Christmas campaign to combat loneliness ‘epidemic’

BY JACK DIXON
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RENEWED efforts are being made to offer a hand of friendship to the thousands of elderly people in Hammersmith and Fulham who will spend Christmas alone this year.

Age UK estimates that there are currently around 4,000 people in the borough who are over the age of 75 and living on their own.

Many of these people are set to celebrate Christmas alone and the charity says one in four will be dreading the festive period without friends and family.

Age UK has launched a nationwide campaign to raise awareness about the loneliness ‘epidemic’, which is considered to be a growing problem even in London.

And extra efforts are also being made locally in a bid to make sure the older generation do not miss out on the festive celebrations.

A three-course community meal was laid on at the Latymer Upper School last week, and up to 300 people will be fed and watered at the Town Hall in Hammersmith on Christmas Day itself.

More than 80 volunteers helped out at the event last year, with members of the community and local businesses making donations of food, gifts and other materials to make the festive bash possible.

In the run-up to Christmas, a new council-funded befriending service is also being launched at Bishop Creighton
Heathrow expansion idea crash-lands

The Mayor of London believes the Government’s decision to delay a verdict on where to build new aviation capacity in the south east is a clear indication that they are beginning to realise that the obstacles in the path of expanding Heathrow are insurmountable, and that a third runway can never be built there.

This week he urged the Government to end decades of debate by definitively ruling out expansion at Heathrow and giving proper consideration to building a bigger and better airport on one of several potential sites to the east of the capital. The evidence presented to the Government by the Airports Commission already makes it clear that looking east of London would offer the greatest economic potential and is the only feasible way of giving the country the aviation capacity it needs for the long term future.

Mr Johnson said: “Today is the day that the Heathrow campaign was officially grounded. They have put a super-human effort into bouncing the Government into a quick decision in their favour but the Prime Minister and his colleagues have refused to allow themselves to be hustled. The wheels are falling off the Heathrow façade and I think that, now the Government has hit the pause button, they will begin to understand with ever greater clarity that, due to the environmental impacts, the legal obstacles and the cost to the public purse, this bird will never fly. “But delay is not the answer. While Britain’s European rivals continue to forge ahead with the construction of multi-runway mega-airports, I have long argued that the most dynamic and forward-looking approach would be to allow the sites at east of London where a four-runway hub airport could be built.

To get to that position we need the Government definitively to rule out Heathrow expansion. I believe that this latest announcement makes that much more likely.”

A new four-runway airport to the east of London

- Connect the UK to more than 300 international destinations – far more than any alternative.
- Serve 176 long haul destinations, more than an expanded Heathrow and an expanded Gatwick combined.
- Provide direct connections to new and emerging markets and important economic centres like Belo Horizonte in Brazil, Calcutta in India and Chongqing in China.
- Serve 16 UK cities, many more than an expanded Heathrow or Gatwick could hope to serve. Support 25 per cent more jobs nationally than a three-runway Heathrow and offers the greatest economic potential for the United Kingdom.
- Expose less than five per cent of the people exposed to significant aircraft noise by Heathrow today – at best, the numbers exposed would be virtually zero.
- A new hub would not exceed EU air quality limits or risk delaying UK compliance.

Since his election in 2008 the mayor has made clear that his mayoralty would take a creative and open-minded approach to the challenges facing the capital. He consistently argued that the reason expansion plans for Heathrow or Gatwick have been debated for several decades is that neither is the answer to the problem. A feasibility study into the possibility of building an airport in the Thames Estuary and two major reports on the need for new hub airport capacity published during his first term as mayor put the possibility of expansion away from Heathrow or Gatwick firmly on the public agenda. When the Government announced the establishment of the Airports Commission in 2012 the mayor made very clear his determination to engage with every aspect of the research carried out by the Commission.

The mayor’s team submitted hundreds of pages of independent research to the Commission, which clearly showed the limitations at Heathrow and Gatwick compared to the incredible economic potential of expansion to the east of London. When the commission rejected any possibility of building at Stansted or in the Thames Estuary (despite acknowledging that the benefits associated with building to the east were potentially greater than any of the other options they considered) the mayor predicted that proposals to expand Heathrow would run into exactly the same hurdles they had met in the past, and that the recommendations made by the Airports Commission would swiftly be made “irrelevant” – as now appears to be becoming the case.

It is clear expansion at Heathrow airport is impossible. A three-runway Heathrow would effectively be full shortly after opening, would expose one million people to unacceptable levels of aircraft noise and risk major EU fines for air pollution. It would simply be an environmental catastrophe and would never pass the legal, political or financial hurdles in its path.

The options for a four-runway hub airport to the east of London at Stansted or in the Thames estuary were discarded prematurely and the Government should give proper consideration to the only feasible plan, which is to build a new runway capacity to the east of London where there is the space to build an airport of the size Britain needs to compete with its European rivals.
Call to provide free parking for shoppers

BY JACK DIXON
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COUNCIL chiefs have been urged to scrap parking charges close to high street shops in a bid to boost trade for small businesses.

Mr Goldsmith, the MP for Richmond, has called for more London councils to introduce 30-minute free parking windows to promote local shops.

Following ‘Small Business Saturday’ earlier this month, the mayor hopeful said: “Charging local residents for parking when they visit their local shops sends the wrong message and discourages people from supporting local businesses, which are such a vital part of our community.”

Mr Goldsmith said he wanted to see the scheme rolled out to more high streets across the capital, making it “easier and cheaper for Londoners to visit their local shops”.

Drivers are entitled to free parking for half an hour in some pay and display zones in several London boroughs, including Ealing and Hounslow.

Schemes offering free parking for 20 minutes are also available in Harrow and Merton.

The 20p ‘stop and shop’ bays have been in operation in Hammersmith and Fulham for almost five years.

The scheme enables drivers to park at a cost of 20p per 30 minutes for a maximum of one hour. It currently operates in Askew Road, Blythe Road, Fulham Road, Wandsworth Bridge Road and the Coombe Place car park.

But the council says cutting out charges altogether would encourage shop workers to occupy the bays for long periods.

Councillor Wesley Harcourt, the council’s cabinet member for environment, transport and residents’ services, said: “We offer 20p ‘stop and shop’ bays on key high streets and are determined to do everything we can to protect and improve our high streets and town centres.”

Figures released by the RAC Foundation last week revealed that English councils pocketed a £700 million surplus from their parking operations in 2014/15. Hammersmith and Fulham council earned the fourth highest – from their parking operations in 2014/15. Hammersmith and Fulham council earned the fourth highest – £23.8 million – from its parking operations.

Steve Gooding, director of the RAC Foundation, said: “The financial sums involved in local authority parking are huge and the overall profits eye-watering. And once again the year-on-year direction of travel is upwards. It is unsurprising that London leads the way in making money. Its roads are most congested and the pressure on road space immense.”

Government guidelines state that “raising revenue should not be an objective of civil parking enforcement” for councils.

Feeling lonely in Hammersmith and Fulham? Age UK offers:

• Free home visit companionship or befriending services.
• Free tutor-led furniture recycling workshops in Hammersmith for older men to build social networks and enhance skills funded by the Big Lottery and Hammersmith United Charities
• ‘Spread the Warmth’ scheme, offering social events including coffee mornings, music recitals, cinema screenings and dog walking.
• A pilot scheme in 2016 offering over-65s interested in history and museums visits to lectures and exhibitions.
• Age UK Hammersmith and Fulham: 020 7386 9085.
The Dorsett does it again

A POPULAR Shepherd’s Bush hotel has celebrated double awards success after bagging two top accolades in a matter of days.

The Dorsett Hotel was named the number one hospitality business at the West London Business Awards, only a week after claiming the Best New Business prize at Hammersmith and Fulham council’s Brilliant Business Awards.

The Grade II listed building now boasts more than 300 bedrooms and suites, an executive lounge, two restaurants and a 24-hour fitness centre.

General manager Hilary Cross said: “It is a true honour to accept these awards on the hotel’s behalf. These accolades are a rewarding acknowledgement of the hotel team’s hard work since we opened in 2014 and we look forward to furthering the hotel’s success in 2016.”

Shoppers dive for cover as roof collapses

PEDESTRIANS miraculously escaped without serious injury after a shop roof in Shepherd’s Bush suddenly collapsed, sending debris tumbling down onto the street.

Dramatic CCTV footage of the incident was released last week, showing the moment that the property in Uxbridge Road crumbled in front of shocked passers-by.

Urban search and rescue teams from the London Fire Brigade were quickly on the scene last Saturday afternoon (December 5).

A man who had been walking past the building as the roof gave way was taken to hospital but sustained only minor injuries.

A 25-metre cordon was temporarily put in place and adjoining buildings were evacuated as a precaution while officers assessed the damage.

Station manager Colin Parker, who was at the scene, said: “USAR crews and specially trained dogs to complete a systematic search of the building and were able to confirm that fortunately no-one else was injured in the incident.”

Bricks, large pieces of masonry and other debris fell from the roof of the building as pedestrians dashed for cover.

The owners, who were away when the collapse happened, have been organising renovation works to convert the loft into three flats.

Hammersmith and Fulham council called in its emergency dangerous structures contractor to clear the debris and secure the building, after fire officers had made the scene safe.

