

Local

SPRING 2026



news from your borough council

Have your say

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Our finances explained
page 6

Where your waste goes
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Future development
page 23



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Dear resident

Welcome to your latest update packed with news, events and opportunities to get involved.

There's plenty happening across the borough, and I'm pleased to share some important updates with you. As you may have seen on our front cover - and in recent media coverage - the Government has launched its consultation on the future of local government in Kent and Medway. This is the biggest review in 50 years, and your views really do matter. In this edition we've dedicated four pages to explain what's happening, what it could mean for residents, and why we believe that just one of the proposals meets the Government's criteria and provides the strongest foundation for delivering high-quality services. Find out more on pages 16-19.



I'm delighted that we've been selected as a pilot area for flexible voting in this year's local election. This means you'll have the option to cast your vote in person at a local voting hub the weekend before election day - making it easier than ever to take part in the process that elects your local councillors. Full details are on page 5.

With spring on the horizon, preparations are underway for this year's bloom campaign. Good luck to all the towns and villages taking part - turn to page 14 for more on Tunbridge Wells in Bloom.

And finally, there's no shortage of things to enjoy locally. The Amelia Scott, LitFest and the Assembly Hall Theatre all offer a brilliant line-up of events for all ages. Plus, Visit Tunbridge Wells is promoting even more activities happening in and around the borough.

Best wishes,

William Benson
Chief Executive

We produce Local to keep you up-to-date about Council services and news. If you have any comments about the magazine, we'd love to hear from you. Contact us by:
Email: Local@tunbridgewells.gov.uk Phone: **01892 526121**

Post: **Lizzie Goodwin, Communications Manager, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS**

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For more information
01892 864429



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Grants given to local organisations

Seven local organisations had good news at the start of the year as they were notified that they had been awarded one of the Council's Community Support Fund grants.

The £100,000 Community Support Fund was set up by councillors to help residents feeling the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and local charities and groups who offer residents support were invited to apply for one-off grants from the fund.

Age UK Tunbridge Wells has received one of the grants to assist with their service for older people. It means their skilled advisors will be able to continue to give advice and guidance to the many people contacting them daily and make home visits to isolated and housebound residents.

Charlie's Angels Kitchen will use their grant to continue providing hot meals and groceries for local residents on a pay as you feel basis. Similarly the grant to the **six church parish larders** in Tunbridge Wells means they will be able to continue offering bags of food at low cost to households who need it. They have

seen an increase in people visiting them and so the money will be very welcome.

Another recipient, **DAVSS**, is a local charity helping victims of domestic abuse. They protect vulnerable families, prevent harm and contribute to safer communities.

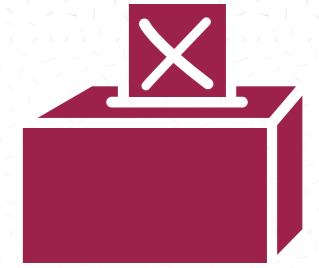
Home Start South West Kent gives support to vulnerable families in financial crisis who have very young children. Since April 2025 Home Start's work has meant help for more than 60 children aged between five and nine years. Like so many organisations they rely on volunteers to deliver their services.

“We are delighted that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has awarded us this money. This generous award will help us to continue to support local families with young children with our volunteer home-visiting service. Thank you from all our trustees, staff and Home Start families.”

Angus Bogle, Chair of Trustees at Home Start South West Kent,

The Hygiene Bank will use their grant to source additional hygiene products for those living in hygiene poverty and to provide a central storage space to manage stock more easily. This volunteer-led group works with 10 community partners who ensure the hygiene products go to those who need them.

West Kent Debt Advice received a grant too. They are an independent local charity with their own board of trustees which exists to support the provision of debt and money advice. They describe their service as 'rooted in and representative of the local community we serve'. We are pleased to be able to offer this support to these groups.



Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Elections

Local elections take place on **Thursday 7 May** in nearly all wards across the borough.

Important dates to note

Monday 20 April

Final day to register to vote

Tuesday 21 April 5pm

Deadline to register for a postal or postal proxy vote

Tuesday 28 April 5pm

Deadline to apply for Voter Authority Certificate/proxy vote

Thursday 7 May - Polling Day
don't forget your photo ID!

Can't go to a polling station?

To apply, search postal vote/proxy vote at gov.uk

If you would like an application form posted to you please contact the Elections team.

Need help?

Contact the Elections team.

elections@tunbridgewells.gov.uk
01892 554024 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Electoral Services
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Town Hall
Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS

Make sure you are registered to vote

Registering to vote is quick and easy online. You need just five minutes and your National Insurance number. You don't need to register to vote before every election.

gov.uk/register-to-vote

You need photo ID to vote

For more information about valid photo ID or to find out about free ID for use when voting search Voter Authority Certificate at gov.uk



voting

New for May 2026

Flexible

This year local elections are different, you've got more ways to cast your vote in person.

We're very pleased to have been chosen by the Government to be a pilot area for flexible voting, encouraging greater participation in democracy.

You don't have to vote in the hub that's nearest to where you live. And you can hand in your postal votes too.



Weekend voting hubs

No need to wait until Thursday 7 May.

On Saturday 2 May and Sunday 3 May you can vote at any of three voting hubs in the borough - don't forget your photo ID, you'll still need to show it!

Whatever ward you live in, if there is a TWBC election due to be held you don't have to wait until 7 May to vote in person. You can go to any one of the three hubs and vote early.

It really is that easy... say you live in Hawkhurst, Sandhurst and Benenden ward and you are shopping in Royal Tunbridge Wells on Sunday 3 May; you have photo ID with you so you decide to vote at the Royal Victoria Place hub during your visit... simple!

When and where

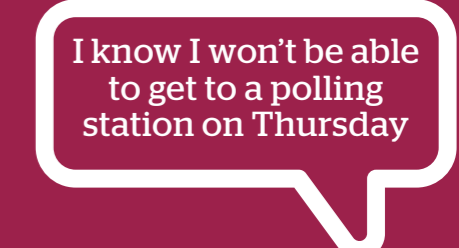
Saturday 2 May 9am-6pm

Sunday 3 May 10.30am-4.30pm

Cranbrook
Vestry Hall, Cranbrook TN17 3HA

Paddock Wood
Paddock Wood Community Centre, Paddock Wood, TN12 6EB

Tunbridge Wells
Royal Victoria Place, Royal Tunbridge Wells TN1 2SS
(Pop In Pop Up unit, upper mall, near M&S, opposite Taste Wells café)



Support our community with a fundraising lottery

Play TW Lotto

twlotto.co.uk

Statement of Accounts for 2024/25

The Council's year end is the 31 March. The national deadline for publishing draft accounts was 30 June 2025, with the statutory deadline to have the audited accounts signed the end of February 2026. We completed on time, with the audited accounts being signed in November 2025.

For the 16th year running we have received a clean audit and Grant Thornton (our auditor), said that they are 'satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources'.

The audit was completed entirely remotely again this year, with an audit team including members from overseas. This is a testament to the Council's approach to digital investment and the professionalism of our Council officers.

You can find the full statement of accounts for 2024/25 on our website at [tunbridgewells.gov.uk](https://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk) (under Financial budget, reports and audits - Annual Financial Report 2024/25).

Our Net Cost of Services for the year was £16.38m which was £0.91m under budget.

