



The Bulletin

April 2021



Ageism – the invisible prejudice in plain sight

April Webinar for members **Monday 26 April at 7.30pm**

About the speaker:

Janis Humberstone has long been interested in the way in which the Equalities legislation has evolved since the 1970s with its lacunas, illogicalities and unintended consequences. Ageism has long been the poor relation as far as the law is concerned and in her talk, Janis will explore the reasons why, and the measurable harms caused to those affected.

As the name suggests, ageism is bias, or different treatment based solely on age and no other justifiable criteria. The reason for shining a spotlight on it is that those affected are not represented by noisy groups prepared to take to the streets to protest about it. MPs, whatever their political views, are not doing their

job either, and holding the feet of successive governments to the fire for their failure to ensure that the law is enforced, and not just there for window dressing. Given the societal sensitivities surrounding so many other areas of inequality, one can only wonder why this should be.

Please email secretary@putney.society.org.uk to obtain joining details and submit any questions that you may have. You can also submit questions during the course of the webinar.



AGM report

At the meeting on 22 March the following were elected

President: **Angela Holman**

Vice Presidents: **John Horrocks, Derek Purcell, David Radcliffe, Hugh Thompson**

Chair: **Robert Arguile**

Treasurer: **Andrew Nichol**

Secretary: **Carolyn MacMillan**

Auditor: **Richard Chadwick**

Executive: **Jonathan Callaway, Richard Carter, Judith Chegwiddden, Victoria Diamond, Mike Fawcett, Charles Gillbe, Val Jones, Stephen Luxford and Mark Poulter**

In the second half of the meeting Sarah Chapman from the Wandsworth Food

Bank outlined the way in which it had responded to increased demand during the pandemic. Switching rapidly from five bases across the borough to home deliveries, it has delivered 10,700 emergency food parcels since April 2020 - to more than 2,300 households. The Food Bank is part of the Trussell Trust network and – as well as providing emergency food & support to people facing severe hardship across the Borough – it also offers expert advice to people coming to terms with the benefit system. Once the collection centres open up again, they will be establishing a new base in Roehampton – when they will be seeking local volunteers.



Elections for the Mayor and London Assembly 6 May 2021

The Putney Society has joined with the Wandsworth, Battersea & Wimbledon Societies to organise an on-line Hustings with the London Assembly candidates for the Merton and Wandsworth constituency. The Hustings will be held on **Tuesday 20 April at 7.30pm** using Zoom.

At the time of writing the declared candidates are **Louise Calland** (Conservative), **Leonie Cooper** (Labour), **Pippa Maslin** (Green) and **Sue Wixley** (LibDem). Please register using Eventbrite to join the Hustings – search using **“Merton & Wandsworth Hustings”** to find the event.

I have already mentioned in recent reports that despite other parts of government being kept busy with Covid or Brexit, the DHCLG under Minister Robert Jenrick are hell bent on finding new ways to stop local communities and the council from preventing ever more housing developments. 2020 saw no less than six changes to the rules for Permitted Development. Until 2015 they came about once every six years.

This month we saw Putney's first application for Prior Approval of two extra storeys on a post WWII block of flats as now allowed by one of the 2020 changes. We also saw planning consent being granted for windows (which the original application had forgotten) on three tiny bedsit flats carved out of a shop under the allowance for conversion of 'redundant' commercial space. Fortunately one of the amendments imposed minimum sizes for such flats, but too late in this case.

But Wandsworth's planners are fighting back. Since the New Year we have seen two schemes refused on the basis, inter alia, that fences to divide the back garden between the new homes would be out of character within the Conservation Area. Ingenious, if poor logic, when these gardens are already fenced. We were pleased to see too a refusal for front garden parking also as out of character and another

recommended for refusal.

