



The Kew Society Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 16th October 2024

Agenda (v1.1)

Time: 19.00 – 21.00

Venue: The National Archives, Kew TW9 4HF

- 1. Introduction by the Chair**
- 2. To accept the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 17th October 2023**
- 3. To accept the Annual Report of the Trustees**
- 4. To accept the Annual Statement of Account**
- 5. To elect Trustees:**

Mary Done is retiring as a trustee

John Rickets is retiring as a trustee

- 6. To elect Trustees to the Executive Committee:**
 - Trevor Whittaker
 - Sarah Clarke
 - Bettina Kaemmerer

(brief biographies of the members standing to be Trustees are included at the end of this document)

- 7. To appoint Claire Satow as our independent Examiner of Accounts for the year ending 31st July 2025.**

8. Any Other Business

After the formalities of the AGM are completed, refreshments will be served followed by a presentation by Jason Debney about the work of the Thames Landscape Strategy.

Reports

Chair's Report 2023/24:

This has been a very important year for the Kew Society, where our strategy team has worked together to establish foundations for the future of the charity. At the AGM last year, I described how the full committee had contributed their thoughts and ideas about how and why - if we are to survive and thrive - we needed to make substantial changes. We have explored every aspect of our current operation, how we work, how we communicate, how we are perceived by local people across our 'target audience' and what we would like to achieve.

Our charitable remit is clear - to promote high standards of planning and architecture, protect our green spaces and amenities and to encourage the public to learn more about the special place that is Kew.

Working within the remit, our overall strategic aim is to broaden and deepen our membership so that we can more genuinely represent a cross section of people living in 'Kew now'...where the demographics of the area have changed substantially over the past decade or so.

If you ask anyone who says they live in Kew for their address, they may provide a road name that you are not familiar with... quite possibly one that did not exist 20 - or even 10 - years ago. A great diversity of individuals and families has moved into the area, especially the 'new developments' that border the riverside. As our new logo demonstrates, we consider that Kew covers the whole area between the A316 and the river... and we would like a good number of members who live in every part of it.

When I go out delivering our newsletters, as our team members do every few months, it's really striking just how many roads, houses and flats there are where we currently do not have any members. The big question that we have to answer is 'Why?' The estate agents tell us that the main reason why most people choose to live (often for most of their lives) in Kew is because of its environment, green spaces and 'village' feel. Looking after - even enhancing - these things is at the heart of what we do. We need to raise our profile and communicate a positive message about our purpose and our contribution to the local area - in a way that younger generations are likely to access. Social media will become increasingly important.

The purpose of the Chair's report is to provide an overview of our activities during the financial year 2023 - 2024. In addition, the trustees who have taken the lead on our Environmental/Green Spaces, Planning and Events activities have also written short reports giving more detailed information about their work, achievements - and challenges - over the same period.

Looking back over my diary, I realise how many meetings I have organised or attended...and the huge range of people that I have connected with. These meetings have been directly relevant to our work in progress, but many others were concerned with how we could address the challenges that I have outlined to try to ensure our future development.

You may not be surprised to hear that a great deal of time has also been dedicated to building the Kew Society team.... and I am really delighted that, in a time when many similar societies are having great difficulty attracting new volunteers, we seem to be bucking the trend. We now have a team of 25+ who are all excited by working together to make a positive contribution to Kew and the people who live here, visit here or work here.

As I wrote in a recent newsletter, we are agreed that it sometimes feels more like being part of a 'start up' than a well established charity... and we would welcome even more members to volunteer to join our team to share skills, knowledge - or just a love of living in this special place - for the benefit of others.

Having ideas and ambitions is one thing - turning these into reality is always challenging. Fortunately, two very talented and hardworking individuals have given tirelessly of their time to lead on the management of the transformation. Russel Hayes - who gained vast experience of planning and implementing change during his BBC career, and Trevor Whittaker, who has invaluable experience of project management and an engineer's eye for detail - and who is now standing to become Vice Chair of the Kew Society - have jointly led this project. First steps were to fully understand how we have been operating... as in many organisations, things had just evolved over the years... and then introducing systems to improve the way we all work, how we protect our data, and how we can build a platform for future development. The first stage was to migrate all our operations to the Google Workspace, which now provides a secure and well organised platform for all our communications and documents.

Each individual now has a 'kewsociety.org' email address and the system also provides secure cloud storage, and a range of collaboration tools. As a registered charity we have been able to achieve this at no cost - other than a great deal of 'consultant' time provided pro-bono! Everyone is very grateful to Russel for his commitment to this task, and his patience in helping to guide us into the digital age... some of us, including me, are still on the foothills of a steep learning curve... and we still need to fully embrace additional tools such as 'calendar' and virtual meetings to enable us to work more effectively.

