

HOW MANY MILES HAS THIS STOWAWAY LIZARD TRAVELLED?
FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO TREVOR ON PAGE 3




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POLITICAL EXCLUSIVE

My party is in the 'worst place for 43 years', says Labour MP

By Yasemin Craggs-Mersinoglu

The Labour Party is in the worst place it has been during her 43-year membership, according to a south west London MP.

Siobhain McDonagh, MP for Mitcham and Morden, said bullying and intimidation were "sanctioned" by Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.

Her comments come after eight Labour MPs resigned from the party to form The Independent Group, following repeated antisemitism scandals. Ms McDonagh was also rumoured to be resigning.

Chris Williamson, the MP for Derby North, was suspended on February 27 after he said that Labour had "given too much ground and been too apologetic" in its handling of antisemitism allegations.

Ms McDonagh said: "He was definitely protected by Jeremy. I think Jeremy was completely wrong to resist his suspension because he had to cave in and accept the inevitable when so many MPs from right across the Labour Party expressed their anger and concern about it."



Siobhain McDonagh, Mitcham

The hard left is now in control of the Labour Party, Ms McDonagh said, and antisemitism is part of their politics.

"Everybody has to be treated fairly," she added. "If they know the leader of the Labour Party or [are] close to one of his team you should be treated exactly the same as someone that knows nobody in the leadership of the Labour Party."

Ms McDonagh said joining the Labour Party at 16 was one of the best things she had ever done, but she is now considering leaving.

She blames antisemitism and bullying, but has not witnessed any in her own constituency.

Ms McDonagh said: "I hope

to remain a member of the Labour Party but it's no longer unconditional."

Though she doesn't consider bullying and harassment a problem in her constituency, she said she won't watch other MPs being subjected to it.

"At that point I'll have to reconsider what I'm going to do," she added.

Ms McDonagh previously spoke in favour of a People's Vote and believes Labour only backed a second referendum on Brexit because of the eight MPs who quit to set up the Independent Group.

She said: "I don't think we would have ever got to the point of supporting a People's Vote if those eight MPs hadn't left."

"They had to make a decision about what they felt was best for the country, what they thought was best for themselves and their communities and they've been incredibly brave."

A Labour Party spokesman said: "These claims are untrue – the Labour leadership is absolutely committed to tackling bullying, intimidation and antisemitism in all its forms and wherever it arises."



EXCLUSIVE: ANDY CURRY GOES FOR A THAI BREAK

– FULL STORY PAGE 7

Battersea MP: Give us Brexit vote

By Josh Mellor

The government is trying to force a “damaging” Brexit on the country, Battersea’s MP has claimed.

Marsha De Cordova, the Labour MP for Battersea, warned of a “catastrophic” no deal Brexit, and called for a fresh people’s vote with an option to remain in the European Union.

She added that she was “deeply saddened that former colleagues have decided to join Conservative MPs to form the Independent Group”.

Elected in 2017, Ms De Cordova claimed to remain loyal to Labour’s “transformative manifesto”.

But the possible end to two party politics was welcomed by both the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party.

The Liberal Democrats said they have “much in common” with the Independent Group, stating: “People in Wandsworth feel abandoned by the two tired old parties lurching to the left and right.”

Green party member James Frew said: “Two-party politics downplays alternative views and encourages voter apathy.”

Lib Dem councillor goes Green

By Cian Cheesbrough

Westminster politics was branded a “dogmatic two-party system” by a Kingston councillor, as she defected from the Liberal Democrats to the Green party last week.

Sharron Falchikov-Sumner was elected in May 2018 but resigned from the administration after just 100 days over environmental issues. She sat as an “independent Liberal Democrat” before switching to the Greens last Thursday, amid a wave of resignations in Westminster.

Mrs Falchikov-Sumner said: “It’s good to see that people are not scared to stand up for what they believe in.”

“The bullying culture within establishment parties is really very strong, and I am so pleased to see established household figures talking about bullying within political parties”, she added.

Mrs Falchikov-Sumner says she wants to shine a light on air pollution, describing it as a “silent scourge that kills over 9,000 people a year”.



A 15m mosaic will be unveiled in Malden Manor this month, after 1000 volunteers contributed to the artwork which is made of recycled materials

‘I don’t feel safe here’: students fear sex abuse

By Kate Nicholson

Victims of sexual harassment at university lack support, according to Kingston University students.

Students told South West Londoner they didn’t know where to turn or who would help them if they were victims of sexual harassment or assault.

Research published in January found half of UK students have faced unwanted sexual behaviour, ranging from explicit messages to rape. Final

year student Sisi, 22, said: “I’ve only been clubbing twice and many men approached me and some of them were quite aggressive. It definitely happens. But in clubs, I guess that is normal.”

Students suggested that Kingston was not providing adequate support for this kind of behaviour.

Finalist Rosie, 21, said: “One of the things with our uni is that they aren’t very good at showcasing what they do have available.”

“I don’t feel safe here at all,” added Sisi. When asked

what she would do if she felt harassed at the university, she added: “I would probably go to reception, but I don’t know who is the actual person to approach.”

An NUS report in 2015 revealed two out of three freshers did not how to report sexual harassment.

