night in north London, the logical starting point for this preview has to be free-kicks!

Declan Rice's two sublime strikes against the reigning Champions League holders were, incredibly, the first free-kicks he has scored throughout his entire professional career - the first curled sumptuously around the wall; the second positively thumped into the postage stamp in the top corner of Thibaut Courtois's goal.



Furthermore, Arsenal haven't scored a single direct free-kick in the Premier League this season. In fact, only seven teams have: Brighton (2), Chelsea (2), Everton (2), Man Utd (2), Bournemouth, Tottenham and West Ham.

Mikel Merino's superb left-footed strike sealed the Gunners' 3-0 first-leg win over Los Blancos, and Arsenal now stand on the cusp of their first Champions League semi-final since 2008/09, when they were defeated over two legs by a Manchester United side destined to lose to Barcelona in the final.

Merino's gorgeous goal was fitting to win a game, but it was well and truly overshadowed by Rice's two ballistic free-kicks, and there is no doubt that the Gunners are an excellent dead-ball side - made even more dangerous given their England midfielder's current form.

Arsenal were by far the most prolific dead-ball side in the top flight last season with 30 of their 91 Premier League goals stemming from set-pieces (20) or penalties (10) and they are right up there again this term.

The sight of a posse of red and white jerseys huddling at the back post is a familiar one, the currently-injured Gabriel a notable handful from corners this season - with all three of the Brazilian's league goals stemming from them.

This set-piece sub-plot promises to be a fascinating one this Saturday, especially as Brentford have the best record in the division defending them.

Thomas Frank's quest for marginal gains and 'layers' he can add to his team's armoury is apparent in the Bees' efficiency in dealing with opposing set-pieces, the west Londoners having only shipped two goals all season from free-kicks, corners or throw-ins. Further, no team has conceded fewer penalties in the top flight than Brentford (1) in 2024/25.

Two clear lessons Brentford can learn from glancing at Arsenal's corner stats this season is that a) the Gunners win a lot of them (202 this season ranking them third) and b) they absolutely love an in-swinging! In fact, 185 (92 per cent) of those corners have been bent towards their opponents' goal this term, the most in the top tier.

Arsenal and Brentford actually share many of the same strengths, and the last one we'll highlight concerns chance creation.

A focus on fashioning high-quality chances can make all the difference at 'elite' level, and - in addition to increasingly popular metrics such as expected goals and expected threat - a team's average shooting distance can help evaluate the quality of their opportunities.

Last season, Brentford shot from an average distance of 15.6 yards, closer to goal than any other team in the division - and the Bees have improved (to 15.4 yards) on those numbers this season.

However, Arsenal (14.9 yards) have edged ahead of them this season in this statistic, and Arteta's side currently shoot from closer to goal than any team in the Premier League (the Gunners' set-piece prowess no doubt a factor).

Saturday's late kick-off has all the ingredients to be a fantastic clash and, with their hosts' minds full of unfinished business in Madrid, Brentford will target a first away win against Arsenal since 1938.

Item one on the game plan: don't let Rice shoot from range!

### **Scout Report**

Dan Long, *Sky Sports*: Arsenal may rest players for Bees clash

Arsenal were still in the Premier League title race at the turn of the year, even though they trailed Liverpool by six points after the New Year's Day win over Brentford at the Gtech.

*"We can only win our next match and see what happens. It's not in our hands,"* said Mikel Arteta afterwards.

Losing Bukayo Saka to a hamstring injury on 21 December was just the Christmas present they didn't need. He had nine goals and 14 assists in just 24 games in all competitions and was absolutely flying before he was sidelined. They got by - but the injury concerns were not to end there.

Gabriel Jesus sustained an ACL injury in the FA Cup third-round defeat to Manchester United, just as he was starting to hit a purple patch, and Kai Havertz tore his hamstring during a warm weather trip to Dubai in February.

Both will miss the remainder of the season. Gabriel Martinelli was unavailable for most of February and the start of March, too.

The Gunners' attack has been decimated this season, but the slight upside has been that has facilitated the breakthrough of wonderkid Ethan Nwaneri, who has eight goals and two assists in 31 games so far this term. He is already playing for England's Under-21s, despite having just turned 18.

The decision not to sign a striker in January has come back to bite Arsenal, who now have midfielder Mikel Merino leading the line.



In fairness, he has scored six in his last 10 for the club, but it would not have been anyone's first choice for the Spain international to be playing there.

An out-and-out no.9 might have given them a chance of still being in the title race at this point in the season.