Government agency the Health and Safety Executive is currently investigating the incident.

Housing vote

COUNCILLORS have backed the recommendations of a residents’ commission to transfer Hammersmith and Fulham’s entire social housing stock to a new, independent organisation. The council will now give residents a vote on whether or not to follow through with the plan.

The commission’s report, published last month, advised that a resident-led housing association would be able to secure funding to pay for repairs to council homes.

If approved, all 17,000 of the borough’s council homes will be transferred to the new organisation.

Orchard vision

VOLUNTEERS have planted a new community orchard for residents on the White City Estate in Shepherd’s Bush.

Members of the Hammersmith Community Gardens ‘Get Out There’ team planted the orchard in front of Mackay House on Friday (December 11).

The orchard, which has been backed by the lottery-funded ‘Big Local’ project, will include a crop of apple and pear trees.
Can Tube provide platform for advertisers and improve Underground’s bottom line?

BY GEOFF BAKER
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THE next train to arrive at platform two will be the Harrods Express on the Amazon line to Elephant & Marmite.

Cash-strapped Transport for London is to open up the Tube for advertising sponsorship in order to raise billions of pounds and prevent a hike in fares.

Trains will be “wrapped” in sponsors’ colours and logos as part of a new commercial development plan that aims to raise £3.4 billion over the next ten years.

Underground stations could also be re-named for special promotion periods and branded in the names of popular products.

The imaginative and ambitious plan has been confirmed by TfL, which is reeling in the wake of a £2.8 billion reduction in Government grant funding and other massive costs.

The radical plan, under which Tube trains would be repainted and branded like many taxis, has won the enthusiastic backing of the capital’s advertising industry as it would present vast opportunities for companies to promote themselves to the 1.3 billion passengers who use the Underground each year.

“What a gift to Adland, branded Tube Trains. I wish I was still working on Smarties—we could even have different coloured round cushions inside like the sweets,” said advertising consultant Billy Mawhinney, former executive creative director with J. Walter Thompson.

“It’s never a great experience at the best of times travelling underground, but what a great way of getting revenue and really brightening up the journey to and from work.

“I love the idea of getting the Colgate Toothpaste Tube first thing in the morning. Finally someone could really have some smellsvision and have mint-fresh smelling carriages.

“Like all great advertising opportunities it’s a truly wonderful blank canvas. I can’t wait to show it to my clients.”

A TfL spokeswoman said wrapping Tube trains in advertising logos and slogans was part of the plan that aims to avoid increases in fares by developing new ways of raising non-fare revenue.

“We have already trialled the scheme, which began when the Mexican Embassy wrapped a train during the Rugby World Cup,” she said.

Besides branded trains, entire Tube stations could also be renamed for promotions in return for sponsors’ cash—Baker Street station could become Quality Street station to advertise the Nestle chocolates.

The sweets giant has already started the advertising ball rolling. In April this year TfL sold the naming rights to Canada Water station, which was rebranded for 24 hours as Buxton Water to tie in with the London Marathon.

The station’s roundel signs featured the name of the Nestle-owned mineral water and there was branded artwork throughout the building and platforms.

However, the publicity stunt was not popular with Underground staff.

A spokesman for the RMT union, which represents Tube workers, said the sponsorship undermined the “public service ethos” of the city’s transport network.

“It’s part of the whole marketisation and corporatisation of the transport service when people are struggling to get access to Tube and DLR services because of pressures on them,” said the union spokesman, who said that the RMT would resist any attempts to rename stations permanently or to make staff wear uniforms bearing corporate brands.

“We think it’s the thin end of a very long wedge. You could have the whole Tube network with branded stations for private gain.”

Although TfL is facing clashes with the union over the ad plan, which could see the birth of Swiss Air Cottage, Kentucky Fried Park Corner and other massive changes, they are determined to press ahead with their commercial development plan, which has the potential to also raise money through rent rises for its 1,000 in-station retailers and exploiting its vast land portfolio.

“We are looking to raise £1.1 billion from property development,” said the TfL spokeswoman.

On New Year’s Eve, TfL will pocket £120,000 through a sponsorship deal with the travel search engine Kayak, which will enable Londoners to travel for free on the night.
Game on! World leaders back

By Geoff Baker
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WEST London’s amazing soccer-based Isis-buster Football For Unity has now grown into a team of 1,400 teenage players who’ll soon be playing in Downing Street, Vatican City and on the White House lawn as world leaders clamour to join their statesmen-studded supporters’ club.

The incredible Make Goals Not War movement – which blocks Islamist internet radicalisation and gang culture by turning at-risk youngsters onto football instead – now has Prime Minister David Cameron, President Obama and Pope Francis cheering on their pioneering squad.

Football For Unity has become London’s fastest-growing youth sensation – going from just 10 players in April to 1,400 now. Every week scores of new faces are arriving to join Tuff FC [The Unity of Faiths Football Club] at their training ground in Southall and now the chief of the Football Association and even England’s national team manager are signing up to the new unity spirit of the game too.

The astonishing speed of growth in the movement – which is being driven on social media as teenagers all over the capital enthusiastically pass the word on Football For Unity – has astonished its founders, Kensington-based Dr Shamender Talwar and Anna Prior.

“I have never known or heard of anything like it, everybody now wants to be part of this. The popularity of Football For Unity has touched a pulse and the reaction is amazing. It’s wonderful,” said Dr Talwar.

“It’s working because through football we are making kids of all different faiths feel unified and feel British. Multi-cultural Britain is the real winner here and the kids are feeling that. They are blown away at the worldwide interest in them.”

Even though many of them are too poor to afford trainers, let alone kit, teenagers are coming in droves to Tuff FC’s after-school practice sessions at the Swift Road Sports Centre in Southall every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday.

“We had 70 new kids turn up last week,” said Dr Talwar.

“Kids are coming from Wandsworth, Camden, Kensington, Tower Hamlets, Stockwell, Brixton, from all over the city – they are hearing about Football For Unity from their mates on social media and they all want to join in. We’ve got no money for kit and it’s expensive to hire the training pitches at £100 an hour, but I can’t turn them away.

“You can’t say no to a child at risk of radicalisation who is coming to us in hope but who can’t even afford a pair of trainers. We’re needing to hire 14 pitches now. I don’t know how we will fund it but we will find a way.”

But hopes are high that the money or sponsorship will now come as world leaders queue up to be part of the Football For Unity movement as it now goes global, scoring at every stage.

GOAL! Last week Dr Talwar and Ms Prior went to 10 Downing Street to meet the Prime Minister’s team. They are now arranging a five-a-side game in Downing Street and Dr Talwar asked if David Cameron would like to referee. The PM’s special advisers told them Mr Cameron won’t ref the match – because he wants to play in it instead.

GOAL! President Obama has invited Football For Unity players to visit him at the White House so that he can roll out the scheme across the USA. If an airline can give Dr Talwar’s team free flights, he will take 100 players and stage a game – with the President – on the White House lawn.

GOAL! Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster and head of the Catholic bishops of England and Wales, is taking Tuff FC players to meet Pope Francis at the Vatican to get his blessing for Football For Unity and to fix a game in St Peter’s Square.

GOAL! English manager Roy Hodgson is now supporting Football For Unity along with FA chairman Greg Dyke. Mr Dyke has asked for talks with Dr Talwar in order to get full FA accreditation for Tuff FC and to expand the project.

GOAL! Spanish soccer titans Atletico Madrid are sponsoring Football For Unity and now want to roll out the project to teenagers across Spain.

GOAL! This week Football For Unity is meeting with Sport England, who want to partner the scheme and extend it to local sides all over the country.

GOAL! The President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, has called Dr Talwar and Ms Prior to Brussels in order to get Football For Unity games played all across Europe.

GOAL! Soccer icon Diego Maradona has become president of Football For Unity for Latin America. He said, “I am very pleased to be part of this beautiful project, helping the children and creating opportunities for their future.”

GOAL! The Mayor of Molenbeek, the Belgian town re-revealed to be at the heart of the jihadist threat after the Paris terror attacks, has asked Tuff FC to play a game against the town’s team as an inspirational example of how football can steer teenagers away from radicalisation.

GOAL! Tuff FC won the Sports Initiative of the Year prize at the recent prestigious Pride Of Britain awards.

“Something that started small in West London is now growing into something very big worldwide,” said Dr Talwar.

“Football For Unity has now been established to promote unity amongst young people around the world through the beautiful game of football. It provides a platform for cultural exchange, promotes health and wellbeing, and nurtures aspiring young footballers.”
football’s campaign for unity

WHEN football legend Diego Maradona signed for Kensington-based Football For Unity in the autumn – by officially agreeing to be president of the charity in Latin America, Football For Unity, launched at the House of Commons in October, is part of the Unity of Faiths organisation, set up by Kensington social psychologist Dr Shamender Talwar and former Mayfair antiques dealer Anna Prior. It has rapidly won worldwide acclaim for its fresh approach to eliminating radicalism. The relationship between Maradona and Football For Unity (FFU) blossomed after he sent a video link message of support during the House of Commons event expressing his excitement at the prospect of working with children via FFU.

