

MARCH 2024

Friends of Richmond Green

NEWSLETTER

MAY BALL, MAY FAIR and ARTS PICNIC 2024

The 2024 **Richmond May Fair** will be held on **Saturday 11th May** and will be officially opened by the Mayor of Richmond upon Thames at 11am. Now over fifty years old, Richmond May Fair is the town's biggest community event, welcoming thousands of visitors and giving local charities the opportunity to publicise their work and raise much-needed funding. Old favourites include the Victorian Fun Fair, delicious food, the popular Dog Show and the Arts & Crafts marquee. Local bands, schools and performance groups will stage a great line-up of entertainment throughout the day (visit www.richmondmayfair.co.uk). And on the evening of **Friday 10th May**, the **Richmond May Ball** (for details: www.richmondmayball.com) will this year raise funds for My Life Films, a charity for people affected by dementia and also the Riding for the Disabled centre at Park Lane Stables in Teddington. And **Sunday 12th May** sees the return of the **Arts Richmond Picnic** (2-4pm in the May Fair marquee on The Green: www.artsrichmond.org.uk). The special guest is British composer **Roxanna Panufnik** talking about her "festive and glittering" royal commission 'Coronation Sanctus', performed last May at Westminster Abbey for the Coronation of King Charles III.



R.I.P. FoRG is sad to record the recent death of **Liz Carran** who, with the late **Nick Tarsh**, respectively as Secretary and Chair of FoRG, contributed much to the community. Liz also led the May Fair for many years from its origins in St Mary's churchyard.

FRUSTRATED BY GRIDLOCK & POTHOLES



Recently, Richmond has again found itself gridlocked by multiple sets of roadworks and diversions, caused by utility companies needing to dig up roads, sometimes (eg. King Street and Friars Lane) combined with other building works, bringing misery to vital local routes. Residents are understanding of the need for essential repairs, but there often

seems an absence of thought, let alone effective communication, about how best to manage their impact, particularly where multiple works conspire to push people from one diversion to the next. There's a pressing need for the Council to better coordinate these projects to avoid such clashes: a perfect storm of diversions can be crippling for local businesses and makes travelling on local roads aggravating for residents, workmen and delivery drivers alike.

Potholes: to merit action, the Council's threshold is that a pothole needs to be 40mm deep and 300mm long. Around The Green they are demonstrably 40mm deep, so there's now an urgent need for repair. But it'll only happen if they are reported – to do so, go to: www.richmond.gov.uk/report_potholes

OLD PALACE YD DONE



At last, Phase 1 of the project to resurface this historic space is now complete. Phase 2, a top-dressing with heritage gravel, is awaited. The view of the Crown's Agent is that work may begin in the early summer. An outstanding issue is improved lighting: the addition of an extra light in the dark narrow passage leading from Great Court towards Old Palace Lane.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

Wednesday 17th April at 7.30pm

- Hear what's happening around The Green
- Have your say on local issues
- Wine will be served

Where? The Cricketers pub (upstairs), Richmond Green

Please come and join us



FORG's WHATSAPP

Friends of Richmond Green's **WhatsApp group** connects residents living in the vicinity of The Green, The Little Green and the surrounding areas. Its primary purpose is to keep residents **up to date** about local activities and developments that may be of interest. To join FoRG's WhatsApp group, please visit www.forg.org.uk.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Public Toilets: last November the Council short-listed 6 new locations for public toilets in Richmond town. The most likely are in Quadrant Road at the back of the lending library, and on Richmond Green at the Duke Street junction, the latter prompting serious reservations from FoRG. A decision is likely in September this year, with completion in the latter half of 2025.

Consultations: in the autumn a **Richmond Town Centre survey** was undertaken by consultants *We Made That*; FoRG met with them and submitted a written response. Findings were published in late January: no unexpected revelations emerged.

The Council is developing a **Night-Time Strategy** for the borough, to be consulted on this spring. It extends beyond the economy to night-workers, safety of vulnerable people and transport. We attended meetings and responded by volunteering FoRG's Sept'23 note on 'Richmond's Evening Economy and Public Open Spaces', in which we emphasised residents' need for sleep and hence an evening economy ending before 11.30pm.

