



Your independent community newspaper

WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

Free
Nov 2020, No. 68

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Walthamstow Wetlands celebrated its third birthday last month, shortly after welcoming its one millionth visitor. The nature reserve, opened in October 2017, saw a 140% rise in visitor numbers during the Covid-19 lockdown this year as the site became a haven for residents. London Wildlife Trust director Leah McNally said: "We are very proud of our staff and thankful to them for all their hard work in keeping the site open so that local residents are able to continue to enjoy Walthamstow Wetlands in these unprecedented times." Credit Penny Dixie

Fire safety work to cost £38m

By Victoria Munro,
Local Democracy Reporter

Money needed to make Waltham Forest Council homes safe from fires will be raised by charging "tenants and leaseholders" if a funding bid is unsuccessful.

The government is introducing new fire safety laws in 2022 for buildings of six or more storeys. The council owns 13 such blocks – with £38m said to be needed to make them all comply.

At a scrutiny committee meeting last month, director of housing assets Sumitra Gomer said the council was applying for government funding to cover the cost, but admitted if the bid was successful it will "come both from tenants and from leaseholders".

The meeting heard that no building in the borough currently has the kind of cladding used on Grenfell Tower, widely blamed for spreading the fatal blaze in June 2017, but "external cladding identified as non-compliant" was still being used in Waltham Forest.

Project to tackle hate crime

Bystanders will be trained to intervene after local hate crime doubles in a decade

by James Cracknell

Local people will be trained to intervene when they witness potential hate crimes. Waltham Forest Council is launching what it calls a "bystander intervention" training programme as part of efforts to foster "community solidarity" against hate in the borough.

The training aims to encourage

residents to assist those they see as being victims of bullying, harassment or a hate crime, helping them to recognise a potentially harmful situation and how to assist and support victims.

Pilot sessions were delivered digitally to 30 residents last month, during Hate Crime Awareness Week, including to members of faith groups, local voluntary organisations and others who expressed

interest. If successful, it's planned to roll out the training more widely.

The rate of racist and religious hate crimes recorded by the Metropolitan Police in Waltham Forest has nearly doubled over the last decade, with an average of 21 such crimes per month in 2010/11 compared to 40 per month over the last year. Homophobic hate crimes have trebled over the same period, from an average of two

per month, up to six per month. A recent survey suggested that two out of three local residents had either experienced or witnessed a hate incident.

Bystander intervention training participant Emmeline May is one of the founding members of Waltham Forest Women Taking Back the Streets, a local

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COMMENT



FELLOWSHIP IS LIFE

NOVEMBER 2020
No. 68

Waltham Forest Echo is the borough's free community newspaper. We publish monthly and distribute 10,000 free copies of each issue – and we will continue to do so during the ongoing public health crisis

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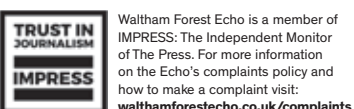
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Homebase is not where the heart is

Residents form campaign group to oppose high-rise plans for Homebase in Walthamstow



Max Carter (left) protesting in Walthamstow against the Fulbourne Road scheme
Credit Caroline Carter

"The scale and height of the proposed development has horrified many local residents"

by Max Carter

Back in June, a few like-minded residents became aware of a seemingly 'under the radar' proposal to build a large development at Homebase in Fulbourne Road, Walthamstow. Our first real sight of this proposal was in July when a glossy newsletter-style flyer with

very little detail landed on our doormats. This was followed by a Zoom broadcast by the architect, JTP, also attended by the developer, Inland Homes.

Shocked into action, a Facebook group was set up the next day, catchily called Fulbourne Road Development Community Group. It now has more than 370 members and continues to grow by the day, as word spreads.

It is fair to say that most residents acknowledge there is a shortage of well-designed, affordable housing in Waltham Forest, and would welcome new homes that blend well with the surrounding area. However, the scale and height of the proposed development has horrified many local residents.

There is little consideration of surrounding residents' right to light and the privacy of those in properties that would be overlooked. It is also unclear why the development can't be more in keeping with the neighbouring Hawker Siddeley site where buildings are four or five storeys tall. Few design cues have been absorbed from the surrounding area, particularly the area to the east where there is a large proportion of Victorian and Edwardian terraced houses. There doesn't seem to be any rationale for the proposed positioning of the tower blocks, either. Surely the tallest block should be located where it would be least obtrusive?

The original Environmental Impact Assessment submitted by the developers to Waltham Forest Council quoted buildings of up to 18 storeys. At the beginning of the

developer's engagement with the community, buildings of up to 20 storeys were quoted. This was then reduced back to 18 storeys. It could be argued that the developer had a clear plan that was inflated during pre-application consultation, only to return to their original plans for the actual application, which was then dressed up as a 'concession' following community engagement.

The council's strategy is to encourage and enable large-scale housing developments on or near transport hubs such as Blackhorse Road, where there is now a cluster of tall buildings. But the pandemic has changed people's working and living needs. It is now less likely that residents will be commuting everyday into central London to work, and less likely that people will want to live in a small garden-less home in a high-rise building. This should now be considered by developers.

Most significantly for residents living in the Fulbourne Road area, this development is just one of many at the eastern end of Forest Road that are either in planning or in progress, including Hylands, Willow House, the former Wood Street Library site, and the town hall campus.

Ultimately, residents may well vote with their feet and decide to abandon the green borough where they have lived happily for years before it becomes a vast construction site for the next five years and beyond.



Plans for the Homebase site in Fulbourne Road include 583 homes

A planning application for 2C Fulbourne Road has now been submitted by Inland Homes and includes 583 homes. For more information:

Visit fulbournroadregen.co.uk

Moving on

An introduction from editor James Cracknell

Hello and welcome to Issue 68 of *Waltham Forest Echo*.

I have loved editing this paper over the last five years but sadly the time has come for me to move on. My role with our pub-

lisher Social Spider is changing and unfortunately this means I will no longer have the time to dedicate to the *Echo*. My last edition at the helm will be the January 2021 issue, so it's not quite time yet to say goodbye, but I just want to thank everyone who has written for the paper in my time here – it really has been a pleasure to edit the many

fantastic contributions I have received over the years!

This is actually a very exciting time for the paper as pagination has recently increased, advertising revenues are at a record high, and next year will see us launch a revamped and much-improved website.

I am looking forward to working with a new editor who can take the paper to the next level and show that there is a lot of life left in local news. On that subject, we are now advertising for the vacancy. If you have experience

in local journalism and are keen to work for us, see the job advert online at <https://rb.gy/ytcoba> and send us your application before the deadline on 17th November.

In the paper this month, on Page 5 read about a new community re-use scheme for local DIY enthusiasts, on Page 9 plans for a new ice centre in Lea Bridge Road win planning permission, on Page 13 local arts groups celebrate winning government cash, and on Page 18 a swimming club makes an appeal for help from the community.

NEWS

New plans for The Mall submitted

Tallest tower extended to 34 storeys and lime tree avenue saved

by James Cracknell & Victoria Munro,
Local Democracy Reporter

New plans to demolish part of The Mall in Walthamstow and build two tower blocks containing more than 500 homes have been submitted to Waltham Forest Council.

The £200million redevelopment originally won planning permission nearly three years ago, but Mall owners Capital & Regional have now revised their scheme – adding more homes, making the tower blocks taller, and including a new tube station entrance for Walthamstow Central.

Following significant public pressure, the council and developers have also now agreed to retain the avenue of lime trees in Walthamstow Town Square, although the amount of public open space in the square will still be reduced by one third and 50 mature trees chopped down. At least as many new trees will be planted in their place and a new children's play area provided.

