

# Twickenham & Richmond TRIBUNE

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## Editors

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17<sup>th</sup> December 2021

T&RT

Christmas lights, Twickenham

Photo by Berkley Driscoll



# TickerTape - News in Brief

## Tube strikes

Full-day strikes will run between 04:30 on **Saturday 18 December** and 04:29 on Sunday 19 December.

Strikes are planned on these lines: Central, Jubilee, Northern, Piccadilly and Victoria.

Find info on Christmas and New Year travel [HERE](#)

## Lots of amazing prizes to be won in the Mayor's Christmas Raffle

The Mayor of Richmond, Cllr Geoff Acton, is inviting residents to support this year's Mayor's charities, Dose of Nature and Habitats & Heritage, by entering a draw for a chance to win a Christmas hamper!

We have a Fortnum & Mason hamper and a Cadburys chocolate hamper to give away. Also in the raffle is a signed Harlequins jersey from the 2020/21 season and signed by the Premiership winning team.

Three lucky winners will be chosen at random on Wednesday 23 December at 5pm. All proceeds will go directly to the Mayor's charities and tickets are just £1 each.

If winners live in the borough of Richmond then we will endeavour to deliver on Christmas Eve. Winners will be contacted by phone or email.

There is no limit to the number of tickets you can purchase. Good luck!

Buy tickets [HERE](#)

## Have your say on the new Local Plan to help shape the borough's development

Richmond Council has published the first draft of the new Local Plan, which sets out a 15-year strategic vision to guide development and place-making across the borough.

When finalised, the Local Plan will be the main document against which planning applications are assessed, and residents, businesses and other key organisations are invited to [share their feedback](#).

The consultation is open to everyone until **31 January 2022**.



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**020 8894 1799**  
[info@skyelectrical.co.uk](mailto:info@skyelectrical.co.uk)



TwickerSeal and some chums were enjoying a day out at the Diamond Jubilee Gardens. They decided to have a bit of fun at the wonderful playground.

It's a lovely safe, secure playground and not overlooked by any large apartment blocks; everything you want in a playground really.

TwickerMole popped up, having burrowed across from the children's sandpit next to the old Lido diving board (a reminder of when councils built with their residents in mind, rather than luxury flat owners).

TwickerDuck remarked that there had been a lot said about the DJG recently. Unbelievably there are some who think the council's new riverside development will provide a bigger playground and a bigger and better DJG!

Should've gone to Specsavers!!



# COVID 19

Teresa Read

## World Health Organization

### Weekly Epidemiological Update, 14 December 2021

Globally, the weekly incidence of both cases and deaths has declined during the past week (6-12 December 2021), with decreases of 5% and 10% respectively, as compared to the previous week. Nonetheless, this still corresponded to over 4 million new confirmed cases and just under 47 000 new deaths and the African Region reported a 111% increase in new cases last week. As of 12 December, nearly 269 million confirmed cases and nearly 5.3 million deaths have been reported globally

### Local Covid total cases to 17 December 2021

Richmond upon Thames	30,882 (28,775 previous week)
Kingston upon Thames	28,775 (26,841 previous week)
Hounslow	49,034(46,959 previous week)
Wandsworth	54,953 (49,801 previous week)

### **In the News:**

Independent, 17/18 December: Covid: More restrictions needed to stop hospital admissions hitting 3,000 a day, experts say.

The Guardian, 17 December: Covid news live: UK sees record uptake of boosters

Sky News, 17 December: COVID-19: Wales to introduce new coronavirus restrictions with social distancing and closure of nightclubs from 27 December

BBC News, 17 December: Omicron Now Dominant Strain in Scotland

### **Munira Wilson, MP for Twickenham Tweet on Vaccine Passports:**

*"Yesterday in Parliament I highlighted how vaccine passports would create a false sense of security, as those who are vaccinated can still transmit the virus."*

Many residents in Twickenham will not be pleased that the MP for Twickenham did not support vaccine passports. Those who are fully vaccinated are less likely to transmit the virus than the unvaccinated.

Ms Wilson should remember that Twickenham is a town that attracts thousands of rugby fans thronging public transport, our streets and public amenities.

Luckily for Twickenham our MP, Ms Wilson, was in the minority and the vote was in favour of the introduction of COVID-19 certificates for venues and large events in England. *An NHS COVID Pass shows your coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination details or test results.*



**The Tree Agency**

darryl parkin

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# Christmas in Sheen

By Simon Fowler

Elizabeth Bancroft, the wife of George Bancroft the American Minister in London, during 1848 and 1849, wrote letters home about her experiences in England

I give you for Aunty's amusement a minute account of my visit into the country at Mr. Bates's, where things are managed in a scrupulously English manner... Our invitation was to arrive on Thursday, the day before Christmas, to dine, and to remain until the following Tuesday morning. His place is at East Sheen, which receives its name from the Anglo-Saxon word for beauty. It adjoins Richmond Park, beyond which is the celebrated Richmond Hill, Twickenham, Kew, etc., etc...

We arrived at East Sheen at half-past five; but I ought first to mention the preparations for a country excursion. Our own carriage has, of course, no dicky for my maid, or conveniences for luggage, so we take a travelling carriage. The imperials (which are large, flat boxes, covering the whole top of the carriage, capital for velvet dresses, and smaller ones fitting into all the seats in the carriage, and before and behind) are brought to you the day before. I am merely asked what dresses I wish taken, and that is all I know of the matter, so thoroughly does an English maid understand her business.



We were shown on our arrival into a charming room, semi-library. In a few minutes a servant came to show me to my apartment, which was very superb, with a comfortable dressing-room, and fire for Mr. Bancroft, where the faithful Keats unpacked his dressing materials, while I was in a few moments seated at the toilet to undergo my hair-dressing, surrounded by all my apparatus, and a blazing fire to welcome me with a hissing tea-kettle of hot water and every comfort.

[At dinner she met] Sir William Hooker [who] is a great naturalist and has the charge of the great Botanical Gardens at Kew. He devoted a morning to us there, and it was the most delightful one I have passed. There are twenty-eight different conservatories filled with the vegetable wonders of the whole world. Length of time and regal wealth have conspired to make the Kew gardens beyond our conceptions entirely.

Sir William pointed out to us all that was very rare or curious, which added much to my pleasure. He showed us a drawing of the largest flower ever known on earth, which Sir Stamford Raffles discovered in Sumatra. It was a parasite without leaves or stem, and the flower weighed fifteen pounds. Lady Raffles furnished him the materials

for the drawing. I dined in company with her not long ago, and regret now that I did not make her tell me about the wonders of that region.

Taken from Elizabeth Bancroft, *Letters from England 1846-1849* (New York, 1904)

# New walk-in vaccination centre to open in Richmond

A further walk-in COVID-19 vaccination and booster clinic will open for five days from Monday in Richmond town centre, enabling even more people in Richmond to have the vital jab before Christmas.

The clinic will open at Richmond Adult Community College (RHACC) on:

Monday 20 December from 11am to 6pm  
Tuesday 21 December from 9am to 6pm  
Wednesday 22 December from 9am to 6pm  
Thursday 23 December from 9am to 6pm  
Friday 24 December from 9am to 5pm

This is in addition to walk-in centres available across South West London, including at West Mid Hospital Vaccination Hub.

The clinic at RHACC is open to anyone aged 12 or over, however young people aged 12 to 15 may need to wait for nurses to become available.



No appointments are needed, but as seen elsewhere in the country, queues maybe long. First and second doses of the Pfizer vaccines will be on offer, and booster jabs (for those eligible) will also be available.

Cllr Gareth Roberts, Leader of Richmond Council, said:

*“We’ve had an amazing response to vaccinations in Richmond, with the majority of our population now eligible for their booster as they’ve already had their first and second doses.*

*“If you’ve not had a chance yet to get any of your COVID-19 vaccinations, it doesn’t matter why, it’s not too late. Even one dose is better than none, so please book an appointment or get to a walk-in clinic as soon as you can.*

*“It is a huge collective effort to ensure every eligible adult gets access to a booster jab. However, the vaccine programme and everyone behind its success has risen to every challenge time and time again, and I know they are pulling out all the stops to protect people.*

*“The message is clear - please get the booster jab now, as that’s the best way to ensure you and your loved ones are as protected as possible from COVID-19 this Christmas.*

*“We will support our colleagues at the NHS with this mission in any way we can, as it is in everyone’s best interests and will help to protect our health services and get us get back to living our lives normally, which is something we all want to do.”*

People should also continue to wash hands regularly, wear face coverings where required, take regular lateral flow tests, self-isolate immediately and get a PCR test when displaying any COVID-19 symptoms, and if meeting people indoors ensure fresh air is circulating.

People are advised to pre-book appointments where they can by visiting the [NHS: Book or manage your coronavirus vaccination page](#) or by calling 119.

People should keep any eye on the [NHS website](#) for any relevant updates regarding walk-in appointments.

# State of the Notion

By Lucilius

Director of the Department of Heritage Destruction, Cllr Rutt is beside himself with excitement as he enters Katchwimen palace for his weekly audience with Ralph Gobbets, the Governor of The Democratic Republic of Transfluvia. He knocks on the door of the Parabolic Office (so named in honour of the puck used in Gurby, the Transfluvian national game), coughs, enters and genuflects. Gobbets is looking in a mirror, admiring the effect of his new sustainable recycled electric toothpick.

Rutt: I've seen it, Governor Gobbets, I've seen it! I was over in Cllr Lickspital's Department of Information Obfuscation, and we saw it on the wind powered video projector. I would have come quicker to tell you, but the battery on my electric pogo stick ran out. Not enough sun in December. You were magnificent!

Gobbets: Yes, I know. Several people told me how honoured they were to witness my first State of the Notion speech.

Rutt: You looked so ... so suave, so urbane, so burnished. That firm gaze, authority epitomised! Eye to eye with your subjects ... whoops I meant your public. Not a hair out of place.

Gobbets: Yes, Berlaymont my personal coiffeur does a nice job. Be-Lay we call him/she/they. President Mycronie recommended Be-Lay to me, when we were swapping pétanque tips.

Rutt: You looked so Regal, a bit like our late King when he made his Christmas speech.

Gobbets: Careful Rutt, such talk could be treasonous. Remember we are a Republic. (I rather think some of those mid-20th Century central European leaders had some neat hair-dos.) Moreover, a secular Republic, so please refer to it as a Winter Festival Speech.