Two planning applications are of particular importance for local residents:-

80 George Street: development consent in 2021 added a 4th floor to the old House of Fraser building; this, together with plant & machinery on top, presents substantial harmful impact on nearby Heritage buildings, the Conservation Area, and views from The Green. 2022 consent changed the 4th floor from office to restaurant and added an external terrace. Consent this March replaced part of the plant & machinery with a 5th floor extension to the restaurant with terrace to provide skyline views for patrons. Harmful bulk and height are further increased and risk injuring residential amenity, already exposed by the terrace on the 4th floor. Diners at the large restaurant will impact parking around The Green and risk disturbance to residents from late-night dispersal. Ongoing 'development creep' is still likely, so FoRG, while broadly supporting the development, will continue to focus on the many issues of light pollution, noise, traffic and parking.

Onslow Hall: the current application by City Pub Group is for a **pub with beer garden** and is wholly inappropriate to the tranquil Little Green. There are more than enough pubs & bars in Richmond; it'll be worse still if this became a rugby pub with barbecues in the front courtyard. Some hotel rooms in the mix are not the answer to the problems created. Residents' parking around The Green will be squeezed, as will noise & disruption from deliveries and refuse collection. The significance of Onslow Hall and neighbouring Richmond Theatre as listed buildings and heritage assets will be harmed; the character and tranquillity of the Richmond Green Conservation area will not be preserved or enhanced. FoRG has strongly objected to the application, as have 65 others. An outcome is awaited.



Onslow Hall

TOWN CENTRE: PLANNING & LICENSING

Richmond town's uncertain commercial future is likely to continue, in the face of economic headwinds, online retail competition, changing demand for office, leisure and residential use and uncertain planning policy outcomes.

FoRG seeks to reduce adverse risks by responding to applications for alcohol sales, planning change of use and design, and street trading. A major issue is ongoing pressure for additional storeys on existing buildings (eg. 80 George St, previously House of Fraser; Eton House; and 54 George St). There is also pressure for roof terraces. Richmond's buildings are often unsuited to changes now forced upon them, resulting in questionable access, fire safety and drainage. There's erosion of residential amenity owing to loss of privacy, light & noise pollution, and harm to the character of Richmond and The Green. Existing commercial delivery and refuse collection is causing residents considerable disturbance, especially in night hours, and seemingly there is no plan for substantially increased activity generated by three new restaurants at 80 George Street, and possibly others in the pipeline. Furthermore, dispersal of up to 1,000 people late at night will inevitably disturb residents' sleep.

Last year **Peter Willan**, on behalf of FoRG, dealt with 7 alcohol licence cases all of which had satisfactory outcomes: 2 were refused, 2 were granted with changes, 1 granted without challenge and 2 withdrawn. The three granted were the **Orange Tree Theatre** (licence variation) and **Townhouse** and **Frizzenti** (new licences). Discussions continue with **Sticks 'N' Sushi** for a new licence on the ground floor of 80 George Street.

FoRG objected to 5 planning applications of which 2 were refused, 2 withdrawn and 1 granted (these exclude 80 George St, referred to below). The one granted was for a window servery onto the street at **Pizza Express**. Those refused were for redevelopment for flats at **47 George Street** and at **Hunters Lodge** in Friars Lane. A window servery at **12 Paved Court** and roof terrace at **Friars Way** were withdrawn at the last moment, and replaced with a satisfactory solution for Paved Court and a partial solution for Friars Way.

A tall **telephone mast** alongside the A316 near the Pools-on-the-Park was withdrawn and another refused. However, a 21-metre mast with several cabinets has been proposed under 'permitted development' rights. The long run of refusals may be broken as it's a replacement for the existing, much smaller mast. Applications by JCDecaux UK for **8 electronic displays** in the town centre were refused, but two have been appealed – one near the station and the other near the Hill Street Odeon – and we await the outcomes. On-going applications include an additional storey at **54 George St**, renewed development at **47 George St** and a change from office to residential use at **9** and **31 The Green**.

Friends of Richmond Green website

Our thanks to **Habitats & Heritage** for maintaining our website. If you have time and skills to help us with it, we would love to hear from you... please email us on: mail@FoRG.org.uk



HEATHROW & RHC

Richmond Heathrow Campaign (RHC), chaired by **Peter Willan**, acts for FoRG and the Richmond & Kew Societies to campaign against expansion, and highlight the adverse environmental impact of Heathrow on community health and well-being. For details, visit www.richmondheathrowcampaign.org



RHC attended 13 meetings with Heathrow, 14 with community groups and 3 with other organisations, responded to 3 consultations and made presentations to Heathrow, DfT, and others on time-shifting all night flights (11pm to 7am) to the day.