The number of proposed homes is increasing from 502 to 538, of which the vast majority will be for rent, with just 43 for private sale. The so-called 'build to rent' scheme will now include 30% 'affordable' homes, discounted from market rent levels. This is below the council's 50% target. First priority for these homes will go to existing borough residents.

The project will also improve and extend Walthamstow Central Underground Station, which lies directly underneath the scheme. A new step-free entrance will be



How revised plans for The Mall are planned to look, as viewed from Selborne Road

built, accessible from the town square. It will be part-funded by a £15m contribution from Transport for London (TfL).

If approved, building work is planned to begin next year. Both The Mall and the tube station would remain open throughout.

Councillor Simon Miller, responsible for economic growth and housing development, said the redevelopment was "an exciting project at the heart of our borough". He added: "At a time when town centres across the country are seeing shopping centres and businesses closing, following the impact of Covid-19, Capital & Regional has demonstrated its continued commitment to invest in major improvements in Waltham Forest."

The height of the development is again causing concern among

residents, with some describing it as "out of keeping" and saying it would "spoil the unique ambience" of Walthamstow.

In addition to extra housing, the scheme will add 8,000 square metres of retail space for The Mall, in an attempt to compete with Westfield Stratford. It will create 350 jobs and it is proposed that 100 car parking spaces will be removed.

Lawrence Hutchings from Capital & Regional said: "We have been working with the council and TfL to find ways to provide more benefits for the town centre. We are delighted to be submitting these plans which will strengthen The Mall as a community-based shopping centre for Walthamstow and provide more jobs and better shops.

"I would like to thank all resi-

dents who participated in our consultation last year. The updated proposals reflect their feedback."

In July 2019, a serious fire led to the destruction of a significant section of the existing shopping centre. Planning permission has already been granted to repair this damage, which was concentrated in the first floor of the south-west section of The Mall, away from where the new development is planned. The replacement of the fire-damaged area includes a new enlarged food court and "refreshed" southern elevation fronting Selborne Road.

Residents can give their views on the new plans (reference 202491) until Wednesday 23rd December:

Email dmconsultations@walthamforest.gov.uk
Visit walthamforest.gov.uk/TheMall

Rapist jailed

A man who raped a woman as she was walking home after a night out with friends in Leytonstone has been jailed for nine years.

Leon Rochester, of Woodhouse Road, was found guilty of rape following a trial at Snaresbrook Crown Court last month.

The 34-year-old had approached his victim in Leytonstone High Road on Sunday 26th January. He offered her a drink and walked with her to a secluded location off Kirkdale Road, where he attacked her after ignoring her pleas to stop. The woman eventually managed to break free and run away.

Detective Inspector Jeremy McDermott said: "I'd like to commend the victim for coming forward and telling us about her terrifying ordeal. Thanks to her bravery, both then and during the course of the investigation and trial, a dangerous offender has been taken off the streets.

"Although this sentence cannot make up for what she has gone through, I hope that the verdict and sentencing brings her some level of closure."

Complaints

by Victoria Munro,
Local Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest Council paid more than £7,000 to compensate residents for its failings in the previous financial year.

The complaints include a disabled man forced to defecate in his bed after being housed in an unsuitable flat and a woman whose fears about her vulnerable father were dismissed. The amounts paid out ranged from £50 up to £2,400 and totalled £7,488, split between eleven people whose complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman were upheld.

Detailed investigations were carried out in the cases of 29 complaints through the 2019/20 financial year, with nine being dismissed, while in five cases the council was deemed to have "provided a satisfactory remedy".

The 69% rate for upheld complaints compares to an average of 70% for other local authorities. More details can be read online at lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance

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group dedicated to stopping street harassment of women. Emmeline said: "The session was a really good introduction into what is known as the 'bystander effect', which is the theory that in a public setting individuals may be less likely to take notice of somebody being harassed if there are others around who are not intervening.

"Over time I'm delighted that more people will be taught how to respond in a safe manner when these instances occur."

The training is one of several community-led programmes the council is taking forward after

"They want the whole community to be empowered to stand in solidarity against hate"

it hosted the first-ever citizens assembly held by a local authority on the topic of hate crime, earlier this year. The "demographically representative" group of 45 residents developed six key recommendations aimed at bringing "the whole borough together against hate". Nearly

£300,000 was spent on running the citizens assembly.

Councillor Ahsan Khan, lead member for community safety, said: "Waltham Forest is a place where differences aren't just something that should be tolerated, they should be celebrated. However, as we're seeing an unprecedented rise in incidents of hate across London, we are working with the local community to address this at a local level.

"Earlier this year, residents told us through the citizens assembly that they want the whole community to be empowered to stand in solidarity against hate. The bystander intervention pilot

is one of several programmes being developed that aims to change behaviour among people of all ages and backgrounds to collectively stand united against hate incidences."

Other recommendations being taken forward include the development of a communications and engagement campaign, improved support for victims and reporting of hate incidents, educating and empowering young people to recognise and reduce hate, and broadening the definition of a hate incident.

For more information:
Visit walthamforest.gov.uk/content/waltham-forest-citizens-assembly

FEATURES

Looking up

Helen Bigham meets David Lindo



Growing up with a passion for birds, the broadcaster and author David Lindo has turned his hobby into a career.

Now known as the 'Urban Birder', David's on a mission to get everyone, particularly city-dwellers, better engaged with the nature around us. His message is simple: "Look up!"

Adds David: "Once you blot out the noise—sirens, dogs barking, people shouting—you get on nature's wavelength and hear things you never heard before."

I've got to know David through his role as president of Friends of Suntrap, a group representing the educational environmental centre in Epping Forest, run by Waltham Forest Council. Suntrap's aim is to encourage everyone to experience nature first-hand, hopefully leading to a greater respect, understanding and collective responsibility for our natural world. Not

forgetting that a strong connection to the outdoors improves our emotional wellbeing and stops feelings of social isolation.

David has been at the forefront in breaking down the stereotype of birdwatching as being the domain of white middle-aged and middle-class men. Following in his footsteps is Flock Together, a monthly birdwatching support club "combating the under-representation of people of colour in nature".

Co-founded by Ollie Olanipekun and Nadeem Perera, the group launched during lockdown and has grown swiftly via word of mouth; with many more following Flock Together's Instagram page, where new members can ask to join upcoming walks. So far, it has drawn in a diverse mix of young Londoners regularly meeting for walks, each lasting a couple of hours, on pre-planned routes through local sites such as Lea Valley Park and Walthamstow Wetlands.

In a recent interview, Perera and Olanipekun explained that Flock Together will provide a social space for its members and relieve some of the pressure of life in the capital. "I hope it releases them from feeling this necessity to 'be something'," Perera said. "I just want people to find some tranquility and being in nature gives you that; you realise that you don't have to be anything more than what you are."

People are increasingly visiting outdoor destinations, as shown with the latest visitor numbers for Epping Forest, which had 14 million people visit in September, an increase of ten million from this time last year. Maybe there are some new 'twitchers' among them?

For more information about Suntrap:
Visit suntrapcentre.co.uk

By hook or by brook

Ben Martin is part of a group of residents committed to cleaning up their local stream

A group of neighbours from Lea Bridge have come together to start cleaning up the polluted Dagenham Brook.

The brook, which runs from Walthamstow Wetlands through Leyton Jubilee Park and down to Hackney Marshes, is a designated site of local conservation importance, and in recent years kingfishers have been seen on its banks.

Unfortunately the waterway, which has long been nicknamed 'the ditch', has also attracted its share of litter, fly-tipping and pollution. During the pandemic lockdown, we residents decided we wanted to help turn the tide and restore the brook to life.