Rosie added that in unwanted sexual situations often it’s “easier to get things over with than to do anything else”.

“It’s horrifying but it’s not surprising at all. It’s expected really, which is even worse,” she added. Sisi said: “People

might think, this is normal, so why would I tell anyone?”

The Kingston student newspaper, The River, reported 50 per cent of female students had been sexually assaulted. Other universities, such as Oxford and St Andrews, now offer sexual consent classes. But the Kingston students who spoke to South West Londoner felt that this kind of support was absent.

A university spokesperson said Kingston takes the safety of students and staff extremely seriously and does not tolerate any form of harassment,

“ensuring everyone is treated with dignity and respect.”

The spokesperson added: “The university actively encourages students who might have concerns about any form of harassment to talk to the specially trained advisers based at its Student Life Centre.”

These specialists provide confidential support. Students also receive wellbeing information during Welcome Week.

Candidates in the Student Union elections are raising awareness of sexual harassment, but the student union was unavailable to comment.



Frankie McGuinness, aged 9

Schoolgirl blasts Heathrow expansion

By Ruby Hinchliffe

A schoolgirl demanded answers at a consultation on Heathrow expansion in Richmond on Wednesday night – while the local MP, Zac Goldsmith, failed to attend.

Frankie McGuinness, 9, a student at Newland House School, was the first to speak at the event in Duke Street Church.

In front of about 400 residents, she told the Heathrow representative, Nigel Milton: “I try to do my exams, but I

can never focus and get all the marks I need because the aeroplanes go over. The class can’t hear, and they don’t know what they’re meant to be doing.”

Frankie also asked how the airport expansion would affect her classmates with asthma.

The meeting was the first of a two-part series organised by Mr Goldsmith, the Conservative MP for Richmond and North Kingston.

Mr Milton told Frankie that Heathrow would look to invest

money to insulate the schools in affected areas, and confirmed that the second consultation to discuss the physical expansion of Heathrow will take place this June.

Mr Goldsmith is opposed to Heathrow expansion and resigned his seat following the government’s approval of a third runway in October 2016. He had been due to attend the meeting, but was delayed due to votes taking place in Westminster.

After giving her speech, Frankie was unable to stay for

the remainder of the meeting, telling the organisers she had to go home to bed.

Frankie’s father Paul McGuinness, 54, represents an organisation called No Third Runway Coalition. He told South West Londoner that he was shocked when he heard his daughter’s voice.

Mr McGuinness said: “She gets woken up in the morning by them [planes], she’s kept up at night. She’s aware of traffic pollution, too. It’s part of the younger generation’s conversation.”



A microchip revealed Trevor the lizard's journey from France to Morden Common where he was found by a member of the public last month

Bonjour! Lizard who travelled from France

By Elena Morresi

A four-foot lizard from France found wandering Morden common last month is recovering well in his new home.

The scaly giant was adopted and named Trevor by Royal Veterinary College student Harry Craft.

Mr Craft, 19, said: "He is doing very well and is a bit naughty." The 46-inch blue tegu tried to bite his finger while receiving an antibiotic jab.

Trevor had a bad cold and was borderline obese when he was brought to the Blue Cross by a member of the public on 1 February.

Deputy nurse manager Elise Smith said staff were shocked by his size, she said: "It's the first tegu we've seen here at Merton.

"It's lucky to be alive given the recent bitterly cold weather." Media officer

Emma Sword said: "Staff members became attached and were happy to see it go to a good home where it would be looked after well."

Blue Cross staff confirmed



Trevor the lizard joins more than 30 animals cared for by Harry Craft

Trevor was chipped and registered to a French company.

Mr Craft believed Trevor may have hatched in sunny south of France, then travelled as far as Hamm reptile show in Germany, before making his way to the UK.

Trevor joined Mr Craft's 30 reptiles including turtles and snakes and his pet reindeer, Reggie.

Reggie the reindeer was just a foal when he was abandoned by his mother. Mr Craft has reared him since birth and keeps him in woodland thirty minutes from his Watford home.

But Reggie is making room for his new international brother.

"It really shows he was lethargic when they found him," said Mr Craft. "He was breathing heavily before but he's much better now."

The lizard had been reared on a cheap diet of chicks instead of the more balanced meals of fruit, insects and

meat that he would have in the wild.

Tegus are South American omnivorous species, they are capable of running really fast and on two legs.

They can be dangerous, if threatened they can whip their tails to swipe at aggressors and can even charge and inflict a painful bite.

Adult males are much larger than the females and can grow to lengths of nearly five feet. Ms Smith: We understand that people's circumstances can change and would always urge pet owners to reach out to their nearest animal charity for help if they are struggling with a pet rather than abandoning them to fend for themselves."

Trevor's owner agreed to keep the rescued tegu for life, "They're cool, I'll give him a good home," he said.

Mr Craft hopes to get the scaly giant used to handling, and bring him to birthday parties to educate kids.

Trevor's life is looking up, his new owner said: "He's content. They haven't got a way of showing it, but he's happy."

He encourages owning reptiles, but recommends people do their research first.

A 2016 Blue Cross report found tens of thousands of exotic animals easily available online for sale.

The report found many sellers didn't identify the species of these animals, or give advice on how to care for them.