Back in October, founders and trustees of FFU with their legal team, Mr Sanesh Zaiwalla and Mr Lawrence Jacobson of Zaiwalla & Co. LLP, gathered to welcome Maradona and his legal team led by Matias Morla at London’s Intercontinental hotel during a press conference. And London Weekly News reporter Jack Dixon was there to see history being made.

Maradona told the London Weekly News: “I am very pleased to be part of this beautiful project with Football for Unity, helping the children and creating opportunities for their future.”

The legendary Argentinian footballer and World Cup winner has served as a manager and coach at a number of clubs as well as the national team of Argentina. Many experts, football critics, former players, current players and football fans regard him as the greatest football player of all time.

Marcus Faraji trustee co-founder of FFU and Mariano Menéndez President of Forbes LATM, said: “Football For Unity are extremely excited and pleased to have Maradona on board as he is a truly world class representative of football.”

The FFU projects will be set up worldwide, scaling up from successful existing initiatives in the UK and Spain, to provide structured games, training, facilities and health awareness education.

This will be targeted to groups of young people from diverse local communities who will benefit from improved integration through sport. Alongside this, sessions on nutrition, behaviour, conflict resolution, equality and conflict will engage youth and teach them to lead better lifestyles.

Dr Shamander Talwar and Anna Prior, co-founders of Football For Unity, said at the time: “We are so proud to say that the world’s greatest ever footballer has signed for us, a British charity helping and supporting many youths around Britain and worldwide through the beautiful game of Football.”

Among the high-profile figureheads to endorse the scheme in October was the Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn who was mobbed as he stepped onto Westminster’s Speaker’s Green.

Mr Corbyn said: “I think it’s a brilliant initiative and it’s nice that we’ve got it here in Parliament on this small area of green outside the Speaker’s House and we’ve got representatives from Athleticos Madrid talking to us about football coaching and football opportunities.”

Asked if the initiative could transform lives, Mr Corbyn added: “I’m absolutely sure of it because young people from all backgrounds need to be together as well as having their own identity and that’s really what modern Britain and modern London is about.”

At the launch, Virendra Sharma, MP for Southall, commented: “A lack of education and ignorance creates barriers. Many are burdened with prejudices against black, Asian or white people; against Muslims, Hindus, Jews or Christians; against the poor or the rich; the slow or the clever; the skinny or the obese; the disabled, the homeless, the jobless. Hatred of anyone who is different has no place in our new global community. Knowledge is key to tackling hatred and education is at the heart of Football for Unity.

“Our very special thanks go to the children who have made history through the launch by coming together in the House of Commons and showing unity. This represents a closer step to a better understanding of tolerance and peace.”

LONDON WIDE
Milestone for new police HQ

The new headquarters of the Metropolitan Police was officially ‘topped out’ earlier this month by the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, and the Mayor of London for Policing and Crime, Stephen Greenhalgh.

In the heart of Westminster and close to the Met’s founding location, the Curtis Green building is undergoing a refurbishment and security upgrade and will become the new HQ at the end of next year.

The move is part of the Mayor of London’s drive to put bobbies first by selling off under-utilised police buildings and redirecting funds into frontline police services.

As part of the biggest programme of transformation in the Met’s history, the sale of the outdated New Scotland Yard, now to be known as 10 Broadway, for £370m will help modernise and streamline London’s police service, saving money, keeping officer numbers high and equipping them with the latest technology to enable them to be more effective, more mobile and more accountable. The relocation to the slimmed down new premises on the Victoria Embankment will save an additional £60m a year in running costs.

Since 2012, the mayor’s programme has helped to cut costs across the Met by £91m. The Curtis Green building has been empty since late 2011.
UNDER THE WESTWAY

Trust will tackle its diversity shortfalls

Westway Trust Chief Executive Angela McConville discusses the importance of diversity to the success of any organisation and explains how the Trust will address its own diversity shortfalls.

Over the last few weeks Westway Trust has been putting in place measures that will begin to address the urgent gaps in diversity on our board. The board is not adequately representative of the local community and so far we’ve not moved quickly enough to fix that.

While ethnic diversity is the most urgent and obvious area we need to address, we are also working to ensure that we are representative in terms of age, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, socio-economics and every other aspect of the local community as well.

To discharge our stewardship responsibilities for the estate and to facilitate the best use of the spaces for a community as diverse as North Kensington, now and in the future, we need a broad mix of skills and experience.

A lack of diversity and inclusion is not exclusive to Westway Trust. It is a problem in many charities, and most big companies, but those who have addressed it have felt the benefits. Not only are they better able to represent their community, to call on a wider pool of talent and to get a broader range of ideas but it demonstrably improves their performance.

Companies who have women on their boards perform better than those who don’t; a diverse workforce reduces staff turnover meaning the best employees don’t move elsewhere; and companies with high levels of diversity say they are more innovative and creative.

Currently at Westway Trust we have two vacancies on our Board. This presents us with a terrific opportunity to make quick progress in improving the diversity of our trustees. Our board is made up of three trustees elected by our 50-strong membership of local organisations; three trustees are nominated by the local council, giving us a link to local democracy; and up to six trustees are openly recruited based on their skills, expertise and community insight.

One of our current vacancies will be nominated and elected by our Members and we have told them that we would particularly welcome the nomination of black and minority ethnic candidates. The other place is an open, independent one, and after listening to what people have said to us at recent meetings and to the strong feelings among particular groups we have decided to limit the candidates in this round of recruitment to those nominated by our Member organisations and the Westway 23 group.

A diverse trustee board won’t mean we can put ourselves on the back and stop listening. It’s also not enough to assume that because we’re open to partnership with every part of the community that we’ve done enough to reach everyone who would like to get involved. We are currently at the early stages of a comprehensive review of our equality and diversity policies, and will be getting expert external benchmarking and creating an action plan that covers not only staff recruitment but every aspect of our work and communications.

I know every one of the trustees that sits on Westway Trust’s board cares deeply about the value of the space to the community and gives their time for free to make sure it is managed properly but good intentions are not good enough and to work in partnership with the community we need to be representative of it.

It will take time to make the changes that need to be made and along the way there will be mistakes but it is something we are committed to and it will mean the space under the Westway better serves those around it.

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SHOP LOCAL FOR A CHANCE TO WIN FABULOUS PRIZES!

Collect stickers when you spend money at the 12 market stalls and 12 local shops listed here.

Entries submitted by 4pm on Friday 4 December will be eligible for an extra chance to win one of five £20 shopping vouchers on Small Business Saturday UK 5 December 2015 at a prize draw at 11am in Lavstock Square W11.

All entries submitted by 5pm 24 December will be eligible to win one of five main prize packages (worth at least £100 each) donated by the participating businesses.

Main prize winners will be notified by email on 9 January 2015.

Visit these market stalls and local shops to collect stickers:

- The Chinese Tea Company
  281 Portobello Road, unit 14
- Danyaq
  281 Portobello Road, unit 23
- Notiti Hill Salon
  281 Portobello Road, unit 19
- Sapelle
  281 Portobello Road, unit 7
- Unora
  281 Portobello Road, unit 23
- Van der Brit
  Vintage fashion stall (Friday & Saturday)
- Jaman Jaman
  Paella stall
- The Spice Shop
  1 Blenheim Crescent W11 1ZE
- Cameras London
  Antiques stall (most days)

Use the map above to find your favourite participating shops and traders. The colour of each business corresponds to the colour on the map. Don’t forget to get a sticker for every £5 you spend (limited to 2 stickers per business).

For full details please see www.rbkc.gov.uk

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FOLLOWING last week’s report on the campaign to install lifts and steps-free services in all Tube stations in Kensington and Chelsea, organisers say they have been inundated with calls from residents wanting to sign the Change.Org petition that is now supported by more than 1,700 – but many cannot find the link to it. We are happy to provide the link – which is https://www.change.org/p/royal-borough-of-kensington-and-chelsea-installs-lifts-in-kensington-amp-chelsea-tube-stations
**Time running out to have a say on ambitious Crossrail 2 plans**

**LWN REPORTER**
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TRANSPORT chiefs are encouraging the public to have their say on controversial proposals for Crossrail 2 as the consultation on the new railway for London and the South East enters its final month.

Launched by Transport for London and Network Rail in October, the public consultation on the proposed new railway closes on Friday, January 8. It has already attracted thousands of responses, with many people attending the public consultation local drop-in events along the route from Surrey to Hertfordshire, with over 70 events organised.

The consultation provides the latest plans reflecting comments from earlier consultations. It includes proposals for:

- **Station locations, entrances and exits** for the tunnelled section of the route
- **Locations of ventilation shafts** for the tunnelled section with construction sites required to build the scheme; and
- **Service patterns and changes to existing National Rail services.**

Crossrail 2 will connect National Rail networks in Surrey and Hertfordshire with an underground tunnelled section crossing beneath central London between Wimbledon and Tottenham Hale and New Southgate.

Its supporters say it will enable 270,000 more people to enter central London every morning at peak time, helping relieve the increasing pressure on London’s transport network. The railway is also predicted to drive the development of 200,000 homes and 200,000 new jobs.