So far, our group has organised four community clean-up days, where volunteers can put on their waders and rubber gloves and get clearing – fishing out rubbish, cutting back invasive plants, clearing blockages, and having a good time too!

We've also been gathering water samples from the brook as part of 'WaterBlitz', a crowd-sourced citizen science initiative,

to measure levels of water pollution and chemical waste.

Alice Harrison, one of the co-founders of our group, says: "Coming together to help clear up the brook has really helped us to get through lockdown.

"Lots of people have found themselves with a bit of extra time on their hands, unfortunately, but doing stuff with the community like this has been great. We can meet new people, feel part of a team and hopefully help transform the brook into an asset for our community, where nature can thrive."

With more than 40 local residents involved so far, and more clean-up days scheduled for the autumn, the group is currently putting together a funding proposal to help support their clean-up efforts and expand their impact.

The next Dagenham Brook clean-up day is scheduled for Saturday 21st November, meeting in Leyton Jubilee Park. If you're interested in coming along or finding out more, email dagenhambrook@gmail.com for more details.



Volunteers have been retrieving litter and other pollution from the Dagenham Brook in Walthamstow and Leyton

Giving young people a head start

Rabeya Alam from Waltham Forest Community Hub on how the charity is helping young people

The year 2020 will have been a substantial year for a lot of people in the world. It has been a tough one as well for our charity, Waltham Forest Community Hub.

Through all the leaps and bounds, and a lot of hard work and support collectively as a team, we have thankfully come through what could have been a very bad situation for our charity. As youth services manager, I feel proud to be part of the community network and workforce where I am pleased to say that, through the calamities, we have come out even stronger, continuing to run some services, while adapting to the reality of what is going on around us.

During the pandemic, we were pleased to announce a new youth programme called Headstart Action Programme – working with young people aged 14–18 years old who are NEET (not in education, employment or training). The numbers in this group have remained consistently high over a decade now, and with harsher economic times ahead of us, this service is vital to help young people combat any barriers that could ultimately have adverse effects on their life chances.

Working alongside Shaun, our youth and family engagement co-ordinator who has been at Waltham Forest Community Hub for ten years, and Hamza,

our youth employability officer for three years, the team has a tremendous amount of knowledge, skills, experience, and ability. Together we can build relationships with young people to enable them to be the best version of themselves.

The programme is aimed at young people who are at risk of dropping out of education and training where, often once a young person goes through a turbulent time, it can be very difficult to get them back on to the path that is best suited for them. Headstart Action takes a holistic approach to supporting this disadvantaged group of young people. The focus is around understanding why they are disengaged in

the first place, in order to meet the specific need of individuals.

Working closely with our various networks and utilising all the support available from our partners, we engage young people through skills development workshops, social action, and work experience. Most importantly, our staff team will provide one-to-one mentoring support and guidance to help improve young people's life chances. We will be recruiting for our second cohort of young people for the programme in January 2021.

For further information:
Email info@wfchub.org
Visit wfchub.org

FEATURES



Tool's gold

Greg Dickson from Forest Recycling Project has helped setup a new community re-use scheme

Tools can be quite costly, take up a lot of storage space, and are often not used very much. So you will be pleased to hear that we have just opened Walthamstow Tool Library (WTL)!

At our base on Priory Court Estate, we have more than 100 new and used tools available to loan, from lawn mowers and strimmers, to chisels and drills. We also have a variety of gardening books, for ideas and instruction on greening your own space.

You can save money, space, and the environment, by joining WTL. The idea came from William Morris Big Local (WMBL), who are always thinking of plans to improve outdoor spaces for the community, and has been made possible by Forest Recycling Project (FRP).

With the support of National Lottery funding and Waltham Forest Council, WTL is currently opening every Friday, 1pm–5pm. Gabriel Edwards, from WMBL, said: “Forest Recycling Project came forward to make it happen, and after the challenges and setbacks of this year, we’re really happy to finally see it open.”

The Walthamstow Tool Library team includes myself, Katja Benkel and Em Palmer from FRP. Together we all alternate in running the library as session workers.

So come and meet us on a Friday afternoon to find out more, or just to have a chat about your garden or DIY projects!

Green spaces are particularly important in cities like London, not only in terms of air quality, biodiversity and wildlife, but especially for our mental health – as many of us have painfully realised over the past few months.

Another WMBL project, in collaboration with Extinction Rebellion Waltham Forest's families group, is the new community garden in Priory Court. This was a small piece of waste ground, which has now been transformed by volunteers. Money raised by WMBL at its Christmas fair last year was used to buy plants and soil, and volunteers of all shapes and sizes completed it using WTL loan tools.

For a small annual membership fee, of between £10 and £40 (depending on circumstances) you can book up to five tools online in advance and borrow for them for seven days. What project do you have in mind that could be made possible with a loan from Walthamstow Tool Library?

Walthamstow Tool Library is based at 2a Priory Court, Walthamstow E17 5SL, and is open Fridays 1pm–5pm. For more information:

Call 07933 710 644

Email tools@frpuk.org

Visit walthamstowlf.myturn.com/library

Discussing sustainable transport successes

by Glyn Roberts

Waltham Forest's drive to create safer, low-traffic neighbourhoods, is winning admirers from around the world who are eager to follow suit, a Zoom meeting heard last month.

With a new survey suggesting most Londoners support such measures, a Greenpeace-hosted discussion heard that the borough was “leading the way”. Traffic had been reduced in many residential streets, improving air quality and safety, with cycling and walking being encouraged.

Parents and borough officials have joined forces over six years to block traffic ‘rat runs’ and shortcuts, while Waltham Forest Council has won grants to develop its ‘Mini Holland’ traffic-calming and cycleways scheme.

“We’re now reaching out across the UK and beyond,” said Dan Kelly, a Walthamstow father who helped organise a campaign to create safer streets for schoolchildren. “People have come from all over the world to visit – particularly Walthamstow and Leyton. We’ve delivered over 100 study tours.”

Dan was one of several grassroots campaigners and transport experts addressing the event, organised by Green-

peace Waltham Forest to discuss sustainable transport. The event was supported by funding from People’s Postcode Lottery. One Greenpeace speaker, Lucy Bridgewater, said: “The right investment from the government would contribute to a fairer, greener and better recovery from the pandemic. We’re calling for at least £10 billion a year in additional public money for sustainable transport.”

The environmental organisation also wants the government to redirect the £27 billion it has committed to new road building into greener measures, pointing out that transport is currently the UK’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions.

This call has been bolstered by the results of a new survey. Recent polling commissioned by Greenpeace UK and carried out by YouGov asked Londoners to choose their favourite transport improvements. New roads were the least popular choice, while 47% said they want less traffic on the roads, 36% wanted cheaper bus and train tickets, and 34% wanted roads to be better maintained. When asked if they would support low-traffic neighbourhoods, 54% said they were in support of such measures, with just 24% opposed.

Dan Kelly works for the sustainable transport charity

Sustrans, and became active in a campaign back in 2013 to improve road safety around the primary school in Pretoria Avenue attended by his children. A long struggle ensued to overcome opposition and other hurdles. “Sometimes we had to resort to campaigning, making banners and waving our fists in the air,” Dan said. He advises people in other neighbourhoods to be sure to build strong support networks in order to advance, warning: “An individual politician can still scupper your efforts.”

Local endeavours eventually prevailed, creating quiet, pleasant streets decorated with floral planters, such as in Aubrey Road, Walthamstow. Hannah Boustred, Greenpeace Waltham Forest’s joint co-ordinator, said Orford Road was seen as an “exemplar” model for others to learn from. “People talk about it as a huge success story,” she said.

