



The Kew Society Newsletter • Winter 2016/17

Welcome...

to a more varied winter this time around in Kew. As you fill in your 2017 diaries, we hope you will find plenty of events here to include, not least the Spring Social on 25th February.

Heathrow

We were disappointed by the Government's announcement favouring a third runway at Heathrow as the way to increase UK airport capacity despite all the evidence against this approach.

In a legal submission to the High Court on 8th December, a coalition of Richmond Council with Hillingdon, Wandsworth, Windsor and Maidenhead Councils, Greenpeace and a resident of Hillingdon is seeking a Judicial Review of the government's decision on the basis of unlawful air quality impacts and that the consultation was fundamentally flawed. The legal challenge also seeks to hold Government to the promise that a third runway would never be built. The decision on whether they have a case is expected this month. The outcome will be key to the next steps by the Richmond Heathrow Campaign and other groups fighting this proposal.

The Government will be consulting on its National Policy Statement (NPS) which would take forward the scheme. We are identifying the detailed legal process involved so that we can have our say in a series of consultations which may start this month.

This would be a long process, starting with the consultation and local engagement events and then submission of the NPS to Parliament for scrutiny, debate and a vote. The consultation will be overseen by Sir Jeremy Sullivan to ensure it is carried out fairly. Following the Parliamentary process, Heathrow would still need to seek planning permission, with further local consultation, and submission to the Secretary of State for Transport for final sign-off. All in all the process may take until 2021-2022 (with a General Election by May 2020 intervening). The runway could only be operational on this timetable sometime after 2025.

We are potentially in for a long fight and are also continuing to engage in discussion with Heathrow and others on noise reduction, ending night flights, mitigating air pollution and on the redesign of flight paths. The Department for Transport published a consultation on night flights on 12th January (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/night-flight-restrictions-at-gatwick-heathrow-and-stansted>). We will be responding through the Richmond Heathrow Campaign.

Memorial Bench

We have received several donations towards the memorial bench for our former Patron, David Blomfield who died last summer. Special thanks go to the Blomfield family for their generous donations: David's widow, Caroline and their children, James, Melanie and Rupert and their families, as well as to members including Jenny Tonge, Caroline Brock and others. The bench is now in situ outside Featherstone Leigh in the Village.



Kew Gardens Station Planting



After 18 months of planning behind the scenes, our project to get the open areas at Kew Gardens station, previously largely devoted to weeds, re-planted, to designs we commissioned from the Royal Botanic Gardens,

is complete. Take a look next time you are there.

Our thanks go to the Area Station Manager, Nawal Didi, for his support and enthusiasm for our idea, to the Botanic Gardens for the pro bono design and advice

(Richard Barley, Richard Wilford and Suzie Jewell), to Richmond Council for agreeing our bid for Civic Pride funding and to Energy Garden for the bulk of the funding and the leg work to make this happen (Alex Forrester, Rukshana Ali and the “Green Team” led by Stephen and Jane). Thanks go last but not least to our Kew Society volunteers who helped with the initial planting and will be a part of the on-going maintenance team. If you would like to get involved in this work, please contact our Chair.

We are planning some publicity around the work we have done, so watch this space. Our new lead for PR, Nora Dennehy, is helping us with this.

Graffiti

At long last the graffiti on the end of the houses in North Avenue, visible from North Road, have been cleaned off though the quality of the remedial work leaves something to be desired. The activity followed our approach to Richmond Council over something of an impasse in that only Network Rail could do the work, because of health and safety issues as access would be needed to the track side, but said they were not responsible for the costs and it was not clear who would

pay. We are very grateful to Paul Chadwick, Director of Environment at Richmond Council, for agreeing to contact Network Rail and get the work done. We are continuing to liaise with Network Rail, following a meeting we arranged with them on site, to get the remaining graffiti along the rail track cleaned up and to improve preventative measures. We will also be asking for a better finish to the patchwork quilt of colours now covering the graffiti.

