



**European Movement in Wandsworth & Merton  
Chair's Report  
For the AGM, January 27<sup>th</sup> 2022**

The objectives of this branch as stated in the Constitution are:

- to promote awareness of the European Union (EU)
- to disseminate a positive image of the European Union and Britain's role in Europe
- to raise awareness of European values and to campaign to build a closer relationship with the EU and to rebuild public support for such a relationship.
- to further the aims and objectives of the European Movement (EM) by undertaking relevant activities. as stated in the Constitution.

**The Committee**

The AGM on 26th January 2021 elected the following committee:

Chairperson	Barbara Callender
Secretary	Sally Morgan
Treasurer	Arjan Geveke
Campaign Executive	Ben Austin
Membership Officer	Johanna Rindforth
Social Media	Maciej Psyk, James Ryder

Other members            Jenny Ladbury, Lucy Marsden, Peter Pollard, Helen Rennie-Smith

**Summary**

The UK's transition period ended on January 1st 2021, when we were still in lockdown. Throughout this year we have watched the continual unravelling of all the Brexit lies. Covid has both masked and exacerbated the mess Brexit has caused – whether it be trade with Northern Ireland, school trips from the EU no longer able to come to the UK, or the lack of workers in so many industries. We have continued to campaign energetically both as a local group and in collaboration with European Movement HQ. Our '*The Business of Brexit*' survey and report is the highlight of an extremely busy and diverse year of activities.

**Members**

In January 2021 we had 92 Wandsworth members and 38 Merton members, whereas now we have 139 Wandsworth members and 59 Merton members. Consequently, our membership numbers have increased by 52% during another extremely challenging year.

Our mailing list now stands at 1521; we hope to convert as many as possible of these supporters to members this coming year.

**Activities**

- **Settled Status for EU Citizens**

We maintained our focus on the June 30 deadline for EU citizens to register for Settled Status. On March 22<sup>nd</sup> we received 1600 leaflets in Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish and Romanian that had been issued by the EU delegation in London. Our teams of volunteers distributed them across both boroughs to shops, businesses, cafes, restaurants, care homes and churches where there was a high concentration of EU citizens resident.

On April 27<sup>th</sup>, in another of our collaborations with Citizens Advice Wandsworth, one of our members held a Russian language information session on Zoom for Russian speaking EU citizens from the Baltics and Moldova.

After the June 30th deadline had passed, we sent thankyou cards to our MPs, our colleagues at Citizens Advice, Council leaders and the local press for promoting the issue and doing their best to ensure as many people as possible registered in time.

- **Europe Day picnic, Wimbledon Park, May 22**

We held our first meeting up celebrating all things European at a picnic in Wimbledon Park. Everyone brought European food, we had EU themed plates, mugs and rugs and we played frisbee with a blue disc with yellow stars, all courtesy of HQ.

- ***Business of Brexit* survey and report**

In June HQ launched their '*Building Bridges*' project, inviting local branches to bid for funding for projects that aimed to build bridges and forge alliances at local levels across political divides. We applied for funding and received confirmation of our success at the end of July, with £500 to spend on the project.

We devised an online survey which we launched at the beginning of September. By then we had designed and had printed 5000 business cards with the URL of the survey and a QR code which allowed participants direct access via their smartphone. A team of local volunteers was assembled to distribute the cards to businesses, shops, cafes and restaurants across the boroughs.

We also paid for an advert on December 3<sup>rd</sup> with accompanying editorial in the *South London Press* promoting the survey. I was interviewed about the survey by *Riverside Radio* in Wandsworth. Using email and social media we informed our members, supporters and MPs about the survey. We also contacted Merton and Wandsworth Chambers of Commerce and local Business Improvement Districts. Our colleagues at HQ also helped promote the survey.

We closed the survey in mid-October and started analysing the results, producing a report we called '*The Business of Brexit*'. We launched the report on December 3<sup>rd</sup> at a breakfast meeting at the Wandsworth Professional Development Centre in SW17. This was attended by Marsha de Cordova, MP for Battersea, Anna Bird, CEO of the European Movement and members of the local business community who had taken part in the survey. Copies of the report continue to be distributed in hard copy and online.

On December 3<sup>rd</sup> we also hosted a social at the Goat pub in Battersea to continue the report launch with our members and supporters.

HQ were so impressed by the report that on January 18<sup>th</sup> they are hosting a webinar for groups around the country where we will discuss how we developed the survey and report.

- **Brexit Impact Survey**

In September I joined a group of volunteers working on the prototype of a Brexit Impact Survey funded by HQ. This involved checking and categorising articles about Brexit from a system set up to automatically gather information daily from a range of sources.

- **Conference on the Future of Europe**

A sub-committee chaired by Peter Pollard consulted on the Conference, a debate open for contributions and suggestions from citizens across Europe, and which is expected to reach conclusions and provide guidance on the future of Europe in Spring 2022. Peter submitted our branch's proposals on October 11<sup>th</sup>.

