

WestcombeNEWS



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June 2026 No 5

'June is the time of perfect young summer' — and the perfect time to reflect on our year.'

Westcombe Society Annual General Meeting



The Society's Annual General Meeting was held on 15 May in the Wollstonecraft Room at Blackheath High School and was well attended by members. During the meeting, members reflected on the wide range of activities and events organised over the past year, alongside updates on membership, advertising, the Society's finances, the work of the Environment Committee and Westcombe News as well as the Charity of the Year initiative. Following the formal business of the evening, attendees enjoyed an illustrated presentation by Joe Beale on local wildlife, with a particular focus on butterflies.

Chair's Annual Report 2025-2026

The work of the Society would be much diminished without the hard work and support of our Executive Committee - Jane Wilson, our ever efficient Secretary, Jean-Jacques Aune the Vice Chair who also coordinates the Events Sub Committee, Miles Storey for keeping our finances in good order in his role as Hon Treasurer and Christine Legg for looking after our membership records.

Membership of the Executive Committee also includes representation from our Environment Sub Committee and from the Westcombe News.

There are separate, detailed reports

which show that our finances are stronger than for some time, that set out the successful fund raising and other activities organised by the Events Sub Committee and which help keep the Society solvent and to maintain the Society's record of supporting donations to charity. The Environment Sub-Committee is forensic in scrutinising planning applications for the area and in analysing and commenting on schemes such as the Council's Low Traffic Neighbourhood scheme

The Westcombe News continues to be published ten times a year and to be a much valued community newspaper. Marilyn Little has done a splendid job in looking after the advertising and Christine Fells, with support from an experienced editorial team, has continued as our well organised and enthusiastic Editor

As members will know we joined with the Blackheath Society in publishing "Walking Westcombe" Neil Rhind's book on the history of the area set out in a series of twelve walks with one hundred pictures, many not previously published. 500 copies were printed and these have sold very well enabling the Society to meet its share of the costs and possibly enjoy a small surplus - though making a profit was not the objective - and we are very pleased to have been involved in this project. In conclusion I would like to thank our members for their continued support and encouragement and, especially, to thank those who volunteer to take on the multitude of tasks which help the Society to function in the highly effective way it does.

*Geoff Brighty, Chair -
Westcombe Society*

Open Letter

A small item in the May edition referred to the open letter to the Chief Executive Royal Borough of Greenwich concerning Access, Evidence, and the Sustainability of a Neighbourhood Retail Centre at Blackheath Standard.

The letter begins by pointing out that, 'National planning policy is explicit that planning policies and decisions should support centres as the heart of local communities and promote their long-term vitality and viability'. It goes on to identify three main issues of concern to local traders; the implementation of the LTN, the sale of Old Dover Road council-owned public carpark and the council's lack of support for, and engagement with, local businesses.

The letter argues that the introduction of the LTN has made a significant impact on trade at the Standard. It had been introduced without any form of assessment or baseline analysis. Enforcement of the local regulations had generated 104,238 penalty charge notices (PCNs) in its first year, including 15,000 issued to vehicles registered locally in SE3, SE7 and SE10. This equates to approximately £0.97 million from local residents and over £6 million altogether.

The disposal of the Old Dover Road car park had gone ahead without any proper analysis of the effects on local businesses and with very limited evidence of its current use.

The letter goes on to say that the only documented meeting with affected businesses took place almost a year after the decision to sell the car park, was unminuted, and has been referred to by the council in terms of "managing the optics", raising concerns about the purpose and timing of engagement.

There is most concern about the

introduction of the LTN which, the letter claims, was introduced without 'economic, behavioural or retail impact assessment to show how the intervention would affect the neighbourhood retail centre.' Traffic may have reduced but additional effects felt by the traders could not be assessed in the absence of baseline analysis. Local businesses have evidence of a decline in trade of between 28% and 58%.

The only meeting called by the council was to discuss the sale of the car park but it also gave local businesses opportunity to raise other matters. However, several of those who attended felt that these were not adequately addressed and the lack of minutes meant that there was no effective follow-up.

The open letter ends with a long list of suggestions for mitigation and improvement. These include creating a corporate local identity, improving the general appearance of the area, re-purposing vacant units for temporary occupation, creating an 'Eat at Blackheath Standard campaign' and others.

More substantive proposals are also offered.

- Mitigate the effect of the LTN by implementing an ANPR-based local access for SE3, SE7 and SE10 to enable local traffic free movement.

- Reverse the disposal of Old Dover Road car park, or deliver a full functional replacement of short-stay capacity

- Deliver a Council-funded, Council-led, Council-delivered place-support plan, with a named Senior Responsible Officer and a clear delivery timetable.

With a new Council perhaps we can see some of these taken on board in the near future.

Friends of Greenwich Park Concerts this Summer



friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk. This concert normally sells out well in advance.