By far the most time consuming project that has been achieved by the strategy team over the past 12 months is the commissioning of our new website. The website is our 'shop window' and it needs to provide effective communication with our - increasingly large and diverse - target audience. Very importantly, we agreed at the start of the project that any new design had to be completely compatible with tablets and mobile phones, as this is the way that most people will connect with the Kew Society in future.

A key member of the strategy team, Jeremy Lumbers, has experienced health problems since the new year and, sadly, but completely understandably, has decided to resign from his role as our lead on the Environment and my

deputy.. We would all like to thank Jeremy for his invaluable contribution to the initial planning team, where he shared knowledge and experience gained from the implementation of a similar project at the Friends of Cannizzaro Park. As I mentioned earlier, we were also incredibly fortunate in being able to persuade Trevor Whittaker to join our team at the beginning of the project. Without these extraordinarily dedicated and hard working members, we could not have contemplated a task of this magnitude.

Once we had a team that would be able to work with a designer and developer, we had to agree on what we should ask them to do... and so we embarked upon a research project, looking closely at the websites of 16 broadly similar local societies working on behalf of local people in the leafy suburbs of London. This exercise provided a range of examples that helped us to provide a thorough brief to potential suppliers.

Russel Hayes and Trevor Whittaker reviewed the work of a longlist of website developers recommended by committee members, and created a shortlist of 6 potential suppliers. Following consultation with the full committee, there was unanimous agreement that we should commission MWA. We are very happy with this choice, not least because our main contact has proved to be very tolerant in supporting us during a period of unforeseen challenges, and we are delighted that he will continue to work with us as we move towards 'phase 2' of our transformation, which will include the alignment of all our communications.

The technicalities are outside my skill set - but I am assured that we have modernised all the underlying computer code, which will enable more integration and automation of our mailing and membership systems. Future trustees will undoubtedly be grateful to benefit from the reduction in the time currently needed to be spent on background admin.

Of course, what I - and most members will notice - is the new 'look and layout' of the website...a new logo, different images, colours, typefaces and designs have all been carefully chosen, with the intention of creating a site which is

contemporary and easy to use. We wanted to look professional, but not corporate...

I hope that visitors to the site will enjoy the new colour palette... and some of you may be interested to know that the subtle mix of blues and greens was inspired by a Pissarro painting of Kew Green!

One of the systems that we needed to simplify is our membership process...which is currently almost Dickensian... requiring an enormous amount of not-very-fulfilling volunteer time from both Janet Clark and Steve Williams. We debated paying someone to manage this, but quickly realised that the cost would be enormous. And so, in line with many other similar societies, we have agreed to make a number of changes. The most important one is to no longer accept payments in cash, or by cheque or card to join - or rejoin - the Kew Society. From now onwards, to renew memberships - or join as a new member - it will be necessary to set up a direct debit. We appreciate that this will be an inconvenience for some members, but we hope that you will understand the background to our decision.

We have also agreed that - after many years without any change - we should increase our annual membership fee for everyone to £10 for an individual and £20 for a joint membership. Current members paying a lower rate by standing order will be encouraged to increase their contribution to support our work before September 1st 2025.

Janet and Steve have conducted a major 'spring cleaning' exercise on the membership list, but are delighted to report that our numbers continue to grow... we currently have 835 individual or joint members, including several who have moved away from Kew, but continue to be interested in belonging to the society.

We are delighted that some of our 'recent joiners' are younger than the majority of our members and, as we begin to plan a range of activities for families and children, especially focusing upon environmental themes, we hope that this number will grow. Of course, we appreciate that many of the younger

people who live in Kew nowadays have incredibly busy lives, and could not be expected to actively volunteer. But we know that most people who live in Kew care deeply about many of the things that the Kew Society does for the benefit of others. Our offer to those with very busy lives is that, by becoming a member and supporting our work financially, our team will be able to do even more than we do at the moment. A good example would be our ambition to encourage the introduction of step free access at the station... we are developing ideas to raise awareness, which will require a level of funding.

Another example is that we are planning a display for the large noticeboard in Kew Plaza with signage featuring our new logo, describing our contribution to the life of Kew, and providing useful local information. We hope that this - alongside new signs in the flowerbeds maintained by our volunteers - will encourage many new people to join.

Of course, outside the work of the strategy team, there has been a great deal of 'business as usual'. When you look at our new website you will see that we have organised what we do under 4 'headings'...

Improving our Green Spaces
Protecting our Environment
Influencing Planning Decisions
Connecting the Community

Taking each one in turn...