This was mainly due to additional income from Public Realm enforcement in front of the Amelia Scott in the Town Centre. The Council had been enforcing on behalf of Kent County Council (KCC), Kent's Highways Authority, but from 1 October 2025 enforcement has returned to KCC. The income, less the costs of the scheme, has been transferred to the On Street Parking reserve. It can only be used for certain highways or environment related schemes. The borough continues to thrive, and more people are using the car parks, increasing income which is now funding car park refurbishments. Income for the theatre was £463,000 over budget, reducing the subsidy required for the year. Energy costs were lower than budgeted as they have stabilised since the significant increases following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. We have also struggled to fill vacancies, which has saved costs but has put staff under pressure to deliver day to day services and meant the Council has been unable to deliver its budgeted capital investment programme. All other costs were carefully

managed throughout the year despite inflationary pressures. By the year end, all costs of services were fully financed from Council Tax, grants and investment income.

We spent £9.61 million on capital investments in the year,

mainly on Affordable Housing Grants, Disabled Facilities Grants, the conversion of the Town Hall and costs for Royal Victoria Place shopping centre. Since the purchase of the shopping centre footfall has been increasing, with major businesses choosing to invest in the town centre. The Council is working with its Asset Manager to fill the shop units, deliver events and provide some children's leisure facilities.

The Council now has property, plant and equipment, heritage and software assets of £142 million. The challenge is to use them to their very best effect in delivering your services. On the 31 March 2025, Usable Council Reserves were £20.88 million, however, the Council has already committed most of them to capital investment projects.

Whilst the Council has been able to balance the budget for 2026/27, action must be taken to reduce costs or raise revenue in the very near future. In particular, the Council's portfolio of buildings must be reviewed as they are using reserves through ongoing maintenance costs, energy performance improvements to comply with environmental regulations and increasing business rates payable to the Government. Also, the waste and street cleansing contract is due to expire in March 2027. This is a statutory service so must be provided and is expected to more than double in cost. As the Council is legally required to set a balanced budget each year and will have used its reserves, decisions will need to be taken to address this.



The Council consults the people of the borough every year on where they feel their Council Tax should be spent and the feedback is considered by Members when setting the budget. This year 2,034 people responded (thanks to everyone who took the time to complete it) and if you would like to see what they said please visit:



It was very pleasing to see that 60% of people who responded said they felt that the Council provides value for money at 42p per day, up from 59% last year.

We also prepared a 'You Said, We Did' that went with the 2026/27 budget consultation, which explains where money has been spent differently since the previous consultation responses:






The final budget for 2026/27 was considered by Full Council on 25 February. You can watch a recording of the meeting at [tunbridgewells.gov.uk](https://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk)

News in brief

Find out what people are talking about in Tunbridge Wells this spring

For news and events follow us on Facebook and Twitter or find out more at [twbc.online/news](https://www.twbc.online/news)

-  [TunbridgeWellsBoroughCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/TunbridgeWellsBoroughCouncil)
-  [TWellsCouncil](https://twitter.com/TWellsCouncil)
-  [TWellsbc](https://www.instagram.com/TWellsbc)

Christmas competition winners

We hope you had fun with the competition in December's Local. Congratulations to our three winners whose names were pulled out of the hat first, Mrs B, Mrs R and Mr G, who all correctly said the missing word was Turkey.

Commons for sale

The Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons are currently for sale. The Friends of the Commons see this as a rare chance to secure long-term certainty for the place they love. They are asking people to register a pledge of support to help explore a community purchase, pledges will only be called upon when their bid has been accepted. You can find out more about the Friends' campaign and contact details at [friendsofthecommons.uk](https://www.friendsofthecommons.uk)

Norwich-based Targetfollow Group Ltd, the commons' owners, notified the Council of the intention to sell last year. The Commons are listed as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) which immediately places restrictions on their sale. If an ACV is offered for sale this triggers a process known as community right to bid. There is more about this process and the high levels of planning protection that apply to the commons on the news page of [tunbridgewells.gov.uk](https://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk)

Fly tippers pay the price

Two men who were responsible for a fly tip in Dunorlan Park, Tunbridge Wells were finally held to account for their actions in January. The fly tip took place in December 2023 and from information found amongst the tyres, old oven, chair and rubble, the Council's Street Scene team was able to trace the people responsible. Several court hearings were scheduled but the men, one a Tunbridge Wells resident and the other from Tonbridge, said they were unable to attend and eventually they were found guilty in their absence. Both were given a community order of 150 hours unpaid work, additionally one must pay over £4,000 and the other £189 in costs and victim surcharge. If you are paying someone to take waste away, make sure they have the correct permit or you could be held responsible for what happens to your waste. Check by searching waste carrier licence on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)



Renters rights

There are changes coming to the private rented sector, bringing in new rights and responsibilities for landlords, letting agents and tenants. The first phase of reforms will be introduced on 1 May 2026. If you're a landlord you need to keep on top of the changes, for all the information you need search [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

Easter is coming soon!

Visit Tunbridge Wells offers some suggestions for spring activities on page 15 and they'll be updating their events page with things to do at Easter time. Events to look out for include the Royal Tunbridge Wells Together Easter trail and the Egbert Holmes Easter Event at Spa Valley Railway. National Trust properties will be hosting an Easter trail, including at Scotney Castle and Sissinghurst Castle Garden, from Saturday 21 March. For information about these and other events see local websites or [visittunbridgewells.com](https://www.visittunbridgewells.com)

Cabinet update

Cllr Ben Chapelard

Leader of the Council

Change is coming to Kent.

Local Government Reorganisation is the biggest rethink of how services are delivered in a generation. While the final shape of Kent's councils is still being decided, one thing is certain: government has just one chance to get this right.

Among the proposals, five councils believe one model stands out - Option 3a. This would create three new unitary councils for North, East and West Kent, bringing together the services delivered by the borough council and Kent County Council. These areas mirror the boundaries already used by our police, fire and NHS services, enabling better alignment, reducing duplication and fostering stronger collaboration. The result will be a more streamlined, consistent and seamless experience for residents.

Option 3a is financially resilient, efficient, and designed around the needs of our communities. The Government consultation is open for a few more weeks, please do share your views. Details are on page 19.

Cllr Mark Ellis

Innovation and Transformation

Local government is facing its most significant transformation in a generation. With the new unitary authority launching on 1 April 2028, we must ensure our staff are ready, confident, and equipped to thrive through this change.

That's why I'm bringing our updated People Strategy 2025-2028 to Cabinet. This isn't simply a refresh of existing plans, it's a practical roadmap designed specifically for the transition ahead.



Our staff are our greatest asset. They deliver the services residents rely upon every day, and they deserve proper support as we navigate this period of uncertainty. The strategy prioritises psychological safety, open communication, and genuine investment in skills development.

We're focusing on building digital literacy, with training in AI tools and Microsoft 365 to maximise productivity. A capability framework ensures development opportunities exist for everyone, from frontline staff through to future leaders. Regular surveys will help us respond to concerns in real time.

Crucially, we're not simply managing people through change we're preparing for a new organisation.

By investing in our workforce now, we ensure Tunbridge Wells staff enter the new authority as skilled, resilient professionals ready to continue serving our communities for generations to come.

Cllr Christopher Hall

Finance and Property

For the third year in a row we've set a balanced budget for 2026 - 2027, which is an outstanding achievement for any local council these days and which we're very proud to have achieved without having to cut services or draw down from our reserves. A huge amount of work goes into the budget each year as we attempt to manage rising costs and provide sustainable funding for the future. The Finance team at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council do a fantastic job and I'd like to thank them for their hard work this year. We were also helped by the Government, and credit where credit's due they came up with a three year revenue support grant which enables us to plan for the next couple of years and gives Tunbridge Wells the security it needs before a new unitary authority takes over in 2028.