The project has gathered pace significantly over the autumn. As part of the Government’s Spending Review, the Chancellor George Osborne has confirmed a new £300 million Transport Development Fund for the next generation of transport infrastructure projects including Crossrail 2, which is being considered by the newly created National Infrastructure Commission. This is expected to report in spring 2016.

Responses from the public consultation will help shape the proposals for the scheme. Subject to further development and consultation, TfL and Network Rail will then seek powers for permission to build and operate Crossrail 2. With Government funding and approval, construction could begin in 2020 with the first Crossrail 2 service running in 2030.

**Fight to stop Chelsea station**

**LONDON WIDE**

The No Crossrail In Chelsea group – which recently added rock star Mark Knopfler to its 6,000 supporters – is preparing to field its own candidates against at least 12 current Conservative members of Kensington and Chelsea Royal Borough Council.

Kensington and Chelsea Council is backing the eight-year construction of a Crossrail Chelsea station, during which the King’s Road would be closed for five years.

The historic Chelsea Society voted in overwhelming numbers at its AGM to withdraw its support for a Chelsea Crossrail station.

Pasta-sauce magnate Lord Grossman opposes the Crossrail plans for Chelsea. He says: “The construction of a huge Crossrail Station in Chelsea threatens to significantly damage the distinctiveness, scale and intimacy of the King’s Road. Local people and businesses do not wish £1 billion to be squandered on a scheme which will threaten the historic environment of the King’s Road, which is a valuable social, cultural and economic asset not only for those who live nearby, but for all Londoners.”

**Actresses Felicity Kendal and Cheri Lunghi also oppose the Chelsea station proposals.**

**Warning over fake presents**

POLICE and Westminster City Council are warning shoppers to beware that the Christmas presents they buy in central London could turn out to be dodgy fakes.

The alert comes after more than £500,000 worth of counterfeit goods – including teddy bears, football shirts and illegal condoms – were seized in a pre-Christmas raid.

The crackdown followed complaints from shoppers that they had been conned by ‘souvenir shops’ and it targeted 10 stores in and around the Trocadero Centre in Piccadilly Circus.

Among the haul recovered from traders were fake clothing, condoms emblazoned with an offensive slogan and unlicensed Hello Kitty toys.

The raids, carried out by Westminster City Council, Trading Standards, police and UK border agency staff, came after shoppers and traders repeatedly complained about the price and legitimacy of goods sold in souvenir shops.

A council spokesman said: “We will stand up and allow traders to flog fake goods, which rip off both honest retailers and the public.

“Our operation with the Met police and partners shows that Westminster’s Trading Standards team is serious about tackling this problem in the heart of London. Rogue traders should beware; we will seize your fake goods.”

Large quantities of business documents were also seized during the raids – which was dubbed Operation Canton by officials – and one person suspected of being an illegal immigrant was arrested by the UK Border Agency. Sergeant Paul Clooney, from Westminster police, said: “Counterfeiting is often thought of as a victimless crime but it can have devastating effects on local traders who are often trying to legitimately sell goods. Customers end up buying items which are often of a poor quality and sometimes dangerous.

“This operation should deter others who think the West End is an easy place to sell counterfeit goods. We will continue to work with partners to target such individuals.”

**Taxis carry road congestion alerts**

TAXI-TOP digital advertising boards are to display traffic information in an innovative trial aimed at cutting congestion in London.

Transport for London have been trialling the technology since December 7 with BrightMedia Media to enable the capital’s iconic taxis to encourage other road users to avoid congested routes.

Initially, targeted messages will inform road users of traffic jams at 40 to 50 areas where there are known traffic delays. In the future, the technology could be used to provide real-time updates on incidents across London’s road network. Messages will be displayed on around 200 taxis fitted with the electronic boards using GPS technology to ensure that the information is accurate and up to date.

The trial is the latest in a range of initiatives TFL says is ‘understanding to keep traffic moving in London.’
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ONE of Britain’s best loved value home and garden retailers, Wilko, has opened the doors to its newest central London store on Kensington High Street.

As part of an expansion plan into the south of England, the new store—which has created 62 jobs—will be the family business’s 381st store in the UK and its sixth in central London.

The 5,833 sq ft shop stocks homeware and furniture, DIY and decorating, health and beauty and garden and outdoor goods.

To mark the occasion on Tuesday, December 8, the Chelsea Pensioners led a ribbon cutting, along with branch manager Harlen Holding and assistant branch manager Barry Chapman.

The Royal Hospital Chelsea, home of the Chelsea Pensioners, a national charity, received a £1,000 donation to its Royal Hospital Chelsea Appeal.

The hospital’s corporate partnerships officer, Rachel Ferguson, said: “This donation will help safeguard the home of the Chelsea Pensioners. It is a pleasure to have received such a generous donation from Wilko and we warmly welcome them as part of the Kensington and Chelsea community and look forward to helping them celebrate future successes.”

To spread a little festive cheer and help shoppers stock up on garden and home essentials, the first 100 lucky customers through the door received a £5 Wilko gift card in a bag jam-packed full of goodies.

There was entertainment on the day, including festive music from the Brass Santas, while a face painter kept the little ones occupied the following Saturday.

As well as this, Wilko warmed commuters outside High Street Kensington tube station with cups of hot chocolate and mince pies.

Wilko is supporting the St Mungo’s homeless charity and, to kick off the partnership, Liza Boon from the charity picked up £250 worth of products from the store to help kit out their shelters.

Mr Holding said: “We’re absolutely delighted to have made this move into such a high-profile shopping destination. “We can’t wait to introduce Kensington to our range of great value, great quality products for the whole family to enjoy. The team have worked really hard to get everything in place ahead of the launch, and it’s been a pleasure to welcome shoppers into store and to begin long-standing relationships with the local community.”

Singers support Syrian refugee funding appeal

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Downton is dead, long live Victoria!

QUEEN Victoria is to become the latest TV sensation as a drama saga set in the early years of her reign is being deliberately-crafted to become the new Downton Abbey.

ITV chiefs believe that Victoria will pick up all of Downton’s fanatical following worldwide and after the initial eight-part series starts screening in 2016 the period drama could easily run and run for years.

The royal saga, created by acclaimed novelist Daisy Goodwin, will star the former Doctor Who sidekick Jenna Coleman as the young queen and it will share all of the hallmarks of Downton – lavish sets, romantic twists, shocking tragedies and life both above stairs and below in the servants’ quarters.

Pundits believe that Victoria, which will be screened in Downton’s Sunday night slot, will be such another huge hit with viewers that it will start the birth of “the Victoria Effect”, a rush on the fashions, jewellery, furniture and all things early Victorian in the same way that Downton caused a craze for everything post-Edwardian.

But the drama is poised to be even far more fabulous than the life of the aristocratic Crawley family, as instead of being set on a fictional Yorkshire country estate, Victoria will be set in Kensington Palace and Buckingham Palace.

The first eight episodes will cover just three years – from Victoria’s ascension to the throne at the age of 18 in 1837 through to her courtship of Prince Albert and their mar-
Victoria’s reign set to be storyline for TV’s new royal saga

FROM PAGE 13

The TV series will dramatise all of the heartache and hell of Victoria’s early years as queen, including how she suffered from Press attacks and public jeering after smear campaigns were orchestrated against her by Conroy and her other enemies, who attempted to undermine the young queen by encouraging false rumours linking her salaciously with Prime Minister Lord Melbourne, a father figure and Victoria’s honest and trusted adviser.

But Victoria will also hook viewers with the romance of her deep love for Prince Albert, for whom she instantly fell after rejecting a series of princes palled for her by various European royalties with vested interests.

Victoria and Albert’s romance is one of the great royal love stories. After their first meeting, she wrote to his uncle, King Leopold of Belgium, to thank him “for the prospect of great happiness you have contributed to give me, in the person of dear Albert. He possesses every quality that could be desired to render me perfectly happy. He is so sensible, so kind, and so good, and so amiable too. He has besides the most pleasing and delightful exterior and appearance you can possibly see.”

Five days after they met again at Windsor in 1839, Victoria proposed to him and four months later they were married. On their wedding night, she wrote in her diary, “I NEVER, NEVER spent such an evening!!! MY DEAREST DEAREST DEAR Albert, his excessive love & affection gave me feelings of heavenly love & happiness I never could have hoped to have felt before! He clasped me in his arms, & we kissed each other again & again! His beauty, his sweetness & gentleness – really how can I ever be thankful enough to have such a Husband! To be called by names of tenderness, I have never yet heard used to me before – was bliss beyond belief! Oh! This was the happiest day of my life!”

With such an intense love at the core of the storyline, it is no surprise that ITV chiefs are already anticipating a massive hit with the new royal drama.

“Queen Victoria’s court is the perfect setting for an epic drama – a seething hotbed of scandal, corruption and romantic intrigue, involving everyone from the humblest dresser to the Mistress of the Robes, the lowliest bootboy to the Lord Chamberlain,” said Mammoth Screen’s managing director Damien Timmer. “When we join Victoria in 1837, England is unrecognisable from the country it will become by the end of her reign. As she takes her fledgling steps as monarch we slowly see modern Britain emerge.”

