



## **European Movement in Wandsworth & Merton**

### **Chair's Report**

**For the AGM, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

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 EU 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 intensify public support for such a relationship.
- to further the aims and objectives of the European Movement (EMUK) by undertaking relevant activities as stated in the Constitution.

### **The Committee**

The AGM on 20th January 2025 elected the following committee:

Chairperson	Barbara Callender
Vice-chair	Sally Morgan
Secretary	Phil Carey
Treasurer	Arjan Geveke
Campaign Executive	Ben Austin
Membership Officer	Helen Rennie-Smith
Social Media	Maciej Psyk, James Ryder
YEM representative	Lucy Marsden

### **Summary**

The branch has had another busy year. Our general campaign strategy continues to aim for a regular stream of activity, whether that be street stalls to meet the public or other events – such as talks with guest speakers, social meet ups, lobbying MPs or otherwise.

Where possible we seek then to publish and promote photos and conclusions from our events via our website and social media. It has been an extremely diverse year of activities, both as a local group and in collaboration with EMUK HQ and other branches.

### **Activities in the community**

- **London Regional Member social**

On January 20th our AGM was followed by a talk from Dominic Grieve KC, Vice-President of EMUK. Our hired room at The Omnibus Theatre in Clapham was packed out with EM members and supporters keen to hear from one of our key patrons.

- **Erasmus + Action Day in Wimbledon**

On January 25<sup>th</sup> we took part in a EMUK national Day of Action to support the campaign for the UK to rejoin the Erasmus+ programme. Branch members met up in Wimbledon and distributed leaflets about the campaign.

- **Meeting with Marsha de Cordova, Vice-President EMUK at Portcullis House**

On March 27<sup>th</sup> two members of our committee met with Marsha de Cordova, MP for Battersea, to discuss her role as co-chair of the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly (PPA).

- **Phone banking and mailshot**

On April 8<sup>th</sup> committee members met at the Chair's house to conduct a phone banking exercise with branch members, with the aim of re-engaging those with whom we had lost contact. This was conducted in tandem with a letter sent to local members.

- **Putney street stall**

On April 12th we took the Eurometer to Putney High Street, where our questions focused on what passersby thought the new government should prioritise in their relations with the EU. Nearly all wanted to see closer relations with our near neighbours.

- **Europe Day Strategy Session**

On May 8<sup>th</sup> we invited local members and supporters to a strategy session at the Omnibus Theatre to discuss campaign objectives and tactics for our group over the coming months. It began with a keynote address from Marsha de Cordova, Vice-President of EMUK. Marsha focused on the progress likely to be made at the EU-UK Summit on 19 May, and praised the valuable contribution made by EMUK, including at local level. She updated the meeting of the activities of the EU-UK PPA.

This was followed by a launch-day showing of EMUK's new film *Flags in the Wind*, filmed in the city of Lviv, marking the 80th anniversary of VE Day and highlighting the resilience of the Ukrainian people.

We then split up into 5 groups and discussed which priorities local members wished EMWM to focus on. These were: young people, local MPs, local businesses, EU citizens in the boroughs and other local partners such as schools.

- **Battersea street stall**

On July 5<sup>th</sup> the Eurometer went to Northcote Road; local people were happy to give their opinions on where we are with European relations. The issues were particularly topical in light of the reset agreement signed between the UK and the EU in May.

- **Summer social**

On August 18<sup>th</sup> we held a summer social at the Leather Bottle in Earlsfield, which is at the epicentre of the two boroughs of Merton and Wandsworth. We had a good turnout with many new faces.

- **Mitcham street stall**

On November 8<sup>th</sup> we held a street stall in Mitcham town centre. Participants expressed overwhelming support for restoring youth mobility for work and study, reviving or creating European town-twinning partnerships, strengthening trade with the EU, and working more closely with European partners on defence and security.

- **Autumn social**

On November 25<sup>th</sup> we held a joint social event with our neighbours Lambeth for Europe at the King & Co pub in Clapham, which was a good opportunity for the two groups to network and make plans for 2026.

### **Members, supporters and e-mails**

At the time of writing EM Merton has 116 members (compared to 111 in January last year) and Wandsworth has 240 (235). It is a constantly moving number since new members sign up and some previous members don't always renew their membership. The database also includes so-called supporters, people who have signed up for our e-mails but are not yet paid-up members. The best way to monitor the number of supporters is to study the statistics of our e-mail messages. Between the last AGM in January 2025 and now we have sent out 14 emails to supporters. The year started with an email sent to 1288 supporters, a number that has increased to 2263.

