



The Kew Society Newsletter • Winter 2015

Welcome...

to our new style website which went on line on 9 January. This completes the make-over that our 2013 survey of members urged on us. We have a new logo, a new style of newsletter and now the new website. What we rightly recognise as unchanging is the care that Kew residents have for their neighbourhood and their concern that, while adapting to the requirements of third millennium living, it should continue to reflect all that is best about an engaged community in a historically beautiful area.

Our newly elected Chair put it all rather nicely at the Annual General Meeting: “We all care about Kew. Most of us do our neighbourly bit when we can.” Caroline Brock went on to say that “the Kew Society projects those local concerns and that care. The larger the membership, the louder the voice of those who care for Kew.” So perhaps we should all have a new resolution for this new year: to sign up one more member each and double the weight of the voice that our Society and our community can project. You can also volunteer to help in a number of ways – see below.

The Annual General Meeting

At the AGM in October, we were fortunate to have Jason Debney speaking to us about the Thames Landscape Strategy (TLS), for which he is the Coordinator. An engaging speaker, Jason described how TLS is now 20 years old and covers the part of the Thames between Weybridge and Kew. This area is the Arcadian part of the Thames - in essence a designed landscape where historical buildings and palaces dot the shorelines and views, such as the cows on Petersham meadows, give the air of a rural paradise.

Jason traced the area's history, giving weight to how from Saxon times Royalty built palaces and the nobility followed them, also building grand homes. The effort to preserve the unique nature of the Arcadian Thames was first taken up by the English Landscape Movement. By putting its views on preservation into law, the foundation of planning law was laid. Time passed and about 20 years ago, the growing feeling that the Arcadian Thames was becoming run down led to the formation of the Thames Landscape Strategy. TLS was and is seen to act as a link between community and authority.



So what does TLS do? In a nutshell, it implements the vision through planning, development and control: Councils take note of it and it in turn reminds Councils of what is in the TLS. Much of its work is carried out by volunteer groups – anything from reducing the level of litter, to opening up vistas to the river, to trying to reintroduce Sand Martins. Jason therefore ended his talk with an appeal for more volunteers to support the work of TLS. Anyone who is interested is most welcome to contact either the Kew Society or Jason Debney for more information.

Helping Visitors to Kew, the new Kew Plaza Map

We still expect to see unveiled soon the new map that we have been working on with the National Archives, the Royal Botanic Gardens, the Kew Residents Association and Richmond Council for Kew Plaza. It will be in a more diagrammatic form than the current map with key routes shown to help visitors find their way to the Royal Botanic Gardens, the National Archives and the Crematorium. We hope this will be a big improvement for visitors to Kew. Do keep an eye on our web site www.kewsociety.org for updates on progress.

Richmond Council also agree with us on the need for improved sign-posting to complement our work on the map. We hope this too will be in place soon. Together all this work should mean fewer lost visitors.

Brentford Stadium

The football club has recently contracted Willmott Dixon as its developer for the new stadium, the “enabling” development of flats and the redevelopment of the old Griffin Park stadium. As the club has not yet been able to acquire all the land necessary for the new stadium, Hounslow Council has served notices to progress a compulsory purchase order on the club’s behalf. We and others are objecting, calling for a Public Inquiry on grounds including the undisclosed financial viability and the failure properly to examine traffic/pollution issues.

Old Inland Revenue Site, Bessant Drive

On 10 December Richmond Council approved the application to develop the long vacant and controversial brownfield site (previously an Inland Revenue sorting office demolished in 2009). The new developers, Taylor Wimpey, engaged with us and other community groups on their proposals and held two public exhibitions with options on designs before submitting their application. Though we did not particularly endorse the new elevation design we paid attention to what the Appeal Inspector had said on the last application and we accept that Taylor Wimpey has addressed the issues raised, following its consultation with the community.



One key outcome is that our community will get much needed GP facilities including space for seven consulting rooms, two treatment rooms and space for minor operations. At the Planning Committee the North Road Surgery said that this was the best opportunity they had identified for space in Kew in the last 10 years of looking. We are very pleased that we facilitated this by putting Taylor Wimpey in touch with the Surgery during the pre-application discussions. The Surgery are now pursuing funding for the fit-out costs from the NHS.