Finally, the Greenpeace event heard from Carolyn Axtell, founder of JoyRiders, which aims to encourage more women, including those from a Muslim background, to get on a bike. She said women from ethnic minorities often needed help to overcome lack of confidence, but free bicycles and instructor courses funded by the council “opened the floodgates,” said Carolyn. “Many were just waiting to be given a chance.”



New cycleways, such as this one in Lea Bridge Road, have helped Waltham Forest build a reputation for sustainable transport

NEWS

Anger over mural removal

by Victoria Munro, Local Democracy Reporter

The removal of a beloved David Bowie mural has sparked outrage.

Waltham Forest Council publicly apologised after handpainted lyrics from the song *Heroes* were washed off the railway bridge in Orford Road, Walthamstow Village. The mural was reportedly removed after a complaint and because it was deemed “inappropriate” for a conservation area.

A petition calling on the council to reinstate it was signed by more than 500 people in just two days.

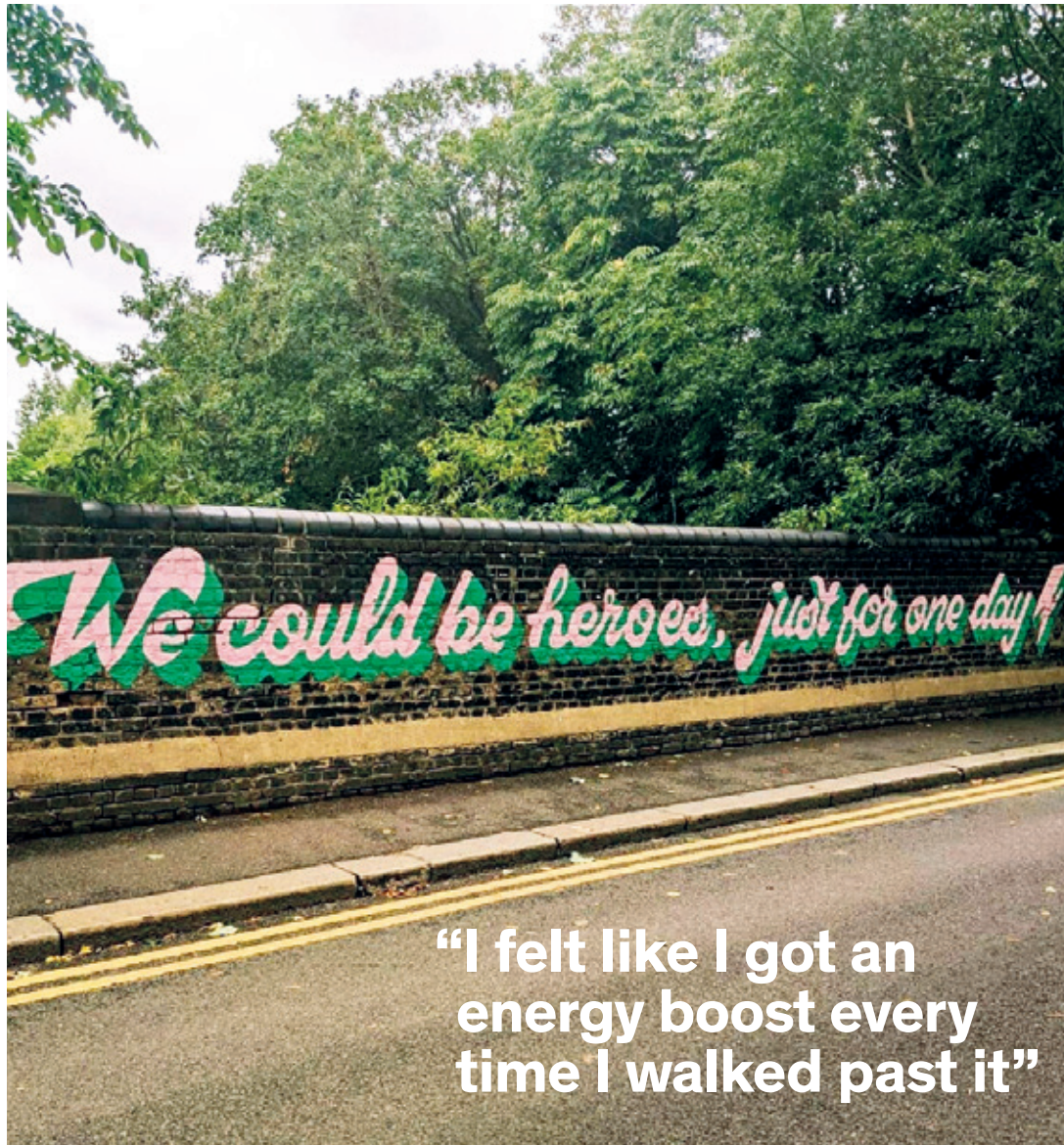
The petition, by local artist Dominic Mandrell, argues that, despite its location within a conservation area, “the artwork was on an ugly old wall overlooking a railway”.

Dominic added: “If anything it cheered up the place and gave many people a much-needed boost.”

One signatory, Lydia Kivenen, wrote: “This piece of art has cheered me up so much during this unusual and difficult year. I felt like I got an energy boost every time I walked past it.”

“Also, as a lifelong Bowie fan, I’ve been proud that we have this homage in our neighbourhood.”

Deputy council leader Clyde Loakes said: “We are sorry for the removal of the much-loved David Bowie ‘We Could Be Heroes’ mural. We understand residents’ concerns and are looking at how we can put this right as soon as possible.”



“I felt like I got an energy boost every time I walked past it”

The ‘Heroes’ mural was sited on a railway bridge in Walthamstow Village

Station entrance set to be rebuilt

By Victoria Munro, Local Democracy Reporter

Plans to rebuild the entrance to Lea Bridge Station to make it a “catalyst” for the area’s regeneration have been submitted to Waltham Forest Council.

Developers London Square and One Housing hope to build a new station entrance, without altering the tracks or platforms, on the corner of Lea Bridge Road and Argall Way. Lea Bridge Station was re-opened in 2016 having previously been closed for 31 years.

The station will remain open throughout building works. Once complete, the 2016 entrance will be demolished, making space for a new high-rise development subject to another planning application to come at a later date. Around 300 new homes are

expected to be built across three separate council-owned sites on different sides of the Lea Bridge Road and Orient Way junction, eventually creating a new “town centre” for the area.

A planning statement submitted on behalf of the developers claims the new station entrance will “help create a new local centre and instil a sense of place in the area”. It adds: “The existing station is uncovered and



A new Lea Bridge Station entrance would help make space for a high-rise development on the site of the existing entrance

exposed, offering no refuge or shelter from the elements as a community asset.

“As the population of the immediate local area is anticipated to grow, the need for a sheltered and more central station entrance will be regarded as a valuable community asset.”

The developers insist the new entrance is “critical to unlocking the redevelopment” of three neighbouring sites, claiming that without the station entrance “there is a significant risk that market interest [in new homes] would be severely reduced”.

The rebuilt station would also have space to store more than 130 bicycles, including some for disabled cyclists. If plans are approved, work will start on the new entrance in July 2022 and is expected to be complete in September 2023.

Claire Weiss, from local campaign group Love Lea Bridge, said: “Lea Bridge residents welcome improvements to public transport infrastructure, but are concerned that this proposal is more to facilitate the building of a tower block and not to improve transport. Considerable public money went into the current station, and the source of money to change it such a short time later is not clear.”

A public consultation event for all three Lea Bridge development sites is taking place on Saturday 2nd December between 11.30am and 3.30pm at Sybourn Primary School.