### **European Twinning for Wandsworth and Merton**

We have made some progress in 2025 towards our goal of setting up town twinning relationships for both boroughs – including a breakthrough in getting a like-minded district of Berlin to offer itself as a twin for Wandsworth. We decided at the start of the year that the strongest foundation should be community-led twinning associations and ran campaigns on that basis in both Wandsworth and Merton: we wrote to all secondary schools and all councillors, and to business associations in the two boroughs, to generate interest in forming an association to drive forward the idea.

Soon afterwards we were delighted to see the Berlin borough of Pankow very belatedly picking up on our tentative initial approach two years earlier. The borough's Mayor wrote to Wandsworth's leader in June proposing council-to-council discussions with a view to twinning. In response, Councillor Simon Hogg, was positive in principle but explained he was not yet in a position to take things forward; expectations from twinning would need first to be explored through consultation with local people, and council officers have indicated this would not be until after the May 2026 elections.

We will encourage the parties contesting the elections, in Merton too, to raise the prospect of a European partnership, and in the meantime will step up our efforts to build on the initial interest that came from the head teachers and heads of languages that we approached this year. We had a really constructive meeting in-person in October with the lead officer at Pankow borough and agreed that twinning with them could very valuably focus on youth exchange and cultural opportunities: with the extra boost shortly afterwards of the UK's imminent return to the Erasmus+ programme, we have a strong proposition to put to schools and colleges, and are now sharing an Education Sector briefing we have drawn up on the case for twinning.

We remain determined to set up a twinning association in each borough and would welcome any support from members in getting things moving in this coming election year.

## **Young European Movement (YEM)**

Over the last year YEM has placed a heavy emphasis on rejoining Erasmus+. They have held panel discussions on the matter and a virtual exhibition, 'Open Doors, Open Futures', to represent young artists' visions of a united future of opportunities for young people across Europe. They have also held various events with MPs and European politicians. Their efforts were rewarded with the announcement from government that the UK will rejoin Erasmus+ in 2027. Their efforts have now turned to ensuring the government will not charge participants the same fees as other international students. They are also focused on improving the social media strategy across regional groups of EMUK and our ability to reach more young people.

## **MP contacts**

We have kept up active dialogue through the year with all five MPs representing Wandsworth and Merton seats: the four Labour MPs (Rosena Allin-Khan, Tooting; Fleur Anderson, Putney; Marsha de Cordova, Battersea; and Siobhain McDonagh, Mitcham & Merton), who have all known us for some years; and the LibDem MP Paul Kohler, Wimbledon, elected for the first time in the 2024 General Election. We have kept all our MPs up to date on our activities, including street stalls in their constituencies, and in particular on the challenges that EU Settled Status presents for their constituents (see below).

We have made great progress in strengthening our relationship with Rosena Alliin-Khan, with a constituent of hers, Roland Woodbridge, joining the Committee and bringing the benefit of his extensive contacts in Tooting. Rosena has a key role as Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Europe, and we look forward to working more closely with her in 2026 as the issues the Group covers rise further up the political agenda.

Our closest links remain with Marsha de Cordova, who has shown her commitment to stronger relations with the rest of Europe through adding to her work as Vice President of the European Movement nationally the role of Co-Chair of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly. We were invited to two separate meetings this year, in March and September, to brief her and her team on the key challenges from our perspective in both those roles, and on any local constituency angle. We were delighted that Marsha was able to join our Europe Day event in May (see above) and set the scene for the discussions.

## **Settled Status**

### **Continued support for a fair and efficient European Union Settlement Scheme**

Having a significant proportion of people with close ties with the EU Member States or dual nationalities among the members, our branch has championed itself as a voice for a fair, secure and efficient European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS). Before the UK exited the EU we worked hard to help inform and assist residents who needed to apply for Settled Status. Since then we have been regularly liaising and updating our 5 local MPs about Settled Status, how it affects their constituents and the problems that arise at a national level.

In our most recent letter to the MPs in late 2025 we noted that the number of pending applications from EU27 nationals for the first time since 2018 had dropped below 100,000. This signifies that the most difficult part of the scheme, both from the Home Secretary and applicants' point of view, where the number of applications vastly outnumbered capabilities to

process them (thus creating backlog) has finally ended seven years after the scheme's roll-out. In this much-sought normalisation phase, the number of concluded applications consistently outpace received ones, which helps to ease the severity of the situation caused the backlog from dire to acceptable. There are now three types of newly registered applications: late applications, joining family members and – most frequently – conversions from Pre-Settled Status to Settled Status. These three routes to enter the scheme may amount to 20-30 thousand applications per month throughout 2026 and beyond. Conversion to Settled Status is partially automated for eligible Pre-Settled Status holders.

We also highlighted the opportunity to support Early Day Motion number 1279 which “*calls on the Government to launch an independent review of the Home Office’s implementation of the digital-only immigration status in consultation with impacted communities*”.