We spoke at the Planning Committee, alongside the

North Road Surgery representatives, in support of the application with certain conditions. We asked for a condition to be included that required the GP surgery to be functioning before any flats were occupied. This condition has been included. The space for the surgery is a trade-off with the space for affordable housing which, at 16% of the total number of units, is very low. We hope that this condition will mean that if, for any reason, the GP provision does not proceed, the percentage of affordable housing can be reviewed.

We also asked the Council to do all it could to ensure that key workers were given priority for affordable housing and that Thames Water took the opportunity, when arranging the sewage system, to address long-standing problems with foul water connections to adjacent drainage systems affecting the National Archives and nearby roads.

We asked the Planning Committee to consider how it might support, in its approval of the application, additional environmental and landscaping factors which we think would soften the transition between quite different character areas - one medium rise modern, the other low rise Edwardian - and how to reduce lighting impacts from the new development. We are continuing dialogue with Taylor Wimpey and the National Archives on what they might do.

Part of the deal is that the developers pay a Community Infrastructure Levy of which some £1 million would be for local initiatives in Kew. The Council will engage with the community on proposals for best use of this money. We will continue to pursue our suggestions for a feasibility study of a pedestrian/cyclist bridge alongside the railway bridge near the re-development site, improvements to the Thames towpath, and improvements to the footpath joining Mortlake Road to the Thames towpath. There may be additional ideas in the community (please let us know) as we have asked to be involved in further discussions once the Council have considered their approach to local consultation.

High Rise Buildings in Hounslow

We support the regeneration of Brentford and Hounslow and the need for more housing in London but this should be achieved in a sustainable way, respecting the local context and taking account of the impacts on traffic and associated pollution levels which are already too high in many parts of London.

Recent press coverage suggests a new skyscraper will be built near Chiswick roundabout to rival some of the tallest buildings in London. We contacted Hounslow Council to ask what was proposed here and how any such proposal could be considered compatible with the Council's policies on appropriate developments sensitive to the character of local surroundings. We have also involved our local MP, local ward Councillors and Richmond Council officials.

Hounslow have said that no application has as yet been made and that guidelines for the height of buildings would mean the highest rise buildings would be along "the Golden Mile" with buildings around Chiswick roundabout limited to 6-8 storeys to take account of the urban context. We have asked them to confirm that they have therefore told the developer this proposal would be unacceptable. Finally we have also asked how it is that the outline planning permission for enabling developments at nearby Lionel Road has been given when these are 9-17 storeys high. We have also asked to see their "Golden Mile Capacity Study". We are concerned that high rise buildings will affect vistas which their draft Local Plan says they wish to protect, not just from Kew but within Hounslow and Ealing too, including Syon Park, Gunnersbury Park, the London Museum of Water and Steam and the Thames foreshore. High rise buildings would also have lighting impacts.

Use of Kew Green

The Council have consulted us on the use of Kew Green for more events, including a circus. We think a proliferation of events here should be avoided. We suggested there should be a wider Kew consultation on the use of Kew Green for new events. The Council have said they are not able to conduct a Ward survey of this kind but they will continue to consult Ward Councillors and the Kew Society when new events are proposed.

We think there should be a debate in the community on how, in principle, Kew Green should be used for events. We will feed in our thoughts on this to the next iteration of the Village Plan. We shall be guided in our response by these principles: events should be non-commercial, for short periods of time, for organisations which benefit the local community and should be held on the eastern side of the Green only (as happens now), except for the existing Richmond River Run.

The Council have confirmed that the Harvest Moon Festival which took place this year will not be repeated in 2015 and that the application by Chaplin's Circus has been terminated.

We are also commenting to the Council on the use of Kew Green by the Kew Green Prep School. The agreement for this use is currently being reviewed. It limits use to a maximum of 12 hours a week in term time and prohibits competitive Year 6 Rugby and Football. We also understand the agreement includes a plan for the area of the Green, on both sides of the road, which divides the area into five separate sections, with only one used each day in rotation. We have asked for this requirement to be confirmed and for the agreement to be monitored and enforced.

Sandycombe Road Traffic

At our AGM members raised concerns over HGVs and vehicles speeding along Sandycombe Road. We have followed up in discussions with Councillor Stephen Speak, the Cabinet member for Highways and Streetscene, who is currently reviewing options for traffic calming in this area following the rejection of a 20mph Borough wide limit in the recent Council consultation. We have suggested that the current weight limit of 16.5 tons at certain times along this road could be reviewed as well as the weight limit signage which is only at the Manor Circus end of the road.