Daisy Goodwin added: “I’ve been fascinated by Victoria since I started reading her diaries at university. She’s a woman whose personality leaps off the page – a tiny four foot 11 teenager who overnight became the most powerful woman in the world, and her candour and spirit makes for an irresistible heroine. “Victoria was the first woman to have it all; she had a passionate marriage, nine children and was grandmother to most of Europe’s royalty, but she also had a job, being Queen of the most important nation in the world. It wasn’t easy; her reign was beset by scandal and sleaze and it was only by sheer force of personality that she prevailed.”

As with the cast of Downton Abbey, ITV has assembled an impressive cast to carry the epic drama, which is already being pre-sold to TV companies around the world. Joining Jenna Coleman as Victoria and Rufus Sewell as Lord Melbourne, will be Paul Rhys (The Aestetes, Borgia, Being Human) as Sir John Conroy, Peter Firth (Spooks, Undeniable, World Without End) as Prime Minister Lord Melbourne, and his father figure and Victoria’s honest and trusted adviser.

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How Duke upset hotel the royals love to use

BY GEOFF BAKER
geo@londonweeklynews.co.uk

MAJOR General Gerald Cavendish Grosvenor, 6th Duke of Westminster KG CB CVO OBE TD DL, and possessor of a fortune said to exceed £9 billion, is not in the good books of the Royal Family’s favourite hotel retreat.

Ever since Christopher Robin, millions of visitors come down to town to look for The Queen and, like AA Milne’s little lad and his guardian Alice, they just can’t find her anywhere.

That’s because they are looking in the wrong place. As those in the know have long known, there’s no point in traipsing around Harrods hopping to bump into Her Majesty in the food hall, nor can you expect to have much luck searching for a Wales or two in any of the city’s garden centres.

But if you were to go to The Goring…

London’s last family-owned luxury hotel in Beeston Place has long been the secret “our place” of the Royal Family. Since the wonderfully English and exceptionally elegant hotel opened 115 years ago it has been the preferred venue for sovereigns and those in line to the throne.

Whilst other more famous hotels are the frequent publised haunts of the load new money of pop stars, sheikhs and East European oligarchs, the discreet and Michelin-starred Goring with its Bollinger house champagne, Asprey products in the bathroom and Gainsborough silks on the walls is the favourite of the first family.

The Goring was filled with royals and the very best of guests for the coronations of George VI and The Queen, it was the chosen retreat of the Duchess of Cambridge before her marriage, the late Queen Mother very much adored the hotel – where she would regularly dine on the house speciality of Eggs Drumkilbo [eggs and lobster] and Her Majesty herself is known to take tea there.

Not for nothing is The Goring the only hotel in London proudly bear the royal warrant for hospitality services and with suites costing up to £8,500 a night it is, as one might expect, rather very special.

What one might not expect, however, is to check into the royal suite at London’s most select hotel only to be overlooked by gawkers from a low-cost block of flats.

Yet that is the problem now facing The Goring as The Duke of Westminster’s Grosvenor Estate is aiming to expand its massive property empire by building 23 affordable housing flats above shops in neighbouring Buckingham Palace Road.

Understandably, The Goring and residents of other properties facing the proposed flats have “grave concerns” about the development, which the hotel says could present “a real threat to our livelihood” and although Westminster City Council is tipped to give the nod to the planning application, robust appeals on the grounds of preserving privacy are expected.

Planning dispute sours atmosphere

Stampede to claim tickets for Queen’s 90th birthday party

AS predicted, a Glastonbury-style rush met the recent release of 25,000 tickets for The Queen’s 90th birthday celebration, causing all of the £55 to £195 seats to sell out in just three hours – but there’s still a chance to be at the event of the year.

Taking place from May 12-15 in Hyde Park at Windsor Castle, The Queen’s 90th birthday will celebrate Her Majesty’s life, her dedication to the Commonwealth and international affairs, her involvement with the Navy, Army and Air Force, and principally her love of horses.

On each evening, 900 horses and more than 1,500 performers from around the world will participate in the birthday salute to The Queen.

The 90-minute show will take the audience from her birth, through the Second World War, her marriage, her coronation and a reign of more than 60 years, and will incorporate leading actors, bands and dancers to tell the story.

Members of the Royal Family will attend each show and The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh will be the guests of honour on the last night.

Although a ticket to the royal theatrical spectacular is now harder to find than a parking space in Soho, organisers have confirmed that there will be a free ballot in the New Year for 5,000 tickets to a pre-performance party on May 15. The party will take place on Windsor’s Long Walk, and winners will get to see red-carpet arrivals as well as view the performance on giant screens.

Huge demand is also expected for this pre-show party and thousands who are not successful in the ballot will be disappointed. But royal fans keen to have some special souvenir of the evenings will be pleased by the news that publishers St James’s House has been appointed to produce the event’s official commemorative book, the only publication sanctioned and endorsed by the organisers.

“As the official publisher, we’ve been entrusted with telling The Queen’s story,” said the publishing house’s chief executive Richard Freed. “Over the four evenings, more than 25,000 VIPs, guests and spectators will attend the event, and the commemorative album will enable The Queen’s 90th birthday celebration to reach an even wider audience.”

The big birthday bash will be screened live on the last night on ITV.
The core of Jane Austen’s story remains true... but now it’s just got zombies too’

by Geoff Baker

MOST of the many screen adaptations of Pride And Prejudice have tended to skip the bit when Lizzie Bennet stamps on a zombie’s head.

From Greer Garson’s interpretation in the 1940 film version through to Keira Knightley’s Oscar-nominated performance of 2005, perhaps many an audience has come away wishing if only Miss Bennet had high-kicked the walking dead.

But now Downton Abbey’s Lady Rose MacClare is to put right what has been clearly missing for all of these years in the New Year release of a version of the Jane Austen classic which is predicted to become the most-successful ever, finally proving it is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a ninja.

Pride And Prejudice And Zombies, starring Downton’s Lily James as Elizabeth Bennet-meets-Lara Croft, is surely set to be massive fun. Combining period costume drama and action comedy horror, two of the most popular movie genres of recent years, the film deserves to win her the Academy Award for best actress with her tongue in her cheek.

Like Knightley’s sumptuous epic, this new take on the 202-year-old story looks glorious, set in the arcadian grounds of a large Regency manor house with all the lavish splendour of the period; candle-lit dinners, wonderful frocks and gracious manners. It is beautifully lit and filmed and up until this point the Austen purists will be very happy with it.

“We stay faithfully to the story,” says Lily, the new screen sensation who starred in Disney’s Cinderella this year. “The characters and the core of Jane Austen’s story remains absolutely true... but now it’s just got zombies too.”

The sub-plot which has been added for the doubtless delight of young movie fans, if not for the purists, pretends that as it’s not hard enough for Mrs Bennet to marry off her many daughters, now the poor woman has to put up with a Black Plague ravaging the land and those unfortunate who die of it soon rise again from the grave, reincarnated as rotting monsters who dine on human flesh.

Which of course is a terrible trial for Mrs Bennet, for when you are desperately attempting to hitch up a daughter with Mr Darcy at a ball the last thing you need is the very bad form of the servants trying to eat the house guests.

But Mrs Bennet’s reputation and the lives of the eligible gentry is saved when the five unmarried daughters – Elizabeth, Jane, Mary, Kitty and Lydia – reveal a previously-unknown talent for kung fu, sword-play and dagger-slaying as they gorily tackle the intruders at the Longbourn estate.

“There’s some great fight sequences for the five of us girls working together like a really scary version of The Spice Girls,” says Lily, “we get to kick a lot of butt and it’s huge fun.”

“It was so cool, as Lizzie I’m always going about the house armed with two swords. It’s fresh, it’s a reimagining of the characters. But the story is such a rich one anyway, now it’s also got really cool fight scenes, hordes of the undead – and I feel that Pride And Prejudice has always needed zombies.”

With a scabbard strapped to her thigh beneath her dress, it’s something of a costume change from when she danced with The Prince of Wales as the flirty Lady Rose in Downton Abbey and from the sounds of it Lily relished the role.

“It was weirdly wonderful,” she says. “It was somewhat odd to be sitting between takes having a cup of tea in your Jane Austen corset and you’d look to your right and there would be a blood-dripping, half-eaten zombie extra.”

But like the accomplished actress she is, Lily got into the part – although at times a little too much.

“In one scene I’m slicing and dicing a zombie before stomping its skull in with my foot. But when I practised these moments on the set, though, things took a turn for the worse.”

“I didn’t realise that the zombie corpse at my feet was an actual person, instead of what I thought was a prop. So when the time came, I plunged my foot down on the extra’s head. Of course, it was totally by accident and he was okay, but nothing is easy to do in a corset.”

To accomplish all of the fighting scenes convincingly, all of the actresses spent months in martial arts training and, says Lily’s co-star Sam Riley, who plays Mr Darcy, the experience turned her into a walking weapon.

“There is a scene where Darcy’s proposal to Elizabeth goes horribly wrong and we end up having a fight in the drawing room, where she attacks me with a poker and a letter-opener,” said Sam.

“I can speak from the experience of that that Lizzie is pretty lethal. But she is going to be one of the best Elizabeth Bennets we’ve ever seen, if not the best. Lily has got a very natural and unforced charm which I think is perfect for Lizzie. She’s certainly going to be the most kick-ass Elizabeth Bennet we’ve ever seen.”