Steve Goody, Blue Cross Deputy Chief Executive, said: "Unfortunately, it is far too easy to buy tegus and other reptiles online and many people do so without realising the amount of care and commitment they need.

"We would like the government to commit to a proper review of the regulations surrounding the breeding, sale and keeping of exotic pets."

Painting Putney prizefighter brushes world title

By Michael Boniface

A Putney boxer and amateur artist has a shot at a world title, after winning his fight at the O2 last week.

The emphatic knockout moves Joe Joyce, 33, ever closer to the 'big three' of the boxing world.

Joyce, who moved to Putney aged six, didn't land his first punch until age 22, when he joined Earlsfield ABC.

Instead he focused on swimming with the Wandsworth Dolphins, playing rugby for Ruskin Park, and also enjoyed kung-fu, karate, kickboxing and capoeira.

"I was like a jack of all trades but a master of none, until I found boxing," he said.

But knocking people out wasn't the only passion of the 6ft 6in heavyweight. His other love? Fine art.



Joyce knocked out Bermane Stiverne last week

He said: "I remember my first oil painting when I was seven years old. I learnt everything from my dad and it all went from there."

Putney teachers picked up on Joyce's penchant for paint.

He took up a foundation at Camberwell College of Arts before studying Fine Art at Middlesex University.

Though boxing took over, Joyce still finds time for art and his sketchbook remains close during training camp in the mountains of Big Bear, California.

"It's been tough away from home", he said. "We train Monday-Saturday, starting with hill runs at 6am.

"We spar every other day with four minute rounds - old school training."

These are the sacrifices it takes to reach the top, he adds. And if he gets there?

"I'll put my art hat back on," Joyce beams.

Normally, selling paintings as a world champion heavyweight would seem odd.

In Joyce's case it seems distinctly possible.

Wilde fans recognise the importance of being remembered

By Josh Mellor

A campaign to install a rainbow LGBT plaque at Clapham Junction station to celebrate the playwright Oscar Wilde has raised more than £350.

In 1895, more than 60 years before the decriminalisation of homosexuality, Wilde, right, was convicted of homosexual acts and sentenced to two years' hard labour in Reading. He was transferred from Wandsworth and was taken through the station in manacles. People started spitting and shouting at him after he was recognised, and he endured abuse for half an hour.

The Wandsworth LGBT forum is behind the campaign. A JustGiving page was set up to raise money for the plaque, and has raised £351.

David Robson, the chairman, explained the plaque's location at platform 9 and 10.

"There was a screening of the new Rupert Everett film, *The Happy Prince*, which is a

biopic of Oscar Wilde's later years.

"It flashes back to a scene of him being moved from Wandsworth prison to Reading and he's subjected to the most horrific homophobic abuse for a thirty minutes on the platform.



"He's spat on and abused and everything, so a real fall from grace. He goes from hero to absolute scum of the earth."

According to Wilde's biographer, Matthew Sturgis, Wilde claimed that he had wept at the same hour every day since.

Network Rail, which manages Clapham Junction, said that it was happy to support the campaign and that the plaque "would provide a fitting tribute to mark a key moment in the community's history".

Wilde was among more than 50,000 gay men posthumously pardoned for homosexual acts under a new "Turing Law" in 2017.

The Wandsworth LGBT

Forum is collaborating with the Clapham art gallery Studio Voltaire to fundraise for the plaque.

The gallery's Victorian chapel is decorated as "The Temple of Oscar Wilde", a celebration of the Irish author and LGBT history by the American artists David McDermott and Peter McGough.