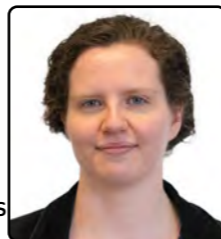
I'd also like to thank all of those residents who filled in the Budget Survey in December. Over 2,000 of you filled in the survey and allocated funds to the services the Council provides. As far as surveys go this is a massive participation rate. Very few local authority surveys reach that level of engagement and I was really pleased to see such a broad range of age groups and residents from across the borough having a go at the numbers. Cabinet members do review it carefully and this year we included a 'You Said - We Did' section which I'd like to repeat next year to show you where we've acted on your feedback. This year 60% of you said you agreed that at a cost of 42p per resident per day, this Council provides value for money. I take that as a positive result, it was up from 59% last year, and while no-one is ever going to like paying more Council Tax I do hope you are seeing the benefits of how your money is spent in your daily lives.

Cllr Corinna Keefe

Housing and Communities

It's more important than ever to provide good quality housing for people who need it. The Council has released a record £1m of Better Care Fund grants in the past nine months to help people adapt and heat their homes more efficiently. And we've been working directly with housing providers to support people at risk of eviction and keep them housed.

We're also continuing our work for young people. Rusthall youth club is now up and running, open to 12-15-year-olds every Friday from 6pm.



Cllr Matt Lowe

Planning

Yellow notices from the Council are a common sight in streets across the borough, alerting residents to a planning application in that area. These notices are one of the ways that the Council consults the community about all kinds of development proposals, from a small home extension to larger policy proposals. How we consult the public on planning issues is affected by all kinds of things, like regulations, practicality, and costs and the need to tell as many people as possible as efficiently as possible. Our procedures are set out in our Statement of Community Involvement. We are currently reviewing our SCI and will be opening up a public consultation in late spring so please look out for this on the Council's website and share your views.



Cllr Justine Rutland

Economic Development

Supporting local businesses through the winter's water outages became an unexpected priority for the ED team, who offered guidance on everything from food safety and business interruption insurance to advocating for fair compensation. Meanwhile, there is plenty of positive progress to celebrate. A wide range of projects funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund are continuing and underway, including street-scene enhancements in Paddock Wood, Cranbrook and Royal Tunbridge Wells; the Hawkhurst rural heritage project; new playground equipment in Rusthall; and CCTV installation for St John's Park.



The Investment Advisory Panel has been carefully reviewing the Royal Victoria Place engagement feedback to shape the next steps for this transformational redevelopment. At the same time, the Amelia Scott is also beginning a new chapter, preparing to unveil by year's end the first refresh of its permanent displays since opening in 2022.

Cllr Pamela Wilkinson

Sports, Leisure, and Health

The TWBC Strategic Plan places community wellbeing at the centre of its long-term vision, and sport plays a meaningful role within that priority. We continue to make progress on a number of projects. Hawkenbury Hub Phase 1 (the area of land already owned by the Council) is advancing through preparatory work and early design activity, laying the foundations to expand capacity for grass roots football. There will be consultation with the Friends group and sports clubs. We continue to collaborate with PWTC to identify how we most effectively use the S106 developer payments to ensure Putlands Leisure Centre benefits from the most effective and high impact improvements. The Bayham Changing Rooms project has also moved forward with positive input from Foresters FC. The old changing rooms have been demolished, and we are expecting the new facilities to be in situ by the end of summer, ready for next season.



Cllr Rob Wormington

Environment and Sustainability

I'm proud to say that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has awarded a grant of £50,000 to Kent Wildlife Trust to support their wilding project at Furnace and Hoathly farms.

The funding will be used in two ways: firstly, to plant around 5,000 native hedgerow trees by the end of 2027. These hedgerows are part of Kent Wildlife Trust's ambitious project to create a near-continuous corridor for nature over 343 acres. Secondly the grant will be used to enable around 100,000 trees to naturally regenerate at the site over 10 years as it returns to a healthy ecological condition.

This work will give an amazing boost to biodiversity in our borough. I'm looking forward to seeing what new flora and fauna thrive when given the opportunity to do so with this project. There is also plenty of emerging science that suggests that natural regeneration can have really powerful carbon capture effects too, which is something I am very keen to see.



Rubbish!



Whether you call it waste, refuse or rubbish, have you ever wondered what happens to all the stuff you put in the green bin?



From April 2024 to March 2025 19,052 tonnes of waste was collected in our borough. That's the weight of **1,732** waste trucks!

How much of that could have been recycled?

Maybe you don't need that additional bin?

Your green bin is for things that cannot be recycled. Once you've separated all your recyclable and compostable items, what's left in your general waste is collected and used to make electricity.

Where does the waste go and what happens to it?

Refuse is taken to an Energy from Waste facility in Allington, Kent.

The plant uses an environmentally-friendly system that's constantly monitored by both the people who work there and the Environment Agency to make sure that it's run safely and efficiently.

Waste is fed into incinerators which reach 650°C. This heats boilers which produce steam to turn the turbines and produce electricity, which is fed into the National Grid. Anything coming out of the chimneys is steam and not smoke.

You can watch a video of the process available on Kent County Council's website:

kent.gov.uk/environment-waste-and-planning/rubbish-and-recycling/recovering-energy-from-waste



Would you help us to do more?

Check what should go in each of your bins or containers. Our website provides information about what should go in each bin, box, bag or caddy. Are you recycling everything you can?

If you want to recycle more items that cannot be collected kerbside, don't forget the Household Waste Recycling Centre (the tip!) in Tunbridge Wells recycles wood, light bulbs, building waste, print cartridges, books and more. Check out the Kent County Council website for more information kent.gov.uk

Is there a Repair Café near you for items that could be fixed rather than thrown out?

repaircafe.org/en/visit/



Waste hierarchy



Tetra Pak recycling coming soon

It's been a real bugbear for many of you - and us! - that we have not been able to take Tetra Paks and similar for recycling because so many drinks and juices come in these cartons.

The good news is that's going to change and the service will be introduced very soon. We'll tell you more in our weekly news email and social media when collections are due to start.



Seen the sticker on your bin?

We have been working with Kent County Council to promote waste reduction and increase recycling. You may have noticed a sticker on your refuse bin reminding you to use your food caddy for your food waste. Across the county there has been a campaign to encourage people to use their food caddies and not put food waste in the refuse bin. This will help increase county-wide recycling rates and save money because recycling food uses less energy and is much cheaper than burning food waste.

In December alone, Kent recorded an estimated 22% increase in food waste recycling compared with the previous year, that's an extra 600 tonnes of food waste and a £75,000 cost saving.

From April we'll be collecting food waste from all households, introducing the service to flats, apartments and communal properties. Look out for your caddy if you haven't received it yet.

Thank you if you already recycle or compost your food waste and hello to the new recyclers we'll be collecting from!



Great British Spring Clean 13-29 March

The Great British Spring Clean 2026 will take place from 13-29 March inviting volunteers to help clean up local spaces across the UK.

