

Academy plans under threat after reshuffle

By Chris Wickham

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Borough chiefs have warned a change in the Government earlier this week is a potential threat to the academies programme.

On Sunday, October 5, it was announced Schools Minister Andrew Adonis – the architect of former Prime Minister Tony Blair's school reform plans and the man credited with developing the academies programme – was to leave the Department for Children, Schools and Families to become a transport minister.

Councillor Serge Lourie, Richmond Council's leader, said an urgent meeting with Lord Adonis' successor, Sarah McCarthy-Fry,

was being sought to ensure there has been no change in policy.

Last month Richmond Council's cabinet finalised documents, known as Expression of Interest documents (EoIs), outlining ideas to turn Hampton Community College, Shene School and Whitton School into academies – independent, all-ability state schools supported by sponsors – and agreed to pass them to the Government.

Should they be agreed the project would proceed to the feasibility stage and the borough's executive has also agreed to spend £1m funding building design and site investigation works during that phase of the project.

Coun Lourie said: "We are determined to make major improvements in our secondary schools

through the academy programme and have been working closely with Lord Adonis.

"He has encouraged the council to proceed with academies and we are making good progress. The proposed investment of £80m in the three schools would be of enormous benefit to young people."

Coun Lourie paid personal tribute to Lord Adonis and added: "He has often seemed to be the only person in this Government who has known what he wanted and was single minded in pursuing his objectives."

Coun Geoffrey Samuel, deputy leader of Richmond Conservatives, said there was evidence that Education Secretary Ed Balls did not want Lord Adonis in his department and believed the academies would now be less prominent.



Proud: Pippa Rollitt and Matt Dowse finished the challenge

Coast to coast

A Richmond physiotherapist has completed her role as the backbone of a charity cycling team travelling 3,000 miles across the US.

Pippa Rollitt, who works at Richmond Physiotherapy in Hill Street, helped boyfriend Matt Dowse and his best friend Andy Wyeth cycle coast-to-coast in 19 days in memory of their mums who died from cancer.

The team has raised more than £15,000 for the Royal Marsden Cancer Campaign and Leukaemia Research.



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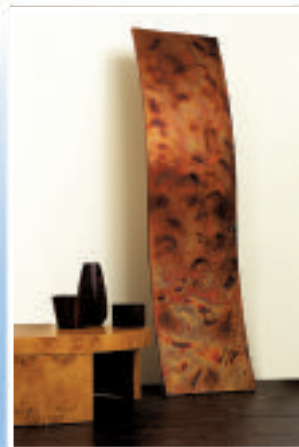
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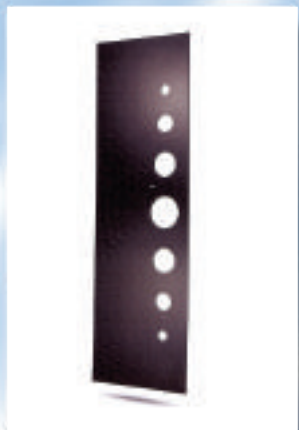
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