Their bandstand concerts, which are free and feature a wide variety of musical styles, will run at 3pm on all Sundays from 5 June until 30 August, finishing on Bank Holiday Monday 31 August.

The Friends of Greenwich Park are staging another season of concerts this summer in the Park. Their annual Midsummer Jazz concert in the Royal Observatory Garden takes place on 14 June and this year sees the return of the popular Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band. Tickets are £10, with under 16s free, and can be booked at



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Westcombe News

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Open times at Westcombe Woodlands



The Friends of Westcombe Woodlands held an early spring open half day on Sunday 3 May. This steeply wooded nature area, next to Maze Hill station (entrance in Seren Park), is a bit of a hidden gem. There was information about the flora and fauna, homemade refreshments, and time to speak to volunteers. Their next open event is on Saturday 6 June in the afternoon (2–5pm). If interested, there is a volunteering morning on Saturday 1 August.

More information can be found at:
www.westcombewoodlands.uk

Blackheath Common – What is Happening?

The Blackheath Joint Working Party (BJWP), the body that advises Greenwich and Lewisham councils on the use of the Heath, is holding its annual public meeting on Tuesday 9 June at 7 p.m. at Blackheath High School, Vanbrugh Park, SE3 7AG. We encourage anyone who has an interest in the Heath to come along. The agenda will include:

- Information on who the BJWP is and what its role is
- What events are planned for the rest of 2026. The organisers of Blackheath Fireworks will be in attendance
- How money raised from past events has been used to improve the Heath and support projects that monitor and protect the flora and fauna that led to it being designated a Site of Metropolitan Interest for Nature Conservation
- A talk on butterflies given by local naturalist Joe Beale
- There may also be a talk about the Bumblebee project

Do you have any ideas for projects that could improve the Heath? This is your opportunity to put them forward.

Do you have concerns about how the Heath is managed? Come to the meeting and get your questions answered.

Newsbrief

Another bus route is to be cut. The 54 which links Woolwich with Elmers End will be reduced from six to five per hour on weekdays as part of TfL's efforts to cut costs.

MEfA Montessori Summer Garden Party



Our 2026 Summer Garden Party will be held on Saturday 27th June from 2pm - 4pm. Everyone is welcome to enjoy afternoon tea, games for all ages, plant sales, 'new to you' and more. Please come and explore our lovely well-being community garden. For more information, please call Wendy on 07710433994.

Weekend Hopper

2026 marks the 10 year anniversary of the Hopper fare.

To celebrate this milestone, TfL will operate a Weekend Hopper fare this summer on Saturdays and Sundays from 04:30 on 25 July to 23:59 on 31 August. It will also operate on the August Bank Holiday, Monday 31 August.

When 'pay as you go' is used on buses and trams, the Weekend Hopper fare will give you unlimited bus and tram journeys on Saturdays and Sundays for the price of a single fare each day. Touch in using the same card or device on all journeys and you get the Weekend Hopper fare automatically. The Weekend Hopper fare also applies to discounted rate travel.

See TfL .gov.uk for further details.

Advertising Manager

The Westcombe News seeks a new advertising manager. Tasks in this voluntary position include responding to queries for new ads, invoicing and monitoring payment. Many advertisers pre-pay for future ads, so monthly invoicing is minimal.

Basic spreadsheet skills a bonus but training could be given. Around 7/10 hours over the month would be needed.

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or 07939386215

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Past Life



The magic of Walking Westcombe by the late Neil Rhind is how buildings locals see daily and take for granted spring to life when their past, often colourful and unexpected, is revealed in the book.

The modern De La Mare Court flats in Stratheden Road, for instance, stand on the site of what was once the Royal Standard bowling green, before it became a nursery garden and then a garage/petrol station. The photo here, by courtesy of Julian Watson and John Coulter, was taken around 1910 outside Alfred Levett & Co's nursery/florists.

Walking Westcombe can be purchased for £12 at the Blackheath Bookshop or the Bookshop on the Heath and can be collected locally by emailing:
info@westcombesociety.com.

Calling readers who live in Tom Smith Close or near the bottom of Maze Hill

We are looking for someone willing to collect just over 100 copies of Westcombe News from Coleraine Road and deliver them to Chrisp House and the three blocks of flats in Tom Smith Close. Help is needed ten times a year. The papers do not need to be delivered to individual flats, they can be left on the ground floor of each building. If anyone can help please email info@westcombesociety.org or call 020 8853 2756. Thank you.

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NEIGHBOURHOOD

One Woman's Passion



Photo credit: Alicia Canter

The wildlife of Westcombe Park has a passionate ally in 39-year-old local animal rescuer, Tracey Parsons.

Chances are you've seen this softly spoken woman wading through freezing pond water to rescue a duck or swan, or you've seen her decorating shop windows with wonderful paintings of foxes, owls, hedgehogs, buzzards, squirrels, ducks, robins, deer, horses and the rest.