We were delighted to learn that, by sheer coincidence, MP Paul Kohler, representing Wimbledon, had signed to support the motion days before our letter has reached him. As of writing this report the motion is supported by a cross-party group of 51 MPs.

We will continue to work to keep our MPs informed regarding Settled Status.

## **EMUK Board and Council**

As a member of both the Board and the Council, I have continued to work with EM management and activists around the country developing strategies to expand our membership and influence.

As Chair of the Diversity Committee of EMUK, I have coordinated actions and webinars to expand awareness amongst our members of the nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The aim is to increase diversity amongst our members as we seek to grow the membership of the organisation.

## **Communication**

- **Website**

Our website at [www.wandsworth.eu](http://www.wandsworth.eu) has links to all our recent activities.

- **Social Media**

### **Facebook**

Our branch continues to maintain a Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/europeanmovementinwandsworth/>

The number of followers has plateaued at around 900. This is close to median across all EM branches. They continue to be predominantly members of the branch, members of the European Movement from other branches, other committed Europeans and fellow organisations including, among others, Swindon for Europe, Dorset for Europe or Oxford for Europe.

The page follows other branches reciprocally and a number of influential individuals and friendly organisations. Throughout 2025 we “liked”, shared or commented posts made by them, eg. EM UK, The New World magazine etc. This allows easy access to quality Brexit-related articles and news that would be otherwise hard to find.

Direct communication with the administrator (and vice versa) is possible although practice shows that to be rare.

The page has “no issues”, meaning it had no Community Standards violations or restrictions.

The page is run by six administrators with two access levels.

The page is authorised to run social issue, electoral or political ads.

The page can earn money, but currently does not.

In 2025 we have had a number of standard posts and four “boosted” posts, tailored to maximize website visitors, post engagements or messages. These were financed through the Treasurer and proved to be much more effective than standard posts.

Our website is public, meaning that any Facebook user can follow us and comment. This is a blessing and a curse, as evidenced during peak visits.

#### **Twitter/X/Bluesky/Threads/Instagram**

Our group currently has a total of 2179 followers on X (formerly Twitter) and circa 5600 followers on BlueSky. We don’t post as frequently on these networks as in the past. Many of our followers on X have left the platform, although it is still used to some extent by journalists, politicians, third-party and government organisations as a way to disseminate information. Some groups and commentators have moved from X to BlueSky in recent years, but BlueSky hasn’t become a focus for discussion and information in the same way as Twitter during its peak around the turn of the decade, and is a bit of bubble for already well informed participants, who whilst all very pleasant, seem mostly in agreement that UK’s place is at the heart of Europe. So our news and announcements don’t have the same reach or reaction as previous, on either network.

The committee is extremely concerned and disgusted at the current image manipulation and abuse by the AI Grok facility within X, so has recently agreed to suspend our use of it with immediate effect, pending further review.

The recently published OFCOM 'online nation' reveals that the social media networks with the most reach in the UK across all ages are YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit and TikTok (in that order, measured by the number of people who claim they connect regularly in the OFCOM polling). Whilst we don’t have the resources in our group to produce regular YouTube and TikTok reels (volunteers gratefully accepted!), we encourage members to sign up to our Facebook and Instagram pages, and to create an account on Reddit to participate and advocate in the many interesting Europe-related discussions on there. And of course to visit our website regularly at [wandsworth.eu](http://wandsworth.eu), where links to all the latest news about EM Wandsworth & Merton is posted on the front page. One of our primary objectives is to convert our many supporters and sympathisers to members, and we need to find new ways to do this efficiently. related to UK and Europe beyond our ‘bubble’ of committed supporters - all ideas are welcome!

## **Looking ahead**

We are hosting an event following our AGM on February 11th at The Omnibus Theatre in Clapham with Molly Scott-Cato, Vice-Chair of EMUK as guest speaker.

We will hold a street stall with our Eurometer and distribute leaflets about EMUK at Earlsfield Station on March 28<sup>th</sup>.

We will continue with the activities described in the section on Twinning above.

We plan to join part of the London leg of the Rejoin Ramble. The team at National Rejoin March are walking from London to Brussels (255 Miles) across 14 days (*19.6 Miles per day average*), from May 23<sup>rd</sup> – June 5<sup>th</sup>.

We welcome suggestions and input from our members and are always looking for more volunteers and committee 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 Ben Austin, Phil Carey, Arjan Geveke, Lucy Marsden, Sally Morgan, Maciej Psyk, Helen Rennie-Smith and James Ryder for their input to this report and accounts. I also wish to thank Robin Phelps, our auditor.

**Battersea, January 2026**

**Barbara Callender**  
**Chair**  
**European Movement in Wandsworth & Merton**  
<https://wandsworth.eu/>