



The Kew Society Newsletter • Spring 2019

Welcome...

...to our first newsletter for 2019, we hope you had a wonderful Christmas and enjoyed the festivities and making your New Year resolutions. The Kew Society has an active programme planned for the coming year – you will see from the interview in this edition of the newsletter the work we are contributing to on Heathrow and on planning across the borough, and the enhancements we are making for all residents in Kew – including the feathered variety. We have no doubt that this year will be another busy one and we look forward to seeing many of you at the wide-ranging events planned for this year.



The Christmas tree in Kew Plaza to which the Kew Society contributed this Christmas.

Home building at the Station for birds

In November, the Kew Society Gardeners welcomed Edward Mayer of the RSPB and Catherine Rocca from Energy Gardens who, along with Marc Boyd of Transport for London (TfL), helped us to set up two nesting boxes on the platforms. One of the boxes is designed to attract birds such as robins while the other should attract very small birds such as wrens. Fingers crossed that we will have some chicks arriving in the spring. This is a pilot project, and if successful will be expanded to other TfL stations.

In addition, we are working with the British Hedgehog Preservation Society on ideas that we can use next spring to encourage hedgehogs to move in to the quieter areas of the station gardens.

Although the Gardening Volunteers, like the

hedgehogs, are hibernating at the moment, if you are interested in joining us for some social gardening, please let Claire (email: secretary@kewsociety.org) know.



Heathrow

We thought our readers would like to know more about the work we are doing as part of the Richmond Heathrow Campaign. Peter Willan has been Chair of the Richmond Heathrow Campaign (RHC) since it was formed in 2007. The campaign is made up of the Richmond Society, the Friends of Richmond Green and The Kew Society. It was set up in response to the government's proposal for a third runway at Heathrow airport. Nora Dennehy spoke to Peter to find out more...

Is the building of a third runway at Heathrow inevitable after Parliament voted in favour last year?

I am optimistic that it can still be stopped, but it won't be easy because of the substantial majority of MPs who voted in favour. However, there are a number of challenges for supporters of Heathrow to overcome. The first is a judicial review, which has been raised by four local councils – Richmond, Wandsworth, Hillingdon, Windsor & Maidenhead – and Friends of the Earth. The challenge brought by the councils is focusing on air pollution and Friends of the Earth are concerned with the impact a third runway would have on climate change.

What are the main objections that the Richmond Heathrow Campaign has to a third runway?

We don't think that a third runway is necessary. There is room for growth at Heathrow and, together with existing spare capacity at other UK airports, it is well able to satisfy demand through to 2050 without another runway being built. We think a third runway will have a major impact on noise and air pollution for local residents and more generally on climate change.

What would the likely impact be on Kew residents if the building of a third runway were to go ahead?

We expect that residents of Kew will get additional noise from a third runway and people who live nearer to the southern runway will have their respite period (which is currently eight hours) halved. Overall there will be more flights. Currently there are 480,000 flights into Heathrow every year. Heathrow are talking about increasing that number to a minimum of

740,000 flights a year, but we have calculated that the number could be nearer to 850,000, which is a 75% increase.

We expect air pollution levels to rise, not just from the additional flights, but also from the increase in the number of people accessing Heathrow. We've looked at the government's plans for improving public transport links to the airport and we think they are woefully inadequate.

One of the government's main arguments in favour of a third runway is that it will boost the UK economy. What is your reaction to this?

We think that a third runway could harm the country's economy. 30% percent of Heathrow's passengers are international transfers and provide no economic value to the UK whatsoever. Nearly 40% of the increased capacity would be used for international transfers. It would be better to replace those with passengers who will end their journey at Heathrow. It would also take passengers away from other UK airports.

Is there anything local residents can do at this stage if they are concerned about the expansion?

Heathrow has launched a consultation (8 January - 4 March) on modernising airspace and its design for the third runway. RHC will be submitting a response and would encourage everyone to get involved. You can attend an event that Heathrow is holding at York House, Twickenham, TW1 3AA on 13th February (2-8pm) and/or visit the website

www.heathrowconsultation.com

Some actions RHC has taken in the last year to oppose the 3rd runway:

- Carried out extensive research on the economic case, flight paths, impact on air quality, noise, etc.
- Made this available to MPs, the Transport Select Committee etc, to assist decision making, which received positive feedback.
- Met with Baroness Sugg, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, to present evidence against expansion.
- Met with the Leader of Richmond Council and colleagues to brief them on the economic and air quality case against expansion.
- Met with Heathrow Community Engagement Board to brief them on the economic and air quality case against expansion.
- Presented the case at Heathrow Community Noise Forum for new flight paths to spread the burden of noise from increased numbers of aircraft.
- Sought legal opinion to oppose the Civil Aviation Authority adopting Heathrow's proposals to focus increased flights over existing flight paths, including over Kew.
- Responded to numerous consultations regarding Heathrow expansion.
- Worked with other action groups opposing Heathrow expansion.

Events

The Kew Society Events for 2019 are up and running. The Events team hope these will provide opportunities to chat, meet new neighbours, friends and residents, crank up your local knowledge about Kew, its village and riverside – and generally make life more interesting.