Rutt: The content though, the content. How you had planted ten trees, the lowest for 500 years; and built those parking sheds for 125 electric pavement motorbikes by demolishing that useless children's playground. How you made a fairer Republic by spending €450 on affordable housing, and €1 million on acquiring the land for the Killjoy Centre and the Doubly Joyous Gardens.

Gobbets: Subject to planning permission ... by my Planning Committee, advised by my (and your) Department of Heritage Destruction.

Rutt: Credit where credit's due, Governor Gobbets. And Cllr Lickspital was pleased that his (well your) Department of Information Obfuscation successfully sent out the wrong addresses for the objections, told the gullible we would forward them, and made the deadline over the period of Chris- - I mean the Winter Festival. Quite a coup. Brilliant!

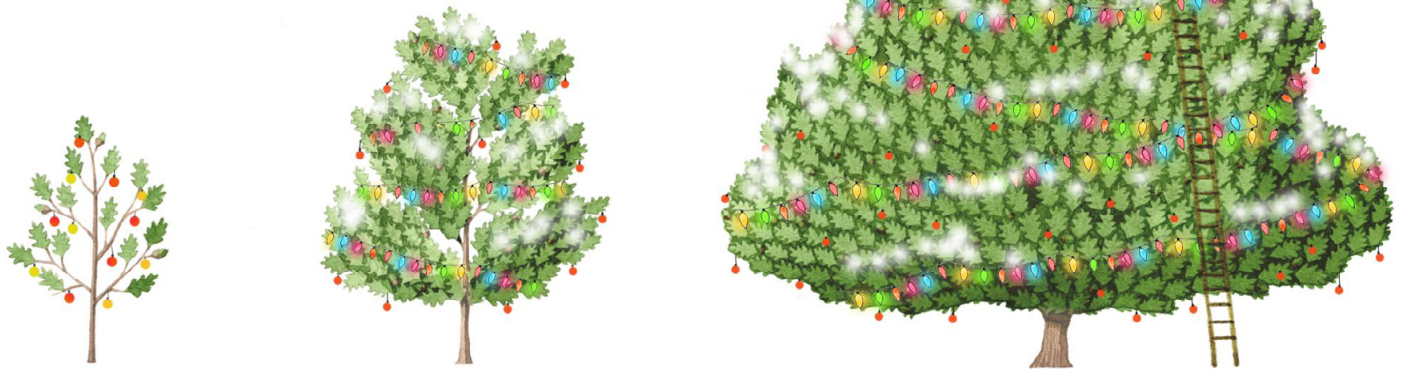
Gobbets: But we've had a greater coup, just in time for the Winter Festival. Axel and I were toasting its success last night, the Public Subjugation Policing Order for Snorsly.

Rutt: Its Vice Governor Hammer's own constituency town. I know he was pleased. Another three years. Before the PSPO, it was bedlam down there, such a detrimental effect on the quality of life, having all those people silently praying. And on the pavement, getting in the way of the cyclists.

Gobbets: Axel didn't like it. Neither did Hermann his Rottweiler. Soon got all our people there to say how this vicious silent praying was ruining their lives. Wouldn't happen now; the Tilia electric pavement motorcycles would mow them down in no time. Superstitious claptrap. That's one of the reason's we renamed it Winter Festival. All these people trying to put religion into it. It completely spoilt Christmas.



*Happy Christmas to All  
from The Agents  
Of The Tree Agency*



# *The Tree Agency*

Holy Trinity Church, Twickenham Green  
Christmas Services

Online: [www.httchurch.org/christmas](http://www.httchurch.org/christmas)

**Sunday 19 December**

10.30 am Carol Service with the Trinity Singers  
6.00 pm Carols by Candlelight

**Friday 24 December**

3.30 pm Christmas Eve – The Story of Christmas  
11.00 pm Midnight Communion

**Saturday 25 December**

10.30 pm Christmas Family Communion



HOLY TRINITY TWICKENHAM



# Twickenham Residents Are Fed Up with Anti-Social Behaviour Emanating from Twickenham Green – Noise Heard Half a Mile Away

This Friday evening was the second Friday this month that over seventy young teenagers descended on Twickenham Green disturbing local residents and crowding over the path taken by local people to visit the supermarket on the Staines Road side.

It is probably well-known by now that the Council has not reinstated public toilets on Twickenham Green, once located on the site of Arthur's Restaurant.

In the summer the Council eventually provided temporary toilets which were closed at the time older groups continued to drink on the Green. Two park guards were provided but they did nothing to prevent public urination when the trailer toilets closed.

Tonight, Friday 17 December, young boys were seen publicly urinating on the Holy Trinity Church boundary fence, their trousers hanging down. Residents had to negotiate puddles of urine – not a pleasant way to end an evening.

This sort of behaviour has been going on for over two years, a year before lockdown - sometimes with threats of violence and the need for 999 calls.

The relevant local amenity groups, the Friends of Twickenham Green and the Strawberry Hill Residents Association have not been effective at preventing this disgraceful state of affairs. Numerous anti-social reports have been recorded by the police.

Local councillors for South Ward Twickenham Cllr Richard Bennett (Green Party), Michael Butlin (Liberal Democrat) and Cllr Katie Mansfield (Liberal Democrat) need to address this matter now. If it is like this in winter, what will the situation be in spring and summer? Twickenham Green will definitely need permanent public toilets in place as soon as possible.

... And a Dispersal Order for under-age drinkers and groups of youths who have started to make Twickenham Green a no-go zone at times, impeding normal life.

Perhaps this should be an election issue (5th May 2022) as public health is regressing in this situation.

It is time that those in positions where they could make a difference dealt with this anti-social behaviour emanating from Twickenham Green.

It is now just gone half-past ten at night on 17 December and the noise continues; as I draw this piece to a close a neighbour who lives at the top of Wellesley Road, on the way to Squires Garden Centre, has phoned to tell me about the noise - heard half a mile away, particularly, I am told, the screams of drunk females.

**Local residents have really had enough.**



*Three urinators return to the crowded Green  
Photo taken 17/12/21 20:34*

Dear Tribune

## Diamond Jubilee Gardens

We feel obliged to correct some of the many inaccuracies and assumptions relating to the Twickenham Riverside Trust's position on the riverside development proposals, published in your columns in recent weeks and in particular in your edition of 11 December.

It is important that this debate is conducted openly and based on the facts. In no particular order, we will address some of the points made in last week's edition.

- The Trust has legal title to and direct responsibility for the Diamond Jubilee Gardens for the next 118 years. This land was vested in the Trust just seven years ago as public open space with the duty to 'preserve, protect and improve' the Riverside area 'so that never again can any other Council come forward with a plan to sell it off to a developer'.
- The Trust has never formally agreed to the Council's proposals for the Gardens, either before or since the appointment of the new trustees in October 2020 (just two weeks before the Compulsory Purchase powers were first mooted publicly by the Council).
- The Trust has been obliged to seek independent professional surveyors' advice before reaching its decision on either the Council's offer or its position with regard to its Compulsory Purchase Order. It was not possible, because of the changing position within the Council, to receive this advice finally until November this year.
- The Trust is not 'hell-bent on stopping the Hopkins scheme', nor has it 'done a u-turn and decided to oppose the current scheme'. The reality is that the Trust has not taken a position on the current scheme. It has objected to the Council's action in making a CPO on its land, taking account of the professional advice received. It is, separately, still in negotiation with the Council regarding the Council's proposal for the re-provisioned Garden as part of the overall development.
- When account is taken of the public open space currently available to the public down on the Embankment promenade, the area being offered as a replacement for the existing Gardens is smaller. In addition, the new Gardens – over several levels and with large areas liable to flooding – do not provide the same amenity to the public in terms of the variety of uses and activities they can enjoy. To take just one example, the measurement of the children's play areas is not a like-for-like comparison: in fact, the new area is not 'considerably larger' than the existing area, as suggested – it is considerably smaller. And this does not account for the additional space required to cover the 'child yield' of the proposed development or the loss of the large sandpit in the existing Gardens.

Regarding the assertions about 'unjustified obstacles of an unelected minority, to enable the creation of a "whole site" solution as proposed by Hopkins Architects and supported by the majority of Twickenham residents', we would simply wonder whether these really reflect reality given what we say above and given the small numbers involved in all the general and planning consultations to date.

The Trust is not putting itself forward in any way other than as a statutory consultee which is duty-bound under its articles to protect its main asset of the gardens, which is one of the primary reasons that the Trust was set up. We would hope that any of your columnists in future would understand the obligation on us to observe due legal process.

Finally, we also wanted to take this opportunity to correct another key misunderstanding relating to the next steps. The Council continues to assert that it had an 'in principle' agreement with us regarding a new lease over the re-provided area of public space. This is inaccurate and the full details of this and many other important Q&A are set out on our website [www.twickenhamriversidetrust.org.uk](http://www.twickenhamriversidetrust.org.uk)

Yours

Luke Montgomery-Smith, Twickenham Riverside Trust Chair

*Editor's note: We would like to clarify that the comments referred to in the above letter were not made by Tribune columnists, but are taken from letters submitted to the Tribune by residents and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Tribune.*

Dear Editor,

### **Twickenham Riverside**

Deon Lombard's letter in Edition 266 demands a response. Life is short, so I will keep it brief.

First, his statement that the current scheme has "the support of the majority of Twickenham residents" is untrue. It does not.

Second, his claim that improvements to the quality and accessibility of the open space and resolution of parking issues "can only be brought about" by the current proposal is wrong and unfounded. With the right political will, these could easily be achieved at comparatively little expenditure. And certainly do not need the provision of a block of luxury flats and a speculative pub/restaurant to secure their provision.

Lastly, he describes opponents of the scheme as putting forward "unjustified" obstacles. Which is a bizarre choice of words as the majority of comments opposing the scheme have been extraordinarily cogent and well thought out.

This site is too important to be squandered on land uses which Twickenham already has or does not need.

Yours

W Stewart, Teddington

Dear Tribune,

### **Yet another murder**

Richmond Council's claim that this is the best borough in London is hardly backed up by the fact that it is not safe to walk the streets.

Chief Superintendent Lis Chapple was reported as saying:

*'People can expect to see an enhanced police presence in the area as we work to support our colleagues as they investigate this tragic incident.'*

How about we have an enhanced police presence BEFORE people get stabbed?