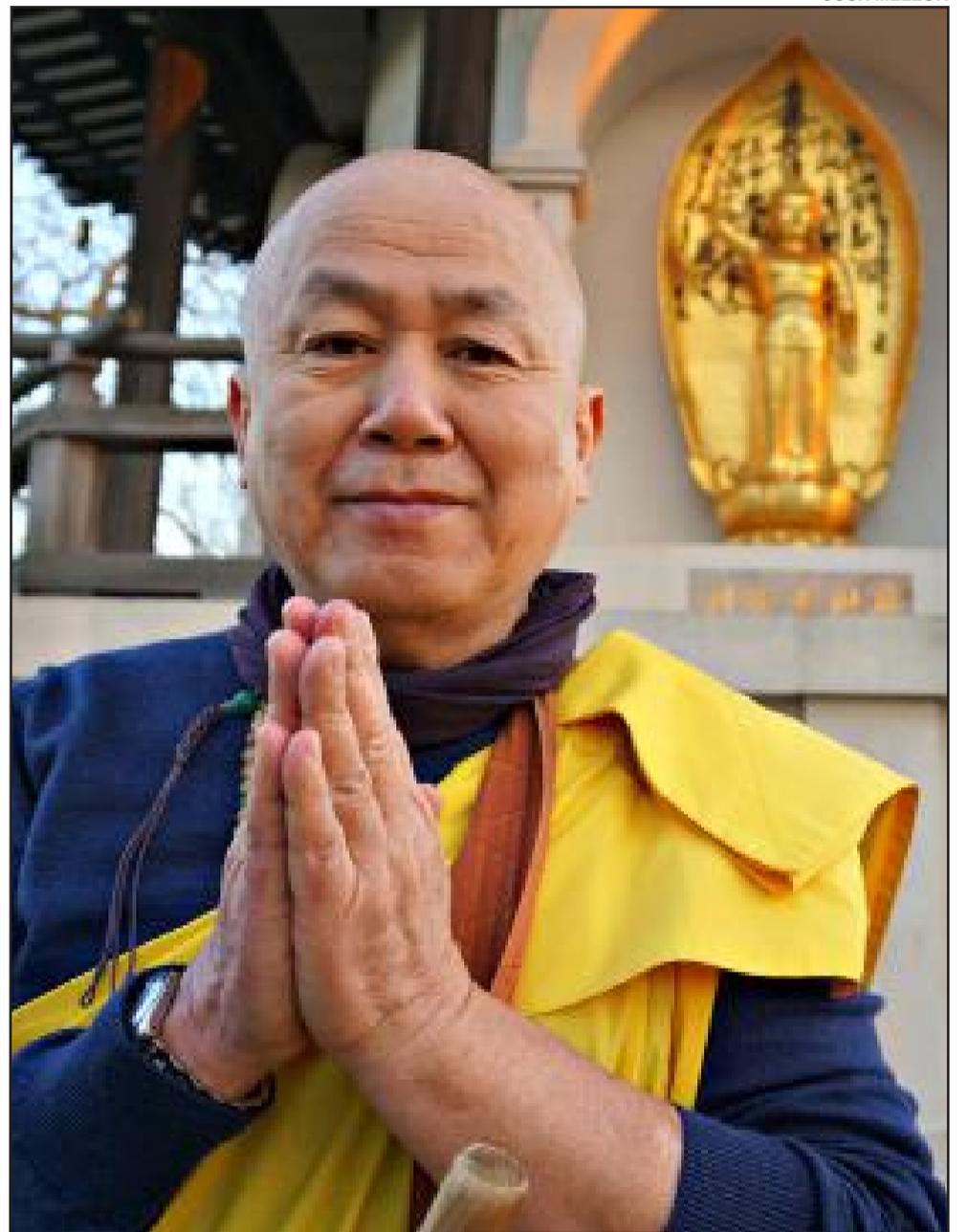
A play about Wilde's lover Alfred "Bosie Douglas", who abandoned him during the trial, was performed to raise money for the plaque on Tuesday at the gallery.

The Trial of Lord Alfred Douglas, written by Peter Scott Presland and Andrew Lumsden, was performed last year as part of LGBT history month.

It has been billed as "a spectacular bitch between two old friends about the nature of the iconic relationship between the Uber Queer Mr Wilde and his 'toy boy', Lord Alfred Douglas."

After all, as Wilde would go on to write in the only novel of his career, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, "There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about."

JOSH MELLOR



Sunrise prayers at Battersea Park's Peace Pagoda with Reverend Gyoro Nagase, 67

Dogs need surgery to breathe

By Charlie Duffield

More than 60 dogs at Battersea Dogs & Cats Home needed surgery last year to help them breathe.

Vets performed 62 operations on pugs and bulldogs, up from seven in 2015. They are bred to have short airways and often struggle to breathe. After surgery, many dogs will only be able to go on short walks.

Shaun Opperman, the head vet at Battersea, said: "Pugs and French bulldogs are a classic example of irresponsible, selective breeding. Many have airways that are so narrow it would be the equivalent of humans breathing through a drinking straw. The corrective surgery improves their quality of life, but it's risky and invasive and recovery can be very complicated."

The French bulldog is Britain's most popular breed, according to the Kennel Club. In 2018, Battersea took in 40 of the dogs, up from eight in 2014.

Church collects clothes for men leaving prison

By Emma Pengelly

Male prisoners leaving Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs will receive donated items as Putney churches host a clothes collection this weekend.

Vicar of St Mary's and All Saints' churches Reverend John Whittaker, 49, said that he realised that many men leaving prison do not have a home or family to return to, let alone clothes to wear. They return to precarious situations as they often have few outside contacts and significant mental health issues.

"Some are in a very vulnerable place," he said.

The importance of caring for prisoners when they have served their sentences was underlined by a report by the National Audit Office (NAO) yesterday.

The latest figures show the number of former prisoners reoffending has increased by almost a quarter since 2011. Recidivism has increased by 22 per cent between 2011 and March 2017, the NAO said.

Prisoners are given at least £46 when they are released, which is not enough to buy a pair of shoes and new

clothes, Rev Whittaker said. "This is us trying to give a bit of a helping hand."

The church is asking the community for donations of warm coats, jumpers, trainers in sizes 7-12, gloves, woolly hats and jeans.

Rev Whittaker added: "This project is something our church is really passionate about. We are confident of a generous response."

The Putney churches also provides shelter and holds clothes donations for homeless people in a partnership with the charity Glass Doors.

Melissa Kerschen, a spokeswoman for the charity, said that they were helping many people to rebuild lives off the street.

"Well over 1,000 individuals come through our doors every year," she said.

"It's thanks to our partnerships with churches that we are able to provide a warm welcome to so many. We couldn't do it without all the good work the churches in our communities do."

