SENIOR Hammersmith and Fulham councillors are helping to enable the coming freeze on council tax by taking a hit in their own wallets – with a 10 per cent “pay” cut.

The voluntary cuts mean that council leader Stephen Cowan will lose more than £3,500 a year.

At the same time as doing their bit, councillors are to save an extra £600,000 by axing top posts among council staff.

Following the decision to freeze tax for residents as part of a radical new budget for 2016/17, the council – which was the only authority in London to cut council tax last year – has agreed that councillors should contribute to savings themselves.

“We have asked councillors to play their part and have reduced allowances by 10 per cent, becoming the first administration to ever cut councillors’ pay,” said councillor Cowan.

All councillors are paid an allowance for serving on the authority. The basic allowance is currently £8,940. This will be frozen for the coming budget year – despite a recommendation by the Independent Remunerator that it should be increased to £10,703.

In addition, certain councillors receive a Special Responsibility Allowance for holding senior offices and it is here, among the top bosses on the council – including the leader, deputy leader and the chairs of all committees – where the 10 per cent cuts will come.

At present the special allowance rates are: the leader: £35,763, deputy leader: £29,796, other cabinet members: £23,838, chief whip: £23,838, deputy chief whip: £5,564, chairman of...
Why Boris makes a tidy prophet

THE Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, is calling on Londoners to roll up their sleeves and join thousands of volunteers preparing to spruce up their local areas in honour of the Queen’s 90th birthday.

Grants are also now available for the Mayor’s 2016 Capital Clean-up scheme, where Londoners can apply for up to £1,500 plus special clean-up kits to brighten up and rejuvenate their local areas. This year, the mayor is also supporting a nationwide campaign, Clean for the Queen, in honour of Her Majesty’s 90th birthday, by donating up to 100 clean-up kits containing litter pickers, gloves and reusable bags for a special clean-up weekend in March.

Capital Clean-up, which has been led by the mayor for five years and supported by McDonald’s, encourages Londoners do their bit and help transform neglected parts of the city. Last year the scheme saw a record 4,600 volunteers take part in events across London, collectively clocking up more than 17,000 hours of hard work cleaning up parks, streets, estates, residential areas and waterways.

Mr Johnson said: “These small grants make a huge impact in helping local people transform neglected areas into much loved community spaces. I want to encourage everyone to sign up to Capital Clean-up and get together like-minded neighbours and friends to litter pick, plant, paint and tidy and really brighten local spaces this year, we have the extra incentive of making our city as beautiful as possible in honour of The Queen.”

Clean for The Queen’s special clean-up weekend on March 4, 5 and 6 is a grassroots community initiative which is supported by Keep Britain Tidy and a host of major businesses, charities, local authorities and schools with the aim of attracting one million volunteers. People are encouraged to take part in the Clean for the Queen event through Team London’s website.

Clean for The Queen campaign director Adrian Evans said: “The mayor’s commitment to our campaign is brilliant. London is the most beautiful city in the world and we want it to look its very best for the people who live here and for the millions of visitors who flock to this capital every year. This is a community inspired, grass-roots mass action event – one that will become a recurring annual movement. We feel that marking the Queen’s 90th birthday with the inaugural clean-up is a wonderful way to kick-start it to life.

“We want to show that millions of people in the country care passionately about the litter affecting the nation and are prepared to get out and do something about it. Everyone in this country can reap the benefits.”

It will be easier than ever to take part in the mayor’s Capital Clean-up thanks to Team London’s free speed volunteering app, which was launched by the mayor earlier this month. The first of its kind in the country, the app will display clean-up events across the capital allowing Londoners to find volunteering opportunities near them. An extra 1,000 volunteers gave up their time to participate in a Capital Clean-up event in 2015 compared to the previous year, and the number of hours contributed by volunteers doubled.

Head of sustainability at McDonnell’s UK, Howard Gray said: “We understand the importance of having a clean and sustainable local environment. Every year, our franchisees and restaurants organise hundreds of community projects across the country and dozens across Greater London. We are proud to support both Capital Clean-up and enable thousands of Londoners volunteer to help make their city a cleaner and greener place to live.”

In Kingston, more than 41 volunteers from the Union of Kingston Students used their Capital Clean-up kit to remove 3.8 tonnes of rubbish from 130m² of the River Thames in Kingston, including 11 troffers. By highlighting the amount of rubbish beneath the Thames the project aims to deter dumping into the river.

Sarah Dutton, volunteering project director Adrian Evans said: “The mayor’s Capital Clean-up is a wonderful way to kick-start it to life. We are proud to support both Capital Clean-up and enable thousands of Londoners volunteer to help make their city a cleaner and greener place to live.”

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BY GEOFF BAKER  
geoff@londonweeklynews.co.uk

LONDON Mayor Boris Johnson is declaring road war on HGVs and is set to force truck owners to spend up to £1,500 fitting new mirrors in a bid to cut the alarming and “unacceptable” number of cyclists’ deaths in the capital.

Last year nine cyclists died on the streets of London – seven of them after accidents involving lorries.

Under the Mayor’s plan lorries in London would be required to have a new side window so drivers can better see pedestrians and cyclists.

“The plan to improve visibility for lorry drivers would help cut the dangerous blind spots which have caused a significant number of deaths on the capital’s roads,” said the mayor’s spokesman.

Lorries are disproportionately involved in fatal collisions with pedestrians and cyclists. Between 2010 and 2014, lorries were almost 10 times more likely to be involved in a fatal collision than cars.

Under the proposals, existing and new lorries would be required to fit a new window in the lower half of the passenger-side cab door – at a cost of £1,000 to £1,500 per lorry.

“The mayor has launched a consultation in principle on the new plans, to build on the Safer Lorry Scheme,” the mayor’s spokesman.

“The danger caused by HGVs to other road users is unacceptable and we have to reduce it,” said Mr Johnson.

“With the launch last year of my Safer Lorry Scheme, we have already made real progress. But nine cyclists were killed in London last year.

“Although this is the second-lowest number ever and by far the lowest ever per journey, seven of those nine cyclist deaths involved lorries and that is why we have to press on to the next stage.

“The cost per lorry is modest. The benefit to Londoners’ safety will be significant.”

Many casualties occur when a lorry turns across the path of a cyclist or pedestrian that it cannot see. Experts say that if a window was installed in the lower half of the passenger-side door, these dangerous blind spots would be reduced.

The mayor’s consultation asks Londoners whether they support the principle of the scheme and what would be the best way to enforce the new windows – whether through an extension to the Safer Lorry Scheme, or higher charges for non-compliant lorries under the congestion charge or Low Emission Zone regulations.

It also asks whether the restrictions should be full-time, part-time or route-specific.

Leon Daniels, managing director of Surface Transport at Transport for London, said: “Our Safer Lorry Scheme has helped ensure that almost all lorries in London now have vital equipment to create a safer environment for all.

“We now want to go further and hear views from all road users, businesses and the construction and freight industries on our proposals to reduce deadly blind spots. This will be an important element in delivering our aim of eradicating death and serious injury from London’s roads.”

The mayor’s spokesman said: “Implementation of any measures will involve close working with stakeholder groups, including the industry and Government, and the development of a legally enforceable direct vision standard.

“There would be further public and stakeholder consultation before any decision on implementation is made, and time for operators to make the necessary changes to their lorries.”

The existing Safer Lorry Scheme, Britain’s first, was launched last September and requires all lorries in Greater London to be fitted with side guards and Class V and VI safety mirrors.

Many operators started complying in anticipation of the ban and there is now around 97 per cent compliance, according to checks conducted by Transport for London and the Metropolitan Police.

“The mayor and TfL’s ultimate aim would be to see the widespread up-take of low-entry, panoramic-vision lorries on London’s streets, providing a major improvement for visibility and safety,” said the spokesman.

“These lorries, which are appropriate for the roads they use, provide a large improvement to drivers’ direct vision, giving maximum visibility to vulnerable road users. The consultation paper also describes other potential future improvements that could include lower cabs, larger windows and increased use of technology.”

Slow cyclists ‘more at risk’

WESTMINSTER University research published earlier this month revealed that of the 3,500 bike riders killed or injured last year – a rising number – the ones most at risk are those cycling more slowly.

This prompted Libby Purves, writing in The Daily Telegraph, to opine: “Ludicrously, it has become de rigueur for commuters on bikes to behave as if they are in the Tour de France. Pedaling along sedately should be the norm. Speedsters are overtaken less, noticed more, and survive better. Women riders, going slower than men, generally suffer most.”
Why I love Soho

Sam Bernison

SAM Bernison is the manager of Fifty and Dean on Old Compton Street—and lives just around the corner on Rupert Street. He says moving to Soho was one of the best things he’s ever done. Here are Sam’s five reasons why he loves Soho.

1. Everything’s so close
I can get to work in about 30 seconds and then get home again in about 30 seconds so I don’t waste any time or money on travel.

2. The food
On Rupert Street there’s a food market so when I look out of the window or walk out of my front door I’m right in the middle of a food market, with all different types of food. It isn’t healthy but it is good.

3. The people
You see all sorts of strange and weird and wonderful people who just don’t care and it’s fantastic. It’s so great to watch and it’s so good that people still feel they can be like that.

4. The community
The chances of bumping into people in London is very slim but in Soho you bump into people all the time. You can just be walking down the street and meet whoever, which is handy.

5. The noise
It’s a weird one but once you get used to it, the noise doesn’t bother you. When I first moved here I couldn’t sleep until four in the morning each night because you’ll have people always walking about, you’ll have glass collectors coming at four in the morning to the bars—but once you get used to it you just kind of tune it out. When you want to listen to it you can hear all the conversations in the street, you can listen to everyone, which is interesting. It’s nice.

If you live or work in Soho, we’d love to hear five reasons why you love it. Email Nicky—nicky@londonweeklynews.co.uk

Charlie Pipes Up!

Workplace strategy starts to take shape

Iain Duncan Smith should be awarded a ‘Common Sense’ award for his completely logical, no-nonsense approach to getting good careers education to young people still in school before it’s too late.

In a flash of blazing logic, the Work and Pensions Secretary has reasoned that, if future generations of workers are being starved of good careers advice, he’s going to send Job Centre staff into the classrooms to deliver it direct.

For years schools have been failing on their legal obligation to provide young people with good careers advice and this is extremely serious. Teachers tell pupils they must study hard, pass exams, GCSEs, AS and A-levels etc., but there’s very little discussion as to what they are going to actually do with their lives and exactly how some of these generic, non-career related subjects will actually help them in the world of work.

We have to look at the fundamentals of our education system and seriously consider the validity of some of the content of the subjects that are taught. As well as the challenge of getting our young people work-ready, we must acknowledge that they need other skills to make them life-ready.

For example, once you’ve gone past the basics of maths that get us all through life, minds need guidance and, for many, the extra three years of drifting work puts them at a much higher risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training).

How do I know this? Because one of the questions I routinely ask anyone under the age of 25 is if anyone gave them much help and encouragement when it came to thinking about a career. The answer is usually ‘no’, and that’s even more certain when I ask if they were given information on the option of choosing an apprenticeship. Truth is teachers by definition are generally university educated people and mostly carry all the prejudices of their profession, which leads them to believe that the good life only comes after one gets a degree.

And for the few who understand that one size does not fit all, they simply don’t have the knowledge to offer good non-university careers advice.

Iain Duncan Smith’s Job Centre initiative clearly proves the Government’s commitment to creating three million new apprentices by the end of the current parliament.

And I also think that when you take this policy, together with Skills Minister Nick Boles’ plan for apprentices, and former apprentices, to go back into their old schools to educate the next generation of skilled workers, it’s clear that there is a coherent strategy in play here.

Views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of this newspaper

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Mayor rejects regulations to limit taxi app firm

BY LWN REPORTER
editorial@londonweeklynews.co.uk

UBER have won the latest skirmish in their ongoing battle against London’s black taxis.