Improving our Green Spaces:

Probably the most visible - and often appreciated - contribution that we make to life in Kew is the work that Anna Anderson and her team of volunteers do to plant and maintain the flowerbeds and planters on the station platforms, around the station and also in the little 'haven' that is the garden at the junction of High Park Road and High Park Avenue. Many hours of work is freely given throughout the year to contribute to the wellbeing of so many people that live in - and visit - Kew and I would publicly like to record our thanks to all

of them. Members may also be delighted that, every year, a substantial amount of money is provided from our funds to buy plants, shrubs, and compost, to support this enterprise.

Maggie Mason has made great progress this year, by collaborating with Habitats and Heritage and encouraging locals to 'turn grey to green' and to revitalise rather neglected areas of planting.

Protecting our Environment

The Kew Society aims to make a positive contribution to every aspect of the environment of Kew - and sometimes this means that we raise awareness about aspects of the natural or townscape environment that are being damaged or threatened. We continue to benefit from the extraordinary knowledge and self motivation of Roger Mason who has, for example, made formal submissions on the Thames Water consultation, contributed to the Richmond Heathrow campaign, and organised a very well received 'mini symposium' on air quality in Kew. Other members of the team, especially Pam de Goris and Mark Russell have physically helped to remove graffiti, encouraged residents to care for the trees in their road and collected large quantities of rubbish from the towpath. Jeremy Lumbers coordinated all these activities for most of this year, and has now been succeeded by Dr Sarah Clarke, who has already inspired committee members with her ideas about how we could actively engage with current and future members on 'things environmental'.

Influencing Planning Decisions

Very fortunately, the past year has been fairly quiet on the planning front, as we have had to rely on a single trustee - John Ricketts - to take the lead on any responses that we agree to make about planning applications. As a rule of thumb, we do not involve ourselves in any domestic applications unless we are concerned that the work described could impact badly on a significant number of local people. The larger proposed developments - the Kew Retail Park site appears to be 'on hold' but John has been assiduous in keeping in regular contact with other local groups, including 'Listen to Locals' to ensure that we

are in a good position to respond when the time is appropriate. The Mortlake Brewery site will be the subject of a public enquiry in late 2024.

Alice Shackleton - now retired from her trustee position and much missed - continues to be an 'expert friend' which is much appreciated. Both she and John have contributed significantly to the consultations organised by the not-for-profit group that are hoping to gain permission to redevelop Cecil Court into a 'best practice' centre for the care of people with dementia.

Sadly - for us - John will have served his maximum term as a trustee by this AGM and will be retiring. Despite considerable efforts, we have - so far - been unable to attract anyone to take over this really important role. We have an enviable reputation for providing thoughtful and constructive comments on planning applications that are likely to have an impact upon the lives of people in Kew and it is worrying that we will not be able to continue with this. If you, or anyone you know, could be interested in taking over this important position, do please get in touch.

Connecting the Community

Many members will be very sad that Mary Done and her team - Sue May, Heather Wakefield and Jane Hogan - will all be retiring at the AGM. In particular, both Mary and Sue have made an enormous contribution to the charity over a period of many years and most of us are wondering how on earth a new team will be able to fill their shoes... so many people have enjoyed the extraordinary mix of talks, walks, outings, debates and social events that they have organised and delivered. These 'events' have provided a wonderful opportunity for members and their guests to get to know each other as well as to enjoy a range of activities that often have a real connection to Kew.

We are very delighted that Bettina Kaemmerer has volunteered to take over the really important position of Events Trustee and we are looking forward to helping her to build a team of helpers. We have lots of ideas about talks and activities that a diversity of members - and their families - could enjoy, but will

need additional help to design and deliver them. Do say hello to Bettina at the AGM if you could spare some time to help her.

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We have been thinking about how to build upon the wonderful foundation that the new team will inherit and will be establishing a 'Connecting the Community' group to develop ideas. Something that we are hoping to do is to organise a 'Big Kew Conversation' to provide a forum for anyone who lives in Kew to raise issues and concerns relevant to our remit ...and then, importantly, to explore ways to help improve the current situation. The inspiration for this results from our admiration of a similar initiative in Barnes.

More generally, we are hoping to explore ways to work collaboratively with a range of other local groups for mutual benefit and to develop a number of outline plans which may be attractive to a broader mix of people including families.

Meet in Kew - the initiative launched a couple of years before the pandemic - to provide the opportunity for anyone living in Kew to get together once a month for a drink and some good conversation in a friendly and welcoming atmosphere has had a challenging year, never recovering the popularity that it had established pre-Covid. Pam de Goris, who has led on this, is currently heading a group to plan a relaunch.