The Wandsworth and Wormwood Scrubs prison collection boxes will be at St Mary's and All Saints' churches on Sunday and in the following days.



John Whittaker is asking for donations for men who leave prison

Fake clothes seized and sold for charity



The council gives the counterfeit goods to Sports Traider, who recycle them to help underprivileged kids

By Will Barbieri and Kamal Sultan

Richmond council is seizing counterfeit clothes and gifting them to underprivileged children in a charity initiative.

Fake goods caused a market loss to clothing brands of about \$24 billion globally last year, according to Havoscope. Recycling fake clothes prevents offenders from selling them on the black market, which police say often results funding organised crime, as well

as reducing waste sent to landfills.

It also protects consumers by keeping potentially dangerous goods off the market. The clothes are then donated to the charity and high-street brand Sports Traider by the trading association.

The charity rebrands fake labels as "Brand Thief", and uses recycled materials from bootleg garments to sell and raise money for children. Shoes, toys and jewellery were among the goods repurposed for sports clubs and schools.

The money is also invested into equipment for those in

need, with £3,000 being spent on a new wheelchair for a girl with severe cerebral palsy.

Lance Haggith, the founder and CEO of Sports Traider, said: "The money we get can help kids with anything from a scholarship, a bursary or getting them into a club."

Mr Haggith explained how they embroider over counterfeit labels like Lacoste or Ralph Lauren to give them away for free, both protecting the brands and recycling the clothes.

Dangerous products like sweatshirts with drawstrings are modified for safety, and

jumpers are turned into bibs for young children.

The charity delivers in areas experiencing poverty and social deprivation, such as Tower Hamlets, Hackney and the East End.

Sports Traider's initiative reaches as far as Senegal, where fake Levi jeans are turned into bags.

The Richmond cabinet member for the environment, Martin Eलगorn, said: "Making sure that counterfeit goods are not being sold on the streets of our borough is important."

While the charity focuses on children in sports, it also employs ex-offenders and people with disabilities.

Prison workshops are used to provide training and skills that are transferable to the outside world.

Mr Haggith said: "It's almost like the proceeds of crime are being converted by people serving time and then going back out to make a difference to people."

Council backs abortion clinic 'buffer zone'

By Alex Pugh

Anti-abortion protesters will be banned from outside a Richmond clinic after the council voted in February to introduce a "buffer zone", the second in the UK after Ealing.

The Regulatory Committee opted unanimously for a Public Safety Protection Order around the Rosslyn Road PSPO, which will prohibit groups from holding vigils and approaching women. This is the second PSPO used to ban "pavement counselling" after Ealing introduced legislation last

April. It will come into force next month once the council gives final approval on Tuesday, and those persistently breaching the order could face prosecution.

The public affairs and advocacy manager at British Pregnancy Advice Service (BPAS), Rachael Clarke, said she expected the council to vote in favour of it.

Ms Clarke said: "All the reports from the Ealing clinic seem to be that they don't even have to keep a log of incidents anymore, because they just don't happen."

She believes that the Rosslyn Road PSPO would prevent similar situations in

Richmond, but added: "What it wouldn't do, for instance, is stop the people from Richmond going to the Mary Stopes in Hounslow and protesting there instead."

Councils in Bournemouth, Birmingham and Manchester are also considering PSPOs to stop anti-abortion vigils. Ms Clarke said: "We've been pushing for national legislation."

Sajid Javid, the home secretary, believes that national buffer zones are not proportionate, saying that only one in ten clinics attract protesters.

But Ms Clarke argued: "If it were one in ten doctors'

surgeries that had people stood outside telling them the flu vaccine was wrong, it would be a very different scenario."

Many of the vigils outside the Rosslyn Road clinic are organised by a group called Be Here For Me. Their spokeswoman Elizabeth Howard said: "This is Richmond Council saying, 'You're on your own', to the brave women who testified about the help they received [from the organisation] when they had nowhere else to turn."

But Ms Clarke said: "It seems quite obvious that there is a lack of



The Rosslyn Road PSPO

understanding ... on the difference between how you perceive your actions, and how other people interpret the impact of them."

Special needs school rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted

By Joti Kaur

A school in Richmond has been praised for changing lives of students with special needs after receiving a second Outstanding rating from Ofsted on Wednesday.

Clarendon School on Egerton Road, Twickenham, offers a 'life skills' curriculum alongside the national curriculum in order to help maintain independence later in lives. Pupils learn how to load a dishwasher, iron and cook for themselves.

Previously a Local Education Authority school, it became an academy in 2016 to seek funding for a new school site. They are also given "travel training", where they are taken out on buses and trains to familiarise them with travelling independently.

Kieran Baker, 22, left the school in 2012 and credits it with helping him to gain a City and Guild's Cycle Mechanic qualification, and to secure a job at Halford in Hayes. Mr Baker said: "Clarendon is a great school. Having suffered with severe dyslexia, my reading and writing problems were solved there.

"If I hadn't attended, I wouldn't have been given the life skills that they have provided me with.

"They helped me get the job I have held since leaving at 16, and help all their students."

The mechanic qualification is offered to all pupils and has been a success in recent years. Each class has only 12 pupils, which allows teachers to be more responsive to each individual pupil's needs.