The concern is that this is leading to a two tier system. Whilst the new PD rights will mean two extra storeys in some parts of SW15 becoming commonplace, but with no requirement to improve the building below, in other areas almost all change other than ground floor rear extensions will be stopped. Many members might welcome this, but when we are all being urged, rightly, to look at making our homes more energy efficient then "no change" means no solar panels (two refusals spotted in March), no external insulation and no heat pumps to replace gas boilers as these get phased out. We would be interested to hear where members stand on this.

On a wider scale, Sadiq Khan's London Plan was finally adopted four and a half years after his election. Wandsworth's draft new Local Plan which has exercised the Society for the early part of the year and which we first met the council to talk about in 2019, won't finally be adopted until 2023. And it will be based of course on pre-Covid population numbers and employment patterns. No wonder last year's Planning White Paper wants to cut the time to develop local plans down to 30 months, but expects local communities to have more input. **Watch this space.**

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

The Land Registry recently reported that the average house price in Putney and Roehampton has now reached £1million. Combined with the dire effects of the current economic crisis, this is a dreadful statistic. But by an exceptional stroke of good fortune there happens to be a single answer to both of these problems: a really large-scale programme of house building. Societies don't often have the luxury of being able to tackle two major problems for the price of one, and we must grasp this opportunity.

What can be done?

Concerning house prices: as I wrote in your November issue, the reason for average house prices in London having reached an excruciating 13 times average annual income (compared to the traditional and affordable 4 times of earlier years) is that we haven't built nearly enough dwellings to meet demand for more than 40 years. It is officially agreed that the country will have to start building around 300,000 new dwellings a year instead of the recent 180,000. Whether these are council or privately built, and whether they are new schemes or the implementation of already-granted but unbuilt planning consents (*Andrew Catto in your November issue*), is quite beside the point. What matters is that the numbers be achieved.

As regards the current economic downturn: I gather from economists that large-scale house-building is convincingly the best way for a nation in recession to achieve a sharp economic recovery, followed by steady, sustainable GDP expansion – exactly what Britain most desperately needs.

What the above means locally seems clear:

- Wandsworth Council should launch the largest house-building programme for half a century, even if (as seems likely) that is well in excess of its present ambitious plans.
- As an amenity society, the Putney society should wholeheartedly support, and involve itself in, such a programme. The term amenity means 'making life more pleasant and comfortable', and that involves building plentiful affordable housing, as well as creating environments local people will find beautiful. Here is a large, important and exciting role, which the Society should welcome.

The above may sound way over the top, but we find ourselves in the worst social and economic crisis since the Second World War, and have a duty to rise to that challenge.

Maritz Vandenberg
72 Minstead Gardens, SW15 4EW

Mike Fawcett writes elsewhere about air quality, but on the same topic, a number of members may have noticed the eye-catching air pollution poster underneath the railway bridge next to East Putney Underground station. It was unveiled earlier in March by the campaign group Mums with Lungs. It seeks to raise awareness of local air pollution with the slogan in large print, *“Putney, you’re breathing dirtier air than most of London”*. It features two large white ‘lungs’ which will slowly turn grey with air pollution. What is rather sobering is what while we know from our own air quality monitoring exercises that although the Upper Richmond Road breaches EU standards it is still not as bad as the air in the High Street.

Hopefully, there might be a little clarity soon on Hammersmith Bridge. News is expected shortly on the condition of the pedestals to help inform how significant the flaws in the bridge and also a decision on the ferry company to operate a passenger service. The price will be £1.55 one way to cross the river, however the question remains open as to which piers it will operate between. As an alternative to full restoration, architects Fosters & Partners have designed a ‘double-decker’ structure, with an upper level carrying cars and buses, while pedestrians and cyclists would use the lower level. It would be cheaper than the restoration work currently proposed but still cost an estimated £100 million. Unfortunately there was no funding announcement in the Budget and without central Government financial support no substantial progress is likely to happen.

