



Newham Voices

Community News and Views

FREE

Issue 27 | March 2023

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Council tax and rents rise, but there's help on the way

AIDAN WHITE

People in Newham, still recovering from the Covid pandemic and badly hit by the cost of living crisis, face increases in council tax and housing rents in the coming months.

But the council has kept increases below the rate of inflation and has announced a "robust and ambitious" spending plan for the coming year with promises to protect services and support residents.

The Council met as *Newham Voices* went to press to formally agree the budget for 2023. It had been finalised following a series of consultations that gave residents, businesses, young people and community groups an opportunity to have their say on the plans.

The Budget includes a below inflation council tax increase of 4.99 per cent and an increase of 7 per cent in rents for social housing. The council says these are necessary to protect frontline services and to invest in the council's extensive series of programmes and strategy to build a fairer Newham.

Council Tax bills in Newham will remain among the lowest in London with Band D residents paying £1193 a year – the second lowest of the charges among East London boroughs.

Also to be factored in is the £435 council tax charge from the Greater London Authority – a 9.5 per cent increase on last year.

The budget is innovative, say Council leaders, by adopting green budgeting methods to help accelerate the council's Climate Action environmental and climate goals so that it achieves Net Zero in terms of carbon emissions by 2045.

"This budget builds on the successful management of the Council's finances over the past four years to protect frontline services and support residents during these hard times," said Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz at the Cabinet



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"In a really tough financial climate we have made efficiency savings across our services and listened when residents told us that they wanted our budget to support cleaner and safer streets, high quality homes our people can afford and more opportunities for children and young people..."

meeting on February 16.

"In a really tough financial climate we have made efficiency savings across our services and listened when residents told us that they wanted our budget to support cleaner and safer streets, high quality homes our people can afford, more opportunities for children and young people, including those with special educational needs

and support to help people age well."

She said the budget is the start of an annual evaluation of the environmental impact of budgetary and fiscal policies as the council works to make good on its promise to respond to the climate emergency.

On the increases in council tax, Councillor Zulfiqar Ali, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources,

said, "Whilst we are raising Council Tax, this is well below inflation. The rise will also ensure that the London Living Wage is paid to all staff, while retaining the Council's 90 per cent Council Tax Reduction Scheme which supports our lowest income residents.

"Over a decade of austerity, Covid-19, high inflation and the cost of living crisis; local government has had it tough. The lack of clarity and sustained funding for local government has placed a huge strain on councils like Newham as we respond to growing demands and increased costs."

Among the key actions that will tackle poverty, help deprived families and blunt the impact of the cost of living crisis are:

- £3.2m growth in the Adult Social Care budget
- Continuation of the London Living Wage policy for all staff
- The Household Support Fund, including £0.25m distributed to families to help meet food and energy costs

continued on page 2 ▶

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For more information, go to www.newhamvoices.co.uk/complaints-policy

For general inquiries email us at info@newhamvoices.co.uk



Continued from page one: Council help is on the way



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- £6m for the Council's 'Eat For Free' Scheme, saving families £500 per year per child in primary school
- £4m budgetary growth for Children's Social Care services
- £3.8m capital investment in Family Hubs to provide wrap-around support for families and £0.6m more investment in the Council's Special Educational Needs and Disability services for Children and Young People

With an eye on the future of motoring, other spending items include £69m long term capital investments for the Active and Sustainable travel projects including installing 1,000 electric vehicle charging points.

There will also be an extra £0.8m made available for street cleaning and waste collection services; more than £1m will be spent on providing more support for Anti-Social Behaviour and Enforcement teams; and there will be

£1m investment in new and upgraded CCTV around the Borough.

For the future, the council has earmarked long term investment of £2bn in housing including 1,500 new genuinely affordable social rent homes. This includes the regeneration projects for the Carpenters Estate, Custom House and Canning Town, as well as the Affordable Homes for Newham programme.

As reported last month in *Newham Voices* there will be a further £1.6m to invest in grassroots projects through the Council's Community Assembly programme and there will also be funds for campaigning – particularly to combat violence against women, misogyny and hate crime and further investment in the council's Climate Change team. ●

The full details of the budget and background information are available at www.newham.gov.uk/budget

FactFile

Newham and Poverty

- Newham is a young Borough – more than 90 per cent of its residents are under 65 and it is Britain's most diverse community with 72 per cent of residents not identifying as white British
- A quarter of Newham Neighbourhoods are in the most deprived 20 per cent of UK communities
- Almost half the people of Newham live in poverty
- The Borough has the highest rate of homelessness in the country
- 20 per cent of residents receive universal credit
- 25 per cent of working residents receive less than the London living wage

Newham and Covid

The people of Newham were badly hit by covid and are still recovering.