Following the success of last year's events we're partnering with Royal Tunbridge Wells Together to organise a series of litter picks on 27 March and 28 March with volunteers from their member businesses. If your business would like to get involved contact Royal Tunbridge Wells Together rtwtogether.com

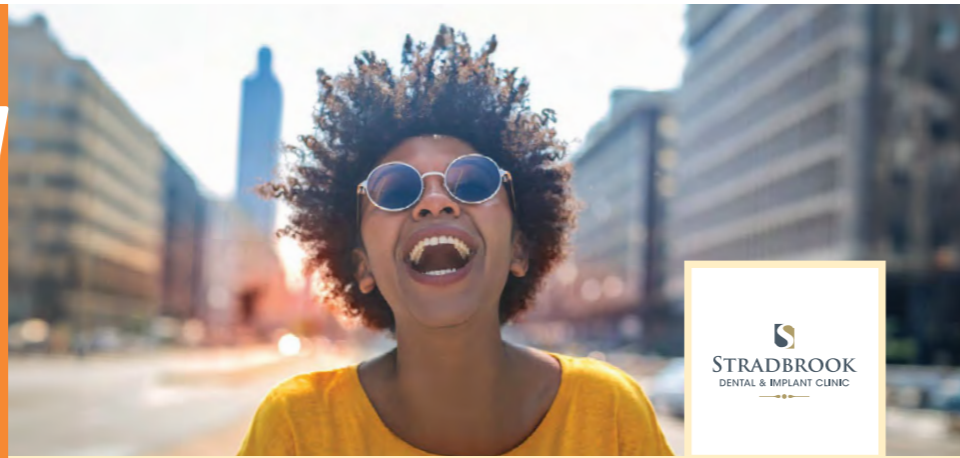
If you would like to borrow litter pick equipment for an event in the borough, you can request this via our website: tunbridgewells.gov.uk/bins-and-recycling/litter-picks



WOW

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Transform your smile with Invisalign® clear aligners



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*T&Cs apply. Offer valid until 25th November. See website for full details: portmandentalcare.com/wow-campaign-terms

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TUNBRIDGE WELLS LITERARY FESTIVAL

1st - 10th MAY

TWLF
IDEAS
BOOKS
ACTION

The Big Bank Holiday Weekend - Live at Calverley Grounds

Saturday 2nd May Festival Of Ideas

Join us for a day of intellectual curiosity as we host world-class thinkers to tackle the most pressing questions of our time.

Jess Mookherjee

A new narrative for the world in which we live today.



Jemma Borg

Jemma Borg speaks on The Intimate Catastrophe



Dr Yousif M. Qasmiyeh

Witnessing Disaster
Author of 'Writing the Camp'



Sunday 3rd May Climate & Nature Fair



A new partnership between TWLF and the TW Climate & Nature fair. Expect talks, debates, workshops and more.

Monday 4th May Family Festival

Ignite your child's imagination with a day packed with entertainment, whimsical tales, & 100th birthday party for Winne-The-Pooh.

Gyles Brandreth

Somewhere, a boy and a bear: A.A. Milne and the Creative of Winne-The-Pooh



Jane Riordan

Tales from the wood; Creating the new adventures of Winnie-The-Pooh



John Higgs

Exterminate/Regenerate - the story of Doctor Who.



10 Days of Literary Events - Across Tunbridge Wells

POETRY NON FICTION FICTION

Friday 1st May

Get ready for an evening of comedy and laughter with **Brian Bilston**, as the 'Banksy of poetry' takes us through the how's, whys and what's of reading, writing and enjoying poetry every day.



Monday 4th May

Join Bestselling poet **Donna Ashworth** in conversation with television presenter **Davina McCall** for an uplifting and deeply personal evening.



Tuesday 5th May

Writer and performer **Georgie Jones** performs her one-woman show with humour and heart, combining spoken word, stand up and storytelling.



Friday 8th May

Tristan Gooley, the natural navigator, & bestselling author. Dubbed 'Sherlock Holmes of Nature', join us to find out more about the world around us.



Saturday 9th May

Join satirist **Iain Dale**, in conversation with **Mike Martin MP** discussing Iain's new book 'Thatcher' bringing her to life in all her paradoxes.



Saturday 9th May

Join **Andy Beckett**, British journalist and historian to find out more about the Seventies - one of the most important and fascinating periods in modern British political history.



Wednesday 6th May

Poet, playwright and author **Richard Tyrell** joins us to discuss his critically acclaimed first novel; *The Fox of Kensal Green*



Saturday 9th May

Bestselling historical novelist **Essie Fox** in conversation with **Stephanie Bramwell-Lawes** to discuss her novel 'Catherine', a new take on Wuthering Heights.



Wednesday 6th May

Join **Sam Davey** as she discusses her feminist take on The legend of Camelot & shares why she chose to reimagine Camelot—bringing its forgotten voices to the forefront.



TWLF

Full programme & tickets: www.twlf.co.uk



BOOK NOW



Assessment & Service Centre

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01732 770251



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rise/recliner armchairs • profiling beds • walking aids
supportive seating • bathlifts • scooters • overhead hoists • ramps

assessments available from our Occupational Therapist
short term hire options • repairs & servicing

Reach out to us for a FREE home demonstration

In Bloom

It must be spring if it's time to talk about the Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom competition.

The campaign was very successful last year, winning Gold - Champion of Champions, at the regional South and South East awards, as well as a Gold in the Small City & City category at the Britain in Bloom UK final.

What successes will 2026 bring and will you be a part of them?

The local In Bloom competition launch

The fun, friendly, local competition for Tunbridge Wells is open to residents, community groups, schools and businesses.

The competition launches on Saturday 25 April, 10am-3pm, in the pedestrian precinct in Royal Tunbridge Wells. This is a great opportunity to come along, meet members of the local group, learn about the competition and leave with some plants, seeds and ideas about how to get started. Plus, every entrant gets a voucher for Coolings Garden Centre.

The deadline for entries is 1 June for allotments and 30 June for other categories. Entry forms are on the website or for a paper copy ring 01892 554031.

Check local websites for in Bloom campaigns in your part of the borough.



Open Gardens

Make a note in your diary, Sunday 14 June is when the popular Open Gardens event takes place between 11am and 4pm. This is a delightful opportunity to visit gardens in the town raising money for Hospice in the Weald and in Bloom projects as you go.

There are at least nine gardens taking part this year. Tickets available on the day, cash only, at each participating garden, see website for more information.

royaltunbridgewellsinbloom.org.uk
[facebook.com/RoyalTunbridgeWellsinBloom](https://www.facebook.com/RoyalTunbridgeWellsinBloom)

TRINITY THEATRE

The ELO Encounter

Fri 6 Mar

Othello

Wed 4 & Mon 9 Mar

Marty Supreme (15)

Wed 18 Mar

G2: Definitive Genesis

Fri 20 Mar

Box Tale Soup's 1984

Thu 26 Mar

Hamnet (12A)

Wed 1 Apr

Milton Jones & Guests

Fri 10 Apr

Michael Rosen: Nice!

Sun 17 May

The Cat in the Hat

Fri 12 & Sat 13 Jun

Tom Stade: Naughty by Nature

Sat 20 Jun



Scan here to see what's on at Trinity



Five spring days out to enjoy

in Tunbridge Wells

Name a better feeling than knowing the days are getting longer (and warmer!) and spending hours in the great outdoors. Beautiful landscapes and countryside surrounding the borough of Tunbridge Wells means we're lucky to have some sensational spots to enjoy at this time of year. With so much to do on your doorstep, you don't have to travel far for outdoor escapism.

A Sunday morning stroll...

Visit Tunbridge Wells recommends spending a slow Sunday morning on The Pantiles. Grab a coffee from one of the many excellent cafes, sit outside and take in some of the fresh spring air or indulge in some breakfast locally. After you're fuelled for the day, take a 20-minute walk to Hargate Forest where you'll be met with some of the most beautiful surroundings for a gentle stroll.

Enjoy forest yoga at Bedgebury...

We can't think of a better place for a spot of R&R than Bedgebury Pinetum. Boost your wellbeing with yoga under a canopy of conifers. And beginners are welcome too! Make the most of your trip to Bedgebury Pinetum with a stroll through the forest followed by something tasty at the café!