Tracey, who has been helping lost and injured creatures, is a force to be reckoned with; an English rose with the tenacity of a tiger when she finds animals and birds in distress. There's no switch-off button, she rushes to rescues in the middle of the night, spends her own money on feed and medications, works with organisations like the Greenwich Wildlife Network, stays up all night feeding baby squirrels and birds ... and yes, sometimes finds it overwhelming.

"I have to do it," she declares. "All animals are precious with a spirit and energy. They are helpless and have no voice. I want to make a difference."

Tracey is a true nature girl who did

her first rescue at the age of 7. It was a fledging songbird that had lost its mother. She kept the baby in her bedroom, and went to the local library to learn how to feed it.

Rescuing and rehabilitating animals has become an essential part of living for Tracey who is always on the lookout for wildlife needing help. She will drop everything when someone calls her about an urgent rescue. All baby wildlife, when well enough, are sent on to licensed wildlife organisations.

This round-the-clock rescuer is also a massage therapist, and an artist who paints wonderful images of animals which adorn cards, tea towels and bags. She is available, too, to paint pet portraits. Oh, and let's not forget her music. She composes, and a lovely song called Whispers of the Soul is receiving radio airplay. She has worked in retail, taken a photography course with award-winning photographer Andy Rouse, and has a children's book, *The Golden Swallow*, in her head ready to start writing and illustrating.

You can't help but be drawn into Tracey's world and to be in awe of her passion for animals and nature. Her partner, Tim, who used to be in IT, often works alongside her in rescue missions.

A local school has commissioned Tracey to do window art this summer and of course, the work will be of wildlife.

Tracey's dream is to one day have her own animal sanctuary. It will surely happen.

Catch her on Instagram: T.J. Parsons

Diane Blackwell

Cleaning & Greening



Caption: some of the Wilder Greenwich team with neighbours in Westcombe Hill. Credit: Andy Chapman

Wilder Greenwich held two sessions in April and May at key local sites that would benefit from a bit of greenery: Siebert Road near the underpass, and the space at the foot of Westcombe Hill, by the railway viaduct.

With thanks to the borough for the loan of litter-picking equipment, and to a good number of young and older people, the two areas were cleared of various bits of rubbish. To one boy's delight, that included 'a whole onion! Look!' There were also many sweet wrappers and empty drinks bottles, blown in on the wind from the A102 or deposited by foxes or humans passing by. Even more fun were the surveys for plant and insect life. There's already a surprising variety among the grass and dandelions. One interesting plant was a green alkanet, widely considered a weed, but with white flowers instead of the usual

blue, so a genetic variant. A nearby resident has been planting bulbs and wildflowers, so there were cornflowers blooming. Among the insects were several butterflies: small blue, speckled wood, and brimstone. There was also a dark-edged Bee Fly (*Bombilius Major*), a special creature; it is a true fly, but looks very like a bee and has a long proboscis for sucking nectar from flowers.

The eventual aim is to plant a long line of native thornless hedging plants along the new barrier that Transport for London installed as mitigation for road noise and air pollution. Wilder Greenwich's plans depend somewhat on the borough's Transport Department, which has some funds to make improvements along the A102, following the opening of the Silvertown Tunnel last year. The results of their consultation should be revealed soon, along with their revised plans. Wilder Greenwich's hope is that more greenery, looked after by locals, builds both homes for wildlife and community spirit for humans. From the evidence of the two sessions held so far, this looks likely to achieve the aims or both.

Anne Robbins

Angerstein Flyover



The Aldeburgh & Fearon Streets Neighbourhood Watch team is based, not as you might think in East Anglia but, according to Google, "is an active community group in East Greenwich, London, focused on improving the local area through regular litter picks, community engagement and safety initiatives. Led by a dedicated team, they have operated for over six years, producing bimonthly newsletters and organizing local projects."

The Angerstein flyover has long been a blot on the street scene of East Greenwich and one which successive administrations have pledged to improve but which currently remains as dreary and dirty as ever, although occasionally enlivened by skate-boarders. Now, the Council have provided a grant to the Aldeburgh & Fearon Streets Neighbourhood Watch to produce a 15 foot "wall of stories" to "show-

case the energy and creativity of East Greenwich". The proposed mural is promised to "transform the area" and tell the tale of the local industrial heritage which has a long list of significant places, people and events.

Recently the winding gear at Enderby Wharf was designated a nationally-important archaeological or historical monument. The Enderby family who owned what was claimed to be the largest whaling fleet in Britain, is also recognised through Enderby House. John Julius Angerstein, after whom the local pub and the flyover itself are named, had an art collection which laid the foundation for the National Gallery. Nearer to our time the O2, one of Europe's largest and busiest indoor entertainment venues, started life as a national project to mark the new millennium, in contrast to the Pilot Inn which, at 225 years, is the oldest surviving local building.

The Aldeburgh & Fearon Streets Neighbourhood Watch team are currently seeking ideas for the decoration and improvement of the area.

