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# Gutted!

**INFERNO** The clubhouse [below] before it was hit by the blaze

Tunbridge Wells Football Club has been left ‘devastated’ after fire gutted its clubhouse on the same day as the death was announced of one of its supporters who was hit by a van. **Full story, page 2.**

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## Traffic banning LTN plan for Tunbridge Wells

**By Lilly Croucher**

PLANS for Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN) in Tunbridge Wells have been submitted by the Borough Partnership as part of a bid for funding from Kent County Council (KCC).

An ‘LTN pilot’ proposed by the coalition between the Lib Dems, Labour and the Alliance, would be trialled along the ‘rat-runs’ around St John’s Road and St James’ Road in an effort to curb congestion and traffic in residential areas.

LTNs are schemes aimed at reducing traffic in certain neighbourhoods by restricting various types of vehicles, introducing one-way systems as well as other traffic calming measures.

In London, LTNs were introduced at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and have proved controversial, with claims that the schemes can increase congestion, traffic and pollution in surrounding areas.

In Tunbridge Wells, the restricted routes are likely to be enforced by physical barriers like one-way systems, changes to road layouts and bollards (such as plant pots) to prevent vehicle access to certain roads.

**‘We would need to do a thorough consultation with residents before any changes take place’**

But the coalition has said they may consider other ‘options’ such as number plate recognition cameras but would need to seek resident and Council approval beforehand.

If the pilot is successful, the Borough Partnership said it could expand LTNs across the town centre.

The LTNs are one of three Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) submitted to KCC for funding through Active Travel England’s Capability Fund. KCC secured £565,439 from the Capability Fund earlier this month, which gives money to local authorities to draw up plans for cycling and walking routes. Further cash would then be forthcoming to help deliver individual projects.

Cllr Peter Lidstone (Lib Dem), the Council’s Walking and Cycling Champion who represents St John’s ward, told the *Times*: “We would need to do a thorough consultation with residents before any changes take place.

“Hopefully our schemes will be put forward and selected for funding, but there are no guarantees here of course,” Cllr Lidstone added.

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## THIS WEEK...

## 'DISAPPOINTING' DECEMBER

Hospitality businesses report difficult Christmas trading **P6**



## BUILDING PROSPERITY

Check out the *Times*' 20-page pull-out property guide covering the commercial and residential markets **P15**



## HANDS OF HEROES

The Forum's birthday tribute to David Bowie this year features handprints from 69 people who were part of the artist's life **P37**



**SMART START** Wellbeing expert Monica Price advises on how to begin the New Year in the best of health **P46**



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## Low Traffic Neighbourhoods planned for Tunbridge Wells

Continued from front page

The Council has also submitted plans for an improved segregated cycle lane on Pembury Road, with a bus lane heading westbound into the town and continuing along Calverley Park Gardens, as well as traffic signals to improve safety at the junction between Sandhurst Road and Sandrock Road.

## Opportunity

The third proposal is for plans to be drawn up for a new cycle lane connecting Rusthall to the town centre along Major York's Road or Mount Ephraim.

KCC's Cabinet Member for Highways and



NO ACCESS An LTN in the London borough of Hackney

Transport, David Brazier, said: "The funding opportunity will enable us to work alongside the districts and boroughs with their active travel ambitions and closely with Active Travel England

to meet the latest Government design standards. "Walking and cycling is a great way to get fit, save money on car-usage and reduce your carbon footprint."

## Routes

"Properly designed schemes, taking into account the views of residents, will help produce improvements with public support."

Active Travel England is investing £32.9million to improve communities, enhance high streets and produce routes which are walkable and cyclable.

The government agency aims to make 50 percent of trips in England's towns and cities to be walked, wheeled or cycled by 2030.

## TWFC 'devastated' after supporter dies and clubhouse burns down on same day

By Victoria Roberts

TUNBRIDGE Wells Football Club said it was 'devastated' by the news that one of its supporters had died after being hit by a van leaving their stadium.