- Up to April 2021 there were 726 Covid deaths and 45,000 cases of Covid, a higher rate than in England and neighbouring boroughs
- Mental health problems increased and the suicide rate in Newham rose despite the rate falling nationally
- Between February 2020 and June 2021 there was a sharp rise in numbers of people claiming benefits – up from 3 per cent to 10 per cent
- Free school meals requests rose from 20 per cent to 30 per cent
- Newham had the highest furlough rate in London

Sources: London Borough of Newham, Office of Budget Responsibility report

Slowing down – Newham heads for more cycling and a 20 mph limit

PETER LANDMAN

A comprehensive shift in transport policy which will see a 20 miles an hour speed limit enforced throughout Newham was agreed by council leaders at their meeting on February 16.

The council cabinet meeting agreed new plans that will bring a number of changes in local transport policy. Along with many other London boroughs, Newham will join the move towards slowing down traffic on all local streets with a plan for the phased introduction of a 20 miles an hour limit across the Borough.

Councillors also gave their backing for more resident-led local traffic management schemes as well as the introduction of 20 more healthy school street schemes which will see traffic reduction schemes being put in place around schools.

There will also be more low traffic neighbourhoods introduced, in particular more work on the Woodgrange and West Ham Park neighbourhoods.

Strengthening awareness among children and young people is also a priority with the continuation of road safety education in schools, and courses for food delivery moped drivers.

The new proposals also envisage the creation of more play streets where children can play safely.

Council leaders also pledged to continue taking action to encourage people to get onto two wheels with an extension to the Borough's cycling network, with more cycle training and the provision of more cycle hangars. ●



©New happy world/shutterstock

International Women's Day | 8 March

'Sadness and frustration' over setback for women's museum

Trustees of the East End Women's Museum say they are 'beyond disappointed' after the project to provide a permanent home for the museum fell through.

The museum, which tells the story of the East End's most remarkable women, including from Newham, is currently an online resource with a programme of events and travelling exhibitions.

It was due to open a permanent home in Barking this year, but the Trustees announced two weeks ago that it would not be going ahead. Ironically, the announcement came just a few weeks before the annual International Women's Day celebrations on 8 March.

Their statement said: "Sadly, due to difficulties with finalising the lease beyond the museum's control, the museum was unable to accept some of the funding grants they had been awarded, making the project unviable. Despite exploring multiple avenues, it was not possible to agree a way of working that was acceptable to all stakeholders. It is therefore with huge regret and sadness that the project will not be moving further forwards."

A spokesperson for the museum added: "We are beyond disappointed that we won't be moving into the building in Barking. The Board, our volunteers, supporters, and the project team have worked so hard to make this a reality. We are sad and frustrated that we have got to this point.

"However, we know that we will find the space that is right for the museum

in the future. The support we have received and the work that has been completed to date means we know that more than ever, a museum like ours is needed to tell the stories of the great women in history.

The museum, which shares and celebrates the stories of East London women, claims to be the only dedicated women's museum in England.

"Whilst this is the announcement we never wanted to make, we do want to take the opportunity to say thank you to the local community and our volunteers for their ongoing support and sharing their stories, and to the funders that believed in us. We look forward to working with you and continuing to make history together."

The project would have been a landmark moment, as both the only women's museum in England and one aiming to be the first in the world to use an all-women construction team.

Successful fundraising efforts of the museum came via grants from trusts and foundations in the arts sector, crowdfunding campaigns and individual donations.

Architects from Manalo & White and a project manager from Through & Around had worked alongside museum



Museum visualisations by Lauren Li Porter. ©Manalo & White

staff to create plans for the space which was offered by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBDD).

The museum, which shares and celebrates the stories of East London women, claims to be the only dedicated women's museum in England. It is currently a 'pop-up' museum offering temporary exhibitions, online and touring around East London, and school and community workshops.

Trustees are determined to carry on delivering East End women's stories. They said: "It is vital that the Museum exists in the world, and the Museum and its Board of trustees are committed to continuing to forge trusted commu-

nity partnerships across East London to deliver new exhibitions, events, schools and community programmes."