Every event provides little nuggets of information to help preserve Kew's history and use it as a baseline for the future. The Events team needs your support to run events – if you have any ideas for talks/places to visit for us to consider, please e-mail events@kewsociety.org

Autumn/Winter 2018 and the New Year

Members enjoyed guided tours of Westminster Abbey and the new Queen's Diamond Jubilee Gallery, Turner's House and the London Museum of Water and Steam. So far this year, we have held a joint event with Richmond Local History Society where Stephen Bartlett talked about Royston House and the building of Victorian Kew, and visited the National Portrait Gallery for a talk and viewing linked to the exhibition 'Gainsborough's Family Album'.

Events planned or in the pipeline include:

Wednesday 13th March – talk by Catherine Parry-Wingfield on JMW Turner and the 'Matchless Vale of The Thames';

Tour of The King's Observatory, Old Deer Park – February/March 2019;

Kew Market – Kew Society Stall – May;

Talk on Marianne North;

Tour of the Queen's Garden RBG Kew;

Talk on the Royal Route at Kew by Susanne Groom;

Talk on birds (particularly swifts) in the Kew area;

Tree walk RBG Kew;

Kew Summer Fair – Kew Society Stall;

Talk on Elizabeth I by Tracy Borman.

The above, plus other, events are in their final planning stages – keep an eye open for further details on our website.



One of the visits arranged to Turner's House in Twickenham in November

Planning Update

Our new Head of Planning, Alice Shackleton, sets out just some of the work that the Planning Sub-Committee undertakes on behalf of our members.

The prospect of massive developments and towering blocks of flats north of the river in Hounslow looming up and peering down on Kew and the World Heritage Site of the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (RBGK), along with revisions to the national, London and borough planning frameworks, made 2018 a busy time for the Planning Sub-Committee.

The Kew Society is dedicated to enhancing the beauty and character of Kew. The responsibilities of

the Planning Sub-Committee include:

- monitoring all planning applications in Kew (and nearby boroughs where necessary) with special regard to Kew's architectural integrity and character. We submit comments as necessary;
- responding to members' concerns about planning, whether on general points or more specific matters, investigating these and assisting if appropriate (in general, we do not comment on individual householders' applications);
- considering planning policy, liaising with government bodies and other societies, and responding to revisions or new policy where needed.

Planning Update (continued)

You may wonder why we are concerned with developments north of the river but the Chiswick Curve development, sited on a small triangle of land on the Chiswick roundabout with a 32 storey tower plus a slightly shorter one, would intrude onto views from Kew Gardens and greatly affect this World Heritage Site to the point that both the RBGK and the UNESCO body objected as, of course, did the Society. The Kew Society, through the tremendous work of members of the Planning Sub-Committee (in particular, Martin Taylor, Prof Roger Mason and John Ricketts), was appointed an interested party in the appeal against Hounslow Council's refusal of the application – the hearings lasted some 3 weeks last summer. The decision of the Secretary of State is now expected in early March.

Other major developments which we have considered and commented on include the Citroen Site in Brentford, the Brentford Stadium development, the Watermans Art Centre in Brentford, the Stag Brewery in Mortlake (as it affects Kew traffic and air quality), and the Kew Biothane plant proposal for an extracare facility with flats and other uses on the riverside at Kew. We also monitored potential development proposals for Kew Retail Park.

These major schemes are very detailed and we work with other local amenity societies and campaign groups (e.g. the Skyline Campaign which advocates non-high-rise residential density) to consider and, if appropriate, oppose them.

Telecoms masts for mobile phones and Electrical Vehicle Charging Points are of more and more interest and concern to residents. The perennial problem is the need for facilities but the difficulty of finding suitable sites. A proposal for a 20 metre high telecom mast opposite 105 North Road provoked great local opposition and we were able to support residents. We approached both the telecoms company (with the assistance of Zac Goldsmith MP) and the local council to try and locate suitable sites.

Whilst we check the planning applications at Richmond and Hounslow councils, we also respond to members' (and non-members') requests for help, often at short notice.

We are fortunate in having good links with Kew Gardens, our MP, councillors, our council officers and many other amenity and other societies, including the Strand on the Green Association, the London Forum (which is the umbrella society of London amenity societies) and certain campaigning groups.

In the past year, we also considered the Mayor's new London Plan – on which we presented comments – and the draft Richmond Local Plan, where we worked with the council in preparing the basements policy, a matter of some concern to residents. We were pleased that the independent Inspector who examined the draft Local Plan passed the basement policy as sound. The Mayor's new more prescriptive approach which prioritises housing provision as well as health may present challenges in future in balancing what may be competing needs. At present, we are considering the government's proposal to further relax rights allowing development of land/buildings without planning permission in order to provide more housing. As proposed, office buildings could be demolished and replaced with residential buildings. Richmond lost a fair amount of office space in the first relaxation of such rules which allowed empty offices and retail space to be converted to flats. The Council then protected many commercial areas by requiring planning permission for such conversions.

The Planning Sub-Committee's work is fascinating and a constant learning curve!

Contact us

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