Like many others, the Society is frustrated that the lack of action continues and noted that a

comprehensive recent history of the travails of Hammersmith and Fulham Council was provided by Stephen Cowan, leader of H&F on 26th February. The full text can be found at <https://mobile.twitter.com/hsmithbridgesos/status/1365282727763865600/photo/4>

Here are a few salient points from that letter:

- H&F and Richmond Councils wrote to the Prime Minister on 24 August 2020 asking for help, having applied for and been refused government funding for the £141m repair bill in December 2019, February 2020 and June 2020. The PM asked the Secretary of State for Transport to act on the basis of this letter, saying that he wanted the bridge re-opened for at least pedestrian and cycle use ASAP.
- A government taskforce was established, the remit of which apparently did not include possible financing. There followed a period obfuscation and briefing against H&F Council alleging incorrectly that H&F had not shown any willingness to pay towards the bridge’s repair.
- On November 25 at a Zoom meeting with the DfT, including the Secretary of State, H&F was told that it would be required to make a 50% contribution to the bridge repair; this would amount to about £64m and *“cause a £800 increase in Council Tax payments”*.
- For comparison, the amount spent by all London Boroughs on all road and river bridges since 2010 amounts to about £100m.

FUTURE PANEL MEETINGS

For the moment all panel meetings are held on Zoom. We will let you know as soon as the guidance allows us to meet in person. If you are new to panel meetings, please contact the panel convenor by email if you want to take part in the Zoom meeting and they will send out an invitation.

COMMUNITY

8 April, 13 May
by Zoom (18.30)

Co-convenors:
Vicky Diamond & Val Jones

vickysw15@aol.co.uk,
jones.val@gmail.com
T: 07746 022654 (Vicky)
T: 07780 674114 (Val)

TRANSPORT

13 April, 11 May
by Zoom (19.30)

Convenor:
Stephen Luxford

Stephen.luxford46@gmail.com

BUILDINGS

7 April, 5 May
by Zoom (18.00)

Convenor:
Andrew Catto

ac@andrewcatto.co.uk
T: 07831 761327

OPEN SPACES

1 April, 6 May
by Zoom (18.00)

Convenor:
Judith Chegwiddden

judith.chegwiddden@gmail.com
T: 020 8788 4489

Chelverton Road Synagogue

A recent enquiry from a Society member prompted me to ask around about the former synagogue over the building that used to be the Royal China restaurant opposite the bus garage. This summarises what I learnt from Dorian Gerhold, Putney's leading local historian, and Andrew Catto, our Buildings Panel Convenor.

The building, Nos 3 and 5 Chelverton Road, was built before 1938 when it was known as "Chelverton Hall". This had previously been a Christian Science Society & Reading Room, first recorded as such in 1914, and had been built for them.

The synagogue itself was not established until 1956 according to the Jewish Communities and Records website (www.jewishgen.org) and referred to itself as the Putney & Wimbledon Affiliated Synagogue (*the affiliation was to the United Synagogues of London*). The congregation was Ashkenazi Orthodox and had 76 seat-holders, or registered members, in 1970.

It was closed after 1970 though a more precise date has not been determined – it could have been anywhere from 1970 to 1985. It looks like they moved to a new location in Toland Square (*off Roehampton Lane*) by 1993 at the latest. There they called themselves the New Wimbledon & Putney District Synagogue but that site too closed prior to 2005. It is unclear whether that congregation merged with another one. The only active synagogue in our area now is the Wimbledon Synagogue, which follows the Reform tradition.



As for the current building, it has an uncertain future as the Royal China restaurant has been closed for many years and the synagogue space used as a storeroom. The building is now in very poor condition with broken windows at the back. In May 2014 planning permission was granted for demolition and rebuilding as six flats, but this has since lapsed. Consent was refused in 1985 for the synagogue space to be turned into a design studio so it must no longer have been active then.

Andrew describes the building as an interwar building of English bond brickwork and steel windows, thus dating it from the 1920s or 1930s. The address Nos 3 and 5 and the plot width suggest it may have replaced two houses and a vestige of party wall at the front says these didn't match Nos 7 upwards. He suggests they may originally have had shop fronts like Nos 2 & 4 opposite. So a few uncertainties remain. Maybe one of our members attended the synagogue or has other memories of the building?