A link to their publicity and request for ideas can be found with this QR code





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FEATURES

Meet Robert Seatter, our own River Thames Poet



Without the River Thames, Greenwich would not feel like Greenwich; it's part of our identity, whether we go on it, in it, or simply beside it. And so the pathway along the river is an important part of life as we know it. Thirty years ago, the Thames Path was created, to ensure that as much as possible, the riverine inhabitants – that means us! – could have access to the river then and into the future. And now you can have a personal escort along the river: the current Poet in Residence for the Thames Path, writer, broadcaster, historian and performer, Robert Seatter. **Neville Grant** interviewed him for the *Westcombe News*.

NG: Robert, I know you are visiting Greenwich on 9th June, for one of Irena Hill's 'In-Word' literary evenings at West Greenwich Library, so this is very timely!

RS: I'm looking forward to it. I love sharing my work with an audience – not all poets do, but I like that sense of communicating what I have written.

NG: I see that you have already published eight collections of poems, which have won an impressive number of prizes and awards. However, your current job description is Poet in Residence for the Thames Path Project. What does that entail?

RS: It doesn't mean 'wandering lonely as a cloud', sounding off about the

beauties of the river! It really means listening to all those who know, use or love the river, and building up a sense of what it means to those who are closest to it.

NG: And then?

RS: I have created 'a word trail' of 30 short poems along the length of the river, available via a QR code on the Thames Path fingerposts, and you can also hear my voice reading the poems. Plus I am asking everyone to send me their thoughts and reflections about the Thames in order to create a community poem, at the end of the project later this year.

NG: That's very interesting. More about it later. But first, can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

RS: Well, I was born in the 'dreaming suburbs', in Surbiton, where the town emptied every day as all the commuters piled into London. And that early suburban existence marked me – gave me a sense of life always happening elsewhere, and perhaps an early wanderlust to find that elsewhere...

NG: We can glean even more about you from a great poem you wrote, called I come from ... which is on your website I think?

RS: Yes, it's a 'list poem' conjured from the objects I grew up with – from i-SPY books and privet hedges to double glazing and the ubiquitous sound of night-time trains. The ordinary things that make all of us.

NG: So you escaped?

RS: Yes, first to Oxford University to read English, and then I went to teach English as a Foreign Language in Italy and France.

NG: A good experience, I'm sure.

RS: Absolutely, I learnt a lot about language - its mechanics, its mutability, and about neighbouring cultures, also about our own culture as seen through European eyes. I think that kind of experience was invaluable to me, to define my personality, and to help me find my voice.

NG: And then?

RS: Publishing for a number of years, then the BBC where I ended up as Head of BBC History. I went to stay for a couple of years and stayed for over 25! But during all that time, I

was writing and publishing poetry.

NG: And in particular I know you have developed a passion for poetry and placemaking – tell us about that

RS: Yes, I've become very interested in how poetry can capture the essence of a space, its collection of objects, the personalities that have shaped it. Poetry is so good at evocation, at going to the heart of the matter. So I've been lucky enough to be poet in residence at two fascinating locations. First, Sir John Soane's Museum, that extraordinary 'cabinet of curiosities' in Lincoln's Inn Fields, filled obsessively with over 5,000 objects.

Then last year, I repeated the role at Kelmscott Manor in Oxfordshire, 'the heaven on earth' residence of William Morris, which inspired many of his most famous designs, such as the Strawberry Thief. But also designs for fabrics and wallpapers evoking the nearby Thames and its tributaries.

NG: Which leads us neatly back to the Thames. Tell us about the trail of poems you have created.

RS: It's really based on what draws people to the river, from the historic locations that stay in our memory to the solace and beauty of nature, from the workaday mechanics of managing a river to the physical activity - walking, swimming, rowing, fishing - that fills our daily schedule. The poems are short and accessible, but I also hope revelatory and intriguing - making people maybe see the Thames they thought they knew in new and different ways.

NG: I can't wait to follow the trail! And if any reader of this article wants to be part of the community poem at the end of the project, what do they do?

RS: Simply send me a short email – three words that conjure up the Thames for them, or a message saying what the river means to them, or their most vivid memory of the Thames. Send to robertseatter@hotmail.com.

NG: Fascinating! Robert thank you so much for your time. I much look forward to hearing you at the West Greenwich Library on June 9th.

RS: Many thanks Neville.

www.robertseatter.co.uk

Maggie Gravelle

A Two-Day London Marathon: Benefits and Drawbacks

The London Marathon is always one of the highlights of the sporting year, and most local residents are proud that it continues to start in Greenwich. But are they as keen to host a two-day event as we are told is being considered?

The BBC tells us that no decision has yet been taken, but event organisers say they are exploring ways to enable more people to take part. They say: "It comes after a record 1.1 million people applied in the public ballot to participate in the 2026 race." This is a 36% increase on the previous year. Organisers also claim that a two-day event would increase the amount of money collected for charity. The thousands of visitors who line the streets to cheer runners on would also boost the local economy and bring Greenwich into the homes of the millions who watch on TV.