One things is for sure, Lily James is going to be seen a very great deal in the coming weeks and months. Although she only graduated from London’s Guildhall School of Drama and Music 8 years ago, now at the age of 26 she has already notched up considerable glittering credits, from Korra the soldier in Avatar the Last Airbender to the heroine British athlete in The Secret Diary Of A Call Girl, her star part in Downton and of course the lead in Cinderella, for which she was unfailingly trolled by envious halfwits on social media who claimed that her naturally-small body had been digitally-altered to make her the super-slim Cinderella – a jibe to which Lily at the time well-responded, “Why do women always get pointed at for their bodies? And why is this whole thing happening and I’m constantly having to justify myself?”

“International Women’s Day has just gone, and it just feels just a bit sad that it’s still happening. On the one hand it’s upsetting and on the other it’s just boring, I’m just very healthy and I always have been.”

Although hopefully not, perhaps the trolls will kick off again when Lily is back in tiny-waisted costumes in the New Year for a lead role in the BBC’s epic version of War And Peace, in which she plays Natasha.

Like Pride And Prejudice, War And Peace is one of the classics most-adapted for the screen. The first was made 100 years ago, a silent movie version starring the Russian ballerina Vera Karalli. Since then there have been myriad takes on it; the 1956 movie starring Audrey Hepburn in Lily’s part, a seven-hour film released in 1966 which took the Russians six years to film and the BBC’s 1972 adaptation, all 17 hours of it, which starred Morag Hood as the captivating daughter of Count Rostov.

Then there’s also been operatic versions, French and Italian versions, an “electropop opera” version and at least three lengthy adaptations for radio, including 10 hours of the one which was broadcast for all of New Year’s Day this year. But the new BBC version, adapted by Andrew Davies, is set to be finest yet – with a stellar cast that includes Jim Broadbent, Gillian Anderson, Brian Cox, Greta Scacchi, Kenneth Cranham and Ade Edmondson.

“It’s a huge book but Andrew is such an amazing adapter he’s condensed it down, but he’s kept the vitality and it feels accessible and I think the audience will really be drawn in,” says Lily.

“But you have to read the novel too because it’s so addictive. That’s why great books are great books. This novel has been around for a long time because the themes Tolstoy discusses are eternal. The things these characters are talking about – love and death – are never going to change.”

They are, however, likely to change Lily James’s fortunes considerably. With War And Peace coming on the back of Cinderella, Pride And Prejudice And Zombies following Downton Abbey – in which she reappears as Lady Rose in the final episode this year – the young actress is now widely tipped to become Britain’s foremost and finest.

Next year she will take on another two leading roles, opposite Kevin Spacey and Jamie Foxx in the action crime comedy Baby Driver and as a Second World War British secret agent in The Kaiser’s Last Kiss with Christo-pher Plummer. A genuinely-talented big new star is being very born soon.

The last Downton Abbey will be screened on ITV on Christmas Day.
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FOR a slice of real decadence this Christmas look no further than The Arch London, in Great Cumberland Place.

This boutique hotel, which houses luxury restaurant Hunter 486, is offering some wonderfully diverse cuisine for guests to sample this festive season.

You can choose a Festive Lunch for £35 per person from now until December 30 with a set three-course lunch including shellfish bisque; traditional roast Norfolk turkey with all the trimmings; and flamed Christmas pudding with brandy and vanilla sauce.

On Christmas Day, guests can enjoy a lavish four-course Christmas Lunch with tea, coffee and mince pies for £75 per person. Dishes include the chef’s amuse, smoked salmon terrine with crab salad, soft boiled quail eggs and lemon oil; traditional roast Norfolk turkey with roast potatoes, Brussels sprouts, chipolatas in bacon and cranberry sauce; and

THE ARCH LONDON by Nicky Sweetland

Christmas pudding with brandy and vanilla sauce.

The Arch London provides a glamorous setting for festive party. A private festive lunch or dinner can be held in the Martini Library or Whitehall Room from £45 per person from now until December 30.

The chic boutique hotel is located minutes from Oxford Street and Marylebone Village, the perfect place to take tea during your Christmas shopping trip.

Indulge in festive treats including chocolate yule log; sticky ginger cake; cranberry and white chocolate fudge served with just baked scones. Sandwiches and savouries include roast turkey and cranberry; honey baked ham with piccalilli; Stilton cheese straws; pigs in blankets; and smoked salmon and horseradish crème fraîche roulade.

£38 with a glass of Tattinger Brut Reserve, will be available until January 5, 2016.

An extravagant five-course New Year’s Eve menu will be available in Hunter 486. Guests can enjoy it with an exquisite dinner in warm and intimate surroundings. Priced at £95 per person, this indulgent option includes champagne and live music from 7pm.

Delightful dishes will include scallop carpaccio with caviar, lime and shellfish vinaigrette; wild mushroom consommé with truffle tortellini; roast loin of venison with creamed Savoy cabbage and croquette potatoes; spiced poached pears and walnuts; white chocolate and honeycomb mousse with raspberries.

HAPPY DAYS: Ed’s Diner at Westfield shopping centre

Step back into the cool atmosphere of Ed’s Diner

IF you’re looking for somewhere to rest you weary feet after a morning of frantic Christmas shopping over the next couple of weeks, I’ve found the perfect place writes Nicky Sweetland.

The newly opened Ed’s Diner, at Westfield London is a great place to get away from the modern world and immerse yourself in the simpler (and cooler!) 1950s.

Set on the top floor of Debenhams and overlooking the mall’s amphitheatre, the little oasis acts as a tonic to alleviate some of the stress of the credit card usage and allows you to rest your overworked, aching arms, in an authentic American diner, complete with plush red leatherette, stainless steel and rock and roll tunes on the juke box.

I was shopping alone, but decided I would sample as much of the extensive menu as I could while I was there. Well, it’s rude not to isn’t it?

I started with one of the milkshakes which was £4.95. I chose the banana and peanut butter flavour, which was served in a cute metal tankard and was actually a very filling but absolutely delicious start to my lunch.

For my main meal I went for a pulled pork option with my burger, which meant I had the smoky flavour of the pork atop my sumptuous beef burger all served in the classic sesame bun with cheese and salad, I was given the option of regular or large and decided I would really go for it, so I not only chose a large burger, but also went for the Ed’s plate version for £14.30. This meant it came served with fries, onion rings and coleslaw. The burger was excellent, even though all of the food is cooked when you order, didn’t take too long to arrive.

After drinking the milkshake however, I only actually managed to eat around a third of the main, as I was just too full, so would suggest those with a realistic idea of their appetite should take that in to consideration when ordering.

I did also decide I had better sample dessert so went for the Loaf of Waffle for £5.15. Again I was only really able to get a taste of this having made myself fully replete with the first two courses, but it was perfectly sweet and again a very large portion for the price.

The cost of my meal was £24.40, and considering I didn’t need to eat again until the next day, was very reasonable for a great lunch in enjoyable surroundings.

For those with a good appetite, Ed’s Diner can certainly help you to get through the chore of Christmas shopping.
Funny Girl ****

The hugely anticipated revival of *Funny Girl*, starring Sheridan Smith, opened last week at the Menier Chocolate Factory and with tickets for the limited run selling out in just 45 minutes and a West End transfer already booked, reviews are a mere formality for the show which has already made history.

So, does the show and its beloved star live up to the high expectations, asks Nicky Sweetland.

The answer is without doubt a resounding yes and with tickets for the transfer to the Savoy Theatre also selling fast, I would urge you to get booking.

Smith stars as Fanny Brice, a lower east side New Yorker who becomes one of Broadway's biggest stars. The role was made famous by Barbara Streisand both on Broadway and in the 1968 film for which she shared the Best Actress Academy Award and which helped to gain her legendary status as a musical performer.

Smith is herself no stranger to awards and accolades, having previously won two Oliviers and a BAFTA as well as being appointed OBE earlier this year. Following in such renowned footsteps however, is no easy task, but Smith has become one of Britain's most beloved actresses and after watching this performance, it is obvious why she attracts such a following.

With a command of the stage which belies her stature, Smith has just the most adorable charm and brings a verve and panache to her clowning, which she's able to make feel exasperated. She redefines the term “showstopper” with first the rousing *People*, and then with the act two finale *Don't Rain On My Parade*.

It’s in the comedy numbers however, where she really shows her stuff, with a timing that is perfection but always with a real substance behind the grin. In the more pensive moments as we follow her doomed relationship we completely understand that this woman has really only ever striven for affection.

For much of the show that affection is provided by the slick and suave Nick Arnstein, played by Darius Campbell, who doesn't show much complexity with his acting but sings like a dream in *You Are Woman, I Am Man*.

His dashing presence really adds to some of the big ensemble numbers and with the help of some clever direction by Michael Mayer, makes the musical feel big budget, old school but not a bit dated.

The inventive use of travelators in the staging also gives an added thrill to both the dance numbers and scene transitions and the hidden orchestra provide sympathetic accompaniment, although the “Cornet Man” on stage may wish to offer his services to help out the pit trumpeter on occasion.