Residents can give their views on the application for a new station entrance (reference 202850) before Friday 13th November:

Email dmconsultations@walthamforest.gov.uk

Gasworks group aims to highlight pollution risk

By James Cracknell

Residents living near disused gasworks sites across London and beyond – including a group fearful of a proposed development in Leyton – have formed a campaign group to call for new clean air rules.

The new alliance has been formed of people living near five gasworks sites “to make sure residents’ voices are heard” in any developments involving “potentially toxic sites”.

Earlier this year the *Echo* reported on how residents living near Lea Bridge Gasworks had expressed fears over plans to build hundreds of homes on the contaminated site – which the developer itself admitted could “present an environmental and human health risk”. Developer St William has submitted a planning application for 575 homes at Lea Bridge Gasworks, in ten buildings up to 18 storeys tall. The site abuts Leyton Jubilee Park.

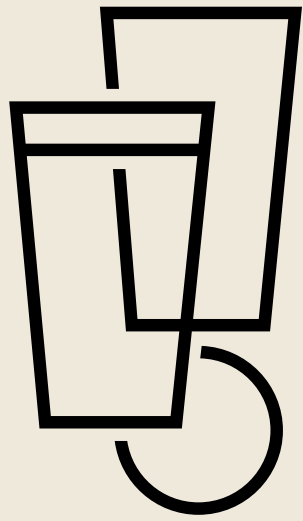
“They must explain how they are going to mitigate the pollution on these gasworks sites”

Now residents with similar concerns about developments on gasworks in Southall, Bow, Hornsey and Brighton have joined forces to establish a group called Gasworks Communities United (GCU). They are demanding an urgent overhaul of regulations on the treatment of contaminated land to protect people’s health and wellbeing.

Kathryn Judd, from Kettlebaston Road, said: “St William must be robustly held to account by our elected representatives in the council and explain publicly how they are going to mitigate the pollution on these gasworks sites and the arrangements for independent assessment.

“In future, remediation needs to be more thoroughly planned from the outset, demonstrating that scientific advice has been heeded and that the health of residents is a priority before, during and after construction.”

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NEWS

£30m ice centre gets go-ahead from council

Concerns raised by environmental groups over encroachment on Leyton Marshes

by Victoria Munro, Local Democracy Reporter, and James Cracknell

Plans to nearly double the size of Lee Valley Ice Centre have been granted planning permission.

Waltham Forest Council's planning committee approved the project after the only councillor opposed was ejected from the meeting for arguing with the chairperson.

The new £30million ice centre will include two rinks with space for 800 spectators, plus a gym, cafe and dance studio. Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA), which owns and runs the sports venue in Lea Bridge Road, argued the current building was too small and worn out after three decades of use, and would have to close if it could not be rebuilt.

The plan was opposed by environmental groups angry that part of Leyton Marshes would be built on to accommodate it. They argued the need for a modern ice rink was not a good enough reason to encroach on legally-protected open space and that the new centre should instead be built two miles away at Eton Manor.

While the building itself would be twice as big as the existing centre, a smaller car park meant the overall amount of hardstanding needed for the expanded venue would be 22% bigger – equivalent in size to an extra ten tennis courts. In total, 119 people objected, but this was outweighed by 517 people who wrote in support of the plan – including many users of the existing ice centre.

The only committee member who voiced concerns was Conservative group leader Alan Siggers, but he was ejected before he could vote for shouting at the chair of the meeting, held via Microsoft Teams. Becoming agitated at the discussion of the plans, he asked: "Why is it every time I speak somebody has to talk absolute crap over what I say?"

Cllr Siggers had earlier said of the new ice centre: "More attractive though it may be, it's still a much larger building."

Committee chair Jenny Gray, a Labour councillor, said the new centre was "not anything to be afraid of" but "something to welcome". She said: "It does look like a more imaginatively designed building and not such an eyesore as the corrugated iron we have now."

Regarding the decision to build on protected land, Cllr Gray added: "It's a pretty scrubby, desperate bit of Metropolitan Open Land, it's not like it's a beautiful green meadow."

Metropolitan Open Land receives the same legal protections as the green belt, meaning there has to be "very special

circumstances" to justify building on it. Abigail Woodman, from campaign group Save Lea Marshes, said there was a risk the borough would sacrifice green space for a "white elephant" if the venue didn't pull in the money LVRPA hopes. She said: "It will look like a massive warehouse, especially from the marshes. Is this what you want for our precious green space?"

The meeting heard from Olympic ice dancer Marika Humphreys-Baranova, who is employed by the centre. She said training currently has to be scheduled before 6am or late at night to avoid clashing with general use, which is "too much for many budding skaters". Marika told the committee: "Our ice sports are being inhibited due to an undersized ice pad and the scheduling constraints this creates."

Hackney mum Emily, whose 12-year-old daughter has skated at the centre for six years, said the area's young figure skaters would "lose their chance at a career" if the centre could not remain in the area. She said: "There is a chronic shortage of sports spaces in [Hackney] and a particular shortage of spaces for sports that attract girls."

"There is a very strong community of skaters that has been there since the rink was founded. We have to hold that together, there are not many places like that in London."

A spokesperson for Essex Wharf Residents Association said residents on the nearby estate felt they had been "completely overlooked" in the planning process. She told the committee: "There has been a bare minimum of meaningful communication and a mistrust of LVRPA has arisen as a result. It's people elsewhere who are the priority."

LVRPA has pledged to fund a ten-year £250,000 community programme to open up access to the new ice centre for groups and schools across Waltham Forest and Hackney. More than half-a-million people are expected to visit each year. Chief executive Shaun Dawson said: "We're absolutely thrilled Waltham Forest Council has approved our plans."

"We want the new ice centre to reach all communities including those less likely to participate in physical activity. The new ice centre will offer a range of activities and facilities open to all."

Councillor Simon Miller, the council's cabinet member for economic growth, also welcomed the planning approval. He said: "The investment will bring with it extra jobs, as well as creating London's first Olympic-size twin-pad ice rink."

Although now approved by the council, because of the size of the development it will still require approval by the mayor of London.



An impression of how the new Lee Valley Ice Centre will look

"The investment will bring with it extra jobs, as well as creating London's first Olympic-size twin-pad ice rink"

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LETTERS

Wrong site for ice centre

Dear Waltham Forest Echo

With so many aspects of our lives so different at the moment, it was jarring to find things very much 'business as usual' at Waltham Forest Council's planning committee meeting on Tuesday 6th October. With little scrutiny, the committee voted to approve Lee Valley Regional Park Authority's application to build a huge ice centre on Metropolitan Open Land in Lea Bridge Road.

I am not against a new ice centre, but I am against a new ice centre at this location. The new building will be twice the size of the existing building, destroying known hedgehog habitat and felling mature trees. It is recognised, in planning law, as an inappropriate development on Metropolitan Open Land, and the case for 'very special circumstances' to justify the development was not, in my opinion, made out. In fact, I feel councillors failed to wrestle with this issue; it was barely discussed.

Councillor Marie Pye referred to the land around the current ice centre as 'scrappy', as if that was justification for disappearing it under concrete. Perhaps everyone is lulled by the park authority's bright shiny promises to improve biodiversity? I'm not. It's not as if they haven't had decades to improve biodiversity already.

I will mourn the loss of that 'scrappy' land but, when I am done with my sadness, I'll fight to make sure the park authority doesn't wriggle out of the sustainability and biodiversity promises it has made to try and make us feel better about our loss.