Take on the Scotney Castle Circular Walk...

Stride out on a scenic walk around the beautiful Scotney Castle. Try the 4.5 mile route that starts and finishes at The Vineyard in Lamberhurst and loops around the National Trust property, with some striking views of the Old Castle on offer. Plus, you can treat yourself to a bite to eat before or after you've completed your walk.

Take a steam train ride to the vineyards...

Royal Tunbridge Wells is lucky enough to have its very own heritage steam railway - but did you know that you can now hop on board and take a trip to some of the nearby vineyards? Spa Valley Railway and Birchden Vineyards have teamed up to offer a wonderful weekend activity where you'll travel in style through the countryside to Groombridge, then a short stroll to Birchden Vineyards for a spot of wine tasting, a vineyard tour or a picnic among the vines.

Take to the water at Bewl...

There are so many watersports you can turn your hand to at Bewl Water. From sailing and windsurfing to paddleboarding, canoeing, kayaking and rowing. There's also a host of family-friendly activities including pedalos, and from May the Aqua Park is open - a giant inflatable obstacle course the whole family will love.

For more information about all these fun things to do, or if you're looking for more weekend activities and upcoming events visittunbridgewells.com



VISIT TUNBRIDGE WELLS

What is Local Government Reorganisation?

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is a major change to how councils in Kent are set up and how they run local services.

At the moment, Kent County Council provides services like education, social care and highways, while borough and district councils manage services such as waste collection, housing and local planning.

Under the proposals, existing councils would be replaced by a smaller number of unitary councils. A unitary council is responsible for all local services in its area.

The aim is to:

- Make services easier to use
- Reduce duplication and save money
- Speed up decision-making
- Give local areas more control instead of relying on the Government

Because this is a big change, it requires detailed planning and agreement from both government and local communities. The goal is a simpler, more efficient system that provides better services and value for money.

What is happening in Kent?

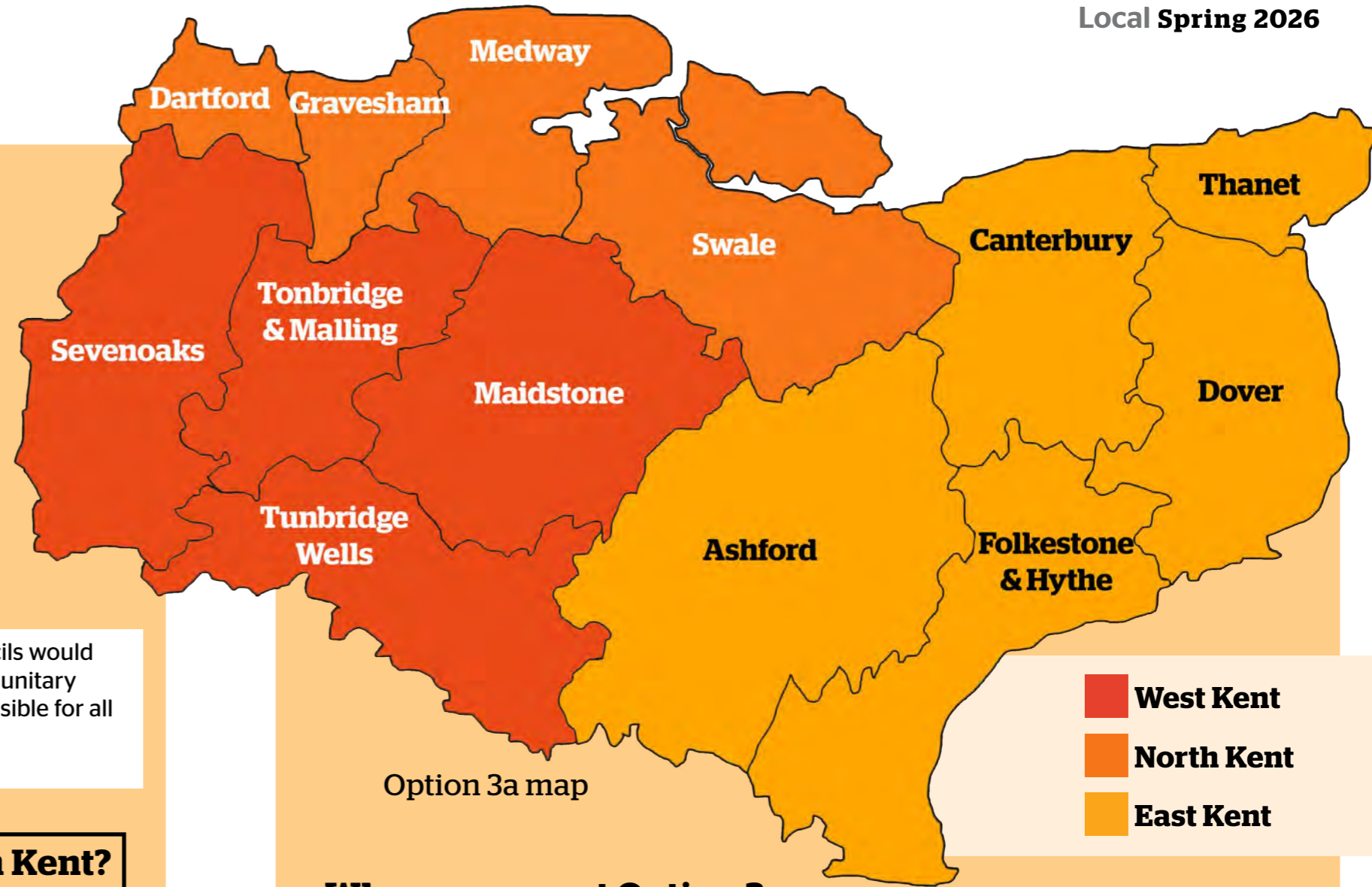
Councils across Kent and Medway have worked together to explore how local government reorganisation could be shaped. Five options were submitted to government in November 2025 - from one single unitary council for all of Kent to five separate unitary councils.

We are concerned that a single unitary council would be far too large, less responsive and wouldn't meet the Government's criteria. Similarly, creating multiple smaller unitaries would cost more, increase risk, fragment services and reduce alignment with other public sector bodies.

That's why we believe the three-unitary model - known as **Option 3a** and supported by five local councils - strikes the right balance by delivering stronger services, better value and a more local feel.

The Government is now reviewing all five options and has begun a public consultation which ends at 11.59pm on Thursday 26 March.

A final decision is expected in summer 2026. If approved, the new councils would begin operating in April 2028.



Option 3a map

- West Kent
- North Kent
- East Kent

Why we support Option 3a

Big enough to make a difference, small enough to care

Alongside Maidstone Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and

Folkestone & Hythe District Council, we have chosen Option 3a as our preferred model for Kent for the reasons set out below.

Service and resident focused

Option 3a is built around local communities. It:

- Supports strong local identities
- Provides clear accountability
- Aims for fair access to services across Kent

It also matches the existing boundaries used by Kent Police, Kent Fire & Rescue and NHS organisations. This should help services work better together, reduce duplication and improve coordination.

Financially resilient and efficient

Option 3a offers:

- One of the lowest set-up costs
- The highest long-term savings potential
- One of the quickest payback periods

This is one of five options the Government is considering, and while Option 3a reflects our ambitions, and offers significant benefits that align with our vision for modern and responsive local government, the final decision rests with the Government.

LGR timeline: What's happening and when

LGR will take place in stages over several years.