With the fabulous *Gypsy*, starring Imelda Staunton, just vacating the Savoy Theatre, it seems only right that another revival with an equally astounding star turn should take up the reins and with Sheridan Smith at the helm this show is likely to become a smash hit when it reaches the West End in April. You'll laugh, you'll cry but you won't have to worry about anyone raining on this parade.

His dashing presence really adds to some of the big ensemble numbers and with the help of some clever direction by Michael Mayer, makes the musical feel big budget, old school but not a bit dated.
**Talk Of The Town**

**TALLY HO! Father Christmas sets off on his annual marathon.**

It’s Christmas, a perfect family show

Father Christmas

Lyric Hammersmith, ****

WITH so many family Christmas shows around it’s difficult to know which one to choose, but a play starring the man himself has to be top of the list for me every time, writes Nicky Sweetland.

The Lyric Hammersmith is once again presenting Raymond Briggs’ Father Christmas for this festive season and the play, which follows Santa as he prepares for his annual big night out, ticks every box as the perfect family production.

It’s not too long, has some great music and leaves you with a wonderfully Christmassy warm glow. The play is based on Briggs’ classic books, which were first published in a 1991 animated short, and follows Santa as he awakes from a dream of sun, sea and sand only to find it is the busiest day of the year, Christmas Eve.

The grumpy old man in his pyjamas isn’t obviously our hero from the start, and we actually begin by just watching Father Christmas go about his daily life as he does his household chores and cares for his pets, including his reindeer, of course. The magic really begins when darkness falls and Santa leaves the utilities of normality to travel across the globe to fulfil his vocation.

This charming adaptation has it all, from a wonderful set, some fabulous puppetry and an absolutely astounding performance from the great man himself.

I watched a lunchtime performance and was joined in the auditorium by a plethora of nursery schools bedecked in high-vis vests.

The three-year-olds were just mesmerised by the staging and I was and it was lovely for me to reminisce back to when my offspring were that bit more wide-eyed and innocent.

Father Christmas runs at the Lyric Hammersmith until Christmas Eve. For more details visit their website lyric.co.uk.

**THE MAIN MAN: Father Christmas go about his globe to fulfil his vocation.**

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**Silence is golden at mime festival**

If you’re looking for something to cheer you up after the party season has finished for another year, the London International Mime Festival might be just the ticket.

When it first started in 1977, the festival played over just two nights. Almost 40 years later, this January’s festival will host 112 performances over 29 days from 18 companies.

Almost all the productions will be UK premières and held at prestigious venues like the Barbican, Southbank Centre and the Tate Modern. The event is directed by Helen Lannaghan and Joseph Seelig and gives audiences the chance to see the very best and newest contemporary visual theatre, including cutting edge circus-theatre, animation and puppetry, mask, physical and object theatre.

The 2016 festival opens at the Shaw Theatre on Saturday, January 9, with Marcel performed by Complicite original members, Jos Houben and Marcella Magni. It then runs until February 6 at various venues across the city and includes Australia’s world-famous acrobatic troupe Circa, Glaswegian based Al Seed, winner of a 2015 Total Theatre Award, and a special festival highlight from Jos Houben, who will reprise his acclaimed performance-demonstration The Art of Laughter, which explains and illustrates what makes people laugh.

Full programme details, including workshops and after-show discussion dates will be available online at the website www.mimelondon.com.
COLOUR CONTRAST: Lee Mead rises to stardom in Joseph and the Technicolour Dreamcoat.

Singer delivers a show Mead in heaven

West End critic Nicky Sweetland enjoys Lee Mead's Christmas concert at the Garrick Theatre

Lee Mead, Some Enchanted Evening Garrick Theatre ****

The singer who won the BBC1 talent search to find the leading man for the revival of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat in 2007 has completed a mini tour with his show which boasts some reimagined takes of classic musical songs from yesteryear.

The show was entitled Some Enchanted Evening and lived up to its name as the audience, mostly made up of many of the singer’s hardcore fans, were enthralled by Lee’s sublime vocals and cheeky charm.

Taking to the stage along with his four-piece band wearing a garish Christmas jumper and pretending to puff on a pipe, Lee is the consummate showman and his fans, many of whom are of the more mature female variety, swooned at his every word.

The production featured songs from Lee’s new album, which is set to be released on Mother’s Day in 2016, but also included some Christmas classics with a wonderful big band feel and had the addition of a very over-zealous snow machine which helped to provide that extra festive sparkle.

Lee has played numerous roles in the West End but has most recently been on our screens as Lofty in the BBC1 hospital drama Casualty. Many of his co-stars were in the audience to support the popular entertainer and he was joined on stage by Amanda Henderson, who plays nurse Robyn Miller in the TV show.

While Lee took a break, Amanda showed off her ample singing talent – first with a fabulous swing medley before teaming up with Lee for a musical version of the Yuletide favourite, Baby It’s Cold Outside. Henderson went on to show her real class as a performer in act two when she absolutely brought the house down with the Wizard of Oz standard, Over the Rainbow.

Lee was also joined by Tony winning actress Tracey Bennett for a very rousing version of the Garland/Streisand duet Get Happy/Happy Days and by West End favourite Steven Rahman Hughes for a really unusual take on the Barbara Streisand classic, Don’t Rain On My Parade from the currently very en vogue musical, Funny Girl.

With plenty of chat and gigles, the show felt like a relaxed and intimate affair even though the 650-seat theatre was virtually sold out, and the odd dropped lyric here and there just added to the general atmosphere of fun.

The absolute highlight of the concert however, was Lee’s tribute to the victims of the recent terrorist attacks in Paris with his very moving rendition of the Barbara Streisand classic, Don’t Rain On My Parade from the currently very en vogue musical, Funny Girl.

The stage was adorned with a dazzling disco backdrop for the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, who along with Kylie’s own band, provided the musical accompaniment to the performance, which was given in aid of the charity’s fundraising for the National Youth Choir of Great Britain. What a fantastic opportunity for the youngsters to perform with such an absolute musical goddess and I’m sure they all felt just like I did, very Lucky, Lucky, Lucky to be there.

Christmas crackers from Kylie

Kylie Minogue at the Royal Albert Hall ****

I FEEL like I had arrived in Christmas party central at the Royal Albert Hall last week as Kylie Minogue took to the stage for a one-off, sold-out concert.

It was the first time Kylie had headlined the iconic venue and my goodness, the pint sized princess of pop certainly knows how to throw a shindig. With Santa hats on every seat the auditorium was bedazzled with sumptuous lighting, which set the scene for a truly joyful and triumphant show.

The star took to the stage amid dancers with pom poms and candy canes, and looked stunning in a white tutu as she treated the gathered multitude to many of the songs from her new album, Kylie Christmas, as well as performing some of her classic hits, which encouraged a storming response from the audience.

Highlights included the Pretenders classic 2000 Miles, for which Kylie was joined on stage by the legendary Chrissie Hynde, and the really sexy
Sapori Sardi is a haven of authentic Sardinian food and carefully selected Italian wines. Sapori Sardi is owned and run by husband and wife team, Piero and Gul, who have created a warm and friendly atmosphere and have been known to sit and chat with their diners over a glass of Mirto at the end of a busy day!

Piero Taris (Owner & Chef) was born in Sardinia and arrived in London in 1986, aged 26 and full of enthusiasm and passion for the unique flavours of his homeland.

Piero uses authentic products imported from Sardinia together with fresh local produce to prepare a menu that is refined and innovative whilst maintaining the strict traditions of his distinctive region. He has been cooking since he was 11, learning to bake bread from his father, Giulio, who was a Master baker in the Italian army during the 2nd World War.

Piero began working in a kitchen at 16 and was Head Chef at the age of 21 at the renowned Torre dei Corsari in Costa Verde. He has taught Italian Cuisine to chefs at some of the world’s finest hotels including the Sheraton Group.
ALBERT FREDERICK
(John) FARR
unexpectedly passed away, aged 93, on 8th November 2015, aged 93, in his home in Hammersmith. Born 16th April 1922 in Hackney.

Visitation at Co-op Funeralcare, King Street, W6 from 12pm Monday 14th until 6pm Tuesday, Monday 15th.

Funeral Mass will be held at Holy Trinity, Brook Green at 11:30am on Wednesday 16th December, followed by committal at Mortlake Crematorium.

Donations may be sent to the Grove Cemetery, W6. Tel: 020 8855 8824.

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Closing date for applications 31st December 2015
NEW Queens Park Rangers manager Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink took satisfaction from Saturday’s goal-less draw with Burnley and then paid tribute to the “magnificent” Rangers fans.

The Dutchman, in charge for the first time since his appointment, received rapturous applause as he waved to all four sides of the ground when introduced before the game. He said: “The welcome I got was just magnificent – and a big thank you to the QPR supporters. They made me feel one of them and I really appreciate it.”

Before the game, Hasselbaink had used social media to express his delight at being offered the chance to manage in the Championship at Loftus Road just 13 months after being handed his first management role in English football at Burton Albion, then of League Two. “I feel absolutely privileged to be handed the opportunity to manage Queens Park Rangers,” @JimmyFloydHasselbaink tweeted to his 35,300 Twitter followers.