Michael Jay  
Hampton

Dear Tribune,

### **Twickenham Riverside**

It is interesting that Sue Hamilton-Miller's letter in last week's Tribune confirmed exactly my previous two letters to the Tribune which both clearly showed that the reported claims by the Leader of Richmond Council of: '*Broad public support ... by countless residents*' for its Twickenham Riverside plan are actually based on the Council's obviously flawed survey of a mere 829 people which showed that only 0.3 % of Richmond's population supported it.

Mr. Deon Lombard's letter, also in last week's Tribune, stated that:

*'The TRT was set up to protect the interests of the majority of Twickenham residents. It has been hi-jacked as a vehicle for a minority who are hell bent on stopping the Hopkins scheme from proceeding. Under these circumstances it is clear that a CPO is necessary to overcome the unjustified obstacles of an unelected minority.'*

Just who are the unelected minority? The .3% who support the Council's plan or the other 99.7%?

Mr. Lombard had previously written that: '*The majority do not complain when they are satisfied*' (Tribune 19.2.2021), a claim which I refuted in the Tribune on 26.2.2021 with numerous logical reasons including the fact that one can hardly say that the majority in countries occupied by the Nazis were satisfied merely because they did not complain about Hitler.

I know nothing of the Twickenham Riverside Trust but I repeat my previous assertion that a compulsory purchase order would not be necessary if the ACTUAL majority of Twickenham residents supported the Council's plan rather than just a minuscule 0.3% of the population.

Michael Jay  
Hampton

*Letters published do not necessarily reflect the views of the Twickenham & Richmond Tribune, its Publisher, its staff or its advertisers.*

*Letters of approximately 500 words of body text will be printed at our standard 14pt font size, which will publish as a single page.*

*All letters must be submitted by the end of Thursday, prior to publication the following day on Friday.*

*The Tribune prefers letters to include the writer's name, but will publish anonymously provided details are supplied.*



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# Reaffirmation of Richmond's twinning with Fontainebleau

The Richmond in Europe Association is delighted to announce that the reaffirmation of Richmond's international partnerships with Fontainebleau & Konstanz, which had been due to take place in 2020, will now be celebrated in Richmond from 6th-8th June 2025.

Over 500 guests are expected from our twin towns during the course of the long weekend. So far 120 local groups, schools & associations have registered to participate. To register your interest or for further information please go to.

<https://richmondineurope.com/2020-reaffirmation/>



## Compulsory Purchase Order: Twickenham Riverside

The Department for Levelling Up Housing & Communities will acknowledge all Objections, received, to the abovementioned CPO.

Send objections to the following address and/or email:

Planning Casework Unit  
Department for Levelling Up Housing & Communities  
23 Stephenson Street  
Birmingham  
B2 4BH

Email: [pcu@communities.gov.uk](mailto:pcu@communities.gov.uk)

# Festive Dog Show a hit!

## Trustees host dog show on the Diamond Jubilee Gardens

This past Saturday morning, some 30+ dogs, and their various human companions, wrapped up warm, padded down to Diamond Jubilee Gardens on Twickenham's riverside to strut their stuff in a Festive Dog Show.

A popular summer event that has been part of the annual month-long June Twickenham Festival for several years, this year's Dog Show - hosted by volunteers and Trustees of the Twickenham Riverside Trust - demonstrated that Twickenham's dog lovers know no deterrent when it comes to showing off their shaggy (and smooth-haired, of course) companions!



Trustees look forward to seeing this event back in a Summer 2022 slot, as part of the calendar of events that are hosted each year on the Diamond Jubilee Gardens. More details in Spring 2022!



# Park Lane Stables is coming home

**We have completed on our home in Park Lane Teddington today and the keys are ours!**

Teddington has been our home for 13 years, and we are now returning as the proud new owners of Park Lane Stables. The legal process proved far more complex than we could have anticipated but we never gave up, and any frustration we may have felt has been swept aside by jubilation.

This year is ending with the only Christmas present any of us wanted.

But before horses return to Teddington's streets, we'll first be refurbishing the site in keeping with its proud 200 year old history as an urban stables. This will include our amazing wall of bricks, each one sponsored by and bearing the name of a supporter. A lasting legacy of this year's tumultuous events, this will write into the fabric of the building the next chapter in its history.

The new year will see riding and carriage driving resuming in Bushy Park, and a newly energised Park Lane Stables now fully in control of its own destiny and able to make plans for the future.

We would once again like to thank everyone who has helped us to achieve this – we would not be in this position if it were not for you.

The hospitality of our friends at Manor Farm Stables in Petersham has meant we've been able to continue to do what we love best, sharing the magic of our wonderful horses with the patrons who are so much a part of the Park Lane Stables family. In the interim at least, we will continue to operate at Manor Farm.

Meanwhile, we also have a street party to organise. Watch this space!

*"We are delighted that RDA can return to Park Lane in Teddington, a venue that has come to mean so much to so many people – and inspired such an outpouring of support and generosity from the local community and beyond. We are grateful to Manor Farm for taking in the group in their hour of need and ensuring that RDA activities could continue."*

**– Ed Bracher, Chief Executive, RDA UK**

*"The Park Lane site in Teddington has been a stables for over 200 years, and thanks to our amazing supporters it will now stay that way. We're so grateful to our immediate neighbours and local community for their steadfast support which has truly sustained us on our journey. Thank you to the incredible team of volunteers and trustees whose tenacity and optimism means we can continue to share the magic of horses with those who need it."*

**– Natalie O'Rourke, Owner, Park Lane Stables**





# Will the Real Father Christmas Please Stand Up?

By Jeremy Hamilton-Miller

Last Saturday I saw three cyclists in full Father Christmas uniform going along King Street. This set me wondering how many people can genuinely be called “Father Christmas”.

They would have to be (a) male (b) married to Mary (surely we all know that Mrs Christmas is called Mary? Her name is on everybody’s lips at this time of year) (c) a father – obviously (d) aged between 40 and 60 – here I am not on such firm ground, but judging from pictures I have seen of the real character, and bearing in mind the white beard and strenuous journey he must do on December 24th, I cannot be far wrong.

The most recent examples I can find are from the 1911 Census (unfortunately I cannot do it for the present day, as the 2021 Census will not appear for 100 years). There can be found 205 males of the right age group, but only 15 were married to Mary; 12 of these were fathers. We are left now with the puzzle of what is the correct first name for the true Father Christmas: the 12 candidates have the names Alfred, William, Arthur, Albert, John, Henry, Elijah and Samuel. None of these can be right. Surely Father Christmas is modelled on St Nicholas, so should bear that name? So, all so far are found wanting.

Father Christmas also goes, of course, by the pseudonym “Santa Claus”. Saints traditionally are called by their first name, so I next searched the Census for males called Claus, married to Mary, aged 40 – 60, with children. Only one name came up.

I can now reveal that the identity of the only genuine “Father Christmas” in 1911: Claus Matzen, born in Germany but resident in UK, a dock labourer from Bootle, aged 58, married to Mary and father of five children. He probably did not realise his true fame.



# Church Street a Christmas mecca for “Home Workers”

By Shona Lyons

It was lovely to walk down Church Street this afternoon and see how busy the street is, with many home workers taking a break and working with their lap-tops whilst getting some fresh air and good coffee & refreshments.

The shops were also doing a busy trade with many people buying their Christmas presents from the many different gift & homeware shops that we have in this street such as Allissias Attic, Mojo and The Hare and The Moon.

The street looks incredibly warm and inviting with all the Christmas Lights in and above the shops and you can see why the street is bustling as it is such a twinkly place right now to get you into the Christmas vibe with traders offering such a wide range of products from vapes, to specialist Panettone & Italian delicatessen Christmas hampers at Corto, Chocolates & Sweet hampers from retro Sweet Memories, to Vintage Vinyl at Eel Pie Records. We even have South African Limpopo and Pierre with all kinds of Saffa treats, meats and biltong and Colleen with her boutique pet emporium and Grooming Salon for Twickenham’s best dressed pooches.



Some of the traders have been here for decades like Crusader Travel, Completely Floored, Twickenham Tandoori & Milestone and Collis Estate Agents and the lovely clothes boutique Rocc who are true veterans and Mojo & Pulcinella have had quite a few decades in the street too.

We are a very Cosmopolitan space and have so many nationalities in the street and a wide range of hospitality to suit most tastes, with You Me Sushi joining us last year as did Gails Bakery adding to our offer of Italian restaurants Pulcinella, Corto Deli, Sorrento, Masaniello and quite a few Indian such as veteran Twickenham Tandoori & Naz Balti & also high end Indian



tapas Tsaretta Spice & popular snack bars where you can have an early breakfast, light lunch or light refreshments such Snax or the Lebanese tea shop Rosie Chai and Italian deli Corto & Gails. In fact when you come to the street early you will see the outside tables absolutely full of people enjoying an early morning breakfast or coffee before they start the day.

If you are looking for spa treatments or a new haircut we have many cutting edge men's barbers, beauty salons and hairdressers too such as Jimmy Marums, Kiss N Make Up, Mint hairdressing and Spa, Piper Violet and beauty aesthetics and treatments at Sheer Laser.

In the last few years we have been joined by Piper Violet Hairdressers run by Becky and Jo who have a wealth of experience and a lovely Hideaway Salon just off the square, ultra-modern Madison Brook Estate Agents, Gails Bakery, You Me Sushi and also Hedson Rail and tomorrow our newest neighbour, Maggie May London will open selling vintage and modern clothes, fragrances and accessories.

Church Street is here to welcome you all! We hope you will enjoy Christmas & the New Year in our lovely pedestrianised & hospitable street.



# Back land, to rear of 16-24 Hampton Road/ First Cross Road

The Friends of Twickenham Green

The land behind 24 Hampton Road, formerly owned by fullers Brewery, was cleared by its new owner, of all shrubbery and ground cover some months ago. This effectively destroyed what had been an important local wildlife habitat, and an important part of the back land wild life corridor between First and Second Cross Road. This site had been left relatively undisturbed for over twenty years, and was home to mammals (including bats and hedgehogs), amphibians and invertebrates (including stag beetles).

The developer has now filed a planning application with the council, to remove five mature trees, including a magnificent mature and established eucalyptus.

Worryingly, in addition, the developer wants to reduce the crown of a second eucalyptus which has a Tree Protection Order placed upon, by 3 to 4 metres.

By destroying the habitat and removing the trees, the developer seems to be trying to ensure that the site has no ecological value. Why compromise the site in this way before a planning application for its use has been made?

Whilst the site is within the Twickenham Green Conservation Area, that does not protect habitat nor wildlife, only property. The developer is currently within their rights to do with the land as they wish. So far the developer has shown no interest in working with the local community.

