



Kew  
Society  
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# *ANNUAL REPORT*

## *2024/25*

*Microsoft Office User*

*The Kew Society | 90 Forest Road, Kew, TW9 3BZ / Charity  
Number 1173016*

## Chair's Report for the year 2024 – 2025

Last year, the main theme of my report focused on the modernisation of our systems, the way we worked together, and the development of a new website and membership system, laying the foundations for future viability of the charity. This year the theme is the work that we have done to deliver our core remit and the efforts that we have made to ensure that the charity continues to exist and thrive. Amenity societies such as ours are having a tough time and some, like the Twickenham Society, have been forced to dissolve.

**We describe ourselves as 'a small charity run by volunteers'.** We do not, and cannot, afford to pay for administrative help and rely entirely on members prepared to share skills, expertise and time for the benefit of their neighbours in Kew. Although we have been increasingly successful in attracting a diversity of wonderful people, including several who are decades younger than me, we have struggled to find volunteers prepared to take on some key responsibilities associated with our remit. People tell me that almost all the voluntary sector has the same problem.

The words of a Joni Mitchell song comes to mind "You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone..."

This summer, I wrote to all members to ask "Would you miss the Kew Society?". My note prompted a flurry of responses including one which was from an individual who we hope will take on a leadership position at some stage in the future.

**Although I had hoped to step back from the central role of Chair** in order to focus my efforts on our *Connecting our Community* ideas, no one has expressed an interest in taking over the Chair. This has required us to do some creative thinking and we propose to split the Chair role to create Co-Chairs. This is an approach increasingly applied in the charity sector and will give us flexibility and should reduce the workload of an individual Chair. Hopefully this will also make recruiting successors less of a challenge. Co-chairs have equal status. Their role descriptions specify which trustee will take the lead on individual areas (governance, community relations etc.) and those which are a joint shared responsibility. Trevor Whittaker has stepped forward to take on a Co-chair position with me on an interim basis (6 months). Of course, this does not prevent us from having an individual Chair in the future.

**We continue to search for someone to take the lead on our Planning remit.** This person does not need to be a specialist and of course comprehensive training will be given. The person just needs to be someone who is genuinely interested in keeping up to date with relevant (generally larger scale) proposed developments that may have an impact upon the lives of local people. Over the past months, I have taken on some of this, for example,

meeting the developers of the Biothane plant and the Homebase site. It is both interesting and worthwhile work. We are not “nimbies”. Rather, we aim to influence good planning decisions and be a voice for the majority of people across Kew today.

**On a positive note, we have been successful in attracting some great new team members to take the lead on a range of areas.**

**Ella Ladevaia has joined us as our Communications lead** and has put together a strategy to create a ‘family’ of communications designed to ensure that we are a source of relevant local information that is up to date and of real interest to local people. This would include our newsletters, website posts, social media and my notes to members. Ella’s input will build on the excellent social media foundations established by Tara Harun, who is now applying her talents in the creative industry.

**Other new recruits that are sharing skills** to support our communications are

- David Graham, a retired architect with excellent computer design skills, who creates interesting posters for our events, and
- Cindy Hanegraf, a talented traditional graphic designer.

David and Cindy are working together to produce a family of attractive visual communications. These include a new notice board poster in Kew Plaza and posters to publicise our quest to improve access across the railway. They will also be designing material to raise awareness about one of our main achievements this year, our ***self-guided Kew Walk***, which is available through our website and by using a QR code.

This walk, inspired by the historic circular walk developed by the (then) Kew Society team during Covid, has been taken into the digital age by two team members

- Russel Hayes (who has retired this year from his trustee role, but continues to advise us on a non-exec basis), and
- Helen Bartolome, a fully qualified Blue Badge guide.

**If you have not yet done the walk, you are in for a treat.** Using your phone, it leads you on a fascinating walk, packed with interesting things to see and learn about this wonderful area. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. I would like to publicly thank both Russel and Helen for the time and effort they have put into this project, for the enjoyment of all people who live in, or visit, Kew. Our next step will be to approach local providers of food and drink to be featured (for a small sponsorship fee) on the digital map.

**Yet more new recruits have helped us to establish an editorial team** to support Claire and Paul Bethel in the production of our much valued newsletter.

- Helen Whitten - an accomplished writer - has been conducting interviews and writing articles, and
- Amanda Jones - a recent graduate in English and Journalism - is developing an important new section to highlight the work of all the voluntary groups in Kew.