**Tweets**

In five subsequent carefully worded tweets that morning, he added: “It is my intention to leave no stone unturned to ensure this club move forward and meet with success. #QPR

“I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the owners for giving me the opportunity to manage this great club. #QPR

“The overwhelming messages of support from the fans following my appointment gives me great cause to be very optimistic moving forward. #QPR

“I am confident hard work and unity will eventually bring its own rewards. #QPR

“They are a club steeped in history and one I have always taken a keen interest in and privately harboured dreams of managing one day #QPR.”

Hasselbaink got QPR playing with vigour and positive intent against promotion contenders Burnley. And he would have been celebrating his first victory in the Hoops’ dug-out had Grant Hall’s goal-bound header not been cleared off the line by Scott Arfield in the dying seconds of a pulsating game in W12.

“I learnt a lot today,” said the immaculately black-suited Hasselbaink. “I learnt that QPR has magnificent support. I learnt that we have a team that is willing – willing to work for each other.

“There were a lot of positives to take from the game. We were commanded, we did a lot of things right.

“The gaps are a tight group. They want to succeed and be better players. If we play like we did today, especially in the first half, I am confident we can be successful.

“I thought we expressed ourselves well, especially in the first half when we were the better team. The players showed that they want to do things right.

learn things

“We suffered a little in the second half but that can sometimes be a good thing, because you learn things about the team.

“Let’s not forget one thing, we came up against a very, very good team. Burnley are very well organised, very hard to break down and I thought we gave them a really good game.

“You have to respect that good teams are always going to have spells but I thought we coped very well with those spells.

“I thought we did ever so well.”

QPR were unable to find a breakthrough, despite being the leading second tier side at home. But an upbeat Hasselbaink added: “I’ll take a 0-0 because the performance level was right.

“If we keep performing at this level, we should win more than we lose.

“For that to happen, though QPR need a fully fit Charlie Austin firing on all cylinders. His ongoing calf problem confined him to the subs’ bench until he received the call from ‘JFH’ with 30 minutes left to play against his former club.

“Charlie isn’t quite where we need him to be, fitness-wise,” said the new boss who knew what is required of a team’s main striker. “We want to make sure that he has another really good platform to come back. We can’t afford for him to be missing for a long time, because he is an important player for us.”

Hasselbaink has vowed that no other club will be permitted to ‘pitch’ for the 29-year-old in the January transfer window, although R’s can’t be very confident of hanging on to a proven goalscorer who can walk away for nothing, on a free transfer, next summer when his current contract expires.

Hasselbaink was speaking before Thursday’s home league game against Championship leaders Brighton and Saturday’s visit to Stamford Bridge, where he will be hopeful of collecting his first win.

**FOR the third consecutive season, Chelsea will face Paris-Saint Germain in the Champions League.**

**Second leg at home**

Having qualified for the knockout stages of the competition as group winners, Chelsea will play the second leg at home.

The first leg will take place in Paris on Tuesday, December 16, with the return at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday, March 9.

Laurent Blanc’s side sailed through their group with 13 points from six matches, despite finishing runners-up to Real Madrid, and won’t be fazed by another trip to west London.

Unbeaten PSG are running away with Ligue One, 17 points clear of the chasing pack with 15 wins and three draws from their first 18 games.

By drawing them out of the hat again, Jose Mourinho’s team will avoid a less daunting test against one of PSY Eindhoven (Holland), Celtic (Portugal), Juventus (Italy), Roma (Italy) and Gent (Belgium).

For Chelsea followers, the draw will evoke memories of PSG’s previous visit to SW6, on that stormy night last March, when Zlatan Ibrahimovic was red-carded, former Blues defender David Luiz forced extra-time with a late header and Thibaut Silva sent the 10 men through on the away goals rule after a pulsating game ended 2-2 and the tie 3-3 on aggregate.

**Mixed reaction to Finn call-up**

Steve Finn’s selection to the England Test squad for their cricket tour of South Africa with mixed feelings.

The 26-year-old fast bowler missed the series against Pakistan in October and November because of a bone stress injury. But he returned to action last weekend for England Lions in the United Arab Emirates, playing in two Twenty20 matches.

“I’ve been really pleased with the way things have gone with the Lions,” he said.

The 29-year-old is confident of making a late summer return to the England Test side after missing the recent Ashes series in Australia.

**Excited**

“I’ve bowled my overs and my foot has come through fine. I’m excited by the prospect of linking up with the team out in South Africa.”

However, Finn is unlikely to feature in the first Test in Durban on Boxing Day and his county will have all fingers crossed that he comes through the tour unscathed and is fit and ready to bowl next spring.

Rather than risk further damage to his foot, Finn could probably have done with having his feet up this winter.
Old failings haunt new man

By TONY MCDONALD

Even in this unpredictable, volatile world there are certain things that can be relied upon 100 per cent: death, taxes... and Fulham conceding a goal from a corner.

Sure enough, it happened again on Saturday, when west London neighbours Brentford visited Craven Cottage and salvaged a 2-2 draw, which was the least they deserved for their first-half dominance.

New ‘Senior Coach’ Stuart Gray is the latest incumbent to bemoan this common Fulham failing. Speaking after his first game in the dug-out, as successor to Kit Symons and previous interim Peter Grant, he said: “After getting our noses in front, I felt we’d gone on and won it but our Achilles heel this season has been defending corners. That’s 14 we’ve conceded this season, so that’s frustrating.

‘With this group of players we’ve underachieved. We need to stop giving away soft goals. At the moment we’re not stopping enough free balls into the box and defending them properly.

‘But I can’t fault the effort and commitment and I’m pleased with the response we had after going 1-0 down. Probably a draw was a fair result but we’ve got to start putting points on the board and we went for the win.’

Fulham fell behind to an Alan Judge penalty after Jazz Richards tripped Jake Bidwell millimetres inside the 18-yard box. Whites levelled through James Tarkowski’s headed own goal before Moussa Dembélé netted his 10th of the season for a deft finish to put Fulham in front, only for Jack O’Connell to equalise.

This was an open, end-to-end derby clash that neither side could have won. The fixture compiler could have been kinder than to present Gray – assisted by Steve Wigley – will whether Gray – assisted by Steve Wigley – will.

Dream of fourth

“If we can get a run of four or five consecutive victories, because none of the other clubs are doing that, maybe we have a chance to make up the distance and dream of finishing fourth. While it’s mathematically possible, we have to try.”

One man who thinks Chelsea can not only up their performance but even become champions again is former Blues and England star Joe Cole.

Cole, 34, who cost £6.6 million from West Ham in 2003, and for seven years was a star of Chelsea’s midfield, believes Mourinho has what it takes to make Chelsea great again.

“Anything is possible, and that’s why we watch football,” said Cole, now plying his trade with Coventry City.

“You can’t rule them out as champions. That team could beat everyone from now until the end of the season.

“The main thing you’ve got to think about is you’ve got the best manager in the world there – fact. That’s not down to opinion, he’s the most decorated over the different leagues.

“I’m not saying it’s going to happen but it’s football. It’ll be interesting in the next few weeks. The fans haven’t turned, they’re right behind the manager and the chairman.

“For Chelsea to move forward, you’ve got to stick with the manager and let him do what he does best. I don’t think anyone can dispute his record and I’m sure he’ll be relishing it around.

“What separates Mourinho from the rest is his common touch, how he relates to his players and gets the best out of each individual in the squad, whether you’re the captain or the third-choice goalkeeper.”

Oscar, who starred in last week’s 2-0 home Champions League win against Porto that secured top spot in the group, recognises that Chelsea must replicate that high level of performance in the match against Sunderland at The Bridge and their other upcoming Christmas fixtures against Watford and Manchester United.

He said: “Because everyone knew it was an important game, we were very concentrated. We knew we needed to win, everybody was confident and we played better.

“The manager said to stay confident and show our quality. The team played very well and we won the game. But we need to play like this in the Premier League as well. We need to win our next game, it’s very important for us.”

Speaking ahead of Monday’s visit to high-flying Leicester City, Oscar added: “We need to win two or three games in a row to keep the confidence.

“The win against Porto was important for everyone. It’s difficult when we lose a game, for the players and Jose.

“We now need to focus on the Premier League and play like we did against Porto.”

One man in desperate need to score to bolster his flagging confidence is striker Diego Costa, and Oscar is confident that better times beckon for the Brazil-born Spanish front man.

“Diego played very well and he knows he’s very important for the team,” he said. “Hopefully in the next game he will play even better. He tried everything to score a goal.

“It’s difficult for a striker when you’re not scoring but the confidence is coming back, he’s happy.”

Sunday cup tie will be live

CHELSEA will face either Leyton Orient or Scunthorpe United in the the FA Cup third round at Stamford Bridge on Sunday, January 10 at 2.00pm. It will be broadcast live on BT Sport.

Young Dane scoops award

DEFENDER Andreas Christensen has been named 2015 Danish Talent of the Year – an award given to an outstanding player under the age of 22.

Christensen, 19, has been on loan from Chelsea to Bundesliga club Borussia Monchengladbach since July. Recent impressive performances against Bayern Munich and Manchester City have elevated his status.

Christensen made his Chelsea debut in last season’s Capital One Cup tie at Shrewsbury and earned his first full international cap for Denmark against Montenegro in June.

Paris-bound again in Europe – see page 27