However, the original Twickenham Green Study from March 1992, referring to the back land

behind First Cross Road, gave Supplementary Planning Guidance for the council, "single new dwellings behind a main house in tandem are rarely acceptable".

Loss of trees, especially in the light of the recent Cop26 conference is not to be taken lightly. We would urge you all to contact your councillors and make your feelings known. Please do reply to the council planning department on the following link: -

[http://www2.richmond.gov.uk/PlanData2/Planning\\_CaseNo.aspx?strCASENO=21/T1003/TCA](http://www2.richmond.gov.uk/PlanData2/Planning_CaseNo.aspx?strCASENO=21/T1003/TCA)

**Closing date for comments is Friday the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 2021**

It is time that we ask our councillors to look again at what we mean by the term 'conservation area'.

*Images: The Friends of Twickenham Green*



# PCR testing expanded in Richmond

The mobile PCR testing facility based at Old Deer Park in Richmond is now seven days a week. As levels of COVID-19 remain high in the borough, we want to make it as easy as possible for local people to get tested.

To access a test at this centre, and the centres at Bramble Lane in Hampton or Broom Road in Teddington, you **MUST** book an appointment. Test appointments are available to book for those with Coronavirus symptoms. These include a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste.

PCR testing is also available for those who have tested positive via a lateral flow test, or have been asked to get a test, either by NHS Test and Trace if they're a close contact of a positive case, or a clinician or their local authority.

Tests can be booked on the new NHS Covid-19 app, online: [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://nhs.uk/coronavirus) or by calling 119. If there are none available, please continue to check online.



All three PCR testing sites in the borough are easily accessible without a car. Those being tested will be required to follow public health measures, including social distancing, not travelling by taxi or public transport, practicing good personal hygiene and wearing a face covering throughout, including while travelling to and from the testing centre.

We also know that there is national demand for lateral flow tests, with people keen to test before seeing friends and family at Christmas.

At the moment we are trying hard to ensure that East Sheen, Hampton, Twickenham and Whitton libraries have tests for people to come and collect. However, demand is very high. We are hoping our stocks will be replenished in the coming days.

The national website is regularly refreshed, with daily stocks arriving for people to [request online](#). However, we ask that residents do not 'stock pile' tests. There are seven tests in a box.

## Annual festival for carers this Saturday

The London Virtual Carer's Festival, run by LondonADASS, celebrates the role of carers across the capital.

The focus of the festival is to celebrate and congratulate London's carers with a fun packed event of comedy, music, art, and dance. All are being delivered in partnership with London carers. The programme includes a range of activities including Zumba with Zoe and a live performance by a steel band.



The event is free and open to all (whether you are in a caring role or not). Please join us to say a huge thanks and congratulate our carers across the capital.

Book your free ticket [HERE](#)

# TV presenter Julia Bradbury says invigorating woodland walks have helped her cope with ongoing treatment for breast cancer

Julia, who has presented both BBC's Countryfile and Britain's Best Walks, is an avid walker and has revealed some of her favourite free Woodland Trust's woods for a winter stroll.

She says her diagnosis for breast cancer in September has magnified her love of the outdoors and made her even more aware of the healing power of nature.

*"Although my treatment has left me feeling fragile, I've been trying to get outside every day and build up my steps,"* Julia said.

*"There's nothing like a walk, through beautiful trees, to boost your physical and mental wellbeing. Breathing in pure air and surrounding myself with nature is good for the soul and a welcome distraction from what I'm going through at the moment."*



The Woodland Trust has more than 1,000 woods across the UK, all free to visit and open every day.

You can locate your nearest woodland escape easily - just enter your postcode at [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/find-woods](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/find-woods) or take a look at Julia and the Trust's pick of the best winter walks from around the UK.

Julia added: *"This Christmas people are really looking forward to getting together with friends and loved ones. I'd urge everyone to plan a trip to their nearest woodlands for some fresh air and to spend some time together in nature, whatever the weather. Woods are real winter wonderlands – whether it's a crisp, frosty morning or soggy afternoon, it's great to take in the oxygen and embrace the chilly weather. If your family overindulges during the festive season, head out for an outdoor adventure; my top Woodland Trust walks are ideal places to burn off those extra mince pies!"*

In winter, woods take on a whole new character. Spectacular, frosty landscapes and bare branches expose elusive wildlife and hidden history. And what's more, all Woodland Trust woods are free to enter.

After a day of indulgence, Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree on repeat and the children arguing about the PlayStation, Boxing Day is a great time to escape outdoors – and where better than the UK's glorious woods?

The Woodland Trust has more than 1,000 woods which are free to enter and open all year round so come prepared for nature in its natural state. This means no toilets, cafés, bins or cleaning staff - just unmissable views, clean air, birdsong and woodland paths for you to wander along to your heart's content.

Embrace nature and enjoy but also back our Love Your Woods campaign by playing your part and protecting woods and nature for the future with these top tips for your visit.

- Stay on the paths
- Take dog mess and litter home with you
- Protect wildlife by keeping dogs close
- Stay fire free
- Leave sleepovers to the wildlife
- Be considerate with den building
- Park with consideration for others
- Swimming is for wildlife only
- Woods aren't good for rock climbing which destroys precious habitats
- Check access rules before cycling

So, dig out your wellies and woollies say goodbye to some of those extra Christmas calories.



**WOODLAND**  
TRUST

# Police Now officers in The Met attend their passing out parade

Over 70 Police Constables on the Police Now [National Graduate Leadership Programme](#) attended their passing out parade with the Metropolitan Police Service (The Met) on Friday (10<sup>th</sup> December 2021), officially welcoming them into force.

In total, over 300 Metropolitan police officers - including those who joined via Police Now - participated in their passing out parade and subsequent ceremony, which took place at Hendon Peel Centre.

The parade was attended by Deputy Commissioner Sir Stephen House QPM and Commander of Learning and Development Adrian Usher, as well as senior officers including London's Borough Commanders.

**Deputy Commissioner Sir Stephen House QPM said:** *"I want to congratulate all of the Police Now officers, and their colleagues, who attended their passing out parade on Friday."*

*"Police Now is a valuable programme for the force and I am pleased to see so many great officers joining through this route. I wish them all the very best in their future policing careers with The Metropolitan Police Service."*

The officers marched on to the parade square, accompanied by The Band of the Grenadier Guards and Met police horses, before attending the awards ceremony.

Several 'Top Student' awards were presented to Police Now officers at the ceremony, including PC George Beckley, PC Mourad Dekiouk, and PC Emily Nice, to recognise their levels of behavioural and academic success during their training.

**Police Now officer PC Mourad Dekiouk said:** *"Training both with Police Now and the Met has been intense, but ultimately has left me feeling confident and prepared to work in some of the busiest areas of London."*

The Police Now officers are part of a cohort of [over 300 officers who were attested](#) at the Police Now academies this summer and [deployed across 14 forces](#) in England and Wales.

They will continue their training in force as neighbourhood police officers on the two-year [National Graduate Leadership Programme](#), tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in their local communities.

Police Now was founded in 2014 by Met detectives David Spencer and Tor Garnett. In its first year, Police Now supported the recruitment and training of 71 police constables in The Met whilst establishing itself as an independent social enterprise, and has since recruited another 423 police constables into the force via this route.

In total, Police Now has recruited 494 police constables to The Met and over 2,000 officers across 33 forces in England and Wales since it was established.

Police Now's mission is to transform communities, reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, and increase the public's confidence in the police service by recruiting, developing and inspiring outstanding and diverse individuals to be leaders in society and on the policing frontline.



## LAST MINUTE CHRISTMAS FOODIE EXTRAS

Well, everything's a bit 'up in the air' now! Our poor, beleaguered, hospitality industry is wondering where all those bookings have gone, and we're all hoping we won't be forced into yet another lockdown. It's time to make sure that we are stocked up with all the necessary goodies to make our Christmas as festive as possible. So switch off the news, and head for the shops or your computer, and secure those extra indulgences in time for Christmas!

I've been impressed with the Tesco range of wines (**NB: for Clubcard holders there's a 25 per cent discount if you buy 6 or more bottles – till 19 December**). We're planning to enjoy a bottle of **Tesco Finest Margaux** with our turkey. At £22 for a 14% abv, IWC Gold medal winner, this is a steal. It is Christmas after all, so worth splashing out on this lovely Bordeaux, made for Tesco by Château Boyd Cantenac. It's bold, well balanced, with rich, ripe and complex flavours. It'll go equally well if you're having beef.



If you've an Ocado order secured, you might like to add this lovely **Conker** spirit selection set. It's a great stocking filler, or a cupboard standby gift if you're going to drinks with friends over the holiday. £22 for a beautifully packaged set of four 5cl miniatures of hand-crafted Dorset spirits.

It's worth laying in some good supplies of easy foods that have a good shelf life to keep in the fridge till needed. Smoked trout or salmon paté, for example, is a fail-safe standby and the ones from **Chalkstream Trout, Charlie's Trout and Forman's** are all excellent. So check out your local fishmonger, farmer's market or supermarket or order online. And they are even nicer served with some slices of smoked trout or salmon alongside!



If meaty snacks are more to your taste, the **Unearthed** range will take your taste buds off to Europe in a trice. The company has a fabulous range of cured meats, olives, and other yummy deli delicacies. For a Christmas Day starter, the Pork Rillettes (£2.69) are delicious spread on toasted sourdough, and for Boxing Day cold platters the French or Calabrian selection platters (£3.95 for 90g) are perfect. And they'll add another dimension to those turkey sandwiches!

Another great cupboard standby is the **Opies Fruits with Alcohol collection**. Opies products have traditionally been popular at Christmas, purchased for a foodie gift or an indulgent festive treat. Black Cherries with Kirsch; Peaches with Courvoisier; Red Berries with Pink Gin; Baby Pears with Amaretto and Apricots with Dark Rum. This year, the collection includes a new variety: Pineapple with Luxardo Spiced Rum. Around £6 for a 460g jar.



And while you're in one of our many local Tescos buying your discounted wines, check out the special festive cheeses like **Tesco Finest French Brie with Truffle** (135g £2.50) a soft and creamy brie infused with a layer of white Italian truffle. And/or the Baking Brie with Festive Fruits, Brandy glaze and walnuts (600g £6) After all, it's Christmas!