Heathrow Expansion: passenger traffic increased in 2023 to 79.2 million – broadly in line with pre-Covid 2019. Growth is still Heathrow's agenda, at a guess by more intensive use of existing runways, adding up to 20% more flights to the current 480,000 a year, possibly followed by a 3rd runway. This and larger aircraft means noise is unlikely to lessen. But CO2 net zero may come to the rescue, as expectations of sustainable fuels prove far too optimistic, thereby requiring reduced growth.

Cranford Agreement: the prohibition of take-offs on the northern runway towards the east over London has ended; from 2028 the runway will be used for departures to the east (approx. 30% of the time), alternating with the southern runway. Planes may curve south over Richmond and bring more take-off noise and loss of respite.

Airspace Modernisation: Stage 2b concluded last July with initial flight-path options. Stage 3, which has been stalled without reason by the CAA, is scheduled to produce final flight-path options for public consultation in 2025. RHC's scrutiny of options confirms the possibility of departures over Richmond from the northern & southern runways. Modern technology (PBN) means aircraft can fly very precise routes; this concentrates noise. Route alternation can provide some dispersion but the end of Cranford and the use of PBN could substantially increase noise over our town.

Night Flights: the DfT is consulting on slot allocation and night flights – the latter for a 3-year regime starting in October'25. Scrutiny shows that, disappointingly, there's unlikely to be any noise improvement, but RHC continues to argue that night flights could and should be shifted into the daytime schedule.

Could you help? RHC is in great need of **volunteers** to join the team of 6 people to engage with Heathrow on issues and to liaise with the Kew and Richmond community and others. If **you** are interested, then please contact FoRG or RHC.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tapless no more: We're sorry the restored **Victorian Drinking Fountain** on The Green wasn't in working order for 9 months of last year, after someone had stolen the on/off button. The Council at first struggled to source a replacement, but happily it's now fixed and we're told that the latest button is 'tamper proof'.

Friars Lane: the **Car Park**, closed since 5th Feb, is being upgraded following a positive residents' response to a consultation back in November'21. Works include improved drainage, re-surfacing, greening, new bins, better security & lighting, and **Electric Vehicle charging points**. It's good to see this neglected corner of Richmond finally being renovated.



Meanwhile, further up **Friars Lane**, a temporary bridge was installed to keep access open while lessening the load above a **sinkhole** detected during building works back in Dec'23. Thames Water is repairing a **damaged sewer** that is compromised by other services running above and its proximity to a listed building and the tidal nature of the location.

OLD DEER PARK

The **Old Deer Park Working Group (ODPWG)**, chaired by **Peter Willan**, comprises representatives of FoRG and other local amenity groups, aiming to make ODP better appreciated for outdoor sports & recreation, with better access, while sustaining the park's historic significance and parkland qualities. We're pleased that Andy Sutch, who chairs **Sports Richmond**, has joined the group. We held 2 meetings and attended events arranged by Thames Landscape Strategy (TLS), Habitats & Heritage (H&H) and others.



Path to the Thames: access to the Thames and ODP from the heart of Richmond involves a **new path** in a joint Council/ODPWG project. Stage 1, from Park Lane through the A316 car park, was completed in 2019. Stage 2, linking the car park to the river and ODP, started last September and, conditions allowing, will complete this Spring. The delightful, meandering, unbound gravel path from the car park will be extended with a permeable resin gravel path to the raised board-walk to the park constructed under Twickenham bridge. The short path from Old Palace Lane to the boardwalk awaits a top coating. ODPWG very much appreciates the Council's efforts in obtaining all consents and managing the project.

Tree Planting: the Council/ODPWG **Tree Plan** for ODP started with the planting of 20 Yoshino cherry trees near Pools-on-the-Park, in honour of the Coronation of King Charles III at a ceremony led by the Mayor of Richmond upon Thames last June. Nine specimen trees were also planted, with more to follow. ODPWG was pleased to contribute financial support to the project.