GP surgery at Emerald Gardens

We met with our new MP, Sarah Olney, on 16th January to introduce ourselves and to discuss a number of important issues we are currently dealing with, including concerns over the protracted negotiations with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to secure funding for the fit-out costs for the move of the North Road surgery to the new space at Emerald Gardens. Despite agreeing in principle to the funding some time ago, the negotiations have still not been completed and sufficient funds identified. We have over the last 18 months been asking for updates on progress and have now asked Sarah Olney to pursue this too. She has agreed to approach the CCG. We will continue to press for action so that these much needed facilities are secured, in line with NHS policy to provide more care facilities locally, taking pressure off the acute sector. We will update our website again as soon as we have more concrete information.

Antipodea in Kew Village

We have been working with local residents, as well as with Richmond Council’s planning department, planning enforcement team, licensing officers and environmental health department to require the new owners of this site, at 9 Station Approach, to comply with legal obligations and respect the impact on local residents of the development work undertaken without planning permission. You can see the background to this on our website. It is rare in Kew for us to have to deal with such disregard for legal processes, rightly there to ensure the community’s needs are respected. We hope the new café will flourish and be respectful of its neighbours.

Across the River...

Although slightly revised by the developer after their initial 2015 application, the proposal for The Chiswick Curve, a massive 32 storey twin tower skyscraper at Chiswick Roundabout has at last, unanimously, been turned down by Hounslow planning committee. Local amenity societies north of the river were also active in their opposition and Barbara Weiss of the "Skyline" campaign spoke against it at a public meeting against the project coordinated by the societies, including The Kew Society. This may not mean the end of adventurous proposals for this site, but at least there may be a pause for thought.

Other new development issues in Hounslow with significant implications for Kew on which The Kew Society is engaged include:

- The intensification of use of the proposed new Brentford football stadium to include use by the London Irish rugby club. Always envisaged as part of the football consent, the consequences of alternate weekend and some evening rugby use will mean few winter "weekends off" for locals impacted by increased traffic/pollution. Any increased commercial benefit for the stadium owner should be matched by increased funding for CPZ's and community support initiatives.

- A new 92 bus storage depot, workshop & offices (to be funded by 3 tower blocks of 550 flats) at the junction of Capital Exchange Way and the A4 Great West Road, close to the now consented football stadium. Such a design must compound the visual impact of the stadium residential development, add further to the traffic and pollution in the area and beg questions of sustainability in the absence of Hounslow improving local infrastructure by way of medical facilities, schooling and transport improvements.

- The removal of the Watermans Arts Centre from its current Thameside location to the basement of a new residential tower proposed for the old Police station site next to Morrisons in Brentford town centre. This would release the Watermans site for a new riverside block of 200 flats (the design of which has been roundly criticised by Ruth Cadbury MP) and a new marina. We are joining with resident groups in Hounslow and the Royal Botanic Gardens in raising concerns about these proposals given their visual impact on the views from Kew and the lack of supporting infrastructure being planned by Hounslow.

- We await further stages in the progression of Hounslow's Local Plan review.

Signage

Richmond Council are discussing with us their proposals for improving the signage around Kew Gardens Station to the Royal Botanic Gardens, the National Archives, and Mortlake Crematorium. New signage already installed is an improvement but we agreed more could be done beyond the immediate station plaza and forecourt to provide a safer, more obvious pedestrian route from the station entrance towards Station Parade and Lichfield Road.

The Council propose using a combination of 'minilith' style pillars and pole-mounted 'finger' signs to guide visitors from the station to locations where the paths to the key destinations are more obvious. Current work on the signage should be completed in the Spring/Summer, in time for the main visitor season. We shall lose some heritage style signage but, with less clutter too, visitors should find their way more easily.

Events

Looking back

Our well-attended AGM in October provided an opportunity for Members, Trustees and Patrons to put names to faces.

The following week we had a most interesting talk by Lee Prosser and Polly Putnam, Historic Royal Palaces Curators, on renovation work to the Great Pagoda in the Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG) to restore it to its original Georgian splendour with its famous eighty dragons. Work is scheduled to finish by Easter 2018.