Many thanks to Jonathan Callaway for this contribution

Fifty Years of Wandsworth Historian

Do you remember Wandsworth in 1971?

If so the lead article in this issue of the Wandsworth Historian will provide a fascinating stroll down memory lane. Phil Evison reminds us that two years later in 1973, Diana Rigg and Vincent Price were filming the horror movie "*Theatre of Blood*" in and around the old Hippodrome in Felsham Road. Other items include the launch of the Young's Brewery archive now deposited with the Wandsworth Heritage Service.

The Wandsworth Historian

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On-line payment preferred, but cheques payable to the '**Wandsworth Historical Society**' also accepted.

Open Spaces Panel

Convenor: Judith Chegwidden
28 Howards Lane, SW15 6NQ
judith.chegwidden@gmail.com 020 8788 4489

How do we balance the need to remain safe in our urban environment with the need to halt the decline in animal populations? In the last month this has been highlighted as petitions are raised to light the Riverside Walk in Wandsworth Park and a planning application is received to have permanent lighting on walkways and the car park following the redevelopment of the Kersfield Estate – part of which was previously a “dark area”. The Bat Conservation Trust warns that “Bats are nocturnal animals that have adapted to a life in darkness, partly to avoid predation during daylight hours from birds of prey species, such as sparrow hawks. Therefore the artificial lighting of bat roosts, access points and foraging pathways can be extremely disturbing to bats and should be avoided.” Slower flying and rarer species, such as the horseshoe bat, are particularly adversely affected by lighting of roost areas.

The Riverside Walk in Wandsworth Park is one of the few dark sky areas along the Thames in inner

London and is home to several species of bat, including horseshoe bats – lighting the Riverside Walk at night has been ruled out, particularly as alternative pedestrian routes are available. But what about landscaped areas surrounding blocks of flats, where residents need to feel safe? Perhaps the solution here is to use motion-activated lighting rather than “always-on” lighting?

Working with the Transport Panel, we wrote to the Council suggesting venues for planters on and adjacent to Putney High Street and we were pleased to get a positive response. It is likely that a planter will be installed near the Library in Disraeli Road and another on the very wide pavement outside 39-41 Putney High St. We hope that consideration will also be given to a planter on the pavement near Jubilee House. Some plants, such as *Cotoneaster franchetii*, are particularly effective at absorbing airborne pollutants so these planters will make a contribution to improving air quality in Putney High Street.

Community Panel

Co-convenors: Victoria Diamond 6 Norroy Road, SW15 1PF
Val Jones Garden Flat, 41 Norroy Road, SW15 1PQ
Vickysw15@aol.com & jones.val@gmail.com 07746 022654

As we go to print, the hope is that we shall soon all be released from the rigours of our third Lockdown, which for many has been particularly difficult during the cold, short days of winter. And although the weather is still reminding us that winter has not released its grip, there is much to look forward to in the days ahead. For those of us with gardens, this is a time of preparation and renewal – much cleaning and tidying to do, ahead of the pleasures of choosing and planting new borders and pots. For those without gardens, our local parks, heaths and commons are bright with blossom, daffodils and crocuses – and the welcome signs of trees coming into leaf. Let’s all enjoy Spring, and absorb its benefits to our health and wellbeing.

Regenerate, a charity based in SW15 is creating opportunities for young people to thrive. This spring/summer they are launching another two new ‘Feel Good’ coffee carts with the aim of employing 30 young people across four mobile coffee carts. Last week their story was highlighted on BBC London news featuring James, who is a young person on the Alton estate who came across Regenerate through

their Community Box project. Every week James picks up a box of essential food supplies for his family and he heard about the Feel Good Coffee Carts and applied for a job. James is thriving in his first job and is one of eleven young people Regenerate are employing in this scheme. Many thanks to Andy Smith for his hard work in this field.