London mayor Boris Johnson has snubbed a series of proposals which would have heavily restricted the minicab booking app.

The mayor said he had rejected what he described as “necendarlk” and “frudious” calls from London’s traditional taxi drivers to crack down on the company.

Mr Johnson had previously consulted on plans to limit the number of private hire vehicles in London, ban several features of the ground-breaking Uber app and force users to face at least a five-minute delay before booking a minicab.

London black cab operators have campaigned heavily for new restrictions to be imposed on the company, culminating in angry protests at City Hall last year. Police released footage of a protestor assaulting a security guard who was knocked out as protestors tried to force their way into the building.

However, Mr Johnson said it was not possible to “turn the clock back on technological progress”.

He also admitted that he had been lobbied heavily by the government not to impose any new regulations.

He said his “friends in government” were “adamant” that they didn’t want to limit the number of private hire vehicles in London. Asked about reports that the chancellor George Osborne had personally texted him to lobby against the plans, Boris replied that it was a subject which “keenly exercises the government”.

However, he said it was a “category error” by the government to assume that “Uber must be a great thing because it’s Californian and tech” and he said that the rise of the company needed to be managed carefully.

The mayor announced there would be some new regulations governing private hire vehicles. Under new proposals to be considered by TfL, Uber drivers will be forced to undertake English language tests in order to retain their licences. Mr Johnson also announced a new consultation on removing the congestion charge exemption for minicabs.

This latter proposal is likely to be resisted by the mayor’s own party, however, Conservative Assembly member Richard Tracey said he had “significant concerns” about the plans which “will increase fares and reduce choice for Londoners”.

Labour politicians in the London Assembly were quick to call on the mayor to reveal full details of all the lobbying he had received on the issue from government.

Labour assembly member Val Shawcross said: “For months there have been strong rumours that the Chancellor and Prime Minister have been personally lobbying Boris over Uber.

“For just as long City Hall have stonewalled our FoI attempts to get to the bottom of this.

“The government are there to serve the public interest. It would be incredibly worrying if senior government ministers were secretly lobbying for private companies outside the proper processes.”

Uber said the announcement was “good news for Londoners and a victory for common sense”.

An Uber spokesman added: “We’re pleased Transport for London has listened to the views of passengers and drivers, dropping the bonkers ideas proposed last year like compulsory five-minute wait times and banning showing cars in apps.”

A spokesperson for the London Taxi Drivers Association said that the mayor had pedestrianised the private hire lobby and described the new regulations as a “disgrace”.

Step into the story of Canary Wharf

THE London Society is running a Canary Wharf walking tour on Saturday, February 13, between 10am and noon.

The Wharf is one of London’s planning success stories, a feat of civic transformation on a grand scale. Only 28 years after construction began in 1988, it functions as a financial centre and cultural hub.

But there is more to the Wharf than commerce. It is a socially integrated district where people work, live and play—and with the arrival of Crossrail in 2018 a flourishing future is assured.

The tour follows major thoroughfares and walks through public spaces to provide a sense of place and an understanding of both the built and social complexity of the district. Walkers will be able to understand the challenges faced when inserting mega construction projects into the historic superstructure of the former West India Docks with its vast tracts of open water.

There will be opportunity to see the work of such architects as Foster & Partners, Cesar Pelli and SOM, and consider the future direction the Wharf is taking as development continues into neighbouring Wool Wharf. The tour includes the upper levels of Foster & Partners’ Crossrail station and concludes at the practice’s spectacular underground station.

To book the event, go to the website londonsoociety.org.uk

Just desserts at jail restaurant

YOU can enjoy a sumptuous three-course lunch on April 15 at Brixton prison’s The Clink, voted best ethical restaurant in the 2015 Observer Food Monthly Awards.

The Clink Charity’s prime objective is to make a substantial lasting reduction of re-offending rates of ex-offenders by training and placing graduates upon their release into the hospitality industry.

The charity represents a genuine opportunity for change, offering prisoners the chance to gain food preparation, food service and cleaning qualifications as well as experience within an exciting, operational business and in-depth guidance to find full-time employment within the hospitality industry upon release.

The Clink Charity operates the Clink Restaurants at HMP High Down, HMP Styal, HMP Cardiff and HMP Brixton in partnership with Her Majesty’s Prison Service. The Clink Charity runs to operate 10 training projects by 2017.

A garden project was launched in 2014 at HMP Cold and produce is being grown there for use at both Brixton and Highdown. The latest restaurant opened at HMP Styal in April 2015, the first restaurant in a women’s prison.

The aim of The Clink Charity is to reduce re-offending rates of ex-offenders by training and placing graduates, upon their release, into employment in the hospitality industry with the support of a career mentoring scheme.
Finding out you have breast cancer at any time is a terrible shock but for Siobhan Dillon it came just days into landing a dream role in one of the biggest shows in the West End.

Now recovered and back to performing, Siobhan’s story is one which should act as an inspiration to young women who are diagnosed with the disease and give hope to those who are themselves undergoing treatment, writes Andy Sutherland.

Siobhan shot to fame following her appearance on the BBC1 talent search, How do you Solve a problem like Maria? The show, to cast the leading role in the revival of The Sound of Music, was eventually won by Connie Fisher but Dillon’s calibre as a leading lady was apparent and she went on to enjoy success in the West End production of Evita and Legally Blonde, as well as playing Molly Jenson in the smash-hit musical Miss Saigon at the Piccadilly Theatre.

In February last year, Siobhan landed the role of Ellen in the multi-award-winning smash-hit musical Miss Saigon at the Prince Edward Theatre, and I was lucky enough to interview her before she took on the part.

However, just two weeks later everything changed following a frightening discovery. Siobhan was diagnosed with breast cancer and what followed was a whirlwind six months which included some very low points, but eventually resulted in her recovery and return to the stage.

I met Siobhan in her dressing room where she told me how she had first discovered the tumour and explained the medical treatment which eventually led to her return to Saigon.

“She (Katy) said ‘They can see the show when you come back’ but I thought ‘What if I don’t come back?’ What if this is really bad and I don’t make it? What if they don’t ever see me in Miss Saigon?’ Those things go through your mind.”

After performing three more shows, Siobhan gave in and took some time off to follow her treatment, which included first a lumpectomy and then a course of radiotherapy. Her oncologist advised that anything that increases any feeling of anxiety was not advisable and so along with the Camden Mackintosh office, the decision was made for Siobhan to take leave from the show until she was fully recovered. Anxiety and depression in those diagnosed with breast cancer is very common, with many struggling to come to terms with the enormity and impact of the disease. Along with feelings of anxiety, Siobhan also felt cheated, having only just started a dream role, to then have it so cruelly taken away.

“I really felt like I was missing out and I felt really angry that I had to miss out. For the first couple of weeks I didn’t know if I was coming or going. I knew that I wanted to be on stage but I didn’t feel strong enough and mentally straight enough to perform, but I still wanted to be there. That’s what really messed my head up. On the Saturday matinee before I went off I had this really strange panic attack type of thing where I thought I’d forgotten the words, you know. I was only two weeks into the contract. I had this weird feeling and my heart started banging out my chest and because of all the worry and everything that had been going on it (performing) just made it ten times worse.”

So, Siobhan was forced to walk away, all be it just for a few months. She rested and undertook the therapy programme, which included some high intensity booster radiotherapy sessions which cause severe fatigue. Just two weeks after finishing her treatment, however, she felt strong enough to be back on stage and couldn’t wait to get started.

“The first week was really tiring. I was always going to come back, in my mind, because I felt flippin’ short changed when I had to leave, so it was my goal. With all that’s happened I feel much more passionate about acting and about singing. I want to do the best job I can in every single show, and I’m not saying that it wasn’t the case before hand but it’s just a whole different level of appreciation of the craft now.”

Having cancer has changed Siobhan’s outlook on life and made her appreciate her friends, family and career in a different way. She will have to continue to be monitored and has to take hormone therapy for the next ten years to help prevent further problems.

Siobhan’s also committed to helping others who are diagnosed with the disease and has plans to do more charity work, including opening a café which will give a percentage of its profits to the cause. She already has a fantastic name picked out for the place which will promote wellness by serving organic health foods and will provide an area for relaxation.

In the mean time, she is just pleased to be back on the stage and is loving the challenge of being part of such a fantastic show. Miss Saigon will close at the end of February before it transfers to Broadway, so you have just a few weeks left to catch Siobhan playing Ellen in this legitimate trepidational event. You can visit the website for more details – miss-saigon.com 

Siobhan will then be starring alongside the multi-award-winning actress Glen Close in the English National Opera’s production of Sunset Boulevard, which opens at the London Coliseum in April. If you would like any help and advice on any of the issues raised within this article please contact The Lavender Trust at Breast Cancer Care – which raises money specifically to fund information and support for younger women with breast cancer. It is the only fund in the UK dedicated to addressing the particular needs of this age group and its website is breastcancercare.org.uk You can also join thousands of women in London to help raise money for breast cancer charities by taking part in the annual Moonwalk in May. The iconic event, which has been running for over 20 years, takes place on Clapham Common and is a fantastic way to help raise funds for breast cancer research. For more details you can visit walkthewalk.org
A LONDON brewery has found a way to transform unwanted bread into beer after research found that UK households waste at least 24 million slices of bread a year.

The Toast Ale brew, which is launched this week, uses one slice of fresh surplus bread from bakeries, delis and other sandwich makers to help brew each bottle.

According to food waste charity Feedback, the aim of the project is to tackle the “global issue of food waste” until it eventually puts itself “out of business”.

Tristram Stuart, Feedback founder and creator of the Toast Ale idea, said: “Tackling the problem of food waste has taken me all over the world. It was at the Brussels Beer Project where I first found out about this innovative brewing process that turns a colossal global problem into a delicious, drinkable solution. “We hope to put ourselves out of business. The day there’s no waste bread is the day Toast Ale can no longer exist.”

The beer, which will be available online at £3 per bottle over 10,000 petition signatures opposing the proposal. In the face of this overwhelming opposition, we believe TIL and the mayor are duty bound to scrap the proposal for a station on the King’s Road from their plans for Crossrail 2.”

Greg Hands, MP for Chelsea and Fulham, said: “I firmly believe that Imperial Wharf should continue being seriously considered as an alternative option for a Crossrail 2 station, and I also ask whether it should be the preferred site for a station in Chelsea and Fulham.”

Celebrity fans of the beer already include food waste champions Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall.

All profits will go to Feedback, which aims to halve food waste by 2030, after it reported that 15 million tonnes of food are wasted every year across the UK.

A spokeswoman added that, of all food items, bread was the “worst offender”, with at least 24 million slices being thrown away in UK homes.

The amount of baked goods binned in households, she said, would be enough to prevent 26 million people across the globe suffering from malnutrition.

Jon Swain from Hackney Brewery said: “We absolutely jumped at the chance to join Feedback’s fight against food waste.”

“ar and characterful. With two tube stations, five bus routes and access to Crossrail 2 from Victoria, we are hardly cut off either.”

Supporting the No Crossrail in Chelsea campaign because over the last few months it has brought the community together – young and old, residents and business, visitors and shoppers – demonstrating the overwhelming local opposition to this mad station plan.”

The anti-Crossrail campaigners revealed that more than half of all responses to the TIL consultation for the entire Crossrail 2 route oppose a station in Chelsea.

“TIL have revealed that there were 10,000 responses to the consultation in total for the whole route – and the No Crossrail in Chelsea campaign have copies of 7,250 returns opposing a station in their village, one of which is being the total to 8,000 – and some further 1,500 responses supporting local MP Greg Hands, saying that the station should instead be at Imperial Wharf in Fulham,” said a spokesperson for the campaign.