They have only won two of the last six Premier League games, with three draws and a defeat in the other four. They scored only twice in those games, despite generating 5.62 xG.

Hope of catching Liverpool has been all but abandoned now.

There are 21 points left to play for and Arsenal trail by 11 going into Saturday's game. It's not impossible - that's important to say - but it would take a minor miracle from here.

And so now the focus is on ensuring they secure second place for a third season in succession. It would match a record the club set at the end of 2000/01, albeit a relatively unattractive one. If nothing else, it highlights a level of consistency.

Arteta will just be hoping this is the last practice run before, as they have been threatening, they finally get their hands on the Premier League trophy after a wait of more than two decades.

And don't forget the Champions League! The crucial quarter-final second leg against Real Madrid at the Bernabéu comes just four days after this game, so the success of this season could well hinge on that one night in the Spanish capital.

They might even be tempted to rest some players for the visit of Brentford to north London...

### **In the Dugout**

Mikel Arteta

Mikel Arteta was a product of Barcelona's famed La Masia youth set-up in the late 1990s and started his professional career at Barcelona B, for whom he played until 2002, with a loan spell at Paris Saint-Germain preceding his sale to Rangers.

In 2002/03 - the first of his two seasons at Ibrox - he lifted the Scottish Premier League and League Cup. After 68 appearances and 14 goals in all competitions, he returned to Spain in the summer of 2004 and signed for Real Sociedad. However, his time at Anoeta was over in a flash; he started three league games during the first half of the season, before joining Everton on loan.

He was an instant hit at Goodison Park and signed a five-year deal in 2005. He ended up staying for seven seasons and more than 200 appearances. Such was his talent that there was even speculation he could play for England under Fabio Capello, having not received a Spain call-up, though it ultimately did not materialise.

In August 2011, Arteta signed for Arsenal and, three years later, was appointed club captain by Arsène Wenger. He appeared 150 times for the Gunners, winning the FA Cup and Community Shield on two occasions each. He retired in 2016 at the age of 34 and soon became part of Pep Guardiola's coaching team at Manchester City.

In 2018, he was linked with a return to Emirates Stadium after Wenger's exit. Though fellow Spaniard Unai Emery took on the role of manager at that time, Arteta replaced him in December 2019. He led them to a second FA Cup win in four years but could not prevent an eighth-place finish - the lowest since 1994/95.

The 42-year-old surpassed 250 games in charge of the Gunners in late 2024; a milestone only nine managers in the club's history have reached. Under his stewardship, Arsenal have so far lifted the FA Cup once and the Community Shield twice.



# Police whistleblower that exposed groomers targeting girls at children's home told by charity rep 'it's what goes on'

From GB News

A retired senior police officer who discovered a grooming gang network targeting a children's home in Bradford was told by a charity representative that 'this is just what goes on.' After a 3 month surveillance investigation into child sex abuse in the city led by an anti-trafficking charity, John Piekos - a retired detective chief inspector - recorded multiple men waiting in cars for young girls. Mr Piekos started working for the charity in 2008 after leaving Greater Manchester Police, where he had dealt with exploitation in Oldham.

In an exclusive interview with [GB News](#) journalist Charlie Peters, who has led the way on this issue, the ex-cop said that he staked out a children's home with a colleague in Bradford for three months, where he found multiple incidents of grooming and children going missing.

*"Sometimes these girls would just be gone for a few hours, but quite often they didn't come back that night or even the next morning,"* he said. GB news has spoken to his work partner from this period who reaffirmed Mr Piekos's testimony.

Mr Piekos said that his church-funded charity reached out to contacts in the area, including the Bishop of Bradford, to organise a meeting with other charities and police officers where they could share their findings. The Diocese of Leeds said it was unable to find out more details from anyone who worked for the then-bishop at the time. He said that at the meeting, senior charity leaders told him that *"everybody knows about this."*

Mr Piekos said he hit back: *"I said, 'I beg your pardon, what do you mean 'everybody knows this?'"* He went on to explain: *"I gave a presentation about what we discovered. And there wasn't any immediate response. A representative from one of the children's charities said, 'everybody knows this is what goes on in children's homes. It goes on across the country'."*

Mr Piekos continued: *"How can this be going on all over the country? And we're not doing anything about it?"* He added that the charity rep explained 'reports' had been undertaken to which he questioned: *"Who's coordinating all this, bringing all this information together, defining exactly what the threats are to these children."*

Mr Piekos said he later received a call from a former colleague who he served with and was now a senior member of West Yorkshire Police. He claims that the officer said to him: *"Don't you realise how much work our officers have put into stabilising this community?" "What you're doing is likely to create a massive right-wing backlash that will burn parts of our town. Don't you see what you're doing?"*

Mr Piekos told GB News: *"I didn't really because even though I thought maybe some of these individuals might be Pakistani ... it never occurred to me that this was an issue of race. It was an issue of child abuse."* When asked if he felt it was a losing battle, Mr Piekos added: *"We couldn't do it on our own. We weren't ready for a battle with the establishment. "We'd lost the battle already. You know, the social services, the police, the children's charities. Gosh, even the church, you know. There wasn't the support there for tearing this down."*

John Piekos's bombshell interview comes amid a fierce political debate over the grooming abuse gangs scandal in Westminster.