But it is also worth considering the disadvantages. Already, areas of Greenwich, including Westcombe Park and Charlton, are effectively cut off for half the day because streets are closed. This is tolerable for most people if it occurs on a Sunday, but Saturday is the day when many families do their shopping.

Public transport would also be disrupted. Rail services are frequently reduced, and trains are very crowded. Engineering works make travel on the affected lines even more uncertain.

The clear-up this year was very speedy, but an additional few thousand visitors might benefit some traders while also putting a strain on services and possibly on the condition of the heath. The clear-up might also spill over into Monday morning.

At the time of going to press, no decision had been announced, but these events are logistically complex and would require detailed planning.

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FEATURES

Environment Committee Report for AGM 2026

Since its inception the Westcombe Society has taken an active interest in the local area. The Environment Committee focuses on both the natural and the built environment. This means that we are interested in the buildings, the open spaces, transport in and around the area and developments beyond the immediate area which may have an impact on our quality of life.

1. Built Environment

A number of traffic issues have been a regular feature of debate and sometimes dissent. Prominent among these is the introduction of the West and East Greenwich Traffic Management scheme, better known as the Low Traffic Neighbourhood area. As a committee we scrutinised the documentation and attended as many of the meetings as possible. Our main concerns related not simply to the scheme itself, but to the way in which the consultation was conducted and to the Council's response to a proposal that was widely criticised. Those of

us who live within the LTN have mostly benefitted from quieter roads, but we worry that those in neighbouring areas are suffering as a consequence.

Dockless e-bikes also raise concerns. Too often they are left inappropriately on pavements or blocking driveways and are not removed sufficiently quickly. The Council has now suggested measures to ensure that they are parked in designated areas and we await fuller consultation on the final details of the scheme.

The roads leading to and from the Blackwall and Silvertown tunnels border our neighbourhood and we are particularly concerned at the effects for those living there. A Noise Barrier has finally been erected and local residents have been working hard to make this 'the best it can be'. We are following with great interest plans by both the Council and Wilder Greenwich to landscape the area around Siebert Road and the bottom of Westcombe Hill and to improve the underpass.

Old Dover Road/Westcombe Hill is our local shopping area with an exciting variety of shops and businesses. We know that the traders are suffering increasing costs and decreasing income and are worried that this may affect their long-term viability. Recently, an Open Letter was sent to the CEO of the Royal Borough of Greenwich detailing these concerns. We look forward to the reply and to working with the traders to see that improvements are put in place.

The Environment Committee scrutinises local planning applications and comments on those that involve overlooking or significant alteration to the street scene. Over the year there have been many applications for loft conversions and extensions as people make the most of their living space. We often discuss these cases with the Greenwich Planning Alliance, which we helped to convene, and which includes experts in planning and architecture as well as representatives from the Council. The Planning Department has clear guidance on building and renovations in Conservation Areas which form the framework for our recommendations. We have also commented on the Draft Local Plan, currently being revised by the Council, which will also help us form opinions on planning applications.

2. Natural Environment

Many of the planning applications which we scrutinise concern work to trees and we are fortunate in having a good working relationship with the Council's Tree Officer. She has the power to impose Tree Protection Orders on healthy specimens that are endangered.

We are very lucky to live near two such valuable spaces as the Heath and the Park, as well as several smaller green areas. The Westcombe Society is represented on the Blackheath Joint Working Party (BJWP), which is the consultative body for the heath. The preservation of the natural environment is particularly important and we have made suggestions on cutting the

grass at appropriate times and heights to preserve the delicate acid grassland which is of special importance. The BJWP also discusses the events on the heath and tries to ensure that these are evenly distributed and not too obtrusive in terms of noise, traffic and damage to the grass. We encourage residents to attend the BJWP Open Meeting which will be held at Blackheath High School on 9 June. Our other major space is Greenwich Park and we are represented on the Stakeholders Panel. We are also represented on the Friends of Mycenae Gardens.

Work is going on under the Wilder Greenwich scheme at Westcombe Park station and in other areas to improve the natural environment, both to make it more attractive and to provide a haven for birds, insects and other wildlife.

3. Other Activities

The Environment Committee also works collaboratively with a number of other organisations and we value and appreciate membership of these networks. Representatives attend the Safer Neighbourhood Panel, which is a valuable link with local police and enables us to inform residents of progress on issues that are concerning them.

We are also members of London Forum, which represents the views and interests of amenity and civic societies in London, and we value their expertise in areas such as planning, development management, heritage, transport, environment, waterways and open spaces.

We communicate regularly with our local Councillors and appreciate the hard work and support that they provide.

We are not experts, but interested residents who take an active interest in local developments in order to preserve the essential character of the Conservation Area. We meet once a month online and would welcome new members who share our desire to ensure that Westcombe Park remains such a pleasant place to live and work.