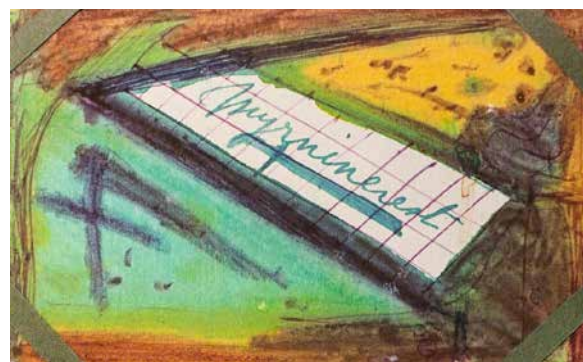
The website provides a growing collection of stories about ordinary women's lives, as well as their better known sisters, throughout East London, including Newham. ●

www.eastendwomensmuseum.org/womens-stories

Free event to celebrate International Women's Day

Lawyer and author Pauline Campbell will be talking about how writing her book *'Rice and Peas and Fish and Chips'* helped her find her voice as a person of colour at a special International Women's Day event organised by Newham Council.

The afternoon of free activities for families will be held at Beckton Globe Library on 8 March.



Clockwise from top left: Postcard art by Madge Gill, London Borough of Newham, licensed under CC BY; Elizabeth Mouncey ©Barnardos; Elizabeth Fry from Wellcome Collection Library Archive; Daisy Parsons mural at Hermit Road Recreation Ground ©Newham History Society; and Betty May, the Tiger Woman of Canning Town.

Health visitors translate principle into action

FAWN BESS-LEITH

Newham's Health Visiting service is an integral part of an interdependent system focused on the health and wellbeing of its residents with families of children aged 0-5 years.

The aim and objectives of the day to day work is underpinned by fundamental principles and values for multi-agency working. Consequently, if one agency is not supported the impact will be felt in another part of the system.

One of our partners is The Magpie Project that offers practical, emotional and professional support to mothers with under fives living in temporary accommodation in Newham. The support is offered in a warm and friendly 'Stay and Play' environment in collaboration with agencies including housing and employment in addition to mental and physical health services.

Magpie's CEO Founder Jane Williams said: "We could not be prouder of our amazing partnership with health visitors right from the start of our project five years ago".

The work of health visitors saves the NHS billions of pounds annually. Visitors save thousands of pounds every day by working in partnership with a range of agencies to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities.

This includes promoting safe infant feeding with a high emphasis on



Image via www.themagpieproject.org

breastfeeding, safe sleep practices and oral health, in addition to promoting antenatal bonding and attachment as well as supporting positive parental mental health in the context of chronic deprivation including inadequate housing and migration trauma.

Risk factors for poor mental health include: deprivation, stigma, lack of awareness of mental health issues and language barrier. Newham experiences significant problems with poverty and inequality and is one of the most deprived boroughs in London.

"We truly believe that health visitors play a crucial role in protecting and encouraging health in our families and community," said Jane Williams. "We recognise and applaud what they do on the front line every day and we look forward to strengthening and deepening our relationship with health visiting even further in the next five years in service of all our children."

Despite this important role, it is unfortunate for families and the thousands of health visitors across England, that government policy doesn't recognise the value of this role and there is consistent underinvestment in health visiting across the UK.

The health visiting workforce remains optimistic, as daily we strive to ensure that all children in Newham get the best possible start in life.

Children's Health and Headstart 0-19 service Single Point of Access:

- Chis@newham.gov.uk
- themagpieprojectE7@gmail.com

Fawn Bess-Leith is a Specialist Health Visitor Perinatal and Infant Mental Health. She is also a Queen's Nurse. The title was awarded in recognition of her outstanding commitment to providing high quality care to clients in Newham.



Up to £500 to celebrate the new King

Communities are being offered up to £500 grants to organise events in celebration of the coronation of King Charles III in May.

Newham Council's King's Coronation Community Grants are available for events that are completely free to all participants and take place between Sunday May 7 and Wednesday May 10.

Applications for support have to be in by 5pm on March 17.

Successful applicants will also receive a waiver of all non-statutory fees and charges such as road closure and use of council venues.

For more information please visit newham.gov.uk/coronationgrant

State of the art surgical centre aims to cut wait time and speed up treatment

SHEILA NURSINHULU

The new Gateway Surgical Centre at Newham Hospital aims to achieve quick diagnosis and fast access to surgical interventions, to help reduce the long waiting list.

The new 39-bed centre in the grounds of Newham Hospital boasts some of the most innovative and modern surgical and diagnostic facilities available anywhere in the world, with a team of the most highly skilled and