Abigail Woodman
Save Lea Marshes

Chance missed

Dear Waltham Forest Echo

Waltham Forest Council has made a foolish decision in agreeing the Lee Valley Ice Centre application. 'Very special circumstances' were not proven. The applicants ruled out other sites with less protection than Leyton Marsh. The ice centre will cause serious harm to the flora and fauna, over years. It will need to attract many more visitors to be financially viable. Its poor public transport connections mean more traffic at Lea Bridge Road, which will be more heavily

congested and polluted.

The applicants, and the committee, were required to consider alternative sites. Eton Manor's transport connections are incomparably better with its links to Stratford Station, the seventh-best connected station in the UK; is better connected to other parts of London; and has a well-used bus station. It is near the A12, meaning less pollution on local roads. Eton Manor's public transport connections make the ice centre's ambitions to become a national facility, increase the number of users, and reduce car usage, achievable, unlike at Leyton Marsh.

Eton Manor remains very accessible for local users. Lee Valley Regional Park Authority wants to redesignate its Eton Manor site as development land and claims the London Legacy Development Corporation agrees. Putting the ice centre there would also create a cluster of facilities in line with City Hall's wishes.

This decision misses the chance of a 'win win' result of more green space with less pollution and congestion at Lea Bridge Road and a more viable and sustainable ice centre at Eton Manor.

Julian Cheyne
Save Lea Marshes

Making our roads safer

Dear Waltham Forest Echo

New government figures have shown that 94 Londoners were tragically killed or seriously injured in road accidents in Waltham Forest last year.

We should in no way accept this as an inevitable reality of living in a busy city. As Londoners, we should be able to travel across the capital confidently and safely – whether it's crossing the street, getting on our bikes or boarding a bus.

This is why Transport for London launched its 'Vision Zero Action Plan' to implement measures to eradicate all deaths and serious injuries from our roads within the next 20 years. At the heart of the plan is making our city safer and more accessible to pedestrians and cyclists.

We have seen this with the segregated cycleways that have sprung up across London, the overhaul of dangerous junctions and roundabouts and the installation of more pedestrian crossings on busy roads.

During lockdown, the 'Streetspace' scheme also accelerated some of City Hall's efforts to encourage Londoners to adopt greener ways to get around the capital. However, with traffic steadily increasing, we all need to play our part by using our roads responsibly and attentively.

Jennette Arnold
London Assembly member
for Waltham Forest

Feline good

Dear Waltham Forest Echo

During lockdown my step-daughter and I were at home the entire time, with all of the challenges that brought. One of the things that really helped us through was the daily visits of a neighbour's rescue cat. 'Stumpy Cat', as he we called him after his docked tail, sits nearly every day on a large tree stump in our garden. He brought so much positive energy to our lockdown time that he inspired myself and my partner Harriet to write, illustrate and publish a book series! *Stumpy Cat* books are

aimed at children aged between two and ten years and are available via Amazon.

Peter Lewis-Dale
Walthamstow

We will remember them

Dear Waltham Forest Echo

As Remembrance Day approaches and we face the prospect of not being able to commemorate as extensively as usual, under the shadow of Covid-19 restrictions, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight how the Walthamstow branch of The Royal British Legion will be helping residents to make a contribution this year.

Poppy sales and collection boxes will be available in all main supermarkets, shops, pubs, bars and cafés. The annual parade to Waltham Forest Town Hall on Remembrance Sunday itself will be much reduced in scope to reflect social distancing measures and to protect the vulnerable – but a form of service will be made available online for virtual participation.

Our armed forces have been integral to the response to the coronavirus pandemic and I would urge everyone, as always, to show their appreciation at this time to veterans, to those serving, and to the memory of the fallen, by taking the opportunities to remember even in these difficult times.

Stella Creasy MP
President, Walthamstow branch
of The Royal British Legion

Send us your letters

We accept letters of up to 200 words from people living and working in Waltham Forest. Please email your submission to WFEcho@socialspider.com before the next deadline on Tuesday 17th November.

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Walthamstow's warmest welcome

Come to the experts

PHOTOGRAPHY

Double portrait

By Finnegan Travers



Beyond the grand façade of Chestnuts House in Hoe Street, residents have been experimenting with fashion shoots and textile techniques. There's been tie dye and vegetable dyeing using onions and avocados; indigo dipping; starch resist and bleach drawings on fabric; dressmaking; face-mask making; and shirt decorating. While

others have been dressing down during lockdown, residents here have had fun dressing up. Here's a double portrait of two artists modelling their clothes: Deborah Nash (pictured above right and below right) uses starch resist to write and draw on upcycled shirts and dresses; Zoe Rachel Thomas (above left and below left) likes to mix recycled

fabrics and scarves together with freewheeling stitching to create lively collaged garments.

To see more of Finnegan's photography:

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ARTS & CULTURE

Explaining the unexplainable

Eleanor Southgate is publishing a book to help communicate coronavirus to small children

How do you help a not-quite three-year-old child make sense of how the coronavirus pandemic has changed the way we live? How do you explain why the playground is shut? Or why he can't go to nursery?

I wondered this back in April, as I watched my young son holding the locked gates of Coppermill Park looking miserable. "Someone needs to write a children's book for pre-schoolers about all this," I said on a call to two of my oldest friends one evening.

Friends since school, Claire is a scientist specialising in global public health, Hannah is a GP and I'm a trainee GP. We each have two children under four years of age. My husband is an intensive care doctor and was bringing home worrying news each night of yet more admissions and sicker patients.

Over WhatsApp and Zoom, we chewed over the science, debated the policy, and compared notes on local protocols. That night, as it often did, the conversation turned to how our respective three-year-olds were coping with lockdown.

Thinking about how my son had found picture books helpful for other toddler life-hurdles, I was frustrated that nothing about the coronavirus had yet been produced for pre-schoolers, despite some excellent publications for older children. Claire's answer to this was that we should write something ourselves. By the next morning she had written the first draft of *Coronawho?* – the story of a three-year-old, Elsie, searching for answers as to why life has dramatically changed.

We didn't want it to be a scientific or medical 'explainer' but a story to read to young children.



Eleanor Southgate with her son Charlie

We wanted it to be gentle and comforting, with illustrations to make adults and children smile.

Together we worked on the text while Hannah picked up her paintbrush and brought the story to life. After a positive response from our own children, family and friends, we were encouraged to share the book more widely. We made it freely available as an e-book, and to date it has had over 18,000 users in more than 100 different countries. The book has even been translated into French, Spanish and Welsh!

Feedback has been heart-warming; parents and early years providers have told us that it creates a much-needed space for young children to talk about their experience of the last few months.

'Coronawho?' is now available in paperback, with all proceeds being donated to UNICEF:

Visit elsiestayhome.com

Decade of discovery

James Cahill is the founder The New LoFi, a popular music blog



by Gemma Batterby

This year, Walthamstow resident James Cahill celebrates the ten-year anniversary of *The New LoFi*, a music blog he founded when living in New York City in 2010.

Known as 'that yellow blog' *The New LoFi* relentlessly focuses on exploring, curating, and sharing new music. This quest has seen James feature artists such as Crystal Fighters, Lana Del Rey and Azealia Banks, years before they hit the mainstream. For the last decade it has attracted readers from countries around the world.

"In the time since *The New LoFi's* creation, the way people discover and listen to music has totally changed," says James. "We've seen the rise of platforms such as Spotify, Soundcloud, YouTube and TikTok. The iPod has drifted into irrelevance while vinyl records have become in-vogue again. The music world looks very different compared to the way it did ten years ago.

"It feels like quite an achievement for a music blog to make it this far!"

To celebrate the milestone, *The New LoFi* is releasing a ten-track vinyl featuring ten different musicians who have been close to the blog since its inception.