- **National Day of Action, November 9<sup>th</sup>**

We held our first street stall for nearly 2 years on Northcote Road in Battersea. We distributed information leaflets to passers-by about the European Movement and encouraged people to complete surveys on clipboards about how Brexit was affecting them.

- **YEM**

Lucy Marsden now represents our branch with the Young European Movement and keeps us informed as to their activities.

### **Online Events**

- On March 16<sup>th</sup> we hosted an event about proportional representation led by Ed Bowsher, a financial journalist and a member of the *Make Votes Matter* North London branch. It was well attended and generated a lively debate.
- On June 7<sup>th</sup> we hosted an event with Baroness Sarah Ludford, Liberal Democrat Europe spokesperson in the House of Lords. Her talk focused on where we are almost 6 months after Brexit and what the campaigning options are for pro-Europeans. There was a stimulating exchange of views on how to maximise the opportunities for winning support in the months and years ahead for closer relations with the EU and ultimately rejoining.

### **MP contacts**

Due to ongoing Coronavirus restrictions we have had only one physical meeting with a MP. Nevertheless, we have continued to keep in email contact with all the MPs in our constituencies and they have all received a copy of *'The Business of Brexit'*.

- **Rosena Allin-Khan, Tooting:** We know that Rosena has had another extremely busy year and thank her for her support to EU citizens in her constituency.
- **Fleur Anderson, Putney:** On December 9<sup>th</sup> we were proud to see Fleur request a Parliamentary debate on the impact of Brexit, region by region. On her Twitter account, Fleur summarised Mr Rees-Mogg's response as: *'Brexit prayer...Brexit song...Gloria in excelsis Deo...happy fish.'*
- **Marsha de Cordova, Battersea:** Marsha invited two members of our committee to a meeting at Portcullis House on November 22<sup>nd</sup>. We had a good discussion and she agreed with the view that Brexit has been damaging to the UK on all fronts. We were delighted that she attended the launch of *'The Business of Brexit'* on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- **Stephen Hammond, Wimbledon:** Stephen replied to our invitation to our survey launch to say that he was looking forward to seeing the report.

- **Siobhain McDonagh, Merton:** Siobhain retweeted the call for participants and emailed to express interest in the survey results. She is presiding over amendments to the Border and Immigration Bill aiming to provide a physical proof of settled and pre-settled status for EU citizens.
- **Other activities**

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, Sally Morgan and I attended the launch of the Festival of Europe, a series of cultural European themed events to be held across the UK later in 2022. Sally will be pursuing this later in the year.

We have developed closer links with Richmond in Europe; on November 5<sup>th</sup> I attended the unveiling in Twickenham of a new fingerpost sign, pointing to their twin towns: Fontainebleau in France and Konstanz in Germany. The unveiling was performed by the Mayor and Leader of Richmond council. Local MP Munira Wilson attended.

We are also developing links with the West London EM Pro EU Group.

## **Communication**

- **Website**

### **NationBuilder migration**

NationBuilder is an online tool in which we have administered our contact database, website, surveys and donations. We have also sent out e-mails from NationBuilder. Since our constitution in 2017 HQ has supplied us with a so called 'sub-nation' to their nationwide account.

During 2021 HQ has streamlined the use of NationBuilder for all local groups. The main reason is that some local groups didn't use NationBuilder at all but had alternative individual solutions. This made it complicated for HQ to have an overview of GDPR and other compliance issues.

In the middle of September we had an e-mail from EM HQ saying our sub-nation to their NationBuilder account would be closed down by 1st October.

1. We knew we would lose our website, as we knew it, and the new feature on NB would be a one-page information page.
2. We can still publish blog posts and events, but they are now listed together with other groups' blogs and events, which can be seen as an improvement because it gives us nationwide exposure.
3. We are no longer able to keep or create new 'special pages' such as 'in the press' or fundraising specifically for our group.
4. We also lost the landing/information page for the business survey, which at that point was up and running.
5. The good news is that there was a solution, since we have used our own domain name from the beginning.

## **Solution**

After having cleared our suggestion with HQ, we pointed wandsworth.eu from the NationBuilder sub-nation to a free WordPress site where we can create dynamic sub-pages to the now static information page at NationBuilder. That way, we can keep the pages we don't want to lose but still have the benefit of being part of the nation-wide EM UK website and database.

## **Development**

There is now a 'skeleton' website under the domain name wandsworth.eu. It is strongly advised not to use that as "our website". Its only purpose is to provide a platform for sub-pages, extra information, which we can't fit into the information page which HQ provides. We should do our utmost to focus our communication to be posted there, see item 2 above.

## **WordPress Plans**

In the process of creating the new WordPress platform, we realised the free version would not suit EMW&M. Mainly because that allows random advertising, over which we have no control, and we can't use our own domain name. Hence, our account was upgraded to the cheapest paid WordPress plan, called "Personal" which costs USD48, or £36.20 per year.

## **The past year**

We sent out 18 emails to members and supporters and published several blog posts on our old website.

## **Communication in the future**

E-mails, blog posts and events will in the future be administered from our new, limited account at EM HQ's NationBuilder.