Chris Lenon, Chair of the No Crossrail in Chelsea campaign, commented: “We are delighted that Hugo and Georgia have joined our campaign. Young and old, residents and business, visitors and shoppers – they all oppose a station here. “As well as London’s overwhelming rejection of a Crossrail 2 station in Chelsea in the TIL consultation, we now have
Safe roads in hands of young designers

TRANSPORT for London is turning to schoolchildren to come up with bright ideas for how to make roads safer, by asking them to design the next generation of trucks.

The Future Truck Design Awards scheme, launched at the Freight In The City Expo at Alexandra Palace, is an opportunity for school, college and university students to develop concepts that make transporting goods in urban areas safer, cleaner and more cost-effective.

Organised by Transport for London (TfL) as part of the Safer Trucks programme, the competition has been designed to encourage young people to understand the complexities involved in meeting challenges of safety and sustainability.

Prizes on offer when shortlisted entrants present their designs to the leading truck manufacturers will include £1,000 cash.

The winning entries will also be showcased at the Transport Museum in London’s Covent Garden next summer.

Ian Wainwright, Head of Freight and Fleet at TfL, said: “The industry’s challenge is to ensure trucks can deliver goods as safely as possible in towns and cities, while streets continue to get busier with pedestrians, cyclists, cars and vans.

Vast improvements have been made in the design and technology of trucks over the years, but this is young designers’ opportunity to present their ideas – potentially radical and game-changing ideas – that could be incorporated into the trucks of the future.

Individuals, teams or classes can submit an entry in three categories – whole truck design, safety feature and system of operation – to www.futuretruckdesignawards.co.uk before March 11. Winners will be announced at an awards ceremony at the Commercial Vehicle Show on April 26.
Demand for property goes ‘inside out’ as buyers rush to claim homes in Hounslow

BY LWN REPORTER
editorial@londonweeklynews.co.uk

THE west London borough of Hounslow enjoyed the biggest growth in demand for property in the last six months of 2015. New research suggests that with demand up by 50 per cent and an average house price jumping by over £300,000, the borough looks set to continue this upward trend, with prices having increases by 12 per cent already over the course of 2015.

Meanwhile, the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the city of Westminster were in the bottom ten property hotspots, with only 16 per cent of property demand.

The statistics come from the latest Property Hotspots Index, produced by eMoov.co.uk. The index records the change in supply and demand for the most popular locations across the UK, by monitoring the total number of properties sold in comparison to those on sale. Experts at eMoov.co.uk say the likely factors behind the Hounslow increase are “almost certainly the ongoing infrastructural and economic developments in the borough”.

They say: “Hounslow is due to profit considerably thanks to its close proximity to the Crossrail development, as well as the delayed decision of the third runway at Heathrow, which should also see property demand revived for the immediate future.”

Despite being home to one of the most expensive average London house prices, demand for property in Richmond upon Thames has also seen an increase, up 17 per cent since the third quarter of 2015. Despite the run up to the festive period, London’s outer boroughs and commuter belt remained hot for property demand in the last quarter of 2015.

Bexley is once again the most in demand property location in the UK, with demand still at a staggering 79 per cent. To the east of the capital, Havering (71 per cent) and Barking and Dagenham (69 per cent) also rank highly, joined by the London Borough of Hillingdon (66 per cent) to the west and Sutton (66 per cent) south of the river, as the final borough to make the top 10.

Each of the boroughs making the top 10 hotspots currently offer an average house price lower than the London average.

However, as the capital’s outer boroughs continue to outperform their more central neighbours, these five in particular will be the ones to watch in 2016, where an increase in prices is concerned.

Founder and chief executive of eMoov.co.uk, Russell Quirk, said: “I believe 2016 will see demand for London property continue to decline from the inside out and, as the exodus of property to the outer boroughs and commuter zones continues to build, the demand for property will inevitably intersect with the supply of housing available.

“When this does happen prices will rise and commuters may be forced even further afield.”

These are just some of the places we’ve visited and heard about. None can, or should, be transported here wholesale but by combining them with our vibrant arts scene we can create something special that furthers the area’s legacy.

In the first phase of consultation for the Portobello Village proposals, creating space for culture and community was one of the top five responses from the local community. We have identified multiple spaces in the scheme which could be used very flexibly to support arts, culture and creative enterprise. I’m delighted that so far more than 30 local people have offered to work more closely with us on how these spaces can develop in terms of content and ways of operating. Do contact me if you’d like to get involved; it’s not too late to join the group.

Over the last few weeks we’ve all been mourning the loss of some of London’s cultural icons and wondering how under difficult circumstances we make sure that new ones can emerge. It will always be challenging to both preserve the cultural legacy of a place – the stories, the styles, the art – and the people – as well as the innovative artistic environment that allowed that art to emerge in the first place. I believe now is the time for bold choices in how we contribute to the cultural life of the area to retain its vibrancy and central role in London’s cultural heritage.
Celebrations as Leighton’s art is secured

BY LWN REPORTER
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LEIGHTON House Museum, the Kensington home and studio of Victorian artist and President of the Royal Academy Frederic, Lord Leighton, has announced that thanks to the unprecedented response to its public appeal campaign launched in September 2015, Leighton’s painting Interior of the Cappella Palatina has now been acquired for the museum’s permanent collections.

The acquisition was achieved with the support of the Friends of Leighton House, the Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Fund and through public donations.

Interior of the Cappella Palatina, a previously untraced painting by Leighton, was probably painted in the 1870s, and depicts the interior of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo, Sicily. The Cappella Palatina was built in the first half of the 12th century by the Norman king, Roger II, and is famous for the luminous gold Byzantine mosaics that line its walls.

“Leighton was very interested in architecture generally, but he seems to have been particularly anxious to accurately record the interior of this chapel. Although the study beautifully captures its atmosphere, with the play of light across the mosaics illuminating the east end of the chapel, Leighton took pains to faithfully represent all the architectural elements of the building and its decoration – even including a single figure standing on the left against a column to give a sense of scale,” said a spokesman.

“Leighton’s Arab Hall was based on another 12th century interior at a palace called La Zisa, also at Palermo. This painting demonstrates how captivated he was by these interiors and how closely they inspired his own Arab Hall. This is why the museum was so keen to add this picture to the permanent collection; to make the connection between Leighton’s travels, his skills as a painter and the influences that were brought to bear on the design and construction of his extraordinary house.”

Leighton House Museum is the former home and studio of Lord Leighton (1830-1896). It is unique among the capital’s museums in combining an exceptional collection of Victorian art with the intimacy of a private home. The house was designed by Frederick Leighton, with the architect George Atkinson RA, as a showcase for artistic taste and to entertain and impress the foremost artists, collectors and celebrities of the day.

The exterior of Leighton House gives little clue as to the treasures that lie within. The highlight of any visit is the extraordinary Arab Hall which reflects Leighton’s fascination with the Middle East, where he travelled widely. This room was built between 1877 and 1881 to display his outstanding collection of 16th and 17th century Islamic tiles and also contains mosaic floors, a gold mosaic frieze, set beneath a gilded dome, and a cooling fountain.

The spokesman added: “Also not to be missed is Leighton’s painting studio on the first floor, with its large north-facing window, picture slot and screen. Leighton produced all the works of his mature career in this room, including the iconic Flaming June which is now at the Museo de Arte Ponce, Puerto Rico.”

Leighton was born in Scarborough, Yorkshire in 1830, to a wealthy medical family, the second of three children. At an early age he showed an interest in drawing and went on to study art on the continent, despite his parents’ early reservations about his choice of career. Leighton did undeniably succeed – Queen Victoria bought his first major painting in 1855, and in 1878 he reached the pinnacle of his career as President of the Royal Academy of Arts.

He also received numerous international honours and was highly regarded by his peers. However, the man himself remains something of an enigma. His private life was closely guarded – he lived alone, travelled alone and left no diaries. Even his letters make little reference to his personal circumstances.

Just before his death in 1896, Leighton was embroiled, becoming Baron Leighton of Stretton. He is the only British artist to have been awarded this honour and is buried in St Paul’s Cathedral.

Post office to close despite residents’ campaign to save it

THE post office in Kensington’s Earls Court Road will shut its doors for the last time on January 30 and move into Kensington Crown Post Office in Kensington High Street – despite a long campaign to try to save it.

The Post Office says the decision was taken following feedback from a 12-week public consultation which ran from last June to September.

Kensington and Chelsea council has opposed the proposals all along and at a public meeting in September organised by ward councillors and attended by top Post Office bosses, angry residents stressed how much they needed the facility.

The PO argues that the development is part of ongoing plans to create a network that is modern, sustainable and profitable.

The improved Kensington branch will have increased staffing levels which will ensure that staffing hours are closely aligned to changes in customer demand. The branch has already been modernised and improvements included new style self-service kiosks.

Lib Dem councillor Linda Wade said she thought that they “went through the procedure of a consultation but they made up their mind beforehand”.

More than 7,000 new homes are being built in the area as part of the Earls Court Exhibition Centre development.

Councillor Wade told a news website: “There are 7,600 new homes being built. Who in their right mind would want to give up on their position in the high street in light of the development? It doesn’t make sense to me. It’s really sad news.”

London tests technologies of the future

USING the River Thames to heat homes, testing electric bikes and trialling state-of-the-art smart parking bays are just some of the innovative projects to be put to the test in London as part of a European-wide technology drive.

London is joining forces with cities across Europe in a €25m project that aims to demonstrate how technology can improve the lives of their residents. Mayor of London Boris Johnson, in partnership with the Royal Borough of Greenwich, has been chosen to take part in the Smart Cities and Communities Lighthouse programme which aims to develop solutions to challenges faced by all major cities as they continue to grow and develop.

The programme will see Greenwich used as a testing ground for new technology. Initiatives there include:

• Trialling 300 smart parking bays that aim to optimise parking spaces and help drivers find a space quickly and conveniently.

• Testing shared electric bikes to see if these support a shift from private cars, while electric vehicles will be piloted for local deliveries and car sharing.

• Using the River Thames as a renewable energy source to provide affordable heat to local homes. A heat pump will be used to increase the water temperature before being piped through a heat network for space heating and domestic hot water use in local homes.

Police learn to mind their languages

DUE to the growing number of people in London who cannot speak English, the Met has launched an eight-week drive to recruit new police officers who can understand any of 25 languages.

“The Met works within these communities on a daily basis and a key part of gaining their confidence is to take into account their diversity and needs. We need to be able to communicate more effectively and go a long way towards achieving this,” said a spokesman.

The chosen languages are: Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Cantonese, Estonian, Farsi, French, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Sinhala, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese and Yoruba.

Deputy Commissioner Craig Mackey said: “Following the success of the last campaign, this is an initiative we are keen to repeat. With the number of languages spoken in London and there being a massive opportunity for us to build on our existing skills and help support Londoners.”

This invaluable knowledge and skill can be utilised to support our policing and community engagement.”
Chelsea prepares to spring more surprises as showtime 2016 looms

BY LWN REPORTER
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IF the gloomy mid-winter days are draining your spirits and you are wondering if spring will ever arrive, remember that the 2016 Chelsea Flower Show is not far off.

For five days this May, the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea will be transformed into the world’s greatest flower show. Some of the show-stopping displays promised this year include:

■ Photographic exhibits and a floral arch to celebrate the 90th birthday of the Royal Horticultural Society’s patron, the Queen.

■ A 60-foot carriage from Belgium British Pullman, which will form part of the 6,000sq ft planted-up station in the Great Pavilion.


■ The memorable poppies tribute by Philip Johnson at the entrance to the show.

■ Horticultural showman Diarmuid Gavin is back with The British Eccentrics Garden, featuring bizarre garden gadgetry that comes to life every 15 minutes.

■ An acoustic garden inspired by world-leading percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie will play musical notes to visitors.