Wilderness Arcadia: TLS, ODPWG and the Council opened up **vistas** to the King's Observatory, obelisks and Kew Pagoda, and work continued on creating a sustainable flood-plain with wetland restoration along the river and the parallel Ha-Ha. A hydrological study was completed and new ecological and archaeological studies are in the pipeline.

Local Plan: ODPWG responded to a Council consultation on its draft **Publication version of the Local Plan** placed before the Secretary of State for inspection in January 2024.

Police Drones: a few times monthly, police will **fly drones** for practice & training at ODP, but keeping public safety paramount.

Other concerns: the section of Ha-Ha alongside the Cricket Ground on the Kew Road is in great need of repair and this project is being led by H&H. Parking and related signage in parts of the ODP are of increasing concern. ODPWG is keeping a close watch on development of any future plans for the Pools-on-the-Park and its management.

Friends of Richmond Green

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 17th April 2024 at 7:30pm

(upstairs at The Cricketers pub, Richmond Green)

Minutes of last year's FoRG AGM (26th April 2023) are available on FoRG's website: www.forg.org.uk

Current Executive Committee: **Vivien Harris** (Chair; 8 Pembroke Villas); **Diana Billingham** (Treasurer; 21a The Green); **Peter Willan** (7 The Green); **Peter Griffiths** (26 Retreat Rd); **David MacKenzie** (4 Pembroke Villas); **Gemma Warrillow** (Old Friars, Old Palace Place); **Gemma Fumagalli** (6 Pembroke Villas); **Juliet Bramwell** (3 Cholmondeley Walk).

Contact FoRG's Chair – telephone: 020 8948 3384

FoRG's ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Accounts for year ending 31st Dec 2023 will be distributed at the AGM.

In summary, FoRG recorded a total income for 2023 of **£2,182.00** (cf. 2022: £3,950) leading to an overall deficit of **£6,572.18** (cf. 2022 deficit: £3,102.80). Total year-end reserves amounted to **£9,447.67** (cf. 2022: £16,019). This year included final payment for the Drinking Fountain project, May's Coronation celebrations on The Green (£1,674), together with donations to Tree Planting in Old Deer Park and the Richmond May Fair. Income from Film company visits decreased in 2023 after the final filming of the *Ted Lasso* series. **The FoRG committee continues to seek uses for its accumulated cash surplus and always welcomes ideas or suggestions from residents about how funds might be put to good local use.**

CRIME & POLICING REPORT 2023

Despite being one of London's safest boroughs, Richmond in 2023 saw an increase in crime. Figures show that robbery, burglary, shoplifting and theft from motor vehicles were behind this increase. But in tackling this, there is positive news going forward.

Richmond now has a new additional **Police Inspector** and it is expected that the borough will also be able to recruit a new Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) in the near future. We currently have a great Safer Neighbourhood Police team in Richmond and they have asked us to reiterate to all residents that, along with reporting **all crimes on 999** (or 101 after the event), **everyone** is welcome to email them at southernrichmond@met.police.uk with questions and concerns and to report any Anti-Social Behaviour – so that they can target their patrols accordingly. Every crime reported is logged and enables the police to request extra resources.

The link initiative, whereby local coordinators write weekly crime and ASB reports for the Community Safety Officer, will start up again at Easter and continue until the end of this coming summer.

Finally, Richmond Borough has two **WhatsApp Update** channels ('Richmond Borough' and also 'South Richmond') where all crime updates are posted directly by them. If you aren't following these channels, and would like to know how to, then please contact the FoRG committee (mail@FoRG.org.uk), or your Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator, or email the Safer Neighbourhood Team at the address given above.

TRAVELLERS SHOCK

September'23 saw a large convoy of travellers set up camp on Richmond Green. They arrived suddenly on a Wednesday evening but had been dispersed by lunchtime on the Friday, following prompt Police action.

FoRG has met with the Parks Service Manager to discuss what can be done to avoid a repeat this summer. Together with other Boroughs, our Council is working on a '**Final Injunction Application**' which they consider the best line of defence against unauthorised encampments. The Council does not favour installing extra bollards or gates around The Green, however, because Travellers are known to use battery-powered hand tools to remove them.

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We hope as many of you as possible can join us for our 2024 AGM on Wednesday 17th April at 7.30pm.

Vivien Harris
Chair, FoRG

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We are again grateful to Featherstone Leigh for printing this newsletter