The executive headteacher, John Kipps, has been at Clarendon School for 26 years and said the number of children with different educational needs is increasingly quickly.

Mr Kipps, 53, said: "Here we're able to really get to know the individuals on a much more personal level, and make sure we can make every lesson bespoke to that child and that's what we're about. I have got a very dedicated and committed staff team to who I am enormously indebted to because this was a team effort."

He added that 100 per cent of his pupils have gone on to further education, either in specialist sixth form schools or mainstream courses at colleges without supported learning environments.

"It's about making sure we meet the child's needs rather than just saying this is what we offer.

"They have come here to a safe haven to take away the skills they need."

Shopkeepers mourn death of the High Street

By Kate Nicholson

Kingston High Street faces an inevitable death, according to the founder of Kingston's last independent clothing chain.

Andy Beagley, 54, the founder of the male fashion chain Natterjacks, believes the combination of Brexit and online trade is making the future of retail unsteady.

Kingston is no exception, he added, saying: "There's nothing somebody like me can do to change anything."

"The tsunami wave has already begun. It's already taking people out, it's already demolishing retail as I know it."

A government report published this month said that high streets and town centres urgently need to adapt to changing consumer habits. In December 2018, 20 per cent of total retail sales were online, the report found.

There were 16 empty retail units in Kingston, a report from business improvement district, Kingston First, and a further two stores closed this month.

Mr Beagley, who founded his business in 1989, said there was no market for

independents now, adding: "Kingston doesn't need more retail stores."

"A town centre needs to be invested in and kept up to a certain standard."

"It's a perfect storm," he added.

Jon Tolley, owner of Banquet Records and Liberal Democrat Councillor for Kingston, 41, said: "Kingston has rested on its laurels for



Jon Tolley, the founder of Banquet Records, has watched competitors collapse

a little bit because it has always been a go to retail centre."

"But I don't think the high street is dead, I think it just needs to evolve."

He thinks independents stores can help keep Kingston afloat, saying: "Independents add the life and fizz to the town centre. Independents will be the ones who will get through this easier."

"They give a s*** about their area."

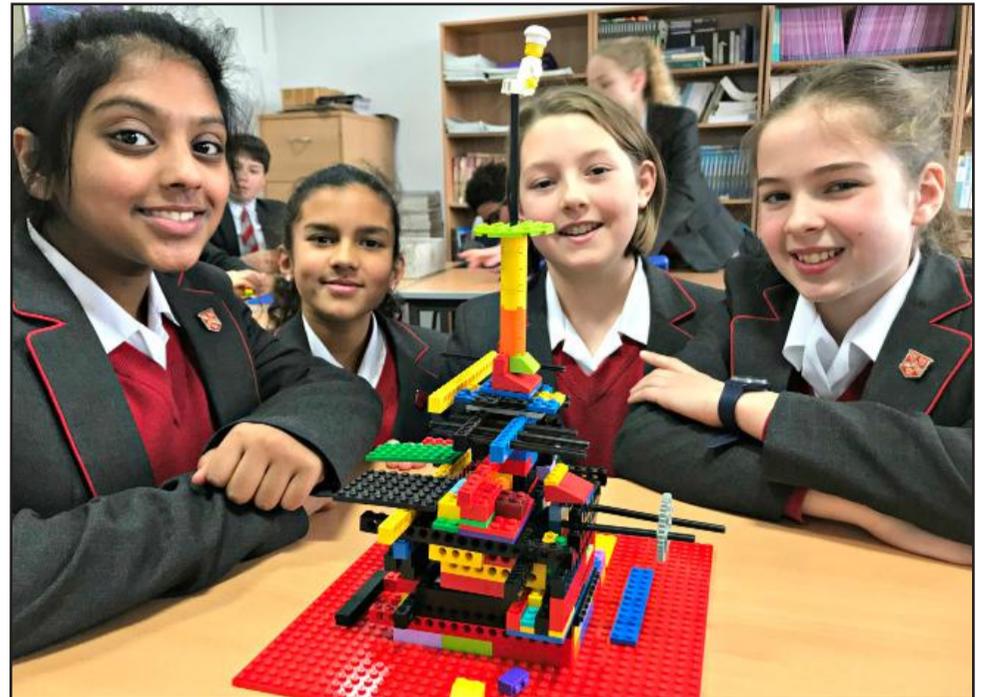
The councillor believed that the Kingston pound, a local currency introduced in 2015, could help keep money among the independents.

Research from Kingston pound said 80 to 90 per cent of cash in the town leaves the borough within a day.

Although a local currency "is not the silver bullet" to fix the high street, but "it's good to have people fighting your corner, trying to extol the value of what we do."

Mr Tolley said that the only way forward was to turn the town into a community space as opposed to a commercial centre.

The public need to actively start visiting the high street again for retail, warned Mr Beasley, "or one day, the shops aren't going to be there any more."



Pupils at Kingston Grammar School are taking Lego lessons to help them to focus

Building blocks for better mental health

By Roy Chacko and Harry Normanton

Kingston Grammar School is building Lego into its curriculum for all year sevens to help distracted children.

The 11 and 12-year-olds have two 50-minute classes of building this term as part of a broader wellbeing programme.