## Hay Fever

by Noël Coward

Richmond Shakespeare Society, Mary Wallace Theatre, Twickenham until 18<sup>th</sup> December

To party or not to party. To gather or not to gather. The festive dilemma hangs heavy as plum pudding in the run up to Christmas. What better than a light-as-soufflé diversion? A trip to a Covid-compliant theatre where Noël Coward, master of comedy, is back on stage with *Hay Fever* at the Mary Wallace Theatre, less than a mile from his Teddington birthplace.

Director John Gilbert is known for his eye for style and period costume. Cue a glittering wardrobe of taffeta and tiaras, flashy diamonds adorning throats and wrists, feathers and cloche hats, crushed velvet capes and flapper dresses, jewel colours and silky textures. And with this stylish satire that teeters between farce and a comedy of manners, his production of the 1920s drama has drama aplenty: histrionics, chest thumping, arm flailing, sobbing and swooning, anguish and ecstasy.



The action is set in a country house on a summer weekend. Four single souls, reluctant guests, find themselves out of their comfort zones, prey to misplaced desire and the vagaries of romance. These unfortunate strangers, who find themselves in the Bliss's home in Cookham on the same weekend, cannot counter the contempt of their hosts. They are intimidated, embarrassed and horrified in equal measure, involved in unsought-for engagements, stolen kisses and clumsy sexual encounters.

David and Judith Bliss are hateful hosts, who play a cruel game of one-upmanship with their house guests. David is an author, his wife an actress of a certain age who dreams of reviving her career. They ensnare their victims with a mix of charm and bullying. They are callous, spiteful, insufferable... and mesmerizing to watch.

Ninety-six years old, *Hay Fever* bears its age lightly. You could still encounter nightmare hosts whether in Cookham or Croydon, although the accents are probably less clipped. But there must be a special place in hell for folks like the Bliss family.



Read Gill Martin's review at [www.markaspen.com/2021/12/12/hay-fever](http://www.markaspen.com/2021/12/12/hay-fever)

Photography by Pete Messum



## Matilda the Musical Jr.

by Denis Kelly, based on the story by Roald Dahl, music and lyrics by Tim Minchin  
Dramacube Youth Theatre at Hampton Hill Theatre until 18<sup>th</sup> December

Review by one of our younger reviewers. Evie Schaapveld is eleven years old and acts with a number of local stage companies.

In the Purple Cast of *Matilda* I saw many feats of acting and great stage direction. Some of the most notable things were the astonishing choreography and how all the children performed so energetically, and so well keeping their moves in time.

Notably, the background was incredible, elaborate yet so simple, changing from the library bookshelf setting to a blackboard and then to a field. But one of the most impressive things in my opinion was the feat of how they told the story of the Escapologist and the Acrobat, with one of the scenes being told by animation in the background.

It was a very creative way of presenting it, as that scene would have been very difficult to do by acting it out.

The Purple Cast is drawn from Dramacube's Youth Theatre of 14 to 18 year olds. Their performance was spot on, and the entire picture is of superb acting. Admittedly there were some performers who completely blew me away from what I was expecting. There were many of them, but one example was Michael Wells as Rudolpho, who stayed in character the whole time and made me laugh. The actor for Miss Trunchbull (Chester Barnes) was also amazing and really did surprise me. In the role of Matilda, Madelaine Oxford was definitely a great choice for the lead and joined with Miss Honey (Vivie Sleight) they made an incredible duo of student and teacher. There were many other marvellous players such as the actor for Bruce (Charlotte Taylor) and the actors for the Escapologist (Sejal Khadakkar) and the Acrobat (Abigail Eggleton) but in truth all of them were remarkable.

I enjoyed every aspect of this show, no scene was weaker than any other. I really hope I can see all these actors again in another performance and that they all do really well.

Read Evie's review at [www.markaspen.com/2021/12/17/matilda-tw-purple](http://www.markaspen.com/2021/12/17/matilda-tw-purple)

Image courtesy of MTI

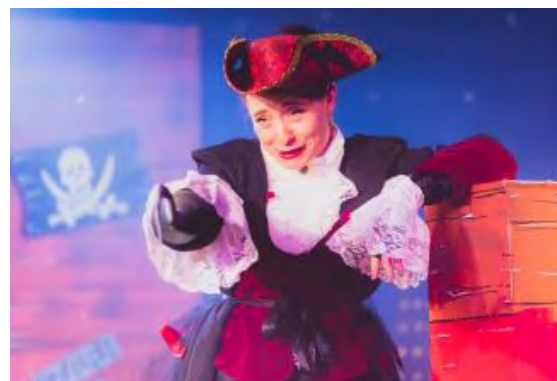


## Peter Pan

by Jonny Danciger

OSO Barnes, until 19<sup>th</sup> December

Once the first joke is told about Captain Hook's lost appendage, Smee hands – sorry, passes – a clipboard to one lucky mum so she can count the manual puns. She should have been given a bingo card to mark each panto tradition, though, so capably does this *Peter Pan* fulfil the audience's expectations.



Mum soon lost count. Statistically though, there were definitely only six cast members, but they achieve the impressive feat of seeming like a full block-buster troupe. Of course, Mr and Mrs Darling (Sonny Pilgrem and Maddy Page) double as Smee and Captain Hook respectively, and fruity narrator Louis Pieris is 'coerced' into donning the crocodile skin later on. But all six players muck in to act, sing, dance, stooge and shift the scenery.



They're a dirty half-dozen, too. Or rather, Gavin Fleming as fairy Tinker Bell, or Twink, as s/he styles her/himself, has sufficient innuendo for the entire cast, and gets surprisingly near the knuckle (another hand pun? Tick.) To fill the gap – so to speak – of a conventional dame, the script leans hard – ahem – into fairy jokes. Thankfully these are played over the heads of the kids to the back row where I and at least two other adults chortle shamefacedly.

Even when it's not actually musical, Jonny Danciger's script sings, ringing with alliteration, rhyme and quick-fire verbal slapstick, which must help the cast keep the pace. The fairy – sorry, *fairly* – topical conceit is that travel back to Neverland is forbidden, because the Pixie Parliament has placed the notional nation on its Red List.

The travel ban is an inspired move that means Hook and Smee end up pirates on a narrowboat, while Twink is allowed some lewd allusions (allewdnsions?) to lost boys and dreamy experiences in Amsterdam. The boat is also hijacked as a vehicle (sorry) for some local joking about Barnes Bridge's continued closure.

Kaitlin Reynell's Wendy is kept on hers toes, not only by having to stitch Peter's shadow to the boy's feet, but also to weave a swiftly improvised eco-parable ... ..



Read Matthew Grierson's review at [www.markaspen.com/2021/12/09/peter-pan](http://www.markaspen.com/2021/12/09/peter-pan)

Photography by Giacomo Giannelli

# Merry Xmas & Happy New Year Dear Traveller!

Travel news by Bruce Lyons

It's been a chaotic week on the Overseas Travel Front. Just when we least expected it, that nice Mr Grant Shapps changed his mind, not before he had dashed many people's hopes of a sunny Xmas, he then cancelled the Quarantine protocols, cancelling the "RED" list but the damage had been done & more uncertainty had been added to upcoming travel –

So that "last minute" dash for a getaway Xmas for many has vanished but the result for the more resilient is that a most extraordinary scenario has been created with prices dramatically dropping nearly 50% and more discounted – as people try to weigh up their options.

So now you don't have to quarantine from anywhere – you can isolate at home. Good for Home Workers and retired folk!

The result is that there are some very, very last-minute bargains for Christmas and New Year – Read on.

Mind you just as that news sank in – our very good friends in France decided that they ought to get in on the act. From Saturday (tomorrow) you can't go to France for a holiday or on business (unless you have a very compelling reason – whatever is that meant to be?) But families can still visit relatives. I wonder how many of you have relatives in the Alps with a nice Ski Chalet??

People tell me they don't understand where they can and can't go and frankly I am not surprised. Many countries require a test on departure & as well on arrival and we all need a test to be done before we come home as well as a 2 day test to release when you are here – I am not surprised that people don't know one foot for the other!

So, dear reader, the result is that the tour operators can't cancel the programmes they have organised, as we are "allowed" to travel as long as the host country is "open" you can go as long as you follow the rules- and as a result there are these little pockets of opportunity e.g., you can get to Mauritius – a real Winter Sun break at this time of year for between £2k and £3k depending on the duration – yes for Xmas!

Here are just a few one weekers to mull over

22nd December Dominican Republic – 5\* Sensatori, all-inclusive £1645; 24th December Gambia 3\* B & B £726, 24th December Thailand, Phuket £1016 B & B and more!



Grab the Suitcase, chuck the Turkey into the Deep Freeze and head on down to Crusader (wearing a mask – of course)

## Dominica and Martinique - Caribbean Islands and Climate Change

Dominica and Martinique were both colonised by the French. Dominica, to the north of Martinique, came under British rule; Martinique eventually became a Department of France.



Dominica

Dominica's Morne Trois Pitons National Park is a World Heritage site; it was inscribed for its tropical forest, volcanoes, fumaroles, hot springs, freshwater lakes and a thermal lake. Scenic areas in the Park include Titou Gorge, Emerald Pool and Middleham and Trafalgar Falls.

There are a number of volcanoes on Dominica. Boiling Lake, in the Morne Trois Pitons National Park, is one of the world's largest thermal lakes.

Martinique's Regional Nature Park, established in 1975, consists of sixty percent of the island covering the mountainous volcanic area, as well as coastal areas.

Dominica and Martinique, like other Caribbean islands, are affected by climate change with rising temperatures and sea levels and an increase in adverse weather events.



Dominica



Dominica



Martinique



Martinique

More information about Dominica:

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

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

# TRAVELLER'S TALES 112

## MY FRIENDS THE ANIMALS

### Doug Goodman Meets Some Delightful Creatures



Extensive foreign as well as UK travel has provided the opportunity to visit amazing places, meet fascinating people and encounter exotic animals. But let's start at home with the more common and well-liked creatures. It's great news that sparrows are making a comeback and starlings seem to be more numerous. Plentiful fat balls and seeds in the garden bird feeders certainly attract them.