**A key element of our modernisation agenda was to try to dramatically reduce the time required to manage our membership system.** Dealing with banks nowadays is neither quick nor simple and we were advised to try to move all our subscriptions onto a direct debit system. You may not be surprised to hear that this has not been easy, and, for a multitude of reasons, a large number of our members have chosen to continue to use standing orders. Quite a number are still paying a historic rate of £6 per annum, which, in this day and age does not really even cover the costs of our quarterly newsletters. If this applies to you, we would be very grateful if you could just increase the standing order to £10. New members are now all using direct debits and we have agreed to continue with the two payment systems.

**Our very hard working Membership Secretary, Janet Clark, will be retiring from the role at this AGM** and we have yet to confirm a successor. Two new team members, Gitika Saksena and Cath Roston, are working to create a 'one stop' database of members, which should make the future role considerably easier to manage.

**In terms of 'business as usual' across our remit, we have achieved a great deal this year.**

Dr Sarah Clarke, our Environment Trustee has worked tirelessly to lead her team to maintain a presence on a number of relevant groups, including the Thames Landscape Strategy Community Advisory Group, the Towpath Group, the West London River Group, Old Deer Park Working Group, Richmond Sustainability Forum and the Richmond Heathrow Campaign. Thanks go to Maggie Mason, Paul Bethel for their support and also to Richard Brewster for his work with the Old Deer Park Working Group.

**And what would do without the incredible knowledge and expertise provided by Dr Roger Mason?** During this year, he has (amongst other things) produced in depth responses to both Thames Water and the Heathrow expansion proposals. As a result, we are assured that the Kew Society is regarded by many decision makers as a valuable source of evidence based information.

**The work of our gardening team, led by Anna Andersen,** is hugely appreciated by many people who live in or visit Kew. Even during such a challenging summer, the planting on the station has looked great, and the flowerbeds in the village were regularly admired. A big thank you for everyone, especially Bharti Hindocha, who (almost single handedly) looks after the little garden at the corner of High Park Avenue and North Road.

**Events, ably organised by Bettina Kaemmerer**, have been a team effort this year, involving several trustees, helped by two of our younger team members, Goli Hashemi and Amanda Jones. Although we have managed to host a diversity of much appreciated events, we would love to find one individual to take the lead on the creation and development of a mixed portfolio of activities for the coming year.

**Despite the challenges, we have managed to offer at least one event each month**, with highlights including a wonderful talk by Felicity Aylieff, which took place during her acclaimed exhibition in Kew Gardens, and a historic bus trip in a vintage bus owned by Lord Hendy's charity. Bettina also ensured that we were well represented at the Kew Fete, the Kew Horticultural Show and the Kew Village Market. Outside our traditional portfolio of events, Sarah Clarke has gained very positive feedback from her 'family friendly' creative activities. The painted pebbles by the station and a number of bags made from recycled t-shirts are visible proof of the success of these workshops.

**Meet in Kew, our monthly get together** that thrived before the pandemic, was put on ice during this year. We are planning a relaunch, probably in a different venue, this autumn. Pam de Goris and I will be working on this.

**Thankfully, there has been very little activity on the planning front during this year.** We are very fortunate that two retired trustees, John Ricketts and Alice Shackleton, have helped us to respond to any planning applications that we felt could have a negative impact upon the local area. Moving forward, it will be essential to recruit a new team member if we are to influence future planning decisions, including the revised plans for the Homebase site and the Kew Retail Park.

**Our *Connecting the community* ideas are still largely on the drawing board.** However, we have achieved a major success in persuading the COO of TfL to include announcements on every tube train leaving Gunnersbury to advise anyone who could benefit from step free access to the Kew Gardens side of the village to continue on the train to Richmond and then double back. A small, but well received, step towards achieving our aim of safe and easy access for everyone who needs to cross the railway from one side of the village to the other. Two members, Jane Wilson and Sarah Williams, will be working with me on this and Cllr. Clare Vollum has been immensely supportive of our ambitions. We would welcome additional volunteers to help us encourage decision makers to provide a solution, which would significantly improve the lives of many people who live in, or visit, Kew.

**My main contribution to the 'community' element of our remit has been to establish and develop a diversity of important *win-win* relationships** especially with the National Archives, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew Rotary and our local councillors. We would like to publicly thank the Kew Gardens Rotary and Kew Horticultural Society for their generous

donation towards the cost of the new bench in *Bharti's garden* on North Road, which is already being enjoyed by many people.

Both the National Archives and Kew Gardens have offered to help to make 2026, the **125th anniversary of the Kew Society**, a very special year. Watch this space!