Our rather more traditional forms of communicating with members include our much appreciated quarterly newsletters, very professionally edited and produced by the 'Bethel team' - Claire and Paul. They continue to do an enormous amount of work on behalf of the society and are much valued members of the team. My monthly notes to members also attract positive feedback, especially when I am able to raise topics that encourage discussion about local issues.

Connecting the Community physically!

For many years now, The Kew Society, especially when it was chaired by Roger Mason, has contributed to the formal applications for funding to enable (genuine) step-free access at Kew Gardens Station. In July this year a second application for 'Access for All' funding was rejected and so we are considering what the Kew Society could/should now do to gather the kind of support which could be more likely to result in a change of heart by the fundholders. We know that many, many people who live in or visit Kew are seriously inconvenienced every day by the lack of a lift. RBGK now has an 'Access Forum' where representatives of a broad mix of charities who work with people with disabilities gather to advise the management of Kew Gardens. I was invited to participate in one of their meetings - shortly before the second bid was rejected - to hear about the challenges presented to visitors to RBGK if they use Kew Gardens Station. The general consensus was that the station was so difficult to navigate that it should be avoided... often at considerable expense. We are discussing the possibility of launching a campaign, hopefully in partnership with RBGK and other interested organisations and would welcome any thoughts and advice.

Holding everything together

I am very grateful for the support that has been provided to ensure that the organisation of the charity runs (reasonably) smoothly. Diana Ormond organises our committee meetings and takes excellent notes which feed into my 'to do' lists, and generally helps me to keep things moving forward. A new member of the team - Juliet Latham - will be providing much welcomed help and expertise, especially as she will now be taking the lead on our mailings.

Valued advice and support

Throughout the year, our patrons - Sir Donald Insall, Sir David Durie and Nick Baird - have all provided support, advice and encouragement to me. I am very grateful for their wise counsel.

Planning for the future

Thanks to Steve Williams's expert stewardship, our finances are in good shape and we have been able to invest in a number of initiatives which, we hope will help the charity to develop in a way that will be valued by people from across the whole of Kew.

The next year will be an important one, as we complete our 'transformation' project. Our new trustees and committee members will all have role descriptions and will be encouraged to develop teams of volunteers. We will endeavour to use technology to facilitate all aspects of our communications and the way we work together. We anticipate that our social media presence will become increasingly important in helping us to engage with a much greater audience and will encourage people who care about Kew to join and support our work. By this time next year, we hope to be able to demonstrate that we have 'broadened and deepened' our membership.

On a personal note, this AGM will be my third as chair. One of my key aims is, before the AGM next year, to have identified someone to take over the central role, enabling me to complete my maximum period as a trustee focusing upon initiatives, where my main skills could be well used... for example, raising awareness amongst decision-makers about the need for step-free access at Kew Gardens station. If you - or someone you know - would be proud to lead this charity, I would be very happy to support them to build upon the foundations that the current team have worked, and will continue to work, so hard to deliver.

I have no doubt that, during the year 2023 - 2024 we have delivered our charitable objectives.

Shiona Williams

(Chair)

Reports of the Trustees:

Events

The Kew Society Events Team - Mary Done, Sue May, Jane Hogan and Heather Wakefield - have organised and delivered a considerable diversity of events and activities over the past year and also over many years before that.

The Kew area has a unique past and our aim has been to offer interesting, fun-filled walks and talks "...there is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about...". Our events help set this Society apart and make Kew a remarkable area for all.

Our team does what it loves – we don't class it as work - events are shaped over a cuppa or glass of wine – our hope is small deeds done are often better than great deeds planned.

A selection of events undertaken in the past 12 months are shown below :

Guided Group Tours - all of which have been excellent.

- Marble Hill House and Park ; Turner's House – 'Seeing the Light'; Syon House and Gardens ; The Royal Albert Hall and Mogden Sewage Treatment Works.
- The Kew Society joined forces with The Avenue Club for a fascinating trip to Denbies Wine Estate. In June we enjoyed a brilliant update talk by Nick Ovenden covering his ground-breaking work involving the YAKUM project in Ecuador and the Amazonian rainforest.
- The National Archives provided Curator tours of its 'Great Escapes' exhibition featuring the torment of prisoners of war.

Talks and Tours-

- A talk on the work of Sir Joseph Bazalgette by Stephen Fielding, Habitats & Heritage Projects Manager ;
- Before his retirement in summer 2024, last year's Kew Society AGM was followed by an interesting talk by Dr. Jeff James (then Chief Executive Officer and Keeper of The National Archives) about his research "Workhouse Lives: Lunacy in the workhouse (Punishment and the Mentally ill).
- November 2023 provided an entertaining 'In Conversation' evening featuring Lord Darroch and Carolyn Quinn - Radio 4 presenter).
- We were also invited by the Richmond Local History Society to host a joint talk by Stephen Bartlett featuring the building of the Priory Estate in Kew.