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ENVIRONMENT

The new plug-in solar panels: Are they for you?

It will soon be possible to buy DIY 'plug-in solar panels' which are a new and simple way to generate free electricity at home. They are part of the Government's drive for clean power and energy security.

1. What are they? The solar panels (usually one or two) are connected to a microinverter and then to a standard plug. The panels generate electricity in daylight, and the inverter converts DC power to AC current, allowing the generated power to flow safely into your home when plugged into a standard 3-pin socket. The dimensions of the panel are typically 1.76m x 1.13m and they are heavy – about 20kg. The microinverter is the size of a small book and is usually mounted behind, or near, the solar panel.

2. Are they useful? They generate up to 800 watts, so will not power your whole home or charge your electric vehicle. The 800-watt limit is so that standard UK sockets and circuits are not overloaded. Plug-in solar will reduce the amount of 'background' electricity used, so could be helpful if you are at home in the day, or work from a garden office, and have steady daytime electricity use. Appliances that are on all the time, such as a fridge, Wi-Fi/routers or smart devices can be powered by plug-in solar panels. They work best when the electricity generated is used immediately as there is no storage, and none is sold to the grid.

3. Who do they suit? If you live in a

flat or rent and have no means of having full rooftop solar, or if you don't want to commit to rooftop solar, then plug-in solar offers a way of making a small dent in your energy bill and reducing your carbon footprint.

4. What are the savings? The biggest attraction is the start-up price. A basic kit is about £400-600 compared with £6,000+ for rooftop panels. And as the kit is portable, you can easily take it with you if you move. Savings are estimated at £70-£110 per year in favourable conditions, with a payback period of approximately 3-6 years depending on initial cost and sunlight.

5. Where to put the panels? South-facing is best to receive maximum sunlight. South-east and south-west orientation is almost as good. Angle them at 30-40°. They can be on a balcony, patio, office/shed roof, wall or on a stand. Avoid shade: this can be difficult in an urban setting like ours, where neighbouring houses may cast shadows, especially in winter. The panels come with built-in cables and usually need to be within 5-10m of the plug. Long extension cords are highly discouraged as they cause a) a drop in voltage which reduces efficiency, and b) a serious fire hazard due to the electrical resistance of the wire.

Similar technologies are already widely used across Europe. In the UK, plug-in solar panels are in the

process of being legalized. New safety standards are likely, including updating wiring regulations and grid connection codes. One regulation will be that if you install plug-in solar panels you should tell the District Network Operator (0203 324 1460) so they can maintain stability of the overall supply. For older properties it would be advisable to ask an electrician to check the integrity and safety of the existing electrical circuit. *Ann Hill*

DISCOUNT! (When you show your Westcombe Society membership card)

ALL CITY LOCKSMITHS LTD offer upto a 15% discount for local residents

ROYAL NEPALESE RESTAURANT (Station Crescent) 20% OFF meals for two or more Sunday - Thursday.

COTON & HAMBLIN LENS CLUB -

Complimentary standard coated single vision lenses worth £50 when purchasing complete spectacles. T's & C's apply.

BLACKHEATH EYECARE OPTICIANS Money-saving Eyeplan membership offered

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WESTCOMBE DRY CLEANERS

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Help your garden birds by feeding safely

The RSPB has asked people to pause using peanut and seed feeders during the summer (1 May to 31 October). Small amounts of mealworms, fatballs or suet can still be offered. Research has shown a worrying decline in some much-loved garden birds due to trichomonosis, a highly contagious disease that can spread where birds gather in large numbers at feeders. RSPB advice is available at <https://www.rspb.org.uk/>

PLANNING APPLICATIONS*

www.westcombesociety.org

41 WESTCOMBE HILL
ref 26/1351/F

To increase multi-occupancy house from 6 persons to 7 persons, remove steel railings, reduce size of light well and install grille.

17 ULUNDI ROAD
ref 26/1324/HD

To demolish conservatory and construct orangery with flat roof.

15 LANGTON WAY
ref 26/1179/HD

To construct two single-storey outbuildings in rear garden.

117 WESTCOMBE HILL ref 26/1123/F

To enlarge existing two-storey rear extension to create two additional flats. one with first floor balcony.

63 SHOOTERS HILL ROAD
ref 26/0849/F

To replace slate roof.

TREE WORKS

99 LANGTON WAY ref 26/1469/TC

To fell holm oak in rear garden.

12 VANBRUGH HILL red 26/1193/TC

To fell elderflower and Indian bean tree in rear garden.

* Please be advised that the planning applications noted here are based on information available at the time of print. For the latest updates, please visit our website www.westcombesociety.org

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WHAT'S ON

Mycenae House

Fri 5th June 7.30pm - Amnesty International Concert. Featuring David Schweitzer, Linda Moylan Band, & South London Samba. £16.

Sat 6th June 2pm - Earth Star Breathwork. A functional breathing and conscious connected breath workshop. £35.