Here's an overview of the key steps:

-  **28 November 2025**
Councils across Kent submitted their proposals to the Government.
-  **February-March 2026**
A seven-week public consultation will run so residents can share their views.
-  **Summer 2026**
The Government is expected to announce the final structure for the new councils.
-  **Autumn 2026**
New laws will be introduced to put these changes into action.
-  **6 May 2027**
Elections will be held for the new unitary councils. The elected councillors will then form a **shadow cabinet** to prepare for the new arrangements.
-  **1 April 2028**
The new councils will officially take over and begin delivering all local services.

What is a shadow cabinet?

A shadow cabinet is a temporary leadership team that will be set up after the May 2027 election. It includes the councillors elected to the new unitary authorities.

Their role is to:

- Prepare budgets
- Set priorities
- Make sure staff, systems and services are ready

They do not have full powers until April 2028, but they make sure the new councils are ready to deliver services from day one.

How will LGR affect me?

LGR will change how councils work, but for most people, the impact will be in how services are delivered.

Instead of having different councils responsible for different services, one council

will handle everything in your area. This should:

- Make things simpler
- Improve coordination between services
- Reduce duplication
- Save money

Over time, services like waste collection, housing, planning and social care will be more joined-up and consistent.



Consultation
closes on
26 March

Have your say

The Government's consultation will ask for your views on:

- The strengths and challenges of the different options
- Which option you think would work well for your area

This is your chance to help shape the best future for local services - your voice matters.

Three ways to take part

Online survey
via the Government's website
bit.ly/lgrconsultation



Paper survey
pick up a copy from your local library

Written responses*
LGR Consultation, Fry Building 2NE, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF

*when replying please include your name and mention that you live within the borough of Tunbridge Wells.

Want to learn more?

Visit the LGR information page on kentcouncillors.org.uk to see all five proposals and understand what they could mean for Kent.



- theamelia.co.uk
- theameliatunbridgewells
- theamelia_tw
- theamelia_tw

National Workshop to be held at The Amelia Scott

The Amelia Scott is to host the University of Plymouth's National Workshop for Creative Health in 2026, exploring how games might be integrated more widely into health and social care interventions.

Our own programmes have established that table top games such as Dungeons and Dragons and Dixit can lead to improvements in confidence, assertiveness, and real-life social engagement.

The event will be open to professionals from across the UK working in the mental health and education sectors.

The initiative is being led by Dr Gray Atherton and Dr Liam Cross, from the University of Plymouth's School of Psychology, and funded through the international **Game in Lab** programme, which supports independent academic research into the societal and wellbeing impacts of tabletop games.

game-in-lab.org



Dungeons and Dragons players at the Assembly Hall during the Roll For Initiative! event

Youth Update

You spoke, we listened

Between July and November last year The Amelia Scott, on behalf of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, ran a youth consultation with 12-25-year-olds who live, work, socialise or attend school within the borough. We heard from nearly 500 young people and more than 60 youth leaders.

A huge thank you to everyone who took part, including the brilliant youth groups who welcomed us into their sessions.

The ideas put forward by those who took part in the consultation are shaping a new youth programme, and we have Amelia Young Creatives projects already under way.

Want to get involved or book onto upcoming Young Creatives sessions? Head to our website for the latest opportunities.



What's on

March

Exhibition - Life Through a Royal Lens

Story Time, Children's Library, Mondays

Rhyme Time, Children's Library, Tuesdays and Thursdays

Knit & Stitch Club, Lower Atrium, Wednesdays

April

Community Freshers fair

Exhibition - Life Through a Royal Lens

Story Time, Children's Library, Mondays

Rhyme Time, Children's Library, Tuesdays and Thursdays

Knit & Stitch Club, Lower Atrium, Wednesdays

May

Exhibition - Life Through a Royal Lens

Story Time, Children's Library, Mondays

Rhyme Time, Children's Library, Tuesdays and Thursdays

Knit & Stitch Club, Lower Atrium, Wednesdays

A Royal Invitation

Discover Life Through a Royal Lens

Step into royal history this spring as **Life Through A Royal Lens** arrives at The Amelia Scott from 13 February to 7 June. On loan from Historic Royal Palaces, this striking exhibition brings together more than 100 unforgettable royal photographs. From famous public moments to quieter, behind-the-scenes images, it offers a rare chance to see the Royal Family at work and at ease. First shown at Kensington Palace, the exhibition is now heading out on a brand-new UK tour, with The Amelia Scott proudly its first stop.

As you enter the building, be sure to pause in the Welcome Hall, where a complementary display of royal-themed photographs from The Amelia's own collection will set the scene.

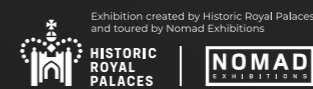


Your royal journey doesn't have to end when you leave **Life Through A Royal Lens**. Head to the Story of the Wells gallery to discover engravings of King Charles II and Catherine of Braganza, alongside Queen Anne.

Before she became Queen, Anne visited Tunbridge Wells in 1698. After her son fell on the Upper Walks of what is now The Pantiles, Anne herself gifted £100 to the town to pay for paving. Two years later, in 1700, pantiles were finally laid, giving the space its famous name. You will also find historic charters from Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II, marking key moments in the town's royal story.

Upstairs, look out for a beautiful dress linked to Jane Seymour's family in the Georgian Spa Gallery, and in The Workroom gallery, don't miss the 1897 Jubilee gloves made to celebrate Queen Victoria's 60-year reign.

There is plenty to explore. Why not see how many royal stories you can uncover during your visit?



13 FEBRUARY – 7 JUNE 2026
Free entry | theamelia.co.uk





A new Local Plan for Tunbridge Wells

The Tunbridge Wells Local Plan 2020-2038 was formally approved by councillors in December 2025

This is a significant achievement for the borough, and the result of years of hard work and input from residents and businesses.

The Local Plan is the most important strategic planning document the Council has. It means the Council can plan and manage development in a way that benefits residents and reflects local ambitions.

Detailed plans for large development sites across the borough are included in the Local Plan alongside a set of policies to guide development. These policies will secure affordable and accessible housing, set requirements for design and environment standards, and protect our natural and historic environments. There are also policies to maintain and encourage a vibrant economy in the borough so that residents and visitors can both work and enjoy their free time here.

Preparing the Local Plan was a long and complex process. An important part of the process was the public examination stage which was led by an independent planning inspector. This and the related work to assess options and refine and improve all the documents that make up the plan, together with input from the many stages of consultation, all contributed to the creation of the Local Plan.

Thank you to everyone who engaged with this vital piece of work for the borough, including the many residents, business and organisations who contributed comments and made representations at the public consultations.

To read more about the plan search Local Plan at tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Practically, the Local Plan puts the Council in a much stronger position to set where development takes place, which means the housing and employment growth the borough needs can go where we want it to. Importantly the Plan helps us to make sure the supporting infrastructure is provided in the way it is needed.

It also helps us to fend off unsuitable speculative development.

Councillor Matt Lowe, Cabinet Member for Planning

Investing in Paddock Wood

The Local Plan provides for the expansion of Paddock Wood and east Capel which will lead to much needed new homes being built. Garden settlement principles will be used to guide the development of the sites where building will take place. Among other things this means homes of different sizes and affordability, and green spaces.

New development will pay for the infrastructure needed and is expected to improve existing flooding issues in the surrounding area.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to create new infrastructure and ensure Paddock Wood is ready for the future.

Find out more about development in Paddock Wood here

<https://twbc.online/pwec-allocations>



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Official Sponsors of Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom



Did You Know?

We do a range of Holidays and Day Trips!