- Ending 2023, the focus switched to local and global air quality and climate change with an evening of questions and debate covering ULEZ and the Risk of Future Floods. Thanks go to Professor Roger Mason for his lead on this.
- A joint talk held by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) on the Boston Tea Party brought the year to a close.
- Kickstarting 2024 with a marvellous guided tour of the Royal Albert Hall, we then returned to the National Archives for a talk and book signing by the author Kerry Barrett featuring 'Kew Garden Girls at War'.
- Michael de Podesta challenged the audience with "Is it possible to live a carbon zero life?" - ideas flew around the room in response to this thought-provoking presentation.
- In March 2024 we enjoyed a relaxing talk - 'An Omelette and a Glass of Wine' - by Jack Andrews covering the life and work of his long-time friend, Elizabeth David – an extremely inspirational lady!
- Keen to hear yet more such stories, we were privileged to be told about the extraordinary life of the well-loved actor, Peter Butterworth, and his wife, Janet Brown – this was a spell-binding and remarkable evening which linked to the 'Great Escapes' exhibition featuring Peter Butterworth's life as a prisoner of war in Stalag Luft III after his aircraft was shot down in WW2 . Living just a stone's throw away from the National Archives, the talk 'A Bit of a Carry On' given by their son – Tyler Butterworth – gave the audience a great insight into his parents and also survival.
- Another source of inspiration came from the annual update by Nick Ovenden on his ground-breaking work with YAKUM in the Amazonian rainforest. His talk brought the urgency and benefits of his work to life in our age of changing climate, deforestation and plant extinction.

Walks have included :

- The annual Draw-off Walk along the River Thames where we walked along the river foreshore hearing more about the work of the Thames Landscape Strategy and The Arcadian Thames.
- A fascinating evening walk around Barnes Common in April with the Barnes Common Group led by Mike Hildesley showed how communities can care for their local area.
- The Kew Society Committee has been so pleased to meet and chat with current and potential new members at the Kew Village Market, the Kew Summer Fair (diary date for next year - 21 June 2025) and the Kew Horticultural Society Show. It gave a great understanding of what is on people's radar right now.
- In September 2023, we also had fun holding a Summer Picnic at Pensford Field – featuring the UKewLele Band and Mr Magic Bubbles.

Events provide opportunities for members to get to know others, make friends and learn more about the area. We aim - when we can - to ensure surplus ticket money is donated back to a specific linked project.

Please do take time to support – as we shall - Bettina and her new crew who take over Kew Society events.

Au revoir! It's been fun and a great delight to plan and put on over 200 events over our tenure – and we are looking forward to what's next

Environment

The environmental remit of Kew Society is extensive and will become increasingly important in the coming years as the impacts of climate change on Kew become clearer. Against this backdrop, we would like to express our gratitude to Jeremy Lumbar for all his efforts as Environment Trustee 2023/24. I am honoured to have assumed this role as of July 2024 and thank him for his support during the handover. I look forward to building on his efforts for

the benefit of The Kew Society, its members and the community as a whole.

At the heart of our work over the past year has been a desire to connect more deeply with our Members and the wider community on environmental matters, to promote environmental awareness and knowledge among our Membership and to inspire actions that will support a more resilient environment for future generations of Kew Residents.

To this end we continue to support and contribute to initiatives such as the Community Advisory Group of the Thames Landscape Strategy, the Old Deer Park Working Group, the Richmond Council Air Quality Action Plan Community Advisory Group and the Richmond Council Sustainability Forum.

Residents of Kew are fortunate to live in an area that has numerous green spaces both on the doorstep and nearby. Moving forward an aim will be to identify short and long term collaborative projects that benefit our local environment – our river, our green spaces, our streets, our air and our resources - while strengthening and deepening connections within the community. Through practical community wide projects and educational activities, Kew Residents will be in a strong position to make informed choices that support and nurture our environment.

Air Quality and Climate Change

Roger Mason organised a Symposium on Air Quality and Climate Change in Kew at the National Archives, Kew, in November 2023. The meeting was open to all. The Symposium, chaired by Jason Andrews, Environmental Health Pollution Manager (Air Quality) for Richmond, Merton, and Wandsworth Councils, included talks on Local air quality by Carol Lee, Principal Environmental Health Practitioner (Air Quality) for Richmond, Merton and Wandsworth Councils,

Mums for Lungs and their campaign to promote the ULEZ by Celeste Hicks, and Climate Change in Kew and its implications for future flood risk by Roger Mason.