Will Cooper, the deputy headteacher, thinks the lessons will benefit his pupils' mental health.

He says: "It's a point we're making, as a school we think that you should find time to have some headspace."

"It's no good telling students to go home and

do that, they have loads of homework."

Students are divided into groups, given a broad brief, such as to build a tall structure, then are left to their own devices with a box of bricks.

Kingston Grammar, a selective independent school, has fees of more than £19,000 a year.

Fay Longega, 44, a prospective parent, said that playing with Lego in class would be "a great bonding experience". "It's the caring, nurturing, wellbeing aspect of the school that was appealing," she added.

Ms Longega continued: "There's certainly enough time spent on screens. Anything that takes them away from that is a great

idea."

Many British schools run Lego clubs or offer "Lego therapy" for children with communication difficulties but Mr Cooper believes that Kingston is the first school to put Lego on its curriculum.

He said: "I think it should be part of every school. It's one of the cheapest wellbeing things you can do."

Lego Education Solutions joins up with schools to showcase the educational benefits of their products.

They claim that using Lego in schools "ignite students' natural curiosity, helping them develop communication, creativity, and critical thinking skills in a fun and exciting way."

Koreans split over Trump summit

By Harry Normanton

New Malden's Korean community was divided over Donald Trump's meeting with Kim Jong-un this week, despite the summit ending without a deal.

It was hoped that the summit in Vietnam might result in a nuclear concession from the North Korean leader but talks ended after just one day.

Few in New Malden, home to the largest Korean population in Europe, were surprised by the collapse of talks.

"I wasn't really expecting anything," said James Gu, a chef. "I actually didn't even think they were going to meet up today."

Mr Trump's willingness to deal with Mr Kim, an authoritarian, has received widespread criticism, and the Koreans of New Malden were divided about his intervention.

Joseph Shin, a banker, said: "Trump is focussing on his own profit, his own benefit. He doesn't care about

reunification, his only focus is America's profit."

Korea was divided in 1945 when the Soviet Union occupied the North, and the United States the South.

Many in New Malden felt wary of Mr Kim, a third-generation dictator who presides over a poverty-stricken nation.

Jo O, a marketing manager from Seoul, said: "We [South] Korean people think Kim Jong-Un is very smart and greedy. Suddenly his mind can be changed."

It's what his grandfather did, what his father did."

There are as many as 20,000 Koreans living in New Malden, including 600 people originally from North Korea. Many in the area were enthusiastic about the idea of reconnecting North and South.

But Mr Shin, who returns to Seoul in six months, thought older South Koreans tended to be wary.

He said: "Especially the older generation have suffered from the Communist attack from the North, they

really dislike it."

Mr Shin, though, saw hope in the interaction of North and South Koreans in New Malden.

He said: "Even though they have different political views and different backgrounds, right here they are mixed, they are living together."

"It's one way of reunification."

The community was torn over the significance of this week's events to Koreans in Britain. Some identified a generational divide, with older generations attributing greater importance to Korean politics than the young.

Mr Kang, 24, said: "Having lived in the UK for quite a while, [Korean politics] is quite distant, you know? Brexit has much more tangible impacts."

But teacher Jane Kae, 55, maintained: "It does matter. I am Korean so always I am very sensitive about this issue."

She added: "I don't think the younger generation know much about history, they are not concerned about it."

Flushed with pride: toilet radio turns 12

By Roy Chacko

Volunteers broadcasting from a former public toilet are flushed with pride as they celebrate their 12th anniversary next week.

Kingston Green Radio addresses what it calls the climate emergency through education, activism and community outreach.

The station streams online and runs on FM part time from their current location, which was derelict when they moved in six years ago.

Founder Sam Hermitage, 62, and his team of volunteers cleaned it up and created a community green space outside their New Malden studio.

Mr Hermitage started the Kingston Environment Centre long before climate change was a widespread concern.

He said: "That's why places like us are so important where we can offer answers, solutions and support to people that want to do something."

Jan Vidler, 67, the co-founder, said: "if we have a climate emergency we have to work with our neighbours and know who we can trust."

Ms Vidler explained their work with social prescribing, which the NHS defines as "helping patients to improve their health, wellbeing and social welfare by connecting them to community services which might be run by the council or a local charity."

Ms Vidler said: "Where people who are isolated and possibly getting depressed,

a medical professional will prescribe activity in the community as part of treatment for mental health.

"They'll get a bit of friendship and sociability and do something in the fresh air."

They work with the Kingston Brain Injury Group and Mr Hermitage said: "it's very good to bring confidence into people."

Ms Vidler said: "They can hear their own program back, which is a wonderful asset for them."



Rick Stickney fears the climate is going down the pan



Fantastic Mr Fudge, a Shetland pony that lives at Wimbledon Village stables, is only 33 inches tall but makes up for his size with personality

Murray gets served in Wimbledon

By Yasemin Craggs-Mersinoglu

Andy Murray was spotted on crutches in Wimbledon in his first public sighting since undergoing hip surgery.

The tennis star enjoyed dinner with friends at Patara restaurant on Wimbledon high street on February 15.

Sutin Sriyod, 50, the restaurant manager, said: "He could not walk properly. He used his stick and moved quite slowly."