Fri 19th 6.30pm - Vital Flow Breathwork. Calm your nervous system, release stored tension, quiet the mind. £25.

Fri 19th - Blackheath Flower Club Come & see professional flower arranging demonstrators create modern artistic displays which are raffled off for £2. Admission £8

Fri 19th June 7.30pm - The SWOP Sessions. Foot tapping, finger snapping, jazz, soul & blues with Open Mic. £8.

Sat 20th June 1.30pm - Mosaic Workshop. Design and craft your own mosaic lamp. From £59 per person.

Thurs 25th June 7.30pm - Gong Bath. Journey through meditation & sound, a chance to relax & let go. £19.

Sat 27th June 1.30-5pm - Introduction to Face Painting. Learn how to paint a number of faces. £130.

For further information about all Mycenae House events + workshops visit www.mycenaehouse.co.uk

ORNC

Lie Down and Listen

Thu 11 & Fri 12 Jun | 6.30pm & 8.30pm
Experience deep listening, rest and reflection in the extraordinary surroundings of the Painted Hall. Hot water bottles and heated eye masks available for purchase pre event at the venue.

Silent Disco

Sat 20th June 7.30pm-11pm
Experience a silent disco like no other and dance the night away at the Painted Hall as it is transformed into a luminous dance floor where art, music, and atmosphere combine for an unforgettable night. The bar will be open throughout the night, serving an array of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks.

To buy tickets and find out more visit: <https://ornc.org/whats-on/>

Sitopia Farm

- 1 Day Organic and No Dig Growing Course - **Wed 1 June**
- Volunteer Induction - **Thu 18 June**
- Solstice Special Farm Shop - **Sat 20 June** <https://sitopiafarm.com/>

Woodlands Farm

Open Farm Sunday
Sunday 7th June 11am – 4pm
Come and join us for this national celebration of farming. Throughout the day we will have guided walks, a chance to meet our animals and Tractor and Trailer Rides. We will also have some activities for children and a pop-up café. A great opportunity to find out all about what we do at Woodlands Farm. Entry is free, but there will be a charge for certain activities.

For more information call **020 8319 8900** or email admin@thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org
For more information, see our website or contact Hannah Ricketts on education@thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org
We are open 9.30am-4.30pm, Tuesday - Sunday (except Christmas Day). There is no entry charge except for special events, though donations are always welcome.

The Arts Society Greenwich

www.theartsocietygreenwich.org.uk

Three Great Families and their Gardens: a history of the Astors, the Rothschilds and the Sackville-Wests

Monday 1 June at 7.30 pm (please note change of date: first Monday of the month)
Lecturer: Caroline Rayman
Venue: Blackheath High School, Vanbrugh Park, Blackheath SE3 7AG
Guests very welcome: £10



This talk combines the lives of the Astors, the Sackville-Wests and the Rothschilds and their family history with the story of the gardens they have all created, despite their very different backgrounds, here in the English countryside.

Caroline Rayman has lectured for many years to universities and art organisations in America and on cruise boats. She was an official guide at the British Museum and has published articles on samplers. Her lectures range from the role of the royal mistress in history to more scholarly lectures on Frederick the Great of Prussia. The story of Caroline's lecture *The Mysterious Disappearances of the Ghent Altarpiece* was told in the 2025 film, entitled *The Bold Thief*.

Cutty Sark

Ferreira Weekend

Climb on board Cutty Sark for a weekend of activities centred around an interesting period of Cutty Sark's history: its years in the hands of a Portuguese company as Ferreira. Attend a talk about the Ferreira period, meet themed character actors, take part in a Portuguese colour rope walk, and get hands-on with craft activities.

Dates: 13, 14 June 2026

Time: 11:00 – 16:00

Age: Suitable for all ages

Location: Cutty Sark

Admission: Free with admission to the ship

Niki Gorick: Dock Life Display

Niki Gorick: Dock Life is a photographic display that captures the varied lives and activities along London's dockside. A London-based photographer, Niki Gorick has achieved recognition for her candid images, which document the capital's diverse communities.

Dates: Daily

Time: 10.00 – 17.00

Age: Suitable for all ages

Location: Cutty Sark

Admission: Free with admission to the ship

Sea Shanty Singers

Cutty Sark's resident sea shanty groups Swinging the Lead and The Hog Eye Men transform the famous tea clipper's 'Tween Deck with the harmonies of sea shanties, traditional working songs. Come along to hear this enduring maritime tradition brought to life.

Dates: 6, 7 June 2026

Time: 11.45, 12.45, 13.30

Age: Suitable for all ages

Location: Cutty Sark

Admission: Free with admission to the ship

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/whats-on/>

West Greenwich Library

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Blackheath Creatives

Mini Fest at Severn Droog Castle on

27 June 5-9:30pm.

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www.severndroogcastle.org.uk

MEfA Montessori Summer Garden Party

Our 2026 Summer Garden Party will be held on **Saturday 27th June from 2pm - 4pm**. Everyone is welcome to enjoy afternoon tea, games for all ages, plant sales, 'new to you' and more. Please come and explore our lovely well-being community garden. For more information, please call Wendy on 07710433994.