The proceedings closed with a Q & A Discussion, for which the speakers were joined by Georgina Creighton, Climate Change and Sustainability Officer, Richmond and Wandsworth Councils. The symposium was recorded and is available on the TKS web page <https://www.kewsociety.org/2023/12/08/now-available-online-air-quality-climate-change-in-kew-from-ulez-to-the-risk-of-flooding/>

It was also reported in the Kew Society Winter Newsletter 2024.

Gardening

Our team of gardening volunteers, led by Anna Anderson, have worked throughout the year to maintain and enhance the green areas around Kew Village. These include the flower beds on the Kew Gardens station platform, in the village, on the Plaza and at North Road. We are grateful to our volunteers for their hard work, the results of which are often remarked on by passersby in the village and train drivers as they pull into the station. We would also like to acknowledge the support of Kew Station staff who are always welcoming and appreciative of our work. We are indebted to the local cafes and traders who allow us to use their taps for watering the various green spaces.

We welcomed several newcomers this year and most weeks we have a stable and friendly team of 6-8 gardeners working in the village, with the main session on Wednesday mornings at the station. We meet informally on a quarterly basis at Kew Greenhouse café for planning and feedback.

We continue to work closely with Energy Garden at the Station and are grateful for their support and the help of their Community Engagement Officer, Callum Clancy who joins us most weeks.

Climate change has begun to have an impact on our gardening work. The dry, cool and quite cloudy summer has meant that some plants have not grown well and others have not flowered consistently. While the village beds looked attractive this year, they are not as vibrant as the two previous years and we will consider changes for 2025 to reflect the changing environmental conditions.

Station Platform Gardens

Thanks to our ongoing efforts, the station platform gardens continue to look attractive throughout the year and provide a pleasant welcome for visitors and residents alike. This has been an eight year collaborative project with Energy Garden, who undertook a large portion of the clearing work at the start of the initiative. We are working with them to provide three signs at the station; one covering the history of the project, the other two giving information about the different beds. We hope these will be installed Autumn 2024.

The year at the station has not been without its challenges, most notably the destruction of the grass and verbena on the eastbound platform which were mistakenly cut down by a TFL Contractor's staff. The Contractor has paid for replacements which we replanted in spring 2024 and the bed is looking attractive again. A small group of gardeners cleared the palm corner by the ramp exit from the station on the westbound platform. This neglected corner had filled up with dead foliage and litter over the years. Over 15 bags of waste were removed and the area looks cared for again, with the added bonus that the ramp is more accessible to passengers.

North Road Garden

For several years John & Daphne Turner looked after the North Road Garden. Their work has helped to transform what was an unattractive and neglected space. In early 2024, they retired and Bharti Hindocha has taken the lead on this project bringing in some new plants including colourful "four o'clock" plants. We are also in discussions with Richmond Council to have the sleepers on the raised beds replaced as several are in disrepair. This may be an opportunity to have an accessible bench installed.

Creating Green Hubs in Kew

Throughout the year, Maggie Mason has continued her work on "greening the grey" in Kew – transforming small pieces of neglected land owned by Richmond Council into green hubs for all to enjoy while at the same time improving local biodiversity and engaging with the local community. Joined by

a number of enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers, her work this year has focussed on three green hubs. A long term aim is to collaborate with local stakeholders near each hub to ensure that outcomes benefit all. These hubs are:

St Luke's Space, Victoria Cottages

Improvements continue to the former playground opposite the Montessori School at the end of Victoria Cottages. We have liaised with a small group of local residents to draw up a plan for the space with the aim of transforming it into a pleasant community spot accessible to all. With the support of Habitats and Heritage, new shrubs and perennial plants have been planted in the raised beds with the addition of soil improvers. We look forward to the arrival of a new wheelchair accessible round table provided by Richmond Council and extend our thanks to the Rotary Club of Kew for their support in replacing one of the two benches that face the Sandycombe Road.

The Kew Green War Memorial

This year Continental Landscapes, the Council's Parks Contractor, created and planted a circular border around the War Memorial. This has smartened the site around the memorial which is now filled with a variety of ornamental grasses and attractive flowers. A small group of volunteers maintain these borders on a regular basis and we plan to improve the biodiversity of this space to attract more bees and butterflies.

The High Park Road green verges at the junction with Mortlake Road

Following consultation with Habitats and Heritage, we have learned that the small grassy space adjacent to the old telephone box is beset with obstacles, such as underground telephone cables and a small electrical substation and is not suitable for major renovation.

Continental Landscapes continue to keep the area tidy and mow the grass at appropriate times of the year in line with the Council's environmental plan for the Borough. The verge on the opposite side of the road is also looked after by Continental Landscapes. From time to time we contact them for plant renewal and pruning.