Pages such as 'In the Press', calls for donations to our group, surveys conducted by our group and other local initiatives will be posted on wandsworth.eu.

- **Social Media**

## **Basic information**

European Movement in Wandsworth & Merton maintains a Facebook account. The username is europeanmovementinwandsworth. The full website address is:  
<https://www.facebook.com/europeanmovementinwandsworth>

This page is visible to everyone. People can contact the administrator privately. The profanity filter is turned on. Posts may show translations automatically for people who read other languages. The page has five administrators and one editor. They are, with one exception, Committee members. Most of the time the content is provided interchangeably by two administrators. 717 people like the page and 741 follow the posts.

The page has been vetted to promote information and advertisements about social issues, elections and political opinions.

## Paid boosts

Throughout 2021, ten posts have been 'boosted' eleven times, usually to promote upcoming events. Each time the cost was £20. The payment is charged by Facebook (Facebook Ireland Limited) from a debit card of one of the administrators and later reimbursed by the Treasurer.

The invoices are provided, however the amounts for transactions do not match with the requests due to different reporting periods. While this does not affect the amount, it proves difficult to maintain from the accounting perspective.

The list of paid boosts is provided in the table below.

Nr	Completed	First words	Reach	Link clicks	Cost (£)
1	22 Dec	Boris Johnson chose a hard Brexit and it crumbles	1444	64	20
2	4 Dec	Following today's launch, our report on how local	637	12	20
3	8 Oct	This cafe owner from Wandsworth was one of	4537	105	20
4	8 Oct	This cafe owner from Wandsworth was one of	4533	101	20*
5	30 Sep	We need retail managers, business owners and	1629	58	20
6	3 Sep	We need your help! We have obtained funding to	908	63	20
7	11 Jul	The Leave Campaign, Boris Johnson included,	1755	? **	20
8	23 Jun	At Parliament Square today - scene of countless	1084	322	20
9	2 Jun	Join our virtual event with Baroness Sarah	1166	14	20
10	15 May	Do YOU work for or run a business here in	990	13	20
11	18 Feb	EU Citizens need YOUR help! Write to your	1235	22	20

\* donated by Maciej Psyk

\*\* Counted by 'messaging conversations started' which has not been provided. This metric is in development.

## Further information

The Committee is aware that Facebook develops a growing suite of tools for page administrators. These include, among others, ability to run fundraising campaigns. This has not been employed so far, but remains a possibility for 2022, should the decision be made to launch it.

There were no major incidents or security alerts in 2021. However, crude or even malicious comments can be left by some people (eg. ardent Brexiteers). This requires a certain 'moderate' level of preparedness and can be difficult to handle both for Facebook and group admins. An in-depth training in Facebook security, hate speech and handling disinformation aimed specifically at European Movement group administrators could potentially be beneficial and desirable at some point in 2022.

The vast majority of comments come from our members and supporters. These are nearly always polite, kind, supportive and friendly. It is hard to overestimate their importance in keeping the page in line with those values. We are grateful to all members and supporters for this support.

## Group Twitter account

The group maintains a twitter account at @WandsworthEM. As of January 2021 we have 1201 followers - a mixture of private individuals, local businesses and other pro-EU campaigning groups.

Twitter provides basic analytical information to non-paid accounts, such as ours. Below is the aggregate number of tweet impressions for each month of the year.

Month	Total tweet impressions
January	1951
February	2034
March	3163
April	7947
May	4709
June	21400
July	2562
August	4850
September	2069
October	12700
November	32900
December	12400

‘Tweet impressions’ denote when someone sees one of our tweets on their own feed. There are peaks in April, June, October, November and December that coincide with the following popular tweets -

**April** - 1826 impressions linking to a blogpost detailing experiences sending parcels from the UK to and from the EU

**June** - 8661 impressions for a tweet promoting our speaker event with Baroness Sarah Ludford

**October** - 9642 impressions for a tweet promoting our small business survey

**November** - 12.9K impressions for a tweet from our street survey for Action Day

**December** - 3902 impressions for a video from our small business survey report launch (the video itself now has nearly 1800 views)

- **Traditional Media**

We have had letters published in the South London Press. These can be found on our website: [https://www.wandsworth.eu/in\\_the\\_press](https://www.wandsworth.eu/in_the_press)

## Looking ahead

We start this year with stronger representation in the European Movement; Lucy Marsden and I were elected to the National Council in November, and in December I was honoured to be voted on to the National Executive.

Yet more Brexit induced chaos is predicted as food retailers in the EU grapple with additional costs and paperwork associated with new Customs checks.

This branch will continue to work towards the aims of the European Movement as stated at the beginning of this report, and we welcome suggestions and input from our members.

### **Acknowledgements**

Once again I would like to thank a highly proactive and efficient committee and all the volunteers who have worked with us on our campaigns this year. I am grateful to Arjan Geveke, Maciej Psyk, Helen Rennie-Smith and James Ryder for their input to this report and accounts.

**Battersea, January 2022**

**Barbara Callender**

**Chair**

**European Movement in Wandsworth & Merton**