■ Horticultural inspiration from around the world, including Jordan, the Netherlands, Cambodia, Japan, Chile, Australia and more.

Also this year there will be spectacular show gardens, showcasing the exceptional talent of a handful of carefully selected garden designers.

Each illustrates the possibilities of garden design, landscaping and plantingmanship, and collectively they deliver a broad range of design styles and celebrate diverse themes. Alongside the Show Gardens are the smaller garden categories. The Artisan Gardens pay homage to traditional and contemporary artisan skills, and the Fresh Gardens category incorporate innovative materials and challenging ideas.

This year, Chris Beardshaw’s collaboration with Morgan Stanley has produced a unique show garden that will be relocated to the heart of Great Ormond Street Hospital after the show as a therapeutic space for parents. Alison Doxey and Stephen Welch have designed The Garden Bed as a green space for hospice patients.

Healthy Gardens, Healthy Gardeners, by Coventry University, will explore how gardening can be a form of exercise, if undertaken in the correct manner. The interactive feature in the Discovery Zone will show how hard a gardener’s muscles are working as he labours.

In the Great Pavilion more than 100 specialist plant breeders, nurseries and societies will create breath-taking floral exhibits with plants at the peak of perfection.

Close by, the winners in the regional heats of RHS Chelsea Florist of the Year, RHS Young Chelsea Florist of the Year, and RHS Chelsea Floristry College of the Year will be crafting glorious floral displays, while outside in the Floral Design Studio members of the National Association of Flower Arrangement Societies will be competing for medals.

Unique products for the garden and home are available to buy throughout the showground, including limited edition sculptures and gardening essentials, and in Ranelagh Gardens five artisans have been invited to dress studios in which they will exhibit their handmade crafts.
BY GEOFF BAKER  
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ALTHOUGH nobody wishes to spoil the party, queries of cost and security have arisen over The Patron’s Lunch, the giant picnic for 10,000 guests which The Queen will host in the Mall on June 12th.

The picnic lunch, which is being organised by Her Majesty’s grandson Peter Phillips, to mark her 90th birthday, will be a celebration of The Queen’s patronage of more than 600 charities.

When the event was first revealed last summer, most people assumed that, as it was to in part promote charities, it would be free.

However, the organisers have now announced that each charity will be allocated tickets costing £150 each – that’s £125 per ticket plus £25 VAT.

It is understood that each charity will be given 10 tickets and their own table, for which they will have to stump up a total of £1,500.

The remaining 4,000 tickets will be open to the public to try for, by putting their names down for a public ballot which will open next month at www.thepatrons午餐.com and will run for four weeks. Again, tickets will cost £150 each.

Fair enough. But is it? And moreover, given the current and foreseeable terror threat, is it wise?

First, the cost. Picnickers will be paying £1,500 per table of 10. The organisers have indicated that the sponsors and supporters of the lunch – who include Unilever, Marks and Spencer, drinks giants Diageo and Boots – will be supplying much of the food and drink, which will include Pimms, PG Tips and Walls ice cream.

But according to the calculations of the LWN’s Housekeeping Editor, a picnic for 10 need not cost anywhere near £1,500.

We did some sums:

- 1 wicker picnic hamper - £10
- Paper plates, plastic cups and cutlery, bunting - £5
- Marks & Sparks teapot - £6
- TOTAL: £21

Which is not quite £1,500.

One thousand tables of 10 at £150 per seat = £1,500,000.
One thousand tables of 10 at £87.75 of food and drink per table = £87,750.
£1,500,000 minus £87,750 = £1,412,250.

Were the Patron’s Lunch being held for profit, which it is not, £1.4 million left after paying for the food and drink would indicate a handy return.

However, organisers also have to take into account the cost of catering staff – somebody has to make 40,000 sarnies – and other costs.

One such vast cost is expected to be that of policing the lunch. Given the perilous state of the risk of a terrorist attack at such a high-profile event – The Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry are among the royals who will be present – a large number of Metropolitan Police will be needed. And as the event is to be held on a Sunday, that means officers will need paying overtime rates.

However, a possible headache for the security forces could come from reports that, having received their allocation of tickets, the 600 organisations invited “are being allowed to sell on 40 per cent of their allocation at a profit to cover costs”.

That a potential 1,200 tickets could go on the open market and therefore become available to anybody has raised eyebrows. And that is in addition to concerns that may arise from 4,000 of the tickets for the lunch also being offered for sale through the public ballot.

Therefore, in addition to the cost of policing the lunch on the day there will also be the vast cost and complexity of the Met having to vet and background check 10,000 people, of whom as many as 5,200 may have nothing to do with any of The Queen’s charities.

One other concern has arisen. The Treasury stands to pocket £250,000 from The Patron’s Lunch in VAT. Given that the event in [a] about The Queen’s lifelong support of charities and [b] is meant to be about the nation celebrating her remarkable 90 years, one might think that under the circumstances Chancellor George Osborne might want to waive the VAT contributions.

FULL details of future and recent events in the ever-busy diaries of the many members of the Royal Family are available from the official website www.royal.gov.uk but here’s the schedule for the week ahead for Where To See A Royal.

January 27
- The Prince of Wales will attend a reception to mark the 40th anniversary of the Foundation of The Anglo-Omani Society, Lancaster House.
- The Duchess of Cornwall will visit national charity Safelives, The Foundry, 17 Oval Way.
- The Earl of Wessex, as Royal Honorary Colonel, will attend The London Regiment Cocktail Party, Cutler’s Hall, 4 Warwick Lane EC4.

January 28
- The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall will visit Wilton’s Music Hall, Graves Alley.

February 1
- The Earl of Wessex, as Trustee, The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, will hold a Diamond Supporters’ Reception to be staged at St James’s Palace.

February 2
- The Earl of Wessex, as Trustee, The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, will hold Receptions at St James’s Palace for young people who have reached the Gold Standard in the Award.

Where to see a royal this week
Her majesty’s about to star in a new film (in which she will marry Dr Who)

BY GEOFF BAKER
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JUST when she must have felt that she had done pretty much everything during her reign, now The Queen has learned that she is to be the star of her own Downton Abbey, a blockbuster TV drama that will run and run for six years.

The Crown, the royal epic will start this year, will be like no royal drama ever before it – 60 hour-long episodes will be screened before it is done, at a cost said to be way over £100 million.

Her Majesty, known to be a Downton fan, will take centre stage of the drama that tells the behind the scenes story of the long history of her reign. And as it is being written by Peter Morgan, who created The Queen movie that won Dame Helen Mirren an Oscar, it will be gripping stuff that is bound to be come top of the TV ratings as millions eagerly follow every episode.

ITV and BBC executives are now competing to buy the UK rights to the Netflix production, aiming to out-bid each other for the drama that is certain to be set for Downton’s Sunday night prime time slot.

The epic – which has already been dubbed Crowston Abbey – will star English actress Claire Foy as The Queen. Foy, who transforms herself into a re-markable lookalike of The Queen, takes the royal role from when the young Princess Elizabeth falls for Prince Philip, who is played by Doctor Who Matt Smith.

Foy won much acclaim last year when she starred as another queen, Anne Boleyn, in the BBC’s Wolf Hall. The Stockport-born actor, who also played Amy in Little Dorrit and opposite Dame Maggie Smith in The Lady In The Van, is renowned for not wanting to be a Hollywood idol.

“I’m never going to be a film star. I’m very happy playing interesting parts,” she said recently.

But she had better get used to preparing for stardom because The Crown is expected to be sold by Netflix to every major TV company in the world.

“The Queen celebrating her 90th birthday this year, The Crown will crown a massive amount of programmes dedicated to Her Majesty which will make her one of the biggest TV stars of the decade,” said a TV insider.

There is a huge variety of programming coming up on The Queen this year, she will be everywhere you look.

ITV and the BBC are currently working on their own two-hour documentaries which will chart The Queen’s nine decades.

In addition, ITV will be screening coverage of birthday celebrations at Windsor which will be presented as a glorious pageant around her love of horses.

There is also a spoof royal soap opera, The Windsors, starting on Channel 4, another documentary planned to profile Prince Philip in his 95th year, and the BBC has just announced plans for a whole weekend of coverage of Her Majesty at 90 this summer.

The BBC1 weekend of birth-day celebrations for the landmark anniversary begins on Friday, June 10 with a service of thanksgiving at St Paul’s Cathedr-al, and the traditional display of pageantry planned for the Birthday Parade and Trooping the Colour will be held on Saturday, June 11.

The Royal Family’s range of play-things for little girls.

FOLLOWING the craze of young parents who rush to buy anything worn by Prince George and his baby sister, Kensington Palace is cashing in on the fervid following of its own tongue-in-cheek Princess Charlotte range of play-things for little girls.

Usually the goods on sale at the Palace gift shop run by the Prince of Wales are not ascribed to any particular royal, writes Geoff Baker.

The men’s leather gardening gloves (£12.99); for instance, are not marketed as ‘Grandad Charlie’s gardening gloves’ and the Crown enamel cuff-links (£17.99) are not sales pitched as ‘Wills-Effect cuff-links’.

But now that Prince George’s outfits have started driving huge sales for the stylish under-creases, the royals have humorously launched the Princess Charlotte collection.

A host of Prince George was recently revealed when online parenting forums were filled with mums trying to buy the padded navy jacket that he wore on his first day at play school.

No sooner had pictures of George in his smart coat done the rounds on the Net than par-tents were inundating John Lewis with calls to buy the same outfit.

“Within the first two days afterwards we saw an increase in inquiries for our children’s quilted, hooded jacket in navy,” said a spokesman for the department store.

Now prepare for a similar must-have rush to the Kensington Palace online gift shop or the Historic Royal Palaces Shop, as it is properly called – from mums wanting to kit out their daughters in the Duchness of Cambridge’s choice.

Given that the tiny princess is less than nine months old, and therefore is somewhat unlikely to be dressing up yet, the palace’s royal residents – Charles and Camilla, William and Kate and Harry – are showing some humour in their apparent selection which indicates that they don’t take being shopkeepers entirely seriously.

Nevertheless, the Princess Charlotte range has now become available.

There’s the Princess Charlotte toy tiara for £3.99, the Princess Charlotte dolly for £17.99 and the Princess Charlotte dressing-up kit for £35.

And who, among all those of us who did not know that she even existed one, could resist the Princess Charlotte purple feather fan, at £9.99?

The Historic Royal Palaces Shops – there are others at Buckingham Palace and Windsor Palace – were set up by The Queen in 1993 and are run as a charity under the chairmanship of Prince Charles.

Although some people might sniffily question why the royals have gone into trade by opening their emporiums of souvenirs, it’s not tat and just now there are bargains to be had if you have a plum p wallet.

For instance, couples wanting to give that special touch to a long relationship can now turn to the royal Raters to buy an exclusive eternity ring made with gold dug out of the Royal Family’s own mine.

For £2,800, romantics can purchase the Tree of Life eternity ring, one of almost 400 items of jewellery available from Kensington Palace’s shop.

“This is a remarkable piece of jewellery, beautifully depicting the ever-evolving nature of life through an intricate design of rose gold berries and vines,” said a spokesman for Historic Royal Palaces, the charity that runs the shop.

“It is inspired by the natural beauty of Wales and reminiscent of the striking filigree detail on the golden gates at Kensington Palace, the Tree of Life ring is a piece to treasure forever.”

Running along the entirety of each ring is an 18ct yellow gold band set with 30-35 brilliant cut diamonds. The band is sur-rounded by a rose gold filigree design.

“Each ring also contains a touch of rare Welsh gold from the mine that has been used by the Royal Family since 1923 to create generations of Royal Family wedding rings, including Her Majesty the Queen, Diana Princess of Wales and the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge,” said the spokesman.

Of the 384 items of jewellery now on sale at the online Kensington market – which has a huge selection of rings, necklaces, earrings, brooches and cuff-links – there are currently big bargains.