Dr Sarah Clarke
Acting Environment Trustee

Planning

The Planning Trustee for The Kew Society during the year was John Ricketts, following the retirement of Alice Shackleton as Planning Trustee and Lead at the AGM in October 2023.

The main aims and context of The Kew Society's planning work remain as set out in some detail in last year's Report: in a nutshell, [to encourage high standards of planning and architecture in Kew and the surrounding area*]. We review all planning applications relating to the Kew area but as a rule, we do not generally comment on domestic applications unless they contravene planning regulations, or have an adverse impact on neighbouring amenity. Using these criteria, we did not see the need to comment on any domestic applications during the year.

Planning Applications

There have been no new major planning applications in Kew during the year. The last remaining large site identified for redevelopment in our area in the Richmond Local Plan is the redevelopment of the **Kew Retail Park**, but we have heard nothing more about the plans for this site since mid-2022, when architects JTP held a Community Planning Weekend at the National Archives on behalf of the developers St George (part of Berkeley Group) and Marks and Spencer. There is as yet no sign of an imminent planning application.

The current status of the other two major planning applications from south of the river which will impact on Kew, which we reported on last year, is as follows:

Mortlake (Stag) Brewery: The revised planning application for this site was approved by Richmond Council's planning committee in January 2024, subject to referral to the Mayor of London and to a legal agreement. The applicant, Reselton Properties, subsequently spoke to GLA officers who indicated that, if the application was referred to the Mayor, it would most likely be refused again (as it was at the Mayor's hearing in July 2021). The applicant therefore decided to appeal direct to the Secretary of State for a decision, as a result of which a Planning Inquiry held by the Planning Inspectorate was scheduled for May/June this year. However, this was postponed due to the unavailability of a planning inspector, **and** will now be held over two sessions in November and December 2024.

Homebase, Manor Road: The Mayor of London finally approved the redevelopment of this site in May this year. North Richmond ward councillors then asked the Council to seek legal advice on whether this decision could be challenged by judicial review (only the process that led to the decision, not the decision itself, can be challenged), given the procedural errors that were evident in the GLA's handling of the application process. The councillors were informed that although the Mayor's public consultations on the proposals were flawed, there was insufficient evidence to show he would have made a different decision if they had been administered correctly. It was therefore decided that the Council would be unable to mount a successful legal challenge.

In August 2023, The Kew Society supported the Old Deer Park Working Group, of which - along with The Richmond Society and others - it is a member, in objecting to a proposed **15 metre 5G telecoms installation** near the footbridge and Pools-on-the-Park complex on the north side of Twickenham Road, on the grounds of the inappropriate siting which would adversely impact on nearby heritage assets (including RBG Kew) and the Old Deer Park Conservation Area in which it would sit. The application (for prior approval) was refused *inter alia* on the same grounds as our objection. We should emphasise that The Kew Society is fully supportive of the roll-out of 5G technology, but not at the expense of serious harm to the setting of important heritage assets.

In November 2023, we attended an exhibition organised by developers C&C London Homes as part of the first round of consultations on the proposed redevelopment of **Cecil Court** in Priory Road. This would involve the demolition of most of the existing building and its replacement with buildings occupying essentially the same footprint as the existing, but reconfigured in line with current best practice for care homes of this nature. We understand that a second round of consultations will be held prior to the submission of a planning application in early 2025.

In January 2024, the **Kew Biothane** site, adjacent to the Kew Riverside estate, was acquired by retirement homes specialist Elysian Residences. In 2020 planning approval was given to previous owners Red & Yellow for a specialist extra care facility on the site and Elysian have stated that they intend to use the existing planning approval to build 88 waterside apartments by 2027. We understand that preliminary works will be starting this year.

North of the river, the only new planning application that has raised concerns for us is the proposed large-scale redevelopment of the **Sega site** behind the Brentford Community Stadium, a planning application for which was submitted in November 2023. This would involve five tower blocks up to 80 metres in height with 916 residential units. The Kew Society joined RBG Kew, Richmond Council, Historic England and Brentford Football Club in objecting to the proposed development on the grounds of the materially adverse impact the tall blocks would have on the surrounding environment, including views from Kew Gardens, Kew Green and the Arcadian Thames towpath. No decision on this application has yet been issued by LB Hounslow.

In December 2023, the Secretary of State overturned the Planning Inspector's refusal and approved the planning applications for the redevelopment of the **Homebase and Tesco sites** on Syon Lane, which we and many other organisations had objected to on grounds of inappropriate height and massing, which would have a major adverse impact on RBG Kew. In July 2024, the applicant St Edwards (a joint venture between Berkeley Group and M&G Investments) consulted on minor changes to the schemes to incorporate the requirement for second staircases to tall buildings in the wake of the Grenfell disaster. It is likely that work on the demolition of the existing Homebase store will commence later this year or in early 2025.