They hail from many different cities including New York, London, Berlin, Austin, Los Angeles, and Paris.

For the album artwork, illustrators from several different countries were commissioned to create ten custom-designed numbers — one to represent each year that *The New LoFi* has been running.

"The music on the album ranges from indie to electronic," says James. "It's a real mix of genres and a fantastic celebration of all the different kinds of music and musicians that have been featured on the blog over the past ten years.

"This record is about celebrating ten years — but also about celebrating the music and the musicians that have been part of this project. We want it to be a symbol for the importance of music and the arts in general, especially this year."

The profit from the record will be donated to Heart n Soul, an award-winning creative arts company and charity that champions the music and art talents of people with learning disabilities. One hundred copies of the album will be pressed with a special limited-edition blue marbled vinyl and are on pre-sale now.

To order, or to find more information about 'The New LoFi' anniversary record:

Visit thenewlofi.com/ten

ARTS & CULTURE

LISTINGS

Arts groups get government cash

Nearly half-a-million pounds in emergency funding has been granted by the government to support local arts organisations in Waltham Forest.

In total across the UK last month, Arts Council England and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport made 1,385 individual grants worth £257million, as part of the government's £1.57billion Culture Recovery Fund set up to support arts organisations struggling to survive amid restrictions imposed because of the pandemic.

Locally, grants were made to Artillery (£68,803), the organisation behind E17 Arts Trail; Blackhorse Workshop (£50,000), a Walthamstow studio for local artists; Elijah & Skilliam (£55,000), a DJ duo from Leyton who run an independent record label; LVE Foundation (£169,500), a charity running projects for young people; Pishter Ltd (£89,495), a music promotion agency for people from central and eastern Europe; and Sink The Pink (£60,627), an LGBTQ performance group.

Artillery co-directors Laura Kerry and Morag McGuire said: "We're thrilled the culture recovery fund is supporting the grassroots work we do. Our mission has always been to mobilise creativity in neighbourhoods.

"We know creative and cultural activity can build and cement communities. There has never



Artillery's finale event for its London Borough of Culture project, 'Grandad's Island: From Page to Pavement' Credit James Robertshaw

been a more urgent time for communities to come together for mutual support. The means by which we do this has been threatened by the pandemic but we can already see how resilient and agile our local creative community has been, to adapt to meet these new challenges.

"As we plan our 2021 E17 Art Trail we are looking at how we can respond to the challenges we face. This funding from Arts Council England means we can survive as an organisation, nurture and provide opportunities, and grow our relationships."

Reading made easy

Louise Knight started a book club to get kids into reading

I love Walthamstow for its vibrancy, diversity and its strong sense of community. It's also very family friendly, thanks to the services and support offered by the likes of Walthamstow Toy Library and Lloyd Park Children's Charity.

Both support the development of children, which is an area I'm very passionate about. Best of all though are the 'Little Free Library' boxes dotted around local streets, which bring the joy of books to everyone.

My own love of reading was inspired by my book-loving father and led to a 15-year career in children's publishing. Following redundancy, I took the plunge during the recent lockdown and set up my own business, Children's Book Club, so that I could help parents and carers give the gift of reading to their own children.

Research has shown that improving literacy through reading helps children better understand their own identity and encourages empathy. It also contributes to their wellbeing and improves literacy skills.

As part of my monthly subscription service, I choose books carefully tailored to the reader, their age and interests, often from independent publishers or those titles you may not come

across on the high street or bestseller lists. I also complement each gift-wrapped delivery with questions the reader can have fun answering to help improve their comprehension.

To help you engage and empower your own child with a love for literature, I've put together some tips my own dad used with me. Firstly, make reading a habit by starting early. Read aloud and together with your baby; it can really spark their imagination and improve their listening skills and vocabulary as they grow.

Secondly, schools are great at encouraging your child to engage with books. Get involved with what your child brings home and ask questions as they read to you to help improve their understanding.

Thirdly, revisit and share your own childhood favourite book with your child. When you can, curl up with a book yourself, so that they can see you reading for pleasure too.

Finally, it doesn't have to be fiction; if your child has a particular interest, encourage them to read about it in a magazine or non-fiction title from the local library.

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Town and Country Planning Development Management Procedure (England) Order 2015

Notice Under Article 13 Of Application For Planning Permission

Proposed development at:

Land of the rear of 1-11 Lambourne Gardens, London E4 7SG

Take notice that application is being made by:

Zambra Investments Ltd

Applicant Name: Mr Joseph Kramer

For planning permission to:

Erection of 2-Story 2 bed dwelling (use Class C3)

Local Planning Authority to whom the application is being submitted: Waltham Forest

Local Planning Authority address:

Sycamore House, Walthamstow Town Hall, Forest Road, Walthamstow E17 4JF

Any owner of the land or tenant who wishes to make representations about this application, should write to the council within 21 days of the date of this notice.

Signed: Mr Joseph Kramer

Date: 30-10-2020

Statement of owners' rights: The grant of planning permission does not affect owners' rights to retain or dispose of their property, unless there is some provision to the contrary in an agreement or lease. Statement of agricultural tenants' rights: The grant of planning permission for non-agricultural development may affect agricultural tenants' security of tenure.

'Owner' means a person having a freehold interest or a leasehold interest the unexpired term of which is not less than seven years. 'Tenant' means a tenant of an agricultural holding any part of which is comprised in the land.

Hoe Street Market

From Sunday 1st November until Sunday 6th December
Online via social media

Hoe Street Market has gone virtual! You can do your Christmas shopping from the comfort of your home and support local artists, makers and designers, all of whom need your custom more than ever! Find unique art, gifts, cards, plants, cushions, clothes, jewellery, ceramics, candles, a Walthamstow calendar, woollen scarves and gloves, baby accessories, glassware, books by local authors, jam and more on our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages.

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Wednesday 25th November, 6.30pm-8.30pm

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Andrew Ryde, Chamberlains Estates

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COMMENT

Fear of the flush

Michelle Edwards from Marlowe Road Estate finds common cause with council complainants

Judging by what I see in local online groups nowadays, more and more Waltham Forest residents are waking up to the reality that they are living under some of the worst contradictions of the Labour Party in local government.

Labour going to war with its residents where it has power, while at the same time claiming to be standing up for working class people against the Conservatives nationally, is commonplace. On that protracted wave of enlightenment, I thought it befitting to share an article of interest across those groups about how Waltham Forest Council has paid more than £7,000 to compensate

residents for its failings in the last year (*Complaints*, Page 3).

These complainants range from the plight of two disabled men (one forced to defecate in his bed after being housed in an unsuitable flat, the other forced to attend the council's housing office accompanied by hospital staff despite suffering from a spinal chord injury and being wheelchair-bound), to a woman on the receiving end of an aggressive enforcement agent for a car she no longer owned. It is claimed that the agent "threatened to break into [her] house and take away [her] goods" if she didn't pay the council's fine.

None of the stories were at all shocking to read. This

council has a proven track record of treating vulnerable individuals and communities with contempt. I am preparing to add my own complaint to the burgeoning ombudsman's file before the end of the year.

Ever since the council commissioned works by Apollo Group under its 2005–2010 'Decent Homes' programme, when arms-length management organisation Ascham Homes managed the council housing stock, my property has become a functioning failure.

After my kitchen was replaced in 2008, I suffered two floods in May and October. Various managers admitted full liability for botched work. Yet, their subcontractor was allowed

"Various managers admitted full liability for botched work"

to continue destroying homes, triggering complaints from the entire estate. I remain without compensation all these years later despite submitting representation to insurer Zurich in 2008. To this day, their shabby work has left me with a frequently blocked toilet and accompanying sink, and a

shower that barely ticks over.