Like other years at this time of the year, the royal store has slashed prices on selected items and in some cases halved them.

Yours for a steal – £800, re-duced from £1,600 – is a rose gold ring given to her on their engagement with 94 diamonds to represent the royal flower of England, and a further bargain can be had with the royal wedding anniversary ring, last year £1,500 but now just £750.

And for Barbie fans, the palace shop also offers dolls of each of Henry VIII’s wives, £1.115 for the set or £200 apiece, and a Princess Anne doll at the knock-down price of £6.99.

For those who wish to go out-doe up like The Queen, there’s also the replica Queen Elizabeth II Coronation earrings for £60 a pair, matched with a copy of Princess Elizabeth’s Coronation necklace for £150.

Touchingly, the royal gem-smiths at Hancocks jewellers have also honour the late Princess Diana. The Princess Diana pendant [£29.99] and earrings [£14.99] are available, both shaped in replica style of the 18-carat sapphire and diamond ring given to her on their engagement by Prince Charles and then given to Catherine by William.
AFTER five years of being absolutely rubbish at the job, the BBC’s Eurovision team has finally stopped attempting to pick a British winner.

Following humiliation after humiliation, the BBC is axing the internal selection process that gave us the red-faced embarrassment of Electro Velvet coming 24th out of 27 last year, Molly Sandén Downes managing only 17th the year before, Bonnie Tyler coming 19th in 2013, Engelbert Humperdinck scrapping in at second to last in 2012 and even pop band Blue only managing 11th place the year before that.

And let’s not dwell on the great idea of having Pete Waterman write the UK entry in 2010, only to see his That Sounds Good To Me, performed by Josh Dubovice [no, me neither] ending up sounding good to none of the judging panels, who placed it last.

Now the BBC has decided that perhaps people who actually buy pop songs may be the better judge of what’s popular and is turning the task of choosing the UK entry over to the public.

Or, as the BBC put it in an announcement, “for the first time in six years, a televised national selection show will be airing this spring, where the public will choose the song and act that will represent the UK at this year’s contest in Sweden. Eurovision: You Decide will be broadcast live on Friday, February 26 on BBC Four, when six shortlisted acts will take to the stage in a bid to impress the viewers at home and a professional panel in the venue as they all compete for the honour of representing the United Kingdom at Eurovision 2016.”

But before we all start whooping for joy in anticipation of a UK win in Stockholm repeating Lulu’s Boom Bang A Bang success back in the 17th century, already the move to wash the BBC’s hands of making the decision is causing controversy.

Members of the British Eurovision fan club have complained that by hiding away Eurovision: You Decide on BBC Four, the little-watched channel which is the broadcasting equivalent of Electro Velvet’s following, the BBC is hardly giving the public vote much of a fighting chance. In fact, in terms of the likelihood of capturing the attention of the nation, BBC Four is something of a null pointer. According to the official TV ratings tables, in the week ending January 10, the best audience that BBC Four could muster was the 1.09 million who made its Italian series The Young Montalbano the channel’s most-popular programme of the week.

We shudder to think what manner of miniscule audience watched BBC Four’s least-popular programme that week, but an indication of its microscopic size comes from the fact that Four’s fourth-best programme, Empire Of The Darts, had a viewership of only £30,000.

Eurovision fans are arguing, probably rightly, that in order to get an accurate poll of what UK song might work well in the song contest, You Decide should be aired on a much-watched channel like BBC One and not buried in a place where it’s pretty much up to three men and a cat to make their minds up on behalf of the whole of Britain.

The BBC, of course, thinks differently. In a statement which puts him in contention to be made the next patron saint of optimism, Craig Jarvis, Harrison, Editor of BBC Four, says: “I’m delighted that Eurovision: You Decide and both of the semi-finals are coming to the channel this year. Four is the home of music on TV in the UK, and as any fan will tell you, Eurovision is one of the biggest music events on the planet and is much more than just one night of TV, therefore it is only right that BBC Four is able to showcase Europe’s favourite music TV event right here in the UK.”

Hmm. However, there is another problem with this You Decide business, which Eurovision fans have also been quick to point out on their vastly entertaining website – is the British public any great judge of a Eurovision winner either?

Before the BBC introduced its “internal selection” process, we had a viewers’ choice system which threw up two of the worst UK efforts ever – Jemini’s truble Cry Baby, which achieved the distinction of becoming British Eurovision representatives in 2003, and the ill-making Flying The Flag For You by Scooch, which came in at 22nd place out of 24.

As many have argued during the 60 years of Eurovision, quite how the nation that has led the world in popular music frequently seems to lose all sense of judgement, if not its total sense of hearing, when it comes to the Song Contest is beyond us, but perhaps we should just throw in the towel and go for the novelty act – like the Germans may be doing this year.

Among the acts vying to be selected to represent Germany is a Gregorian chanting choir. Excellent, wasn’t that catchy Stockhausen not available? Although before we laugh it must be noted that the “band”, snappily-titled Gregorian, has had 15 hit CDs and is soon embarking on a four-month world tour. So we may be foot-tapping to some winning wailing psalmody in Stockholm yet.

However, our money is already going on the model and singer-songwriter Iveta Mukuchyan, the Armenian entry who has the glamour and the Jess Stone-like voice to win it, if her selected song is any good.

Friends reunited

THEY’RE back! After 13 years off the screen the cast of Cold Feet were reunited in London last week for the read-through for their comeback.

The cast of BAFTA winning comedy – James Nesbitt, Robert Bathurst, Hermione Norris, John Thomson, and Fay Ripley – have started work on the new series which will begin filming next month.

The nation’s love affair with Cold Feet began in 1997 when the television audience was first introduced to friends Adam and Rachel, Pete and Jenny, Karen and David. Thirty-three episodes and five series later the couples left the screen amid all sorts of marital problems.

James Nesbitt, back as Adam, said: “Cold Feet was such a big part of my life. I can’t wait to see all my old friends and find out if Adam is still as big an aeroplane as I still am.”

Fay Ripley added: “Revisiting Jenny feels a bit like bumping into an old friend. Getting to know her again is going to be a laugh. I just hope that by the time I finish filming I don’t want to delete her number!”

ITV says in the new series “many questions will be answered” – how has Adam coped without his soulmate, Rachel, raising their son, Matthew, on his own? Do Pete and Jenny still spend their evenings on the sofa, in domestic bliss? And what of David and Karen who had split up. With three children between them, are the ties that bind them still strong?

The creator of Cold Feet, Mike Bullen, said: “This feels like the right time to revisit these characters, as they tip-toe through the minefield of middle age. They’re 50, but still feel 30, apart from on the morning after the night before, when they really feel their age.”

WITH new Top Gear host Chris Evans getting car sick recently while filming the BBC’s motoring show, ITV rivals may soon make him feel more queasy – with its new car show which puts even more celebrities at the wheel.

ITV has commissioned Drive, an entertainment series which features the thrills and spills of motor racing and pitches eight well known celebrities against each other “in an adrenaline charged race with a difference.”

Drive is hosted by Vernon Kay with UK racing legend and double British Touring Car Champion Jason Plato on hand with his expert advice.

Celebrities taking to the tracks are: rapper Professor Green; singer Ella Eyre, X-Factor’s Louis Walsh; comedian Jonny Vegas; Olympic athlete Colin Jackson; TV presenter Mariella Frostrup; weather expert Laura Tobin and broadcaster Angus Deayton.

“This high-octane driving competition will see the celebrities take to the driving seats of old bangers, buggies, 4x4s and rallycross amongst others. As they get into pole position, we will see who has what it takes in a host of unexpected and action packed driving challenges,” says ITV.

“The celebrities with the slowest time in each challenge will battle it out in a Night Race to see who will remain in the competition. And the one that remain by the Final will burn up the tracks in a F4 car in a bid to crown the ‘Drive Champion.’”

Vernon said: “Everyone thinks they can drive – but can they?”

The show will test not only their skills behind the wheel but also how they control their fear. Drive is not just about straight line speed, all driving skills are going to be tested. But when it’s not your clutch you’re burning or your tyres you’re shedding, it’s full steam ahead.”

Jason said: “I’m interested to see what these celebrities can do behind the steering wheel. There is a massive difference from driving a car on the road to taking something to the race track and it will be interesting to see who has what it takes to take their foot off the brake and test their limits.”
Capital nights

EDITED BY GEOFF BAKER

A talk of boycotting the Oscars grows after the disgraceful situation that only white actors have been nominated for the actor categories in the Academy Awards. The BBC is taking big steps to re-tell and re-balance the story of the long importance of diversity in Britain.

The acclaimed historian and broadcaster David Olusoga has been signed to write and present A Black History Of Britain, which will present a fresh approach to our past and will say the BBC, “demonstrate how black history has shaped our world and put BBC Two at the heart of a moment of national historical reassessment.”

Drawing on new genetic and genealogical research, original records, expert testimony and contemporary interviews, Olusoga will build a “dazzlingly different narrative” filmed in the UK, Africa, the Caribbean and the USA.

“We will learn of the African soldiers who guarded Hadrian’s Wall in the third century AD, the black sailors who fought under Nelson at Trafalgar, Queen Victoria’s African goddaughter and the Lancashire cotton workers who supported the abolition of American slavery even when doing so put them on the bread line,” said a BBC spokesman.

“This is a history full of surprises, scandal and contradictions. It will be bristling with emotion, discomforting facts and controversy.

The series will confront taboo subjects that are rarely explored – revealing how the Stuart kings were the first black British monarchs, the fact that many African kingdoms grew rich by trading in slaves.”

Olusoga’s re-telling of our history will be a rich and revealing exploration of the extraordinarily long relationship between the British Isles and the people of Africa. Reaching as far back as Roman Britain, the historian reveals that black British history is an epic, sweeping story that in many ways touches us all.

In the four films, 20 specially designed BBC Black History plaques will be unveiled at locations across Britain, former colonies and the Commonwealth. The plaques will record and celebrate people and events that are pivotal to this new history, providing enduring symbols of the series.

The BBC is working with Black Cultural Archives to encourage further research to uncover, preserve and celebrate the history of African and Caribbean people in Britain. The BBC’s Black History of Britain team is also working with a range of heritage organisations with a view to helping community groups to uncover more chapters in black British history across the UK.

Olusoga said: “This series will unveil a new type of black British history, because to me black history is everyone’s history. It’s the long, often tragic and always surprising story of Britain’s relationship with Africa and her peoples.

“It’s a history that takes place here in Britain but also in Africa and across the Caribbean and North America, and most of it is little known. But it’s also the story of those periods in our past when the rights, status and humanity of black people were among the big issues of the day, issues that helped shape the whole country and the empire.”

Kim Shillinglaw, Controller of BBC Two and BBC Four, said: “BBC Two has a special role to play in showing inspiring and informative television that no-one else would.

With an exploration of the medieval imagination, the Domesday book, as well as Shakespeare’s Othello and his eulogy to black female beauty, Olusoga will find out how the lives of black and white Britons have been intimately entwined for centuries.

After the screenings, viewers will be invited to research and nominate further people and events for addition to a Black History Trail. More plaques will be unveiled, forming a unique heritage trail and a lasting legacy for the series.

The BBC added: “The series will sit alongside other programmes, to be announced, whose shared theme will be to uncover lost, distorted or forgotten stories of Black Britons and the Black British experience. The range of bold and vibrant stories will cast fresh light on historical and contemporary Black British life, celebrating the fact that we are telling stories not made public before.”

UKULELE CHAMPION makes his Mark

FULLHAM-BASED ukelele master John Atkins is heading for the big time after teaming up with top producer Mark Ronson to record a new cover of the huge hit Uptown Funk. Ronson gave John and five other fans the surprise of a lifetime when he invited them to record the new track at Abbey Road studios.