Visit www.pennywoodtours.com to explore all upcoming trips like:

Holiday Highlights

- May - The Newt and other joys of Somerset
- May - Jodrell Bank National Memorial Arboretum
- June - The Channel Islands - Jersey, Guernsey, Sark and Herm
- June - Northumberland
- July - Isle of Wight
- July - The Battle Proms at Hatfield House
- September - Royal Sandringham
- February '27 - Fête du Citron
- April '27 - Keukenhof and other Dutch Surprises
- May '27 - Spring in the Isles of Scilly

Daytrip Highlights

We offer a range of day trips including: **Highgrove, the kings private garden and Highclere (Downton Abbey).**

Contact us on:

www.pennywoodtours.com,
 Email: info@pennywoodtours.com,
 Telephone: 01622 434 981
 Paper brochures available on request.

Contact us for our beautiful printed brochure



Get our latest news direct to your inbox, plus local events, regular items such as jobs, planning applications near you and bin updates.

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 Visit twbc.online/alerts

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TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOSTING WITH ISE CONTACT

Stephanie Heymer
 07555 548470 info@isegb.co.uk isegb.co.uk



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LEARN MORE & BOOK **25% Off** your first Paint

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www.paintngo.com

Street Pastors

On any busy Thursday, Friday and Saturday night in Royal Tunbridge Wells, there is a team of Street Pastors on hand to offer calm, friendly support to anyone who needs it.

As those enjoying a night out move between pubs and clubs, the team checks in with young people, offers directions, hands out water, and flip-flops to soothe tired feet, and clears hazards from the streets - small acts that make a big difference to everyone's safety.

The Street Pastors' approachable, reassuring presence means people often seek them out for a quick chat or help getting home. Joining them recently, Cllr Ellen Neville was struck by their dedication and the positive impact they have in the town every weekend.

Find out more about the Street Pastors on Facebook

[facebook.com/TunbridgeWellsStreetPastors](https://www.facebook.com/TunbridgeWellsStreetPastors)



Warm Homes Local Grant

Your home could be a warmer home if you apply for free energy saving improvements.

The Council has funding for improvements that could make your home warmer and more comfortable, and help lower your energy bills if you meet the eligibility requirements.

If you are eligible we will arrange a home survey to identify the improvements your home could benefit from. That might be wall, loft and underfloor insulation, draught proofing, smart controls, solar panels, air source heat pumps, and more.

We're partnering with E.ON to bring you this scheme. Check your eligibility at eonenergy.com/grant-finder or call **0333 202 4820** (Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5pm). Or scan the QR code



UK Government

LANDLORDS GET ON TOP OF THE RENTING CHANGES

You will need to know these important changes

They are easy to stay on top of, read more at gov.uk/rentingischanging

ASSEMBLY HALL THEATRE SPRING SEASON

for full details and to book tickets visit our website
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<p>THE PRINCESS PROMS</p>	<p>Tales from Acorn Wood</p> <p>based on the favourite stories by JULIA DONALDSON and AXEL SCHEFFLER</p> <p>FEATURING: Rabbit's Nap, Fox's Socks, Hide-and-Seek Pig, Postman Bear</p>	<p>CHRIS MCCAUSLAND</p> <p>YONKS!</p> <p>BRAND NEW SHOW!</p>
<p>FAMILY SUN 15 MAR</p>	<p>FAMILY TUE 17-WED 18 MAR</p>	<p>COMEDY THU 19 MAR</p>
<p>HENNING WEHN</p> <p><i>Acid Wehn</i></p>	<p>PAUL MERTON & SUKI WEBSTER'S IMPROV SHOW</p>	<p>TABLETOP TALES</p>
<p>COMEDY FRI 20 MAR</p>	<p>COMEDY SAT 21 MAR</p>	<p>GAMING SUN 22 MAR</p>
<p>A Virtuoso</p> <p>Concert Performance from the biggest selling violinist in the world</p> <p>Nigel Kennedy</p>	<p>MIKE BROWN & DANNY CARE</p> <p>TRIES AND TRIBULATIONS</p>	<p>Carmen</p> <p>PERFORMED BY DNIRO OPERA</p>
<p>CLASSICAL MON 23 MAR</p>	<p>SPOKEN WORD WED 25 MAR</p>	<p>OPERA THU 26 MAR</p>

<p>Star of <i>Father Ted</i> & <i>Death in Paradise</i></p> <p>Ardal O'Hanlon</p> <p>Not Himself</p>	<p>SCI-FI FILM MUSIC & HOLOGRAPHIC SHOW</p> <p>FEATURING THE LONDON CINEMATIC ORCHESTRA</p> <p>SUPERNOVA</p> <p>SPECTACULARS</p>	<p>THE TRAILBLAZING LIVE VOCAL DRAG SENSATION</p> <p>QUEENZ</p> <p>DRAG ME TO THE DISCO!</p> <p>★★★★★ 'JOYFUL!' 'MINDBLOWING!' 'BEAUTIFUL!'</p>
<p>COMEDY FRI 27 MAR</p>	<p>FAMILY SAT 28 MAR</p>	<p>VARIETY SUN 29 MAR</p>
<p>ROMEO + JULIET</p> <p>BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE</p>	<p>AISLING BEA</p> <p>OLDER THAN JESUS</p> <p>A BRAND-NEW STAND-UP TOUR</p>	<p>LUTHER Live</p> <p>AND VELVET VOICES</p>
<p>DRAMA TUE 31 MAR</p>	<p>COMEDY WED 1 APR</p>	<p>MUSIC THU 2 APR</p>
<p>ORIGINALS LIVE</p> <p>FEATURING SLIP MATT</p> <p>+ A SURPRISE GUEST</p>	<p>The Ultimate Unicorn Party!</p> <p>UNICORN LIVE!</p> <p>UK TOUR 2026</p>	<p>ASU</p> <p>ALL ABOUT LUTHER</p>
<p>MUSIC FRI 3 APR</p>	<p>FAMILY SAT 4 APR</p>	<p>VARIETY TUE 7 APR</p>
<p>JUSTIN LIVE</p> <p>JUSTIN TIME TO ROCK</p>	<p>QUEEN of the NIGHT</p> <p>A TRIBUTE TO WHITNEY HOUSTON</p> <p>FEATURING ICONIC SONGS SUCH AS I Wanna Dance with Somebody, One Moment in Time, I'm Every Woman</p>	<p>An Evening with Aggers and Tuffers</p>
<p>FAMILY WED 8 APR</p>	<p>MUSIC THU 9 APR</p>	<p>SPOKEN WORD FRI 10 APR</p>

<p>TAYLORMANIA TAYLOR SWIFT ERAS - THE ULTIMATE TRIBUTE AS SEEN ON BBC ITV UNOFFICIAL TRIBUTE SPONSORED BY THE FANS</p>	<p>DAVID OLUSOGA A GUN THROUGH TIME</p>	<p>THE ELO TRIBUTE SHOW OF JEFF LYNNE AND ELO</p>
MUSIC SAT 11 APR	SPOKEN WORD SUN 12 APR	SPOKEN WORD MON 13 APR
<p>THE MAKINGS OF A MURDERER THE UNDERCOVER DETECTIVE</p>	<p>Cinderella Grown-Ups Only 16+</p>	<p>JAMES BOND CONCERT SPECTACULAR Compere by Caroline Bliss</p>
SPOKEN WORD TUE 14 APR	COMEDY FRI 17 APR	MUSIC SAT 18 APR
<p>FRIENDS THE MUSICAL PARODY FROM THE PRODUCERS OF HAIRSPRAY & THE DIRECTOR OF THE FULL MONTY THE ONE WHERE THEY SING! LIVE ON STAGE</p>	<p>COUNTRY ROADS ONE NIGHT OF COUNTRY CLASSICS</p>	<p>DR LOUISE NEWSON BREAKING THE CYCLE THE POWER OF HORMONES</p>
MUSICAL MON 20 APR - SAT 25 APR	MUSIC SUN 26 APR	SPOKEN WORD MON 27 APR
<p>LEGEND THE MUSIC OF BOB MARLEY</p>	<p>JEN BRISTER REACTIVE</p>	<p>Peppa Pig BIG Family Show!</p>
MUSIC THU 30 APR	COMEDY FRI 1 MAY	FAMILY SAT 2 MAY - SUN 3 MAY