National Maritime Museum

EXHIBITIONS

ZWO Astronomy Photographer of the Year 17

For the seventeenth year of the ZWO Astronomy Photographer of the Year competition, images of awe-inspiring aurorae, serene galaxies and stunning shots of the night sky have been analysed by a team of expert judges from the worlds of art and astronomy. The winning images are displayed in an exhibition at the National Maritime Museum alongside a selection of exceptional shortlisted images. The competition is run by the Royal Observatory Greenwich, supported by ZWO and in association with BBC Sky at Night Magazine.

Date: Daily

Time: 10.00 – 17.00

Age: Suitable for all ages

Location: Photography Gallery

Admission: Adult £10 | Child £5 | Student £6.50

Kōmij Mour Ijin/Our Life is Here – LAST CHANCE TO SEE

Discover how the people of the Marshall Islands are responding to climate change and the legacies of nuclear weapons testing, as seen through the eyes of contemporary artists. Co-produced with arts organisation, Cape Farewell. Bringing together the work of ten artists, the exhibition highlights the resilience of the Pacific nation. Their pieces explore themes including displacement, memory and the climate crisis, and were created following a Cape Farewell expedition to the Islands in 2023.

Date: Daily until 14 June 2026

Time: 10.00 – 17.00

Age: Suitable for all ages

Location: National Maritime Museum

Admission: Free

PUBLIC FESTIVALS

World Ocean Day

The annual aquatic festival returns to the National Maritime Museum for a day of free activities designed to help families connect with the ocean through science, creativity and live performances. There will be information stalls run by organisations such as Surfers Against Sewage, Creekside Discovery Centre and Trinity Laban. Talks and demonstrations will explore ocean science, climate, biodiversity and human interaction with the sea.

Date: 6 June 2026

Time: 10.00 – 17.00

Blackheath Halls

The Daryl Runswick Competition 2026

Wed 10 Jun 2026, 7.30pm

Hear excerpts from *Danse Macabre*, conducted by the composer, alongside new pieces from the competition finalists, written for and in conjunction with Trinity Laban's Composers Ensemble throughout this year. This event also marks Gregory Rose's retirement from Trinity Laban.

Trinity Laban Musical Theatre presents:

The SpongeBob Musical Tue 16 Jun,

7pm Who lives in a pineapple under the sea and became the hottest star on Broadway? Why, it's SpongeBob SquarePants!

Lunchtime Recital: St James's Chamber Orchestra The Hearn Recital Room

Mon 22 Jun 2026, 1.10pm

Peter Jones: Self-Help from the Middle Ages The Hearn Recital Room

Wed 24 Jun 2026, 7.30pm

Peter Jones joins us in conversation with Suzi Feay to discuss his latest book, in this bold and original history, Jones explores how the Middle Ages understood the Seven Deadly Sins not as a list of vices, but as a map of the mind a practical guide to living well.

www.blackheathhalls.com/whats-on/

Age: Suitable for all ages

Location: National Maritime Museum

Admission: Free

Windrush Day: Beyond the Ship

This family festival will honour the people of the Windrush Generation, highlighting the lives and contributions of those who travelled across the ocean to Britain from Caribbean and other Commonwealth countries, including India, Mauritius and Seychelles, and helped reshape modern Britain.

Date: 20 June 2026

Time: 11.00 – 16.00

Age: Suitable for all ages

Location: National Maritime Museum and Queen's House

Admission: Free

ASTRONOMY

Parts of the Royal Observatory site have closed for a transformative redevelopment project titled 'First Light'. The first phase of the project has started with the closure of the Peter Harrison Planetarium, Modern Astronomy galleries and the Victorian Altazimuth Pavilion. Work is planned to be completed by spring 2028. The Prime Meridian line, Meridian Observatory and historic Flamsteed House galleries remain open to visitors until spring 2027.

During this time, the Royal Observatory astronomers and astronomy programming has moved to the National Maritime Museum.

Astronomers Take Over

Astronomers Take Over is a new space for families that hosts astronomy activities while works are carried out at the Royal Observatory Greenwich. This playful hands-on experience gives visitors the opportunity to meet astronomers, participate in science demonstrations and ask questions about outer space. While the Peter Harrison Planetarium is closed for refurbishment, Astronomers Take Over features an alternative planetarium where visitors can learn all about the night sky, with a variety of shows led by astronomers.

Date: Open daily except Tues and Fri

Time: 10:00 – 17:00

Age: Suitable for all ages,

recommended for families

Location: National Maritime Museum, Special Exhibitions Gallery

Price: Experience + planetarium: £16 | Experience only: £8

www.rmg.co.uk/whats-on/

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