In June 2024, the owner of the **GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Building** on the Great West Road announced plans for an initial consultation on the proposed redevelopment of the 13.4 acre site. This is likely to involve a major mixed use scheme including flats and commercial space. Whilst no firm indication of the size and scale has yet been given, it could potentially be the largest ever development in the Brentford area, involving a major impact on the setting of RBG Kew.

Consultations

In September 2023, Richmond Council announced a consultation on a revised **Kew Green Conservation Area** appraisal, which The Kew Society responded to. This is part of a borough-wide programme of reviewing existing Conservation Areas to 'ensure they are reflective of their current character and appearance'. We noted, *inter alia*, that it was encouraging to see references to the protection of vistas, the threat of tall developments north of the river and the need to continue making representations to LB Hounslow when such planning applications are submitted. The Draft Appraisal proposes changes to the

boundary of the Conservation Area which would include Gloucester Court and remove numbers 1-24 Mortlake Road, together with certain other alterations.

In August 2023, The Kew Society submitted comments as part of a consultation on the **Tall Building Design Guidance** section of the emerging **Character, Sustainability and Design Codes Supplementary Planning Document** relating to the Hounslow Local Plan. We highlighted in particular our concern over the impact of tall buildings in Hounslow on heritage assets such as RBG Kew, and that additional wording should be incorporated into the Guidance document to protect against this impact.

Biographies of prospective new trustees

Dr. Sarah Clarke

Dr Sarah Clarke, an electronics engineer by profession, is a writer, self-taught artist and nature enthusiast who lived in the Middle East for 16 years. Prior to that she called the USA, Japan, Singapore and Canada home. Sarah pioneered the use of educational support dogs in Bahrain to enhance the learning and life skills of children with Autism and related communication differences. She founded a non-profit group “Baloo’s Buddies” to advocate for inclusive education in Bahrain. Using art as a universal language of expression, Sarah conceived of, and facilitated numerous “Art for Autism Awareness” projects. In 2019 Baloo’s Buddies received an International Award for community engagement from the world’s largest Festival of Drawing “The Big Draw”. All Sarah’s projects are designed to be inclusive, collaborative and have minimal impact on the environment through, for example, the use of recycled materials.

Dr Clarke’s PhD, from the Schulich School of Management, York University, Toronto, Canada, is in the field of sustainable technology management. She studied the networks of learning that shape technological innovation and how these may be influenced to guide businesses and technical communities towards more environmentally sustainable behaviours. In Qatar Sarah was the Solid Waste Management advisor for the Qatar Green Building Council focusing on waste minimisation. Her community based project featuring an artwork comprising more than 30,000 bottle tops was displayed at COP18 in Doha.

Dr Clarke has written more than 15 academic papers and co-authored four chapters in Sustainable Development: An introduction focusing on the Gulf Region, Edited by Professor Paul Sillitoe. She has authored two children's books and was the Principal Writer for the Bahrain based Travel Guide series "101 things to see and do in...."

Since returning home three years ago to Kew, Sarah has been a volunteer gardener for The Kew Society and has helped at Pensford Field. In 2022, she led a project "Art at the Allotment" in Ealing for the Youth Engagement Program. She can usually be found walking her black labradors around the many beautiful green spaces in the Borough.

Bettina Kaemmerer

Bettina Kaemmerer is an experienced event organiser and community advocate with a passion for bringing people together and making a positive impact. With over a decade of experience in event planning, Bettina has successfully planned a variety of events, from corporate gatherings to milestone celebrations.

Beyond her expertise in event management, Bettina is deeply committed to giving back to her community. She believes in the power of connecting people to drive positive change.

Bettina has been working as a Management Consultant in her own company 'Bee-Comp Ltd' for 2 ½ years. Having lived in Germany before, she now lives on North Road in Kew for 17 years and knows Kew / Richmond inside-out. In her private time, she likes to exercise (like running along the river), cooking, travelling and meeting with friends.

Trevor Whittaker:

Trevor Whittaker has lived in Kew for many years and is an infrastructure development professional with extensive experience in low carbon renewable energy, urban regeneration, and PFI schemes.

He has led teams to secure significant funding, delivered various energy and urban projects, and advised on policy and innovation for the UK government. His expertise includes project creation and delivery, governance, funding, commercial management, and stakeholder management. Trevor has held senior roles at KEW Consult Limited, John Laing plc, AMEC plc, and Frogmore Estates plc, among others. He has an MBA from Cranfield School of Management.

Ends