Endangered Hedgehog



Garden Fox



Acrobatic Squirrel



Follow Mother

The hedgehog, voted the UK's most popular animal, is endangered. I found one wandering around my garden looking for a way out and after a meal of cat food it disappeared. Let's give them all the help we can: make gaps in the fence, treat compost heaps and other potential hibernating spots with care and put out food for them. The foxes will, of course, devour any food left out as a ready meal is so much more convenient than having to catch their supper. I've watched several generations of foxes growing up in my neighbour's garden and at the moment they seem in very good condition. The antics of the local squirrels are really amusing as they balance on the bird feeders and hop around the garden burying nuts. A proliferation of tiny oak trees can be blamed on the squirrels' poor memories as they forget where they've stashed their winter food. Lambs are already leaping in the fields in Dorset. I'll always photograph the new-born as they follow their mother. Llama trekking is the most enjoyable and de-stressing activity I've experienced as the woolly and sweet looking creature gently follow you through woods, encouraged by an occasional carrot.



Great companion



Eagle Owl



Desert Beast

### WATCH BUT DON'T DISTURB

I've encountered some amazing animals on foreign trips: some in captivity and some in their natural habitat. A tethered eagle owl stared at me for ages without blinking and a brown bear in Canada scooped salmon from a river oblivious to the people in a hide above the water. Camel trekking in Egypt is popular with tourists but usually you are led by the owner. On a trip to the Pyramids I was shown how to 'drive' the beast and to make it go fast. Galloping off into the sunset was quite an experience. On safari in Kenya on the first day everyone photographed a zebra about a mile away from

camp. The guide was amused at the tourists' enthusiasm and advised to save our shots as we would be very close to a vast range of wild animals. And we were. A lion family was within stroking distance from our Land Rover. Hippos wallowed and rhinos were in large numbers but difficult to get close to. Whipsnade Zoo offered a close encounter with their herd and the chance to be slobbered over. My daughter Emily fell in love with rhinos when she visited Nepal and ran the London Marathon to raise money for the charity Save The Rhino. Sadly so many are being killed by poachers.



Zebra Crossing



Cheeky Meercats



Cambodian Captive Crocs



I'll Have You For Lunch

Giant tortoises are to be found in The Seychelles and can give you a ride. But I was warned not to pat them on the head as they have a habit of withdrawing their head suddenly before you can move your hand. In Penang a visit to the Snake Temple was chilling. Dozens of vipers were dozing inside the building apparently in a stupor caused by the thick incense smoke. I declined an invitation to hold one. In Karnataka in Southern India harmless little green snakes were quite tactile but I let one of the travel writers allow the snake to wrap itself around her wrist.



Rhinos at Whipsnade



Harmless



Elephant Blessing

## GENTLE ELEPHANTS

My favourite animal is the elephant. They are so gentle and wise that you cannot help respecting them. In India they are revered and dressed in colourful outfits for religious parades. In Karnataka by the Cauvery River a sanctuary has been established for retired domesticated elephants. Younger ones and those with injuries are released into the wild at an appropriate time. At the sanctuary visitors learn how elephants are cared for, mix food for them and feed them. Riding is no longer an option but you can get really close. The highlight of a visit is bath-time when you join the creatures in the muddy river to scrub their backs. It's evident that is their most enjoyable part of the day and to show their pleasure they tend to squirt water in all direction but mainly at visitors. Slightly disconcerting were the notices on the riverbank nearby warning you to beware of crocodiles. Wild elephants should never be approached and a good guide on a trek will keep you safe. Temples in Tamil Nadu often have a domestic elephant positioned at the entrance to greet visitors. You put a coin in your hand which is sucked up and dropped into a collecting box. The animal then gives you a blessing by putting its trunk on you head. It's a very pleasant experience for visitors but sad exploitation of the noble animals. But be careful where you tread in the temple precincts as you must follow the custom of leaving shoes and socks outside.

# REMEMBER! THE CAR NUMBER PLATE

By Doug Goodman

The very first car number plate to be issued was A1 on 24th December 1903. It was allocated to Earl Russell the brother of Bertrand Russell. Today that registration number must be worth a fortune. I recently saw on an auction site the number 6CH with an estimated value of £37,500 plus 22% extra charges. I've no wish to own a personalised number but I would consider buying a car in Chester or North Wales as the first two letters in that region are DG. We once had to display a coloured disc to show that road tax had been paid but that's now done electronically. In some countries the registration plate, which is changed annually, is the registered authorisation.



UK



USA



India



Thailand



Russia

In Greece, when you commit a motoring offence, the police will remove your number plate to prevent you from driving until a fine is paid. Driving in France was fun guessing where the car came from as the last two numbers on the plate denoted the region where it was registered. For example 75 was Seine et Oise for Paris. The Departments were numbered in alphabetical order. Our own system denotes the year of registration so the age of the vehicle is apparent. ANPR or automatic number plate recognition by camera or from a police car makes it quick to identify an offending vehicle. James Bond's Aston Martin was equipped with revolving number plates which might be rather useful today.



Romania



UK



France



# St Mary's University

## St Mary's Academics Part of Team Winning Multimillion Research Grant

Academics from the Benedict XVI Centre for Religion and Society at St Mary's University, Twickenham have secured £2.7m funding in partnership with five other universities to conduct a research programme on the social-scientific study of atheism.



The funding from the John Templeton Foundation will allow researchers from [Queen's University Belfast](#) (lead institution), Coventry University, Brunel University, Kent University, Notre Dame Australia, and St Mary's to investigate atheism, agnosticism, and other forms of non-belief in God or gods. This research will expand upon the same team's earlier 'Understanding Unbelief' project, funded by a £2.3 million grant from the John Templeton Foundation, which ran from 2016 to 2020.

Non-belief is widespread and growing and is raising public debates about its personal and social impacts, and how to include such perspectives in legal frameworks, education, and public policy.

*"The study of atheism and related areas has rapidly grown over the past two decades, after a long period of neglect. So this is one more exciting step forward for the subfield."* Prof Stephen Bullivant

The research programme has several components.

Firstly, it involves grant competitions, to generate and fund research from across the human sciences, investigating the causes of atheism across demographic groups, cultural settings, and historical periods.

Secondly, its core interdisciplinary research team will work across these areas to build a more integrated understanding of the causal origins of individual and societal non-belief through new cross-cultural surveys and secondary data analysis of several existing datasets.

Finally, the programme includes public engagement activities that aim to develop knowledge exchange between academic researchers in this field and wider publics. Together, these strategies aim to produce the most systematic scientific account of the causal origins of atheism, agnosticism, and other forms of non-belief to date.

The new *Explaining Atheism* project will also involve Benedict XVI Centre PhD student Tim Kinnear, who will be working with Prof. Bullivant on research into the role of the internet in secularization.

Speaking of the research, Director of the Benedict XVI Centre Prof Stephen Bullivant said, "I'm delighted to be working again with the Project Lead, my longtime colleague and friend Dr Jonathan Lanman at Queen's, and the rest of the team. It's a particular pleasure to be involving one of the Centre's brilliant postgrads, whose own PhD research is pioneering the application of Machine Learning methods within the sociology of (non)religion. The study of atheism and related areas has rapidly grown over the past two decades, after a long period of neglect. So this is one more exciting step forward for the subfield."



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

# NHS To Offer Booster Booking To Every Adult by End of December

The NHS vaccination programme will offer every adult the chance to book a covid-19 booster vaccine by the end of the year in a race to protect the nation against the Omicron variant.

As part of the biggest and fastest vaccine programme in health service history, online bookings are available for all those in their 30s and above from today.

The national booking service will then open up to everyone aged 18 and over from Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> December.

The NHS is prioritising bookings for boosters and is urging people to book a slot to guarantee their vital jab. Some vaccination sites may offer a walk-in service for 18s and over from 14<sup>th</sup> December if they have spare capacity.

As the most complex and challenging phase of the rollout expands even further and faster, the NHS has asked every local area to dramatically increase the number of appointments they have in place for vaccinations.

Over the next week, opening hours for vaccine centres will be extended and every area of the country should have centres available that are open seven days a week.

More pop-up sites will be coming online with local areas looking at the most convenient sites for their communities – from trucks and buses in parks and shopping centres to sports stadiums and leisure centres.

There are already almost 3,000 sites across the country – more than at any point of the NHS covid-19 vaccination rollout. Even more new sites will go live throughout the week and dozens of new sites are available from 13<sup>th</sup> December in the Midlands alone.

GP teams will be asked to clinically prioritise their services to free up maximal capacity to support the covid-19 vaccination programme, alongside delivering critical appointments such as cancer, urgent and emergency care. This might mean that for some people, routine appointments are postponed as part of the national mission to roll out boosters.

## **Amanda Pritchard, NHS chief executive said:**

“NHS staff were already working incredibly hard to deliver covid vaccines as swiftly as possible but the threat posed by Omicron is grave.

“Scientists are very concerned about the spread of Omicron due to the speed with which it spreads and because two doses do not appear to provide much protection but thankfully, a

booster dramatically improves this.

“That is why the Government have asked us to prioritise boosters over other routine care.

“I know NHS staff will again, do everything in our power to rise to this extraordinary challenge and ensure the covid-19 vaccination programme provides as much protection as possible as we prepare for a new wave of infections that could be even greater than those that have gone before.

“The online booking system is already open to millions of people and will shortly open to all adults – please don’t hesitate with your booking and get boosted now.”

**Dr Emily Lawson, director of the NHS covid-19 vaccination programme said:**

“The NHS is turbo charging the booster vaccination programme so that as many adults in England as possible can top up their immunity against the virus quickly.

“We know that speed is of the essence and so we will take every opportunity to improve access to the jab, from pop up sites in the community, GP teams doing even more vaccines each day and new sites opening up across the country

“The best way to get your vaccine is by booking online or by calling 119 – please do keep checking availability as we load more appointments onto the system every day.”

Following the launch of a recruitment drive last week, the NHS is continuing to encourage people to come forward and help the NHS to save lives either as a volunteer or in a paid role in the programme.

NHS staff will also be redeployed so that they can focus on protecting the entire country as quickly as possible and military aid will be in place in every region across the country to support NHS staff with planning for the extra vaccinations.

Saturday was a record day for booster vaccines with 483,000 top ups reported in just one day and since the booster rollout started in September, more than 19 million doses have already been delivered in England.

NHS chiefs are urging people to not delay their booster and book their jab in the run up to the Christmas break.

The NHS has advised that the best way to get your booster quickly is by booking online or by calling 119 but if walk in centres have capacity to do so, they can vaccinate adults aged 18 and over immediately.





## BRENTFORD FC



### **Mbeumo strikes seals late comeback win**

#### **Brentford 2 – 1 Watford**

A late goal from Bryan Mbeumo in the sixth minute on injury time completed a remarkable comeback win for Brentford at the Brentford Community Stadium. A header midway through the first half from Emmanuel Dennis had given the away side the lead but Brentford struck twice late on, through

a Pontus Jansson header and a Mbeumo penalty, to claim all three points.