All residents should have received a paper copy of the council's Brightside magazine in the last couple of weeks. As many people do not have access to the internet, this paper version is a useful source of information. We hope you received your copy, but if not, please let us, or the council know. The distribution is monitored and the council wants to know if people do not receive it.

A reminder that you can no longer just go to The Tip/Smuggler’s Way when you want to. You need to book a slot. Either go to WRWA’s (Western Riverside Waste Authority) website <https://wrwa.gov.uk/waste-authority/> or, if you do not have a computer, ring 0208 871 8558.

Local air pollution could kill as many as COVID-19

Air pollution in Putney and Wandsworth could kill as many people over the next few years as COVID-19 has done to date, a new report* reveals.

The report, by Imperial College researchers, estimates that air pollution was responsible in 2019 for between 115 and 129 deaths in Wandsworth Borough. If nothing is done to improve air quality, this death toll could in four years exceed the Wandsworth deaths, 484 as at 12/3/21, caused by COVID. One of the worst air pollution blackspots in the Borough (and in the whole of London) is Putney High Street, where progress on air quality has stalled in the last few years.

Thankfully, deaths from COVID-19 are now falling fast. Sadly, this is not the case for deaths from air pollution, which have remained stubbornly high for several years. This is not just a Wandsworth problem; Public Health England says that air pollution is the biggest environmental threat to health in the UK, with between 28,000 and 36,000 deaths a year attributed to long-term exposure. Older people are more at risk. The chief killers are small particulates (PM2.5) and nitrous oxide (NO₂) – largely from road vehicles, especially diesels.

PM2.5 levels exceed the limit recommended by the World Health Organisation throughout Putney, and indeed throughout London. On NO₂ Dr Richard Carter, the convenor of the Putney Society's air pollution sub-group, reports that the data from the official Putney High Street kerbside monitoring station showed an annual average for 2013-2016 of 123.75mcg/m³, over three times the UK legal limit of 40mcg/m³. Following the introduction of cleaner hybrid buses in late

2016/early 2017, NO₂ levels have fallen. However, the average for 2017-2019 was still 70.7mcg/m³ - 77% above the legal limit.

This legal limit has been in force since 2010, but progress has been very slow, mainly because many car models have been found to emit much greater quantities of pollutants in real driving conditions than had been expected from EU mandated laboratory tests.

In 2020, the NO₂ levels in Putney High Street did briefly dip just below the legal limit, during the first lockdown in April and May, but then quickly rebounded to levels similar to 2018 and 2019. They have fallen again following the December lockdown, but remain above the legal limit.

As the lockdown restrictions are eased, and something like normal service is resumed, the traffic crossing Putney Bridge is likely to increase again, leading to a further worsening of local congestion and air pollution. And it looks like it could be some years before Hammersmith Bridge can be re-opened to cars and buses.



* <https://www.london.gov.uk/WHAT-WE-DO/environment/environment-publications/health-burden-air-pollution-london>

PUTNEY SOCIETY CONTACTS

See website for full details:
www.putneysociety.org.uk

Chair: Robert Arguile
18 Burstock Road, SW15 2PW
020 8788 4554 chair@putneysociety.org.uk
Secretary: Carolyn McMillan
38 Disraeli Road, SW15 2DS 020 8789 6692
secretary@putneysociety.org.uk
Website Editor: Robert Arguile
18 Burstock Road, SW15 2PW
webeditor@putneysociety.org.uk

Bulletin Editor: Judith Chegwidde
Judith Chegwidde, 28 Howards Lane, SW15
6NQ020 8788 4489 judith.chegwidde@gmail.com
Membership: Chris Orriss
020 8785 7115 membership@putneysociety.org.uk
22 Pentlow Street, London SW15 1LX
Treasurer: Andrew Nichol
07894 982 020 nicol.andrewjd@gmail.com