Murray ordered chicken satay, Pad Thai chicken and no alcohol.

Mr Sriyod said: "He said he loves Thai food and that it is his favourite. He was really friendly. We are hoping he will come back."

The restaurant is less than a mile from Centre Court, where he has won Wimbledon twice. He had hip surgery on January 28.

Speed limit cut 'will save lives'

By Edward Day

A speed limit of 20mph has been imposed on busy roads in Merton after three fatal crashes this year.

A study for Merton Council found that there are about 6 per cent fewer accidents on roads with lower speed limits. At least, 599 people were injured in traffic accidents in Merton in 2017, according to 20's Plenty for Us, which has been campaigning for lower speed limits.

Last year 20mph speed limits were imposed on some central London roads. Pedestrians hit by a vehicle driven at 20mph are five times less likely to be killed than if they are hit at 30mph, according to office of Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London.

Three people have been killed on the roads in Merton this year, according to the Metropolitan Police. Rashid Abdullah Alhadid, 18, from Croydon, was killed in January. The others have not been named.

The speed limits on the High Street in Colliers Wood, Priory Road, Christchurch Road, Merantun Way, Morden Road, Morden Hall Road, the Morden Hall roundabout and St Helier Avenue were reduced to 20mph from 30mph on February 28.

Samantha Stimpson, of 20's Plenty, said that she hoped the council would introduce the lower speed limit in the rest of the borough. "We hope that they make the west of the borough with all of its schools, homes, high streets and green spaces safer for everyone who is walking and cycling."

Used syringes dumped on residential street

By Elena Morresi

Used syringes littering a busy street in Morden were cleared by a resident when the council failed to act.

Mark Gale, 41, found more than half a dozen used green-capped clinical needles on St Helier Avenue on February 9.

The rubbish was only cleared by Veolia employees two weeks later. Mr Gale said that nappies from the pile were still littering the street this week.

"I reported it as clinical waste, but got no interest from the official complaint.

Nobody from the cabinet or the councillors answered and after four days I stepped in," he said.

Mr Gale, who lives in Ravensbury and films and publishes council meetings on YouTube, acted after becoming frustrated with the lack of official response.

Mr Gale, a father of two, said that the delayed clean-up was negligent and that he couldn't let the mess continue.

Veolia signed a contract with the council to clear waste in Merton in April 2017 and has since been affected by controversy.

After residents complained at a council meeting on

February 25, the council pledged to employ three street inspectors to join the three neighbourhood officers employed by the council to check the streets in Merton.

In another meeting the council promised to "hold Veolia to account".

Veolia's policy is to respond within 48 hours of receiving word from the council, but Mr Gale said that the rubbish was only partially cleared last Thursday, two weeks after his first report.

He said that he thought the council could do more to inform residents on how to properly dispose of their waste. "They want to push

everyone over to recycling which is a big shock to families.



Needles found in a fly-tip

"This has led to new fly-tips as residents are dumping

their rubbish out of frustration," he said.

Veolia introduced new wheelie bins in October and has since reduced collection from weekly to fortnightly. Veolia said: "Since we implemented the new service in October, we are already bringing environmental and financial benefits to Merton.

"It is premature to determine the success of Merton's services at this time. We continue to work with Merton council to ensure that any issues are resolved and services operate as they should."

The council declined to comment on the matter.

Community hall closed 'to make way for flats'

By Edward Day

A community centre in Merton is being closed amid health and safety concerns.

Taylor Road day centre hosts events for older members of the Asian and Caribbean community, including many vulnerable people. The Positive Network, a community project, which runs clubs every day at the centre, was sent an eviction notice in September 2018.

Grace Salmon, 59, the centre's coordinator,

discovered plans to build a block of flats where the centre stands.

When Merton council cut the project's grant in March 2014, it became "the only community centre paying commercial rents," said Paul Hayward, its treasurer, who lives in Merton.

"We've done everything to keep the building safe," Mr Hayward said. They carried out yearly annual fire and environmental checks, which they had told the council, he said.

More than 100 vulnerable people from minority

communities use the centre for religious practice and dominoes club.

"They will lose the friendship circle which will be detrimental to their well being," Mrs Salmon said.

Francis Heath's mother, Rita, has attended events at the centre for the past seven years attests to how important it is for her mother's wellbeing.

"It is the only time when she can leave the house and meet up with other elders and talk, eat, exercise and pray," Mrs Heath, 47, said.

"There is a wealth of heritage in this place and it

breaks my heart to think that the council want to close it down to build flats."

Siobhain McDonagh, the MP for Mitcham and Morden, tried to bring compromise between the centre and the council at a meeting on Wednesday. Ms McDonagh insisted that "the council no longer wants the Positive Network land to build flats".

This was challenged by a leader of the Asian community lunch club, Musa Rrazvi, who stated that there were freely available documents that clearly set out development plans for

Taylor Road as part of Merton Council's 2020 plan.

Speaking after the meeting she said: "What I am trying to do is for the people who run and are involved in the centre to know understand what the council's position is and to try and understand from the Council what they see the future of the centre as."

A petition to save the Positive Network started by Mr Hayward has had 168 signatures online and more than 1,000 in paper copy.

Merton council did not respond to a request for comment.