The news of the death of the 75-year-old, announced last Thursday (January 12), came as the team's clubhouse was also gutted by fire on Thursday night.

Officers at Kent Police have renewed their appeal for information after the TWFC supporter, who was from the local area, was struck by a white Volkswagen Transporter van in Culverden Down on Saturday January 7. It is thought he was leaving the Culverden Stadium after the match against Erith Town.

As reported in last week's *Times* (January 11), the collision happened at around 5.15pm and led to the arrest of a 55-year-old man who was driving the van. He remains on bail until March 28.

Detective Sergeant Chris Wade, of the Serious Collision Investigation Unit (SCIU), said on Thursday morning: "The victim sadly died in hospital during the early hours of Wednesday January 11 and we are continuing our enquiries to establish the full circumstances surrounding this collision."

"We remain keen to speak to anyone with

information who has not yet contacted the police.

"If you witnessed the collision or saw the van in the moments leading up to it, please don't hesitate to contact us. We are also keen to hear from anyone with dashcam, CCTV, doorbell or mobile phone footage that may assist the investigation."

## Blaze

Anyone with information is being urged to call **01622 798538**.

TWFC released a statement on Twitter following the news of the man's death, saying: "Tunbridge Wells Football Club is devastated to learn of the passing of a supporter after a tragic incident last Saturday outside the Culverden Stadium. We extend our deepest condolences to his family and friends."

But the club was then hit with a fire that gutted its clubhouse on Thursday night.

The blaze broke out just after 9pm and at its peak saw four fire engines tackling the blaze, with crews also using breathing apparatus and compressed air foam.

The flames were extinguished by midnight and while nobody was injured, the clubhouse has been left gutted.

Club chairman Scott Bartlett said: "This is a



DEATH The 75-year-old fan was hit outside the club

dark day, in a dark week for all those associated with Tunbridge Wells Football Club.

"Inspection of the clubhouse by board members in attendance revealed a scene of almost complete destruction."

## Unusable

With the clubhouse 'unusable for the foreseeable future', he urged supporters and members of the public to avoid the building and the immediate vicinity.

And he said: "The club is incredibly grateful for the kind offers of support and assistance from across the football family and the wider community."

"We will need that support over the coming days, weeks and months. The club will be putting in place fundraising measures, details of which will be communicated in due course."

It had also been a blow to the club to realise 'all of the club history we have lost, including all of our memorabilia from our Wembley Vase Final match in 2013', added Mr Bartlett.

He added that the cause of the fire was being investigated, but that preliminary investigations by the fire service indicate it could have been caused by an electrical fault.



DESTRUCTION The building has been gutted by fire

## MP calls for removal of South East Water in Westminster Debate

GREG CLARK has called for South East Water (SEW) to be 'removed from their role' of operating the local monopoly of supplying fresh water to the area, if the company cannot prove that water outages will not happen again.

The MP for Tunbridge Wells was speaking yesterday (January 17) in a Westminster Hall debate, which allows MPs to put problems on the official record at greater length than allowed in the Commons chamber.

His intervention followed eight days before Christmas when 'many thousands' had no water, as well as an earlier period in November when

other parts of the constituency were cut off.

Disruption and distress ranged from water supply stations being gridlocked and inaccessible to residents without transport, to hospitality businesses cancelling pre-Christmas bookings, to serious hospital disruption.

## Dialysis

"The dialysis unit in Tunbridge Wells was forced to close until Boxing Day as they were unable to guarantee full dialysis for their patients – more than 80," Mr Clark said.

And he slammed the company's lack of resilience and poor communication, saying: "South East Water – the company granted the privilege of operating a local monopoly – failed in its only purpose."

He urged the Water Minister, Rebecca Pow MP, to secure compensation and to demand an 'urgent plan to increase the security of our supplies against things that have the potential to disrupt them'.

Mr Clark added: "If they cannot make us confident that this will not happen again they should be removed from their role."