In a clash of two sides that came up together from the Championship last season it was the home side that started the better of the two teams and they went the closest early on with goalkeeper Daniel Bachmann making some crucial interventions.

First, he did well with just three minutes of the clock to tip a volley from Shandon Baptise from the edge of the area and then he also denied Mbeumo with an excellent save to his right.

Watford took full advantage to then open the scoring moments later through Dennis. A curling shot from Josh King initially was put behind for a corner after coming back off the post and then from the resulting corner Dennis rose highest in the box to score.

Brentford looked to be heading towards defeat but a remarkable final ten minutes saw them score twice to turn the game on its head. The equaliser came from an unlikely source as Jansson headed in from a Vitaly Janelt cross in what was the Swede's first goal in the red and white of Brentford.

Things then got even better for the Bees late on when substitute Saman Ghoddos was fouled by William Troost-Ekong inside the penalty area. Mbeumo then stepped up to calmly convert pass Bachmann and give the Brentford all three points in dramatic circumstances.

### **Brentford have two games suspended due to coronavirus**

Brentford saw two Premier League games postponed in a week due to outbreaks of coronavirus that has affected clubs up and down the country.

The home match against Manchester United originally scheduled for December 14th was postponed due to an outbreak in the away side and then the away match at Southampton which was set to take place on Saturday 18th December was also called off, this time due to an outbreak at Brentford which has seen 13 positive cases across players and staff and which has also seen the training ground close.

New arrangements for both games are yet to be announced.

## UP NEXT FOR BRENTFORD

Opponent: Chelsea (H) Wednesday 22nd December 19:45 Brentford Community Stadium

Nickname: The Blues

Competition: League Cup Quarter Final

Opponent record: [Third Round] Chelsea 1 – 1 Aston Villa (Win 4-3 on pens)

[Round of 16] Chelsea 1 – 1 Southampton (Win 4-3 on pens)

Manager: Thomas Tuchel

Interesting fact: Chelsea are one of five clubs to have won all three of UEFA's main club competitions and the first English club to do so.

## Hampton & Richmond Borough

### Beavers defeated again by the Saints

### St Albans City 3 – 0 Hampton & Richmond Borough

Hampton & Richmond Borough suffered another setback on Saturday as they continued their run of poor form with a third defeat in a row in all competitions.



Goals for the home side from Liam Sole, John Goddard and Mitchell Weiss

gave the score line a comfortable appearance but in reality, the Beavers will feel hard done by that they didn't get something from the game.

The Beavers made the better start in Hertfordshire and could have taken the lead when Jake Gray drew a save from Saints' goalkeeper Coniah Boyce-Clarke.

The home side then took the lead for the first time in the game with a moment of individual brilliance that came against the run of play. Liam Sole returned to score against the club for whom he once played on loan with a magical strike that Alan Julian had no chance with.

Hampton & Richmond Borough nearly found an equaliser before half time when Jake Gray combined with Ryan Gondoh but the Beavers were once again denied by Boyce-Clarke.

Five minutes into the second half fullback Kyron Farrell then fired over from a promising position and the home side took full advantage as they doubled their lead moments later.

This time it was Jonny Goddard but it was a similar story as another long range strike from distance beat Julian to put the Saints into a commanding position.

The three points were then sealed in added time as the Beavers pushed forward which allowed St Albans to break on the counterattack, where Weiss finished off a flowing team move to add a third and round off the game.

# England fixture announcement

England men will play four home matches at Twickenham Stadium as part of the 2022 Autumn Nations Series.

England will first take on the same two teams that they will face in their opening 2023 Rugby World Cup Pool D fixtures – beginning their campaign against Argentina [Sunday 6 November], followed by Japan [Saturday 12 November].

Eddie Jones' side will then play New Zealand on Saturday 19 November for the first time since the 2019 Rugby World Cup semi-final, where England beat the three-time world champions 19-7.

Their final game is against world champions South Africa [Saturday 26 November]. Last month, in a tightly contested game England beat the Springboks 27-26 with an 80th-minute penalty.

Jones said: "These fixtures will be a really important part of our preparation for the 2023 World Cup.

"It's almost a mini World Cup in itself and we're fortunate to have it less than a year before the tournament.

"It will be a good litmus test for the team to see where we are at, culminating in playing first and second in the world.

"We saw how much of a difference having a full Twickenham Stadium was this autumn and we can't wait to play a series of games against such quality opposition in front of our supporters."

Hospitality packages are on sale now via [EnglandRugby.com/Hospitality](https://EnglandRugby.com/Hospitality) and wider ticket details will be issued early in 2022.

Kick off times will be confirmed in coming weeks.

## Full fixtures (all KOs TBC)

England v Argentina	Sunday 6 November 2022
England v Japan	Saturday 12 November 2022
England v New Zealand	Saturday 19 November 2022
England v South Africa	Saturday 26 November 2022



# England Sevens programme update and London Sevens tickets on sale

The RFU is pleased to announce the England Sevens programme structure for 2022.

England Sevens return to the World Series in both the men's and women's competition in Malaga (21-23 January) after Great Britain Sevens competed in the opening two rounds in Dubai, as part of the standing agreement to play the calendar year 2021.

The squads will be based at Loughborough University with the first camp taking place from 4 January in preparation for the tournament in Spain.

After leading GB Men's Sevens and Team GB at Tokyo 2020, Tony Roques takes over as head coach of England Men's Sevens.

James Rodwell is appointed England Women's Sevens head coach after working with England Sevens in a coaching capacity for the last two-and-a-half years and as an assistant coach for GB since his retirement in May 2019.

The management team will have a new look when they return, with performance roles integrating across both the men's and women's programmes.

Both teams consist of a core contracted group with a number of other players being selected on an invitational basis from clubs and universities throughout the season on a camp-by-camp basis.

Five 2020 Olympians including co-captains Abbie Brown and Megan Jones are in the women's squad. The duo will once again jointly captain England on this year's World Series.

The experienced Amy Wilson Hardy is also contracted as well as Sale Sharks' Jodie Ounsley who was part of the 2019-20 England Sevens squad.

Alicia Maude and Grace Crompton have both impressed in GB Sevens' World Series matches to date and they are joined in the core group by Isla Norman Bell who joins on a short term trial.

Wasps duo Abi Burton and Celia Quansah and Saracens' Emma Uren are also included in the core group.

In the men's squad, Olympians Alex Davis and Tom Bowen are selected alongside Jamie Barden and Freddie Roddick who have also represented GB Sevens this year.

Durham University's Jamie Adamson joins the core group with Api Bavadra who represented England at the Paris Sevens in 2019 and Chinnor RFC's Max Clementson.

The squad will be added to in the near future, as further contracts are being finalised at this stage.

Supporters can secure their seat to watch the men's team on home soil with tickets for the 2022 London Sevens (28-29 May 2022) on sale from today. Day tickets will be starting from £17 as part of an initial flash sale. Tickets can be purchased [here](#).

## England Women's sevens core group

Isla Norman Bell  
Abbie Brown  
Abi Burton  
Grace Crompton  
Megan Jones  
Alicia Maude  
Jodie Ounsley  
Celia Quansah  
Emma Uren  
Amy Wilson Hardy

## England Men's sevens core group

Jamie Adamson  
Jamie Barden  
Api Bavadra  
Tom Bowen  
Max Clementson  
Alex Davis  
Freddie Roddick

**Rodwell** said: *"I'm incredibly honoured and excited to be named head coach as we return to England Sevens. I've been working with most of the players for the last 12 months through to the Olympic Games. They're a special group of players and I'm excited to see how they can keep improving.*

*"We have a number of Olympians and U20s players who have shown what they can do on the World Series as well as returning players who were part of the England programme previously. We have exciting players coming through.*

*"Isla Norman Bell is a new addition to the group. Isla is England-born, lived in New Zealand since the age of two and we're looking forward to welcoming her in January.*

*"Our aim is to build on what we achieved as GB in Canada and Dubai as we head towards the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham next summer. For everyone involved it's an incredibly exciting time to be involved in sevens and to get the opportunity to go and play in a home Commonwealth Games is not something many players or staff get to do. It's special for everyone involved and one I'm certainly looking forward to leading the players towards next year."*

**Roques** said: *"I'm super excited to be given the chance to be head coach of England Sevens having previously worked with them as an assistant coach. I am very grateful for the experience with GB Sevens and I'll take a lot of what I learnt from that into this role.*

*"It is a very young group. This is a transitional period and we know the World Series will be a big challenge but I'm confident we have the right attitude and a good set of values to perform.*

*"There are some notable absences within the men's core players. Whilst there may be opportunities for some to return in the future, it is an important juncture for us to look at building for future successes by giving a broadly inexperienced group a chance to mould this next addition of England Sevens.*

*"We're all very much looking forward to getting started."*

**Programme Lead Charlie Hayter** said: *"It's a hugely exciting time to be back on the World Series as England, and preparing for all that 2022 has to offer, including a home Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.*

*"The GB programme has created some amazing moments, memories and learnings which I would like to thank everybody involved for making it possible. As we move into a new era post Tokyo with England Sevens reforming, we have an opportunity to reset and reframe sevens. We will operate with a core group of men's and women's players, and whilst Tony and James provide some real experience as head coaches we have the chance for fresh ideas from the majority of the wider staff team."*





# WHO lists 9th COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use with aim to increase access to vaccination in lower-income countries

Today, the World Health Organization issued an emergency use listing (EUL) for NVX-CoV2373, expanding the basket of WHO-validated vaccines against the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The vaccine, named Covovax™, is produced by the Serum Institute of India under licence from Novavax and is part of the COVAX facility portfolio, giving a much-needed boost to ongoing efforts to vaccinate more people in lower-income countries.

WHO's EUL procedure assesses the quality, safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines and is a prerequisite for COVAX vaccine supply. It also allows countries to expedite their own regulatory approval to import and administer COVID-19 vaccines.

“Even with new variants emerging, vaccines remain one of the most effective tools to protect people against serious illness and death from SARS-COV-2,” said Dr Mariângela Simão, WHO Assistant-Director General for Access to Medicines and Health Products. ‘This listing aims to increase access particularly in lower-income countries, 41 of which have still not been able to vaccinate 10% of their populations, while 98 countries have not reached 40%.”