On Tuesday, Safeguarding Minister Jess Phillips told the Commons hours before Easter recess the £5 million fund promised for locally-led inquiries into grooming gangs would now be for "locally-led work."

She made the update "following feedback" from local authorities, which could include further inquiries but also therapeutic support and victims' panels.



# Government invests nearly £38 million to bring 319 new green buses to communities across England

Passengers across England will enjoy greener, smoother and quieter bus journeys thanks to a £37.8 million Government investment to propel forward green transport, with 319 new zero emission buses.

Every pound of Government funding is set to be topped up by at least £3 of private investment.

The funding has been allocated to twelve successful local authorities across England, following bids to expand their zero emission bus fleets, and will see 319 cleaner, more comfortable vehicles serving passengers by Spring 2027.

It comes as the Government made changes to the Zero Emission Vehicle mandate yesterday, including increasing flexibility of the mandate up to 2030, and allowing hybrid vehicles to be sold until 2035, all with the aim of supporting UK EV manufacturers.

Today, the Local Transport Minister Simon Lightwood will visit Hull to see how the funding will bring improved journeys for passengers, and discuss how highly skilled

engineering and construction jobs will be created locally as electric bus infrastructure is delivered.



## **Local Transport Minister Simon Lightwood, said:**

*"I'm thrilled to announce this £38 million investment, which will deliver 319 new zero-emission buses to communities across England by 2027. This funding will not only make bus travel cleaner, greener, and more comfortable, but it will deliver on our Plan for Change; creating jobs, supporting local economies, and accelerating our journey towards a zero-emission future."*

*"By backing local councils and UK manufacturers, we are putting the power in the hands of communities, while helping to deliver on our vision of a sustainable, green transport network. "From Hull to Hove, there's an electrifying future on the way for our buses."*

Among the biggest winners are Nottinghamshire County Council, who will benefit from £2.6 million to launch 42 new electric buses, Hull City Council, where £3.9 million has been

allocated to provide 42 vehicles, and the West of England Combined Authority, who will receive nearly £20 million for 160 buses.

This funding comes on top of the Zero Emission Bus Regional Area 2 (ZEBRA 2) programme which has funded a further 995 zero emission buses.

Funding will see vital bus routes given a new lease of life, for example in Bristol, where funding will be used to expand zero emission bus services across 22 different routes through the city, connecting passengers with vital services including hospitals and universities.

**Matt Cranwell, Stagecoach East Midlands Managing Director, said:**

*“Stagecoach prides itself on the importance of putting sustainability at the core of our business strategy. We’re delighted to be working with local authorities and the Government to invest in a further 78 new electric buses to play our part in improving air quality in those regions where we operate.*

*“This new government funding, supported by significant investment by bus operators, will play a key role in Stagecoach’s transition to green bus fleets, helping us to meet our goal of having a zero emission UK bus fleet nationally, by 2035.”*

The Government is encouraged that UK-based manufacturers are well placed to benefit from these new bus orders. 60% of buses funded by previous ZEBRA investments are being procured from domestic firms, supporting highly skilled jobs and growing regional economies to improve living standards, as per the Government’s Plan for Change.

Regional leaders and leading manufacturers are also being given a voice on zero emission plans, through the UK bus manufacturing expert panel, which seeks to put local people at the heart of bus building.

The first event was hosted by the Local Transport Minister Simon Lightwood in Sheffield last month, and saw experts from Alexander Dennis and Wrightbus speak with Metro Mayors Oliver Coppard (South Yorkshire) and Tracey Brabin (West Yorkshire), about how local transport ambitions could link hand in hand with zero emission ambitions.

**Matt Carney, CEO, Go-Ahead Bus, said:**

*“We’re very grateful to the Department of Transport for this continued partnership. Together we’re investing in even more zero-emission buses so that customers across the UK can access cleaner, greener public transport. This funding will support new zero-emissions buses in Hull, Salisbury, Brighton & Hove, Plymouth and Isle of Wight.”*

The incoming Bus Services Bill will not only hand power back for local authorities to operate their own services, but also include a measure to ultimately end the use of new diesel and petrol buses across England. It is expected to progress into the House of Commons shortly.