<p>THE ELO TRIBUTE SHOW OF JEFF LYNNE AND ELO</p>	<p>LAUREL & HARDY CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF The Centenary Tour 2026 PRESENTED BY NEIL BRAND</p>	<p>COME TOGETHER THE LENNON & MCCARTNEY SONGBOOK</p>
MUSIC SAT 9 MAY	MUSIC SUN 10 MAY	MUSIC MON 11 MAY - WED 13 MAY
<p>HARRY REDKNAPP AN EVENING WITH THE FUNNIEST MAN IN FOOTBALL FORMER KING OF THE JUNGLE</p>	<p>Disco for Grown Ups A POP-UP DISCO PARTY IT'S GOING TO BE A BOOGIE NIGHT TO REMEMBER</p>	<p>KPOP ALL STARS TRIBUTE</p>
SPOKEN WORD THU 14 MAY	MUSIC FRI 15 MAY	MUSIC SAT 16 MAY
<p>BRYONY KIMMINGS BOG WITCH</p>	<p>THE MUSIC OF COLDPLAY BY CANDLELIGHT</p>	<p>THE COUNTERFEIT STONES "The most famous Stones band in England" SIR MICK JAGGER</p>
DRAMA SUN 17 MAY - TUE 19 MAY	MUSIC WED 20 MAY	MUSIC THU 21 MAY

assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk
 TUNBRIDGE WELLS

for full details and to book tickets visit our website



Forest School training

Have you ever considered becoming a Forest School leader? Kent High Weald told us about the leader training they offer:

With a team of trained Forest School leaders, we have been delivering Forest School sessions within the borough of Tunbridge Wells for over four years, and outdoor activities for over 10 years. We love sharing our local woodlands with eager children, where we have supervised hundreds of fire lighting experiences, thousands of bow and arrow creations and the cooking of countless marshmallows.

Our practice allows the children to see their environment as a sensory playground and through this they learn confidence, resilience and ways and means of communicating effectively with others. Many of them surprise themselves with their own capabilities.

As long time champions of Forest School's inspirational approach to learning and connecting to the natural world, we have made it part of our mission to spread the word. We aim to raise awareness through the provision of experience days and to train prospective Forest School leaders by providing nationally accredited qualifications.

We are excited to be offering levels 1 and 2 courses with a level 3 course in the pipeline.

Level 1 An Introduction to Forest School Principles

This two-day course is great for anybody wishing to gain an understanding of the process and is especially suited to parents or head teachers.

Level 2 Award in Forest School Programme Support

This course runs over five days and qualifies students to assist a level 3 practitioner.

All courses take place at Bedgebury Pinetum, allowing students a chance to escape into the forest, amongst the trees and birds to our dedicated Forest School site where a warm fire and hot kettle awaits.



During our courses, we cover all elements of the qualification outside, using our surroundings as a learning aid.

We are able to run courses specifically for organisations and schools and can tailor them to fit in with working hours and term times and we can even come to you if that makes things easier. We also run taster days periodically for anybody wishing to experience a day in the woods, discovering the basics of Forest School.

Please get in touch for more details about courses in 2026. forestschool@khwp.org.uk khwp.org.uk

Step into spring with our Wellbeing Walks

Looking for a simple way to boost your health, meet new people, and enjoy the beauty of Tunbridge Wells?

Join our Ramblers Wellbeing Walks this spring! These friendly, accessible walks are designed for everyone - whether you're just starting out or looking to stay active in a relaxed, social setting.

Why join a Wellbeing Walk?

- Improve your health: Walking is one of the easiest ways to stay active and support your physical and mental wellbeing.
- Connect with others: Our walks are a great way to meet new people and feel part of your local community.
- Discover nature: Explore the stunning parks and green spaces right on your doorstep.

Walks are led by trained volunteers who make sure everyone feels welcome and supported. Most routes are short, gentle, and suitable for all abilities.



When and where?

We run regular walks in locations across the borough. To find a walk near you and see the full schedule, visit:

ramblers.org.uk

Take your first step today and walk into wellbeing!

ROYAL VICTORIA PLACE

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Development update

Thank you for your feedback at the end of last year on the initial proposals for development at Royal Victoria Place. These have been considered as the project team have further developed the designs and the team is now ready to ask you to look at their updated proposals.

There will be another period of engagement between 11 and 23 March when the team will be speaking to residents, businesses and community groups. Once again the updated proposals will be on show in a pop-up unit in the centre and the team will be available to talk to you and listen to your views.

As the project moves forward, proposals for Market Square will be developed as a separate phase. This will allow further work and design to be done to ensure the right development is proposed for Market Square while enabling the Ely Court and Palm Court plans to progress to bring more vitality to the town centre.

Why not go along and take a look?

Find out more royalvictoriaplace.co.uk

Easter events

There's Easter events aplenty at Royal Victoria Place

The Easter Bunny Bop

Hop into Easter fun with the Easter Bunny Bop, a magical, interactive experience for children!

1 April and 15 April

Step Into the Enchanted Craft Garden

Little ones are invited to walk through the magical gates and discover an imaginary world

2 and 16 April

Pixel Bash VR Arcade Event

Enter a world of immersive excitement with our free Pixel Bash Virtual Reality Arcade.

7-11 April

10am to 4pm daily

Find further details on the What's On page royalvictoriaplace.co.uk

Footfall in the centre on Primark's opening day, Friday 12 December, was 78% higher than the same day the previous year. The next day, Saturday 13 December was 108% higher!

Keep your family safe on the farm this spring

While farm visits are brilliant family fun, animals can carry germs that cause illness in people. Sometimes these are serious, especially for young children and pregnant women.

Charlotte Flynn, health protection consultant with UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), said:

'Infections can be picked up from the animals, so it's important to always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water immediately after you have had contact with animals and before eating food to reduce the risk of infection. Hand gels and wipes unfortunately do not remove germs in dirt.'

'Every year we see people falling ill from some very unpleasant illnesses caused by E.coli and cryptosporidium - sadly these infections can sometimes be life changing.'

Simple steps for a safe visit

Do:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after touching animals, fences or surfaces in animal areas and before eating or drinking.
- Clean any soiled shoes or pushchair wheels, then wash your hands again.
- Spend about 20 seconds hand-washing.
- Only eat in designated picnic areas or cafes.
- Remember that if you handle lambs or other animals, germs may transfer to your clothes.

Don't:

- Touch your face or put fingers in your mouth while around animals.
- Let children put their faces close to animals.
- Eat anything that's fallen on the ground.
- Rely on hand gels or wipes - they don't remove bugs from dirt.

Feeling unwell afterwards?

If you or your children develop sickness or diarrhoea within two weeks of a farm visit, contact your GP or call NHS 111. If anyone has bloody diarrhoea, seek immediate medical attention.

Pregnant women should take extra care, as some animal-borne infections can harm both mother and baby.

With these precautions, your family can safely enjoy everything farms have to offer this spring.





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