Three years ago, John started forming ukulele lessons on his phone in his bedroom, as a joke for a friend. Today he creates two lessons a week, occasional cover versions, and has over 220,000 subscribers to his YouTube channel.

Now, as part of MasterCard’s Priceless Surprises campaign for the Brit Awards 2016, he has been selected by Ronson to be part of his new superfan group, put together after the producer selected the musicians from their YouTube cover videos and then post their own interpretations, and I really lucked out with the group,” said Ronson, who has been nominated for British Male Solo Artist and British Producer of the Year for the BRIT Awards on February 24 at The O2.

The new track can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/wM1wFzQbKkA

WHY tickets for Adele’s shows at the O2 changing hands at £4,000 there’s hope yet for fans desperate to see their idol at any of her eight dates there in March.

Fans have been upset that touts are asking up to 20 times the face value for tickets for Adele’s first tour in four years, but the advice from music business insiders is ‘don’t give up hope yet’.

“Even when a show is reported to be completely sold out, tickets will always keep back tickets because they don’t know exactly how full the gig will be until they load in the stage,” said one touring veteran.

“For an arena the size of the O2 it would be quite usual to keep back at least 500 tickets per show and these would be released for sale either the day before or on the day of the show!”

But there’s one proviso.

“Just how many last-minute seats are available rather depends on the number of VIPs who want tickets and traditionally they are always the last ones to declare that they want to see the show. In Adele’s case that might not be good news for the fans, because everybody who is anybody wants to see the gig.”

IN DEMAND: Everyone wants to see Adele in concert

ED FACTOR: The Troubadour in the Old Brompton Road has nurtured some of the country’s coming performers, including Ed Sheeran.

LOOKING for the next Ed Sheeran? Then go no further than back to The Troubadour in the Old Brompton Road, where the cherished venue that helped break Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan and Paul Simon is still brilliantly doing its bit to bring on the stars of tomorrow.

After facing closure last year, the revitalised Troubadour is leading London with its showcasing of new talents through regular slots including New Band Showcase and, on the first Sunday of every month, London Guitar Night.

This month’s Guitar Night Falls on February 7 and will be presented as usual by guitarist Chris Woods.


“The event has become a hub for all things guitar and has hosted some great musicians of all different genres. Guitar is the focal point that pulls everything together, and that’s what makes it so varied. From jazz trio to singer-songwriters, virtuoso instrumental guitarists to minimalist guitar orchestras, the London Guitar Night has had it all!”
Romance at a price

By Peter Faulkner

NEXT month is Valentine’s Day when thousands of romantics in West London, young and old, will celebrate and pledge their love for each other.

It is a tradition started by a Christian martyr in the 5th Century. But I received a call last week from a woman in Westminster that suggests the crooks are trying to use romance to swindle you out of money.

The woman, who only have her first name as Lucy, had received a phone call from someone saying he was from a company called: Express Couriers and asked if she was going to be home because there was a package that needed her signature.

He said said that the delivery would arrive at her home in about an hour and she was confronted by a uniformed delivery man with a beautiful basket of flowers and a bottle of wine.

The woman, in her fifties, was very surprised since there was no consignment note with the gift.

“He then went on to explain that because the gift contained alcohol, there was a £3.50 delivery and verification charge providing proof that he had actually delivered the package to an adult of legal drinking age and not just left it on the doorstep where it could be stolen,” said the woman.

“This sounded logical and I offered to pay him cash. He then said that the delivery company required payment to be by credit or debit card only, so that everything is properly accounted for, and this would help in keeping a legal record of the transaction.

“He added couriers don’t carry cash to avoid loss and would make them likely targets for robbery.”

“My husband Frank, who was standing beside me, pulled out his credit card and the delivery man asked him to swipe the card on a small mobile card machine with a small screen and keypad.

“My husband, was asked to enter his PIN number and a receipt was printed out. He was given a copy of the transaction. The guy said everything was in order and left.

“To our horror the following Monday, £4,000 had been withdrawn from our account at various ATM machines.

“Apparently the mobile credit card machine now had all the info necessary to create a dummy card with all our card details including the PIN number.

“We immediately notified the bank which issued us a new card, and our account was closed. We also personally went to the bank fraud squad and I was put through to the bank fraud squad and I was put through to the bank fraud squad.”

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Health & Fitness Nutrients

The human body is an amazing machine and the greatest gift we will ever receive. We expect a lot out of it every day, so it essential to be mindful of what we put into it. Nutrition is the key to unlocking our body’s true potential and with the right ingredients in the right formulation, great things can happen.

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Sweetening the sugar-free deal

"Think about that sugar hit," explains Booth, who often uses fruit as a topping for cakes.

"If you make a Madeira cake and cut out pretty much all the sugars and use apple purée or whatever instead, it would be disgusting. It would just be like having a loaf of bread."

"It just will not be what you're looking for mentally. You have to think about the proportion of things. If you have a sweet topping like whipped cream, you get that nice mouthful and feel like you've got something luxurious. You can sweeten the cake mixture very little and still feel like you've got that thing."

Although not completely sugar-free, Booth "cooks from scratch", so she can keep track of how much sugar she and her family eat.

"I think it's better to try and reduce as much as you can," she says.

"Any step is a step in the right direction because I think, as a population, we are eating too much sugar. Everyone is saying that now and more negative health effects are being found, so I hope that people find it helpful to try baking in a new way.

If you'd like to give Booth's method a whirl, here's a recipe from Sensationally Sugar Free to try at home...

CHOCOLATE TEA CAKE
(Makes about 12 slices)

1 Earl Grey teabag
110g pitted dried dates
75g wholemeal plain flour
25g cocoa powder
100g unsalted butter, very soft, plus extra for greasing

2 eggs
2 tsp baking powder
Pinch of salt
50g no-added-sugar plain dark chocolate, plus extra for decorating

Meantime, make the ganache. Break up the chocolate into small pieces and place in a small saucepan with the reserved tea over a low heat until the chocolate has melted, then stir well. Pour into a bowl and chill in the refrigerator for 30 minutes until the mixture has set. Spread it on the cooled cake. Use a vegetable peeler to create curls of chocolate and sprinkle over the top of the ganache to decorate. Eat within two to three days.
The revival of the classic musical *Guys and Dolls* has enjoyed roaring success at the Chichester Festival Theatre and so a West End transfer was almost inevitable, writes Nicky Sweetland.

Gordon Greenburg’s production has taken up residency in the beautifully traditional Savoy Theatre, a venue which, with its gloriously opulent proscenium, has proved to be the perfect setting for the more pastiche shows in recent years, most notably the highly acclaimed *Gypsy*, which starred Imelda Staunton.

*Guys and Dolls* is a musical which has been doing the rounds on the amateur circuit for many years and as such, I was interested to see how this revival would be different.

Set in 1920s New York, the story follows a gang of friendly gamblers as they search for a quick buck, love and eventually redemption. Made famous by the 1955 film which starred Marlon Brando and Frank Sinatra, *Guys and Dolls* is a proper old-fashioned Broadway-style musical, with the perfect mix of glitz, glamour and great tunes.

A much more ‘dancey’ version than I’ve seen before, this production makes the very most of the classic ensemble numbers *Luck Be A Lady* and *Havana* and leads audiences to enjoy the story effortlessly and with less confusion than in previous incarnations.

Lead by the charismatic Jamie Parker, who plays Sky Masterson, the cast is filled with stand-out performances from seasoned actors with sublime vocals. Parker, who will play the leading role of Harry Potter on stage later in the year, is a strong and smooth Sky and when teamed with Siubhan Harrison’s Sarah Brown, the pair cut a dash with their tempestuous love story.

The comedy elements are expertly provided by Sophie Thompson, whose vocal gymnastics as the mucus filled showgirl Adelaide are simply exquisite. Thompson really stole the show for me, with impeccable timing and a wonderful rapport with co-star David Haig. Haig plays the lovably crooked Nathan Detroit with charm and appeal and his scenes with Nicely Nicely (Gavin Spokes) and Benny (Ian Hughes) provide an injection of pace to the otherwise dawdling dialogue.

Well worth a visit, *Guys and Dolls* runs at the Savoy Theatre until March 12. For more details visit the show’s website guysanddollsthemusical.co.uk.

Shades of jazz genius Holiday

TONY, Grammy and Emmy award-winner Audra McDonald will make her long awaited West End debut this summer portraying legendary jazz singer Billie Holiday in the musical play *Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar & Grill*.

This critically acclaimed production will play a limited engagement at the West End’s Wyndham’s Theatre from June 25 to September 3, having broken box office records at the Circle in the Square in New York in a run that netted McDonald her record-setting sixth Tony Award.

Written by Lanie Robertson and directed by Lonny Price, *Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar & Grill* recounts Holiday’s life story through the songs that made her famous, including *God Bless the Child*, *What a Little Moonlight Can Do*, *Strange Fruit* and *Taint Nobody’s Business*.
Hateley’s moving mixture of power and melancholy

Linzi Hateley Crazy Coqs

The exquisitely mellifluous Crazy Coqs is gaining a reputation for hosting excellent cabaret evenings performed by some of the West End’s most legendary stars and last week was no exception as the bewitching Linzi Hateley made her debut at the Soho venue, writes Nicky Sweetland.

Hateley has enjoyed an enviable career in musical theatre which started at the tender age of 17 when she was chosen to play the title role in the musical Carousel.

The part lead to the teenager making her Broadway debut and experience in all of the ups and downs of the entertainment industry on the way.

Her cabaret show at the Crazy Coqs is a fascinating and intimate portrait of her years in the business, with some touching and hilarious anecdotes alongside some fabulously heart-wrenching re-tellings of well-known theatre standards.

After a short collection of ditties including bits of Cyndi Lauper’s True Colours and The Girl I Mean To Be from The Secret Garden, Hateley talked of the loneliness and trauma she felt at such a young age being thousands of miles from her family and facing the harsh criticism which goes hand in hand with a failing show.

This lead beautifully into a medley of Out Here On My Own and the Les Misérables classic On My Own, which is sung in the show by the street urchin Eponine, a role Linzi played when she was just 18.

Possibly her most famous stage role came a few years later when she was cast as the narrator opposite Jason Donovan in the revival of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat at the London Palladium. Joseph was the first West End show I had ever watched as a teenager so when MD for the evening Marcus Savage shook up the first chords of the prologue for Linzi to perform, I couldn’t help but get a tingle of anticipation.

Hateley has the ability to reduce the audience to tears with just one look, so expressive is her face, and with a melancholic mix of songs that’s just what she did.

The atmosphere became even more sentimental when the singer was joined on stage by her teenage daughter for a lovely rendition of the Beatles’ Here Comes The Sun.

That wasn’t the only guest appearance of the evening as Katie Brayben, fresh from playing Ca-role King in the hit West End musical Beautiful, teamed up with Hateley for a storming version of You’ve Got A Friend.

The show’s residency was completely sold out at the club, which is nestled underneath the Brasserie Zedal just off Piccadilly Circus, with Hateley joined later in the week by former Les Miserables colleague Lisa Hull and Chicago co-star Tiffany Graves.

She is undoubtedly fast becoming a legend in the world of West End theatre and I’m quite sure this won’t be the last time we see Linzi Hateley at the Crazy Coqs.

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Festival will be treat for jazz lovers

THE Pheasantry in the King’s Road will play host to a range of leading musicians next month with the highly anticipated February Festival. This top class music venue will be graced by some of the finest names in jazz music, including Elaine Delmar, Joanna Eden, Tina May, Chris Ingham, Georgia Mancio and Sue Richardson.

The music of George Gershwin and Cole Porter could fill every night of the festival without repetition such is the volume of well-known material. Delmar is the most expert interpreter of their writing. She has long been established as a singer of the very highest calibre – with the voice, looks and personality that have captivated worldwide audiences.