We have also asked for information on any restrictions on the timing of deliveries to Kew Village and the weight of these vehicles and also for waste collection. The Council are experimenting with defined delivery times in other centres of the Borough which may also help in Kew. We have said that in principle we support traffic calming measures if these do not adversely impact on space for car parking and we have said that options the Council are considering for a redesign of the area from Kew Village to Lichfield Road could be very interesting, especially if they reinforce the action we have been taking to improve direction finding from the station to the Royal Botanic Gardens with a new map and finger-post signage.

Any proposals from the Council will be subject to public consultation.



Heathrow Expansion

We work with the Richmond Heathrow Campaign to oppose further expansion of Heathrow and attended with them the public discussion session on 3 December. The Campaign is preparing a February response to the latest consultation document from the Airports Commission. It will be publishing its recommendation (two options at Heathrow and one at Gatwick are still under consideration) after the General Election and Parliament will then decide.

The All Party Parliamentary Group established by Zac Goldsmith has published its first report which is on noise, arguing that this crucial issue is not being addressed effectively. You can see the report at www.heathrowappg.com. Further reports will follow on the economic basis for expansion and on pollution.

Events

We were delighted to see so many of our members at the AGM in October and many interesting questions were raised. As mentioned overleaf, we were also treated to a fascinating talk by Jason Debney from the Thames Landscape Strategy whose aims are to understand, promote and conserve our special stretch of the River Thames. This was followed by a scrumptious buffet from the Original Maids of Honour.

During November, Pippa from the Good Wine Shop devised an excellent course on behalf of our members. Another course is planned as the feedback has been so positive: 'Pippa ran it really well and I would certainly recommend it to others'; and again: 'We would go again. Pippa had a lovely manner and was very knowledgeable.' Do sign up through The Kew Society by emailing events@kewsociety.org



On 6th January 2015, we held our annual Twelfth Night celebration of Christmas and New Year in St Anne's church hall, Kew Green, with wine from the Good Wine Shop and, again, delicious canapés from the Original Maids of Honour. As one member commented, 'it was the best yet'.

February 2015

Tuesday 24th February 2015. Tickets will shortly be on sale for a talk by Susanne Groom (ex-Collections Curator, Historic Royal Palaces) entitled "When the Grand Tour Came to Kew". The talk is planned to commence at 15.00 hrs, and will be held at a venue in Kew Gardens.

March 2015

Thursday 19th March 2015. Walk planned along the river towpath – starting at Kew c 10.00 hrs. The walk will be led by Jason Debney, Co-ordinator of the Thames Landscape Strategy and the speaker at our October AGM. The Thames Landscape Strategy (TLS) is one of three sub-regional partnerships for the River Thames in the Greater London area with a focus on the river corridor between Hampton and Kew. This is home to a hugely diverse range of plant and animal life, and its environmental, educational and recreational value is undoubted.

Look out for further details of this walk and also planned volunteering opportunities for the riverside and towpath.

April 2015

Wednesday 15th April 2015. Tour, commencing 14.00 hrs, of Osterley House and Gardens with local historian and guide, Colin Lomas. Watch out for further details regarding tickets.

Planning is underway for our summer programme which will include a repeat of last year's fun Pagoda Picnic evening in June, and we will, of course, have a presence at the Kew Midsummer Fayre on 20th June.

And Finally...

- Remember that New Year resolution to sign up one more member each. Take your friends and neighbours to the Join Us page at www.kewsociety.org or contact membership@kewsociety.org
- The Kew Society needs your skills too. As you can see, we are particularly busy at the moment and would really appreciate any offers of help whether on a regular or ad-hoc basis. Anybody with good computer, website and/or marketing skills would be especially welcome. If you think you could help, please contact one of the Committee members – see contact details below
- Do remember to tell our village shopkeepers how much we appreciated their efforts to light up Kew for Christmas
- Go back to Page One and consider volunteering to support the work of the Thames Landscape Strategy.

Contact us Your Committee

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**JOIN NOW by visiting our website:
www.kewsociety.org**

You can write to us at:

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