The RBG hosted Melvyn Bragg's talk in November – "Writing in Kew" – enthralling everyone about how he first became interested in writing novels while living in Kew during the 1960s. The evening – co-hosted by The Kew Society and The Richmond Society – raised £2,000 for the Museum of Richmond to assist their

outreach and educational work. Richard Barley, Director of Horticulture, RBG Kew introduced the evening and we are extremely grateful to RBG Kew's support for this event.

In the run-up to Christmas 2016, The Kew Society organised with The Richmond Society a Hustings for the parliamentary candidates standing in our by-election. The evening proved to be interesting and lively, and we hope helped people make up their minds about who to vote for.

Volunteers turned up on two grey and rainy days in December to assist the Energy Garden Team with planting 1500 plants on Kew's station platforms. Planting should soon start to take shape on this combined community gardening project – so please do go and take a look next time you take a train...

Events

Looking forward

More details on events will be publicised on The Kew Society website but, going into 2017, we shook off the cobwebs on 16th January with a fascinating early morning guided tour of the Houses of Parliament and were delighted to have the chance to meet our new MP, Sarah Olney, over a cuppa in Portcullis House. A second visit is planned in late spring - details to be announced....

By popular demand we have scheduled further Behind The Scenes tours at The National Archives. Our January tours again proved popular with the 22 attendees. Further tours are scheduled for 11th March, 18th March and 1st April - details are publicised on our website.

22nd February 2017 Craig Ruddick, Arboriculture Manager for Richmond and Wandsworth Councils, is holding an evening talk "Tree Maintenance in Kew" at The National Archives. This will include an update on general tree management in the Borough/local area and provide a chance for Kew Society members to get those niggling questions answered about historic trees, new planting, maintenance and reduction of tree diseases. His talk will be followed by time for Q&As.

25th February 2017 The Kew Society Social Party at Priory Park Tennis Club promises to be a fun event. It has all the right ingredients for a party – paying bar, canapés, picture quiz and a chance to meet up with old friends and new neighbours. Tickets are selling fast!

early March 2017 - watch out for confirmation of date
We are planning a grotbuster walk down the towpath Kew Bridge - Mortlake to focus on can/rubbish collection. For this, all that volunteers need are sturdy shoes and gloves, storage bags for rubbish and a slightly desperate smile for passers-by if it's pouring with rain!

We are anticipating two further Kew-Richmond towpath vegetation clearance events. March and May/June appear to be the best months to clear back excess undergrowth in order to open up the river views.

Dates are in the final stages of planning with The Thames Landscape Strategy (TLS) team. Volunteers will be most welcome at any of the towpath events. The more, the merrier!

17th March 2017 We are delighted to host an evening talk at The National Archives on "The Panorama of The Thames – A Riverside View of Georgian London". This will include a photographic panorama of the riverbanks. The Panorama of the Thames conservation project is creating a unique and enduring historical record of the banks of the river through Great Britain's capital city, London. It contains spectacular panoramic images and videos, accompanied by an extensive database to cover every feature along 52 miles of rapidly changing riverbank.

Funded mainly by individual contributions and community groups, the project shows the built and the natural environment along the river, as you would see it at its best. It includes a fully restored version of a rare publication which depicts the Thames riverside in 1829, at the end of the Georgian period.

2nd April 2017 The Kew Society has booked a stall at the Kew Sunday Market – please do come along to say hallo, get updates on our recent and proposed works or even let us know any personal skills or expertise which you are willing to share with The Kew Society to aid their work. All ideas are welcome!

After Easter there is another busy schedule planned for The Kew Society, to include walks and talks featuring the local area, Kew Summer Fete and historic river delights.

Please keep supporting the Kew Society events – it gives you the chance to meet other local residents and Kew Society members, learn more about where you live and enjoy yourself!

And finally....

Enclosed with this Newsletter you will find your membership card which we have introduced for the first time this year and will send out to you in January each year, provided you renew your membership in time. The easiest way to make sure you don't miss out is to pay by Standing Order. It also saves us a lot of admin time. If you don't do this already, you can find a form to complete on our website under the "Join" tab.

Contact us

Your Committee

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JOIN NOW by visiting our website:

www.kewsociety.org

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