Covovax™ was assessed under the WHO EUL procedure based on the review of data on quality, safety and efficacy, a risk management plan, programmatic suitability, and manufacturing site inspections carried out by the Drugs Controller General of India. The Technical Advisory Group for Emergency Use Listing (TAG-EUL), convened by WHO and made up of experts from around the world, has determined that the vaccine meets WHO standards for protection against COVID-19, that the benefit of the vaccine far outweighs any risks, and that the vaccine can be used globally.

Covovax™ is a subunit of the vaccine developed by Novavax and the [Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations](#) (CEPI). It requires two doses and is stable at 2 to 8 °C refrigerated temperatures. The vaccine uses a novel platform and is produced by creating an engineered baculovirus containing a gene for a modified SARS-CoV-2 spike protein.

The originator product produced by Novavax, named Nuvaxovid™, is currently under assessment by the European Medicines Agency (EMA). WHO will complete its own assessment of this vaccine once the EMA has issued its recommendation.

A meeting of WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) this week also reviewed the vaccine. SAGE formulates specific policies and recommendations for vaccines' use in populations (i.e. recommended age groups, intervals between doses, specific groups such as pregnant and lactating women) and will issue recommendations for Nuvaxovid™/Covovax™ in the coming days.

## WHO emergency use listing

The emergency use listing (EUL) procedure assesses the suitability of novel health products during public health emergencies. The objective is to make medicines, vaccines and diagnostics available as rapidly as possible to address the emergency while adhering to stringent criteria of safety, efficacy and quality. The assessment weighs the threat posed by the emergency as well as the benefit that would accrue from the use of the product against any potential risks.

The EUL pathway involves a rigorous assessment of late phase II and phase III clinical trial data, as well as substantial additional data on safety, efficacy, quality and a risk management plan. These data are reviewed by independent experts and WHO teams who consider the current body of evidence on the vaccine under consideration, the plans for monitoring its use, and plans for further studies.

As part of the EUL process, the company producing the vaccine must commit to continue to generate data to enable full licensure and WHO prequalification of the vaccine. The WHO prequalification process will assess additional clinical data generated from vaccine trials and deployment on a rolling basis to ensure the vaccine meets the necessary standards of quality, safety and efficacy for broader availability.

See all [EUL listings](#)



# BBC Savings and Reform

The National Audit Office (NAO) has found that the BBC is largely on track to achieve its current savings targets, but it is likely to need to make considerable further savings in the coming years, while meeting the challenges of a fall in its audience share and in the number of people buying a licence.

To fill the gap in its finances resulting from the 2015 licence fee settlement, the BBC is undertaking a five-year programme to deliver targeted savings of just over £1 billion a year by 2021-22. The BBC is currently negotiating with government on the level of the licence fee from 2022-23 - once this is agreed, the BBC will embark on a new five-year savings programme.

The BBC is forecast to exceed its original savings target of £800 million a year by 2021-22 and is largely on track to meet its increased target of £1 billion a year. It increased this target due to the estimated financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its decision to continue to offer free licences to some over-75s. In September 2021, the BBC forecast that it would deliver savings of £971 million a year by March 2022, only 4% (£41 million) below its target.



The BBC expects to make a lower proportion of its savings from productivity improvements, and is now making most of its savings from audience-facing parts of its business. Until recently, it has tried to limit reductions in the amount of television and radio content it offers. However, in September 2021 the BBC estimated that 41% of its annual savings would come from cuts to content and the scope of services, and 11% from changes to the scheduling mix.

The BBC has sought to enhance its spending on content by seeking third-party funding for productions. In September 2021, the BBC forecast that £116 million (12%) of its £971 million annual savings would come from income generation, a significant increase on the £14 million (2%) delivered under the previous savings programme initiated in response to the 2010 licence fee settlement. This increase has mainly been driven by a rise of 84% since 2016-17 in the amount of third-party funding of BBC-commissioned productions to £385 million in 2019-20.

The BBC has reduced the amount of broadcast television it offers licence fee payers, while also increasing options for accessing this content. The volume of repeats shown across the BBC's three main television channels has increased: for example, there was a 22% increase in the proportion of repeat programming on BBC 1. This was partly due to the pandemic, but also part of the BBC's strategy for addressing a change in audience viewing habits while working within a finite budget. The BBC has increased accessibility to content by extending the time that programmes are available on iPlayer and launching BBC Sounds.

The BBC's pay reforms have not been a major part of its savings programme. Between 2016-

17 and 2020-21 the BBC's staff costs fell by less than 2% in real terms as a result of measures it took, including reforms to the terms and conditions of its workforce designed to improve fairness, transparency and consistency. The BBC spent almost £180 million on making over 1,800 staff redundant when delivering savings between 2017-18 and 2020-21. Despite this, the overall number of BBC staff fell by less than 1% between 2016-17 and 2020-21, mainly due to the recruitment of over 1,100 staff as part of a Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office-funded expansion of BBC World Service.

The BBC's approach to the planning and delivery of savings could be improved. The NAO has found that some divisions are implementing measures without using complete data. This includes staffing reductions in the English regions, which may have contributed to the temporary suspension of local breakfast news bulletins during summer 2021 when a high number of staff were absent. The BBC is also not consistently applying lessons from implementing savings across the organisation.

The extent to which the BBC's transformation programme has achieved savings varies between different parts of the organisation. Under its Modernising BBC News initiative, the BBC intends its News division to produce content that can be shared more easily across its various platforms. In some other parts of the organisation changes have been more incremental and have not involved radical transformation.

The BBC plans to embark on a new savings programme in 2022-23. It projects that the gap between its income and its spending by 2027-28 would require it to make savings of at least a roughly similar magnitude as those it has delivered in previous savings programmes. However, the outcome of the licence fee negotiations could significantly increase the savings it will need to deliver.

To achieve these savings, the BBC expects it will need to make further reductions to content and services across its television, radio, and news operations. The BBC expects that increased commercial returns will make a relatively small contribution to its future savings. For example, it only plans to make £50 million a year in extra income from its main commercial subsidiary, BBC Studios.

To maximise its ability to deliver savings, the BBC must improve the information it collects on the impact of its savings measures. It should also ensure it implements lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and pursues further standardisation of operations across the organisation in order to deliver further savings.

Gareth Davies, the head of the NAO, said:

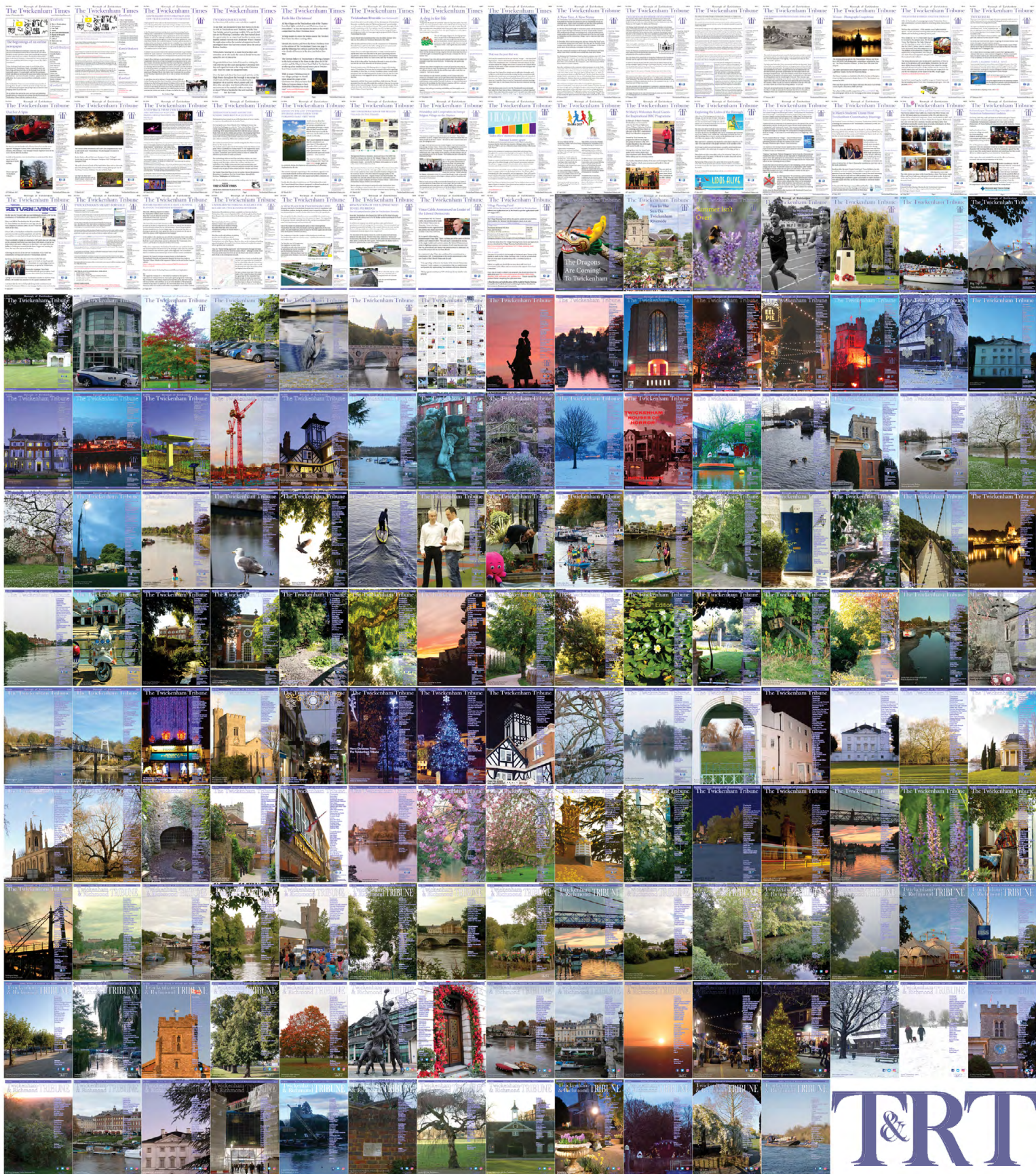
“Over the past decade the BBC has consistently made savings and is largely on course to achieve its £1 billion annual savings target by 2021-22. However, over the coming years it will need to make significant further savings at the same time as addressing a range of other challenges, not least its declining audience share. The BBC must ensure its savings plans do not further erode its position with audiences.”

Click here for the [full report](#) and here for the [PAC Chair's statement](#).



National Audit Office

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