For those who've asked, my property remains in a state of disrepair following the water ingress/flooding at the beginning of the year. Three promises have been broken. In January, a council official told me he had "authorised £70 compensation to be processed" for multiple failures in the year prior by contractor Osborne, who had promised me £50. In March, Morgan Sindall promised to perform "decoration works", to no avail. And then another building surveyor turned out to be no different to his predecessors.

Every flush of my toilet brings me anxiety as to whether it will end with a blockage of backed up shit.

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LICENSING ACT 2003 Application for the Grant of a Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **Sharron Norris** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at **The Holly Trail Café Limited, 4 Bury Road, Chingford E4 7QJ**

The nature of the application is as follows:
• To permit the sale of alcohol from 7.30am–6.00pm

The Licensing register listing full details of the application is kept by the Licensing Service, 3 The Square, Leyton, London E10 5NR. The application may be viewed Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am – 5pm (except Bank Holidays).

Any person wishing to make a representation in respect of the above activities may do so in writing to the Licensing Service, 3 The Square, Leyton, London E10 5NR or via email: Licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk.

Representations must be received no later than **19th November 2020**.

It is an offence to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with this application. A person is liable to an unlimited fine on conviction should such a false statement be made.

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

David George Bonner

Trading as: D BONNER & SONS LIMITED

Of: 1 Bush Hall Cottages, Threshers Bush, Harlow CM17 0NS

Is applying for a license to use 23 Sherrin Road, Leyton, London E10 5SQ

As an operating centre for 1 goods vehicle and 0 trailers

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's office.



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NEWS

Live music venue closes after losing its licence

Business owner says doors are closed for good after row over enforcing Covid-19 rules



Suja Khaled first opened Luna Lounge in Leytonstone in 2004

by Victoria Munro, Local Democracy Reporter

A Leytonstone live music venue running for 16 years has shut down after its licence was suspended. Luna Lounge owner Suja Khaled announced its closure last month, saying he could no longer act as the day-to-day supervisor.

Waltham Forest Council's licensing committee had banned the venue from selling alcohol or playing live music

after 11pm for three months, following a licence review requested by police.

Posting publicly on Facebook, Suja wrote that 16 years of "distributing happiness into society through live music" had "come to an end". He added: "All I ever wanted to do was make people happy, this was never really a business.

"I built everything with my own hands, no money and sheer drive to make it work. I sacrificed my personal life for this."

Responding to the news on Facebook,

customer Rodrigo Prado said: "There must be a solution for this. Leytonstone would not be the same without Luna."

Suja has the option to either appeal the decision or hire another person to act as the licence holder, but said he could not afford to do this.

At a council licensing committee last month, the Metropolitan Police called for the venue's licence to be revoked entirely after Suja "launched into a hostile verbal onslaught" against officers at the venue on Saturday 4th July, the first day pubs were allowed to re-open following the coronavirus lockdown.

In a statement, PC Brand said he saw customers drinking outside, there was no door supervisor, and "no social distancing whatsoever". When he spoke to Suja about these problems "for no apparent reason, he [Suja] launched into a hostile verbal onslaught" against police and accompanying council officers.

The police officer added: "His prolonged hostile and emotional outburst led to a significant number of customers attempting to confront police and obstruct them in the execution of their duty.

"As a result of this, it took some time for police to restore calm at the venue again, at the risk of their own safety."

Suja insisted his reaction to PC Brand was one of "panic" rather than aggression and that the arrival of the officers "created a circus". He told the committee: "It was a very calm bar, the music was low. When the police came in, everyone stood up, it just erupted.

"I would not be in business for 16 years if I did not follow regulations. I promise you the five licensing objectives are something of a bible to me."

The committee viewed both police footage and a video taken by one of the venue's customers while making its decision. Regarding the verdict, the committee wrote: "The committee has no confidence in Mr Khaled upholding the licensing objectives and believe he behaved irresponsibly and unprofessionally."

The closure of Luna Lounge leaves the area with only Leytonstone Ballroom, currently closed because of the pandemic, and St John's Music Hall, as dedicated live music venues.

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SPORT

Appeal to save swimming club

Waltham Forest Gators struggling to survive with limited pool access

by Ruth Fowler

Young people are among the less visible victims of the pandemic, having been affected in less obvious ways.

Take swimmers, for example. Waltham Forest Gators Swimming Club offers beginners, developmental, fitness, competitive and masters classes, from age four upwards. The club has been running for more than 50 years and a huge number of teen members have competed at county, regional, national and international levels.

Olympians Daniel Fogg, Jaime King and Martin Harris all started their swimming careers at Gators, before going on to represent Great Britain internationally. Phoebe Griffiths continued her journey from Gators to Ellesmere Titans and has competed for England and Team GB in open water and pool swimming, before receiving a scholarship this year to train in the United States.

Those who choose not to compete but enjoy swimming as recreation also have a home at Gators, with one of the club's oldest members, a 72-year-old, swimming on the masters programme.

Gators currently provides swimming for 220 local residents in total.

But Covid-19 regulations have meant that pool time for the club and its swimmers is limited. In order to enact social distancing and comply with new safety measures, Gators need to increase their pool time (they train at several local Walthamstow pools), while simultaneously decreasing the numbers of swimmers who can be in each pool lane at any one session. This has meant, effectively, that Gators' costs have doubled, putting severe financial strain on the club, which is a registered charity and run by volunteers.

Michelle MacMillan, the mother of Gators swimmer Bonnie, started a GoFundMe appeal to try and raise public awareness and funding, and prevent the closure of the club – which would mean many Waltham Forest swimmers, Bonnie included, would have to leave the borough to seek training elsewhere.

As many of these local swimmers navigate up to 16 hours per week of pool time, training with school and family commitments, juggling GCSE and A-Level coursework with 5am training sessions, travelling out-



Young Gators swimmer Bonnie competing at the Essex County Championships last year

side the borough would be simply impossible for them. There is no alternative club in the borough which can offer the high standards of training that Gators provides.

Michelle says: "Gators has provided my daughter with a purpose, and the benefits for self-esteem and good mental health are huge. Like many of her teammates, swimming is her dream and all she talks about. Without Gators, I don't know what she'd do."

During the lockdown, Gators members came up with creative ways to facilitate their training; cycle rides, runs, and open water swimming in freezing, murky lakes across London. But as we creep forward into winter, these become less feasible

options, and the demand for pool time is great. In writing this article as the parent of a six-year-old who has just begun his Gators journey, I implore Waltham Forest residents to support our young swimmers.

Please sign up for classes, donate, and spread the word. If this crisis has taught us anything, it is that we have limited control over many aspects of our life – but keeping this club alive and flourishing is something that we can do as a community.

Help save Waltham Forest Gators Swimming Club by making a donation or becoming a member:

Email gatorstrials@gmail.com

Visit uk.gofundme.com/f/theuj-gators-swimming-club-covid-appeal

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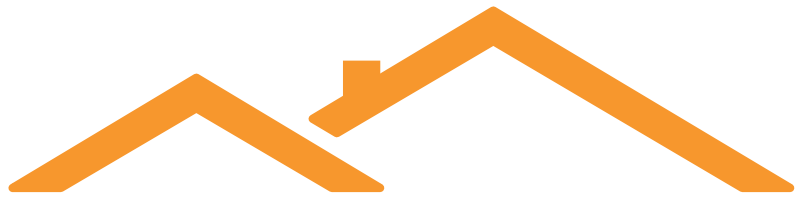
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