Richardson presents the most famous standards, compositions and works inspired by the life of Chet Baker, a unique and influential musician in the 1950s and three subsequent decades, as well as performing songs associated with him. Too Cool is a most entertaining show that has delighted audiences across the UK.

For those who enjoy their music with a Latin flavour, Mancio, with her new trio, have loads of excitement for you to enjoy. Quadro (‘picture’ in Italian) is the new trio by the award-winning vocalist and much lauded pianist Frank Harrison and bassist Andy Cleyndert. Together they present jazz and Brazilian standards alongside reinvented classical repertoire by composers including Strayhorn, Ellington, Tom Jobim, Heitor Villa-Lobos and Artie Shaw among others.

Eden, not only a wonderful singer but also Sam Smith’s vocal coach, will bring you to enjoy. Her performance of the wonderful music of another iconic singer and writer, Joni Mitchell.

Travel from Berlin to Paris to Broadway with your vocal leader Tina May, featuring songs by Kurt Weill, George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Leiber and Stoller and many more. The great divas of stage and screen Lotte Lenya, Edith Piaf, Judy Garland and Peggy Lee, he creates this delicious cocktail with a taste of Weimar, the Folies Bergères and Broadway.

The February Festival runs from the February 11 to 13. For more details and to book tickets, visit the website: pizzaexpresslive.com

Stars enlist for the War of the Worlds

FULL casting has been announced for the new production of War Of The Worlds, which opens next month at the Dominion Theatre.

Making his West End debut singer-songwriter, actor, musician and writer Jimmy Nail plays Parson Nathaniel.

Also making his debut will be Daniel Bedfield as The Artilleryman. The New Zealand born, British raised singer-songwriter shot to stardom in 2001. He returns to this country from LA for the first time in many years.

The third cast member to make their West End debut is Heidi Range, playing Beth. Heidi is the longest serving member of the BRIT award winning multi-platinum-selling British girl group Sugababes.

Alongside these debuts are two West End regulars: Michael Praed, as George Herbert, whose first major appearance was at Theatre Royal Drury Lane in Joseph Papp’s production of The Pirates of Penzance, and who has since regularly starred in Broadway and in the West End; and joining him, Madalena Alberto, playing Carre, fresh from her triumph as Eva Peron in Evita at The Dominion last year.

Finally, as The Voice Of Humanity, and completing possibly the starriest cast the West End has seen, is David Essex. One of the original contributors to Jeff Wayne’s Musical Version of The War of The Worlds in 1978, this will be the first time the two men have joined together to work on The War of The Worlds since.

Reimagined and brought to spectacular theatrical life for its world stage premiere, this breathtaking new production, produced by Bill Kenwright, will preview at the Dominion Theatre from Monday, February 8.

For more details visit the website dominiontheatre.com

THE VOICE: Linzi Hateley, pictured here in Barnum with Brian Conley

LATIN: Georgia Mancio
Talk of the town

From the pub direct to Royal Albert Hall

VOCAL harmony group Collabro shot to stardom after winning Britain’s Got Talent in 2014, and following huge success with a number one album and a sell-out UK tour, the group who only formed weeks before the initial audition are looking forward to another busy year.

Their second album, aptly titled Act Two, was piped to the number one spot by Florence and the Machine back in June but with legions of so-called Collaborators following their every move, their upcoming UK tour looks to be a sure-fire hit, writes Nicky Sweetland.

The group sang for the first time together at the Miller pub in London Bridge and for the five singers, Michael Auger, Richard Hadfield, Jamie Lambert, Matt Pagan and Thomas Redgrave, that was just the beginning of a whirlwind success which has seen them sell over 200,000 records.

Brighton-born Hadfield spent time on the amateur theatre circuit and on the streets of the city busking before the group got their big break.

He told me: “Obviously we came off Britain’s Got Talent and released the album, which went to number one, which was crazy.”

The first UK tour took the group to venues all over the country and also included a gig at the iconic London Palladium.

However, it was the concert in Brighton which was an extra special occasion for Richard.

He said: “The highlight for me was going back to my hometown. Only a year before that I was busking just up the street and then I’m performing at the Brighton Centre in front of 3,000 people. It was completely mad and I actually started tearing up on stage. It was a real moment for me.”

This year Collabro will once again take their show across the pond with an East Coast tour of the US.

They’ve also got a large and devoted fan base in Japan but it’s here in London that the band will achieve a career high later this year when they play one of the most revered venues in the world, the Royal Albert Hall.

Richard said: “It’s unreal. With the first tour we played the Palladium and now we’re stepping up again and performing at the Royal Albert Hall. I don’t know what it will feel like until we’re there.

“I don’t think anything I can think will beat the feeling when we’re on that stage in front of all those Collaborators just singing those songs that everyone knows and loves.”

Collabro will be performing at the Royal Albert Hall on the March 26. For more details visit their website collabroglobal.com

Ellis and May back on tour

WEST End star Kerry Ellis and rock legend Brian May kicked off their new tour last week at The Pheasantry on Chelsea’s King’s Road.

The pair, pictured, who have collaborated on a number of projects over recent years, including the acclaimed Candlelight concerts, premiered their One Voice show which they will carry across Europe over the next few months.

The duo also played at the Leicester Square Theatre, where they were special guests of the celebrated singer-songwriter Russ Ballard.

Ellis said: “It was nice for us to get back into it really. We’d done a couple of performances last year but to actually do a full gig was lovely and it was nice to have a pre-tour get-together for us. It went great, the crowd was lovely, really responsive.”

Kerry Ellis is best known for her West End stage roles, which have included playing the green witch in the smash hit musical Wicked and more recently Grizabella in Cats at the London Palladium.

With a beautiful voice, Kerry has legions of devoted fans of both her solo work and of the work on which she has collaborated with Queen guitarist May.

McGrove

Public exhibition on the redevelopment of the Clearings building, Draycott Avenue, SW3

A second and final public exhibition on plans for the redevelopment of the Clearings building will be held at the interim Marlborough Primary School, currently located at the Clearings site on Draycott Avenue, SW3, on:

Friday 29th January 6.30pm – 8.30pm
Saturday 30th January 10am – 2pm

McGrove Developments would like to invite you to attend and provide us with your feedback.

For further information please contact:
020 7618 9195 or clearings@luther.co.uk
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Help an older person stay physically active in Westminster by volunteering on a new project.

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**We need:**
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**We offer:**
- comprehensive training, ongoing support and expenses.

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- is a project in Partnership with Westminster Community Rehabilitation Team that keeps older people physically active and independent after discharge.

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for an application pack or call Liz:
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www.creightonhouse.org
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for a new exciting youth project based in New Cross SE14

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This is a deep clean service with a specific need for attention to detail so please ONLY APPLY if you feel this position suits you and your experience.

Applicants should be based in the Bromley or Lewisham area.

Apply to Marben & Co at
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**Telferocat Primary School**

Headteacher: Jenny Martin Baines (head), BEd (hons), MIA
(Diploma level 6 in Behaviour KS2) (hons)

New Year: New Job?

Enjoy working with children?

Looking for paid experience in a school?

Thinking of getting into teaching?

Our Outstanding school is looking for:

**Teaching Assistants for K3 (age range 7-11 years)**

to join our friendly, creative and expanding school as soon as possible.

**Graduates welcome to apply**

35 hours per week. 9.30am - 4pm

Salary: £22,000 pro rata

We would like to appoint enthusiastic, professional and motivated Teaching Assistants to join our expanding, successful and creative school. There are also opportunities to join our Extended School Team and expand your knowledge and skills.

The school is located on the Streatham Hill/Balham border, near the Common, we can offer a friendly staff and children and supportive parents. We are an outstanding school and we need dedicated professionals who are passionate about children.

Please feel free to call or arrange a visit to the school.

Application forms can be downloaded from the school website: www.telferocat.lambeth.sch.uk

or requested by email to Mrs Vicky Mather vmather@telferocat.lambeth.sch.uk

Closing date: 12 noon - Monday February 8th 2016

Interviews: Thursday February 11th 2016

Please send your completed application form to vmather@telferocat.lambeth.sch.uk or by post to: Mrs Vicky Mather, Office Manager, Telferocat Primary School, Telferocat Road, Balham, London SW17 0HN.

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people. These posts will be subject to enhanced DBS checks. Further information about this disclosure can be found at www.ukcrb.police.uk.

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**Family Mosaic**

is one of the largest housing, care and support providers in London and the South East.

**The Parkside Community Centre**

An exciting new community centre is due to open in the Lewisham area in April 2016. The Parkside Community Centre is situated on Lewisham Road SE13, and will provide services to the local community and further afield. The centre will be a state-of-the-art facility with the following spaces available:

- Community Hall for activities and functions
- Community Café
- Housing estate office
- IT training room
- Serviced meeting rooms
- Hot desk facility
- Lifts

The centre will be managed by Family Mosaic and a Management Committee with representatives from local residents and user groups. However, the plan is that a community trust will be established to take over the running of the centre within the next twelve months.

There are currently vacancies for three members of staff who will be responsible for the operation of this purpose-built facility. We are looking to recruit this small team who will be customer-focused and ensure a high level of professionalism and enthusiasm for the services offered to the local community. All posts are 40 hours per week.

**Centre Manager** up to £34,000 p.a.

You will be responsible for the overall running of the centre, ensuring that all procedures for operation are in place. You will also manage the budgets and marketing of the centre to ensure its financial viability, oversee the planned maintenance of the building and ensure that high levels of customer satisfaction are met.

**Centre Receptionist** up to £23,000 p.a.

Deputising for the Centre Manager in their absence, and responsible for the administration of bookings and day-to-day cash management; you will be the first point of contact for visitors to the centre, taking bookings and managing the day-to-day use of spaces in the centre.

**Caretaker** £19,552 p.a.

Ensuring that the centre is well-presented, clean and welcoming for all visitors including the laying out of rooms etc., you will undertake minor maintenance or decorating work at the centre. You will also manage contact and ensure a high quality of workmanship, from contractors employed to carry out planned maintenance at the centre, also ensuring the security and safety of the building and reporting any issues to the Centre Manager.

**Standard DBS checks will be required.**

For further information on an informal discussion, please contact Martin Pears, tel: 020 7089 1213 email: martin.pearse@familymosaic.co.uk or Robert Warwick, tel: 020 7089 1277 email: rob.warwick@familymosaic.co.uk

To apply, please go to www.familymosaiccareers.co.uk

**Closing date:** Monday 15 February 2016

Follow our vacancies on Twitter @FamilyMosaicJob

www.mi6.gov.uk

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**Supporting our business is varied. Supporting our nation is vital.**

**Business Support Officers**

£27,432 including local pay addition – London

As one of our Business Support Officers you’ll be using your high quality administrative skills to enable every part of our organisation to deliver, both in the UK and overseas. It all adds up to a varied and stimulating career. To find out more about Business Support Officers, go to www.mi6.gov.uk and search our current vacancies.

To apply you must be a born or naturalised British citizen aged 21 or over who has lived in the UK for most of the past ten years. Only discuss your application with your partner or a close family member, providing they are also British, and make them aware of the importance of discretion.

Mi6 strives for diversity and aims to create and maintain a workplace that treats all staff fairly on the grounds of merit and ability.
FORMER postman Conor Washington is the young striker Queens Park Rangers manager Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink hopes will deliver the goals following the sale of Charlie Austin to Southampton.

The 23-year-old Washington arrived in W12 last week from Peterborough United on a three-and-a-half year deal after Rangers agreed an undisclosed fee – thought to be around £2.5m – with the League One club. Washington has scored 15 goals for Posh this season, including 14 in his last 19, and made his R’s debut as a late substitute in Saturday’s home 1-1 draw with Wolverhampton Wanderers.

On his first signing as QPR boss, Hasselbaink said: “Conor is a player I’ve admired for a while now, so I’m delighted he’s agreed to join us.