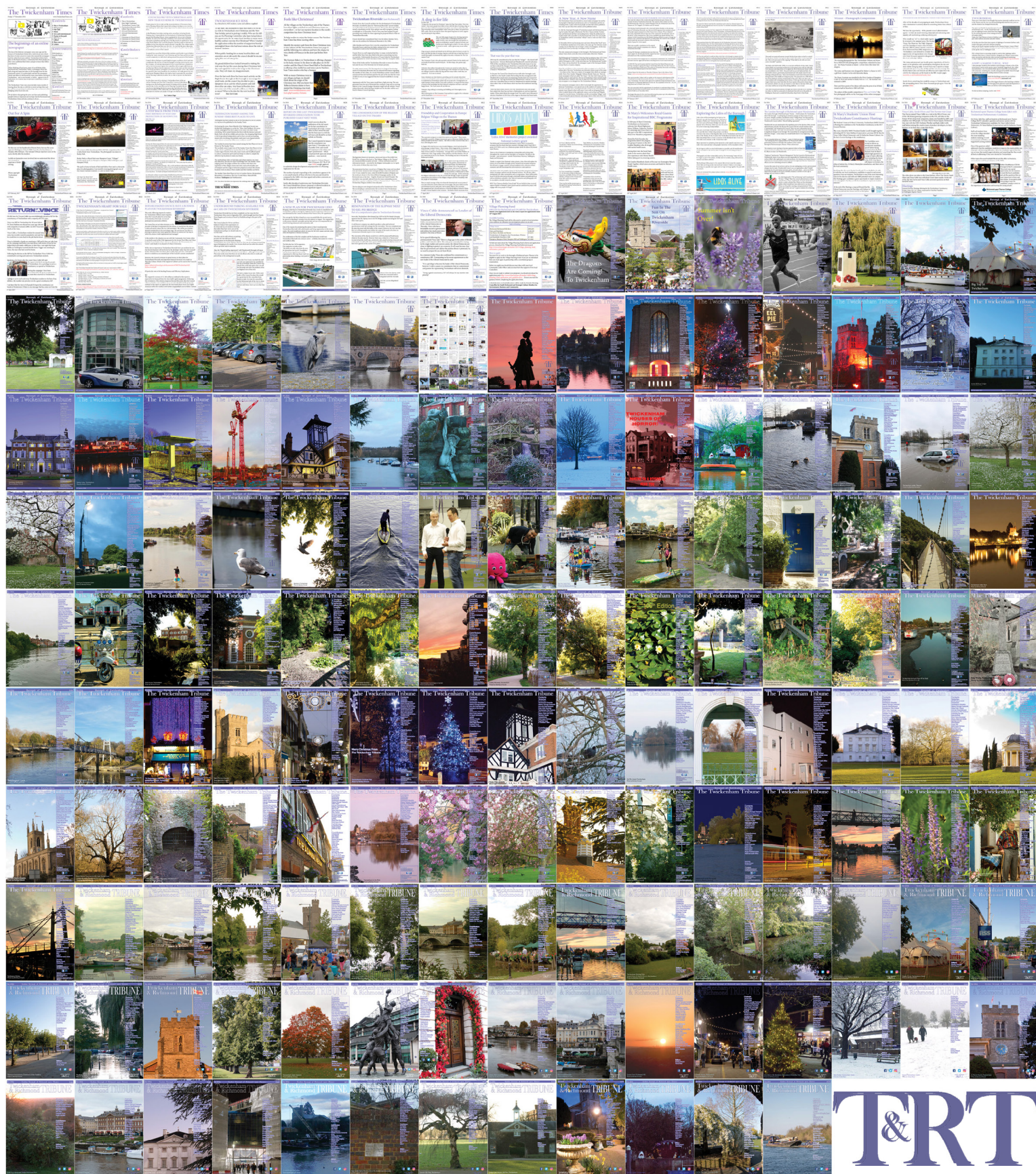
The Local Transport Minister also visited Wrightbus’ site in Ballymena last week, to continue engagement around the green future of bus manufacturing, and mark the significant milestone of their fleet passing 50 million green miles travelled.



Department  
for Transport



# 440 editions of the **Twickenham & Richmond Tribune** online - Lots to read: News, Reviews, History, Sports and On-going Sagas in the Borough of Richmond upon Thames





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