We continue to sponsor the Kew Sparkle Christmas tree and last year a group of our team members took a table at their really enjoyable fundraising dinner.

**I would also like to say a huge thank you to other team members who (sometimes literally) have helped to keep the show on the road.** Trevor Whittaker, my deputy and soon to become the interim Co-Chair, who leads on all our operations, Diana Ormond, who looks after governance and produces excellent minutes (including AGM minutes), Cath Roston who looks after and develops our website, Juliet Latham, who organises mailings and Steve Williams who very ably manages all our finances.

**And finally, may I thank our three patrons,** Sir Donald Insall, Sir David Durie and Nick Baird for continuing to support our work and offer wise counsel. It is much appreciated.

**Shiona Williams**

Chair

The Kew Society

30 September 2025

## Environmental Report 2024/2025

The environmental remit of Kew Society continues to be an important aspect of the work of the Charity. This year's prolonged drought conditions and extreme weather events have focused attention on local climate resilience and how prepared we are for more challenging environmental conditions in the future.

Once again, at the heart of our work over the past year has been a desire to connect more deeply with our 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. An aim is to ensure that a wide range of views are heard so that we may forge a joint vision of a future for Kew, one which nurtures the environment while embracing the needs of our residents and visitors.

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 Towpath Group, the Richmond Council Air Quality Action Plan Community Advisory Group and the Richmond Council Sustainability Forum. I am hugely grateful to our members who represent Kew Society on these committees and keep us up to date on local and regional issues. In addition, this year we have strengthened our links with Kew Gardens Rotary, Kew Horticultural Society and Habitats and Heritage to help us engage with a more diverse group of residents and develop environmental knowledge in Kew.

We were delighted to take part in the Kew Eco-Fair in March making t-shirt bags on World Water Day. This summer, we also ran a project to raise awareness about wildlife corridors by painting bugs, bees and butterflies on pebbles. This latter initiative, supported by Trindles Stores, Kew Green Residents and Energy Gardens, was used to create a work of art underneath Kew Gardens Station footbridge. The Environment Team also supported a Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award student who volunteered with us for 6 months.

I look forward to more projects of this nature in the coming year to help educate and engage Kew Residents about environmental issues. This, I believe, will help us all to make informed choices that support and nurture our environment.

### 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 and at North Road, as well as plantings around the War Memorial on Kew Green and St Luke's Space, Victoria Cottages. These latter two areas are overseen by Margaret Mason.

We are extremely grateful to our volunteers for their hard work. We would also like to acknowledge the support of Kew Station staff, as well as local traders who allow us to use their taps for watering. Drought conditions this year have meant that they have been well used! In fact, over the summer, we introduced an evening watering session to help mitigate the impact of a series of heatwaves on our gardens. In the coming months we will be reviewing all our green spaces to ensure that they are more climate resilient and contribute better to Kew's biodiversity. In this regard, we value greatly the advice we receive on an ongoing basis from the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew.

The gardening team is well established. A friendly team of 6-8 gardeners work in the village, with their main session on Wednesday mornings at the station. Another smaller team, led by Bharti Hindocha, garden at North Road while two other groups attend to St Luke's and the War Memorial. Volunteer gardeners meet informally on a quarterly basis at Kew Greenhouse café for planning and feedback. Thanks to their efforts the station platforms and other spaces look attractive throughout the year.

We continue to work closely with Energy Garden at the station. Earlier this year we said goodbye to their Community Engagement Officer, Callum Clancy, and welcomed Brandon Lynch as his replacement. With Energy Garden's support, this year we were able to move and enhance the station compost bins, replace railway sleepers on the slope on the North Road side and engage with Network Rail to replace the boundary fence on the East Bound Platform. We were delighted to welcome volunteers from Good Gym Richmond to help move some very heavy sleepers! Unfortunately, there have been unexpected delays in our project with Energy Gardens to install new garden signage at the station. We hope this will take place in the coming year.

North Road garden was boosted this year with the addition of a new combined bench and L-shaped planter which replaced rotten sleepers at the end of the garden. This was a collaborative partnership with Richmond Council's contractor Krinkels who undertook the installation work, donating some of the wood, while Bharti's team replanted the bed. We are delighted with the results of this project which was funded by Kew Society, Kew Gardens Rotary, Kew Horticultural Society and Richmond Council. Bharti's colourful choice of plants there this year has made the garden a beautiful spot on North Road. Thanks once again go to Chris & Chris for the water they supplied during the summer drought.

Throughout the year, Maggie Mason has continued to oversee the care of St Luke's Space at Victoria Cottages and the War Memorial at Kew Green. We were delighted that, at our request, Richmond Council installed an accessible picnic table at St Luke's and thank Kew Gardens Rotary for funding a bench to replace a damaged one under the wisteria pagoda. The gardening team this year will work to make this little garden more climate and child resilient, with a focus on year round interest and biodiversity.



Care of the War Memorial garden continues with the help of the Richmond Council's Parks Contractor, Krinkels. Passersby will have noticed that the garden looked particularly beautiful this spring. We hope that the addition of a new border later this year will help to preserve the plants and are exploring more climate resilient plant choices for the coming year.

### **Public Consultations, monitoring and briefing**

Once again, I am indebted to the expertise of Kew Society Members Dr Roger Mason and Paul Bethel for their support and invaluable input into several public consultations to which the Kew Society has made a submission. These include:

1. Richmond Council's Climate and Nature Strategy
2. Richmond Council's Transport Strategy
3. Department of Transport and Civil Aviation's Consultation on Creating a UK Airspace Design Service
4. Consultation on the Future Direction of the UK Aviation Environmental Review
5. Thames Water's Teddington Direct River Abstraction
6. Richmond Public Space Protection Order Consultation 2025 (anti-idling)

In addition, Roger Mason has produced a 3 part briefing document relating to the proposed Third Runway for Heathrow Airport. In it, he describes in detail the pros and cons of the development. The briefing document is available on our website.

We have also kept a watching brief on the breach in the towpath between Kew Gardens and Richmond Lock through our relationships with Richmond Council and are monitoring developments at the Kew Railway Bridge with Network Rail. In addition, Richard Brewster keeps us well informed about the activities of the Old Deer Park Working Group and we will be shortly updating the website to include this work.

With the launch of our new website last year, the Environment Team has been using it as a platform for keeping members abreast of environmental concerns in Kew and the wider borough. I am grateful to Tara Harun, David Graham and Cindy Hanegraaf for their work in this regard. We encourage members to check our social media channels for updates on for example, the Towpath Breach, Kew Railway Bridge repairs, litter picking and conservation work and environmentally themed craft activities. Please "like and share" our posts to help increase awareness about the environmental activities of Kew Society!

**Dr Sarah Clarke**

Environment Trustee

The Kew Society

30 September 2025

## Events held in the year 2024-2025

The Kew Society's events team organised 17 events in the year 2024/2025. We had a tough act to follow following the retirement of Mary Done and her excellent volunteers Sue May, Heather Wakefield and Jane Hogan at last years' AGM.

I am pleased to report that with the support of two new volunteers, Amanda Jones and Goli Hashemi, the trustees and I were able to shape an interesting program of events. Our aim was to host a variety of activities to appeal to a diverse audience and hopefully attract new members.

### 2024

- 06-Aug Tour of Handel and Hendrix House
- 29-Aug Evening Tree Walk with Kevin Martin, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
- 04-Sep King's Observatory Tour at Old Deer Park, Richmond
- 03-Oct Footsteps Around Farringdon lead by Helen Bartolome
- 03-Dec Richmond Park Talk with Paul Richards, Park Manager, Richmond Park

### 2025

- 21-Jan Talk: Letters from Everest by Tom Newton Dunn
- 26-Feb Talk: Monumental Porcelain by Felicity Aylieff
- 13-Mar Kew Eco-Fair World Water Day t-shirt bag making
- 15-Apr Kew Road Ha-Ha: Ditching Boundaries! A talk by Jess Vining, Habitats & Heritage
- 09-May Talk: Weather Forecasting - Next Generation by Dr Florence Rabier
- 25-May Bugs, Bees and Butterfly painting at Trindle Stores
- 21-Jun Stall at Kew Fete Launching *Walk Kew* & Kew Society Mugs
- 10-Jul Brentford Walk lead by Shirley Newton
- 17-Jul Routemaster Bus Tour with Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill & Christine Gordon MBE
- 23-Aug Stall at Kew Horticultural Show
- 23-Sep Talk: Championing the Arts in Richmond by Sue Pandit, Arts Richmond
- 28-Sep Kew Garden Tree Walk with Kevin Martin, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

We have an exciting schedule of events planned for the year ahead including our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations. If you have a few hours to spare a month, why not join the team?

**Bettina Kaemmerer**

Events Trustee

The Kew Society

30 September 2025