“I’ve seen at first-hand what he’s capable of and all round he’s always impressed me. Of course, he’s still got a lot to learn, he’s by no means a finished article, but I’ve convinced he has what it takes to succeed to a higher level with us.

“He’s raw, he’s hungry, he’s determined. He’s quick and he’s versatile, which is important. He can play on his own up there, in a two, or on the shoulders of another striker. He’s got great pace to get in behind and that’s something we need when you look at our current attacking options.

“Importantly, he’s got the right mentality to be a QPR player.”

Washington, who has taken over Austin’s No.9 shirt, has an impressive goalscoring pedigree. During a two-year spell with St Ives in the Southern League, he amassed an incredible 64 goals in just 60 games.

As Washington has moved through the leagues, his goalscoring ratio has consistently improved. From one in 16 in his first season as a pro, to an average of one in four in his second, and almost one in three during his third campaign, Washington is now in the form of his career, averaging almost every goal a game over every other.

Massive pull

He enthused: “As a striker, having someone like Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink here as manager was a massive pull for me. He’s been there, seen it and done it at the very highest level and he could only benefit me as a player.

“I feel I’ve improved as a player over the last 18 months. My mentality has changed and I’m a better player for it. I feel there’s a lot more to come from me and I believe I can properly go on to fulfil my potential at QPR.

“I know I’ve still got a long way to go in my development but I’m relishing the chance to prove my worth. I’ve proved I can do it at every level I’ve played at so far, so I don’t see any reason why I can’t do it here at QPR.”

Washington will give QPR another option in attack, where summer signing Sebastian Polter is staking his claim for a prolonged run in the side. The 24-year-old German gave Rangers a second minute lead with a powerful header against Wolves – his fourth goal in five matches.

“Seb reminds me of an old fashioned English striker,” said Hasselbaink. “He’s got the tools to become a very good player but he’s still learning.

“His hard work is being rewarded at the moment and he deserves this because he is giving everything for the team.

“It’s not just hard work, though – he is leading the line with a lot of ability. ‘Seb will only get better by being stronger and fitter. It’s a process for him because he still hasn’t had many games.”

Polter played the lone striker role until he was joined up front by Washington, who came on to replace Janoi Hollett with seven minutes of normal time remaining.

Even in such limited time, Washington showed his quality. After controlling a long ball with a neat first touch, he got near to the byeline and delivered a perfect low cross on a plate for Tjaron Chery but his crisp strike rebounded from the post. It was a golden chance for R’s to snatch all three points after James Henry had equalised with a lucky twelfe twelfeff etff etff in the 47th minute.

“I’ve had bad luck every day of the week on his left foot,” said Hasselbaink, still awaiting his first home win since taking charge in early December.

“Maybe he caught it too well. Sometimes if you scuff those they go.

“The first half was very positive. We were organised and solid and we were on the front foot and our play forward was good.

“But we dropped off in the second half and didn’t get behind them enough.”

Henry’s fortunate equaliser was a cruel blow to Hasselbaink’s men and the R’s gaffer added: “The goal was disappointing. It’s a double deflection. ‘Could we have got a bit closer before he shot? Maybe. But I can’t be too critical. It was a fluke of a goal.

“You can’t train against those types of goals. It’s a double deflection and they’re rare. They don’t happen every week.”

With no game this weekend (Saturday’s scheduled visit to Nottingham Forest was brought forward to Tuesday of this week, just after LWN went to press), Hasselbaink has an 11-day break between matches to work with his team before Ipswich Town visit Loftus Road on Saturday (Feb 6).

Hasselbaink is also delighted to have completed the signing of goalkeeper Matt Ingram from Wycombe Wanderers for an undisclosed fee.

The 22-year-old, who made 140 appearances in all competitions for the League Two side since making his debut in March 2013, has signed a four-and-a-half year deal until the summer of 2020.

Widely regarded as the best young keeper in the fourth tier, Ingram is relishing the opportunity to prove his worth at a higher level with Rangers.

He said: “I’m at the stage of my career when I want to progress and I see QPR as a natural step forward for me.

“I spoke to the manager at length and he made me feel really welcome about coming here.

“I’m by no means the finished article – as a 22-year-old goalkeeper, I’ve still got a lot to learn – and coming here gives me another platform to develop and get better.

“The challenge of competing for the shirt will drive me on. Alex (Smithies) is a great keeper and I’m looking forward to working with him and the other keepers.”

The future

Hasselbaink said: “Matt is one for the future but he’s joining us at a time when he’s developing into a really good young goalkeeper.

“Alex has the shirt now but I want Matt to challenge him – and that is why we have signed him. Knowing him and his character, he won’t just be coming here to sit on the bench.

“We feel Matt will play at the highest level one day. We foresee a very bright future for him.”

LOFTUS ROAD RANGERS REVIEW

With Tony McDonald

WASHINGTON tipped to deliver the goods

FIELDSTONE

Windsor

Fulham

Chelsea

Branislav Ivanovic has signed a new one-year deal at Chelsea

Chelsea back page

Milton Keynes Dons v CHELSEA,
Sunday, January 31

London Evening Standard

COSC

Middlesbrough

Middlesbrough

Marcos Odubajo handed Hull the big difference between us and them.

We have to really care, we have to get the points from every game. We need to start winning games regularly. We don’t know where we can finish but we are not thinking about that because we know the season for us has been very, very disappointing. It’s not finished and that’s a positive, because we can still change something.”

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Fulham back page

There is a sense that, at 29, McCormack sees this as probably his last chance to play in the Premier League – suggesting Middlesbrough do gain promotion in May. He would certainly be a huge loss – and not just for his goals.

McCormack, who joined Fulham from Leeds United for £1m on a four-year deal in July 2014, also has one of the best assists records in English football this season.

Dead-ball specialist

He is a dead-ball specialist whose creativity is distilling to a Middlesbrough side renowned for a string of low scoring victories in games of few chances.

While Fulham continue to bite their nails as the clock ticks agonisingly towards next Monday’s deadline, Jokanovic must use what is left of this transfer window to bring in loan signings. After the defeat by Hull, which leaves his side four points above the bottom three, he said: “It’s not an easy situation for us. I made three changes but we’re looking to the loan market.

“Our plan is to bring in new people. We have another week and we’re trying to do something. We need to improve.”

Fulham enjoyed 67 per cent of the play against Steve Bruce’s side but Tigers’ keeper Allan McGregor was only forced into a couple of saves,

Although Jamie O’Hara went close from a free-kick at the Hammersmith End and in another close shave Alex Kacaniklic almost scrambled the ball over the line. There were just 10 minutes remaining when Lasse Vigen Christensen’s reckless challenge on Moses Odubajo handed Hull the penalty that decided the game. Jokanovic said: “First of all we’re very disappointed. I believe we played very well for 60-65 minutes and had a lot of possession. It’s true, we didn’t create many chances but it was clear the game was heading for a draw, then we made one mistake and lost.”

At least the Serbian didn’t point an accusing finger at the match officials, as many other managers do in the face of adversity. He said: “I don’t know if it was intentional but I believe the referee made the right call.” he admitted.

“Try to organise my team,” added Jokanovic. “Hull are one of the top teams in the Championship and they are more solid, stronger and faster. I tried to find a way to win. I don’t think we’re ready to play in a similar way to Hull but I didn’t see big difference between us and them. “We showed some organisation, we had more balance but it’s the second game I’ve lost at home.”
Blues target cup progress

Chelsea can put their misfiring Premier League season on hold this week as they prepare to visit Milton Keynes Dons on Sunday, in the fourth round of the FA Cup.

It’s unlikely that interim manager Guus Hiddink will unnecessarily tinker with the side that dispatched Arsenal so professionally on Sunday, but a few enforced changes are on the cards.

Returning to the starting line-up, following his groin injury sustained against Crystal Palace three weeks ago, will be Eden Hazard, who came on as a substitute in the 1-0 win at The Emirates.

England vice-captain Gary Cahill, who it seems has lost the battle with John Terry to partner Kurt Zouma in the league, is expected to take Terry’s place in the back four against the side currently 20th in the Championship.

Pedro, who apparently had a stomach complaint at the weekend, will most likely play instead of rested Oscar.

Up front, Diego Costa is a doubt. He had a shin problem before the Arsenal game and though he scored the winner after 23 minutes, he limped off. The Emirates pitch midway through the second half clutching his right leg. Loic Remy is the obvious alternative.

Hiddink said of the Costa blow: “I don’t know if it’s a slight or more severe injury. It was on the knee.”

The 1-0 win in north London extended Hiddink’s unbeaten run to seven matches, ironically the best in the Premier League at present, since he took over from Jose Mourinho.

Languishing

But there have only been two league wins and that’s why Blues are still languishing at the wrong end of the table, in 13th place, just seven points clear of third from bottom Newcastle United.

Chelsea are 14 points off fourth spot and while it is mathematically possible, it’s highly improbable that Blues will qualify for next season’s Champions League. Of course, if they overcome Paris Saint-Germain next month and go on to lift the trophy in May, they then will be in Europe’s elite competition next season as holders.

Although Hiddink is unlikely to be manager next season, he is hoping that his charges keep on winning.

Talking of the three points gained against 10-man Arsenal, the 69-year-old Dutchman said: “It was a spectacular result. I am proud of the guys. We played well in the first half and OK in the second. But we should have scored more goals.”

Of the 18th minute incident in the 18th minute, Arsenal centre-back Per Mertesacker was red carded by ref Mark Clattenburg for bringing down Costa, who would have been through on Petr Cech’s goal, Hiddink said: “There was no doubt it was a sending-off, because you could see it was a beautiful through pass from Fabregas to Diego.”

“But when you wait for Arsenal, they are so skilful and can score against us, so we should have gone forward more. The only thing I can criticise them for is that we didn’t go for the kill and make it 2-0.”

“But I’m pleased with the attitude of the team. We were happy he is saying he is playing well. He is in a line of improving. He likes it when he can play but we try to get the team in balance.”

Chelsea had a strong shout for a penalty dismissed when Lauren Koscienly bashed Fabregas to the ground in the Arsenal penalty area.

Diplomatic as ever, Hiddink said of the obvious spot kick that wasn’t given: “I can understand that the referee did not give the penalty.

“We are unbeaten (since I took over as manager) but it’s not satisfying. We need three or more wins and if we stay unbeaten as well, it’s possible to get into the top four.

“But I want to see the ambition from the players, even when there is nothing at stake. John Terry says we can make the top four. So if the captain says so, then we follow the captain – but it is a gap.”

Hiddink has, however, scotched rumours that former striker Didier Drogba would be joining him in the dugout anytime soon.

The former Ivory Coast striker is plying his trade as a player on the other side of the Atlantic, in the MLS with Montreal Impact, and was expected to bring much-needed personality and experience to the Chelsea dressing room as a coach rather than player.

But it seems that negotiations to release him from his remaining year deal have stalled and Drogba, currently doing the rounds promoting his new book, will return to Canada for one season more.

“Drogba won’t be coming back to Chelsea in the short-term,” said Hiddink. “He’ll always be welcome in the long-term.”

ONE iconic Chelsea player who is remaining at The Bridge is Branislav Ivanovic, who has signed a new one-year contract.

The centre-back, who plays right-back for Blues, will be 32 next month and Chelsea’s policy of giving only one-year deals to players over 30 means the Serbian will probably stay in SW6 until at least July 2017.

He said: “I am very happy to stay with Chelsea for another season. After eight years here this is my home and there is no other place I would rather play football.

“I have enjoyed so much success since moving to the club and I am determined to help the team achieve more in the last months of this season and next year as well.”

Ivanovic was signed from Locomotive Moscow in January 2008 for £9million. He has won the Champions League and two Premier League titles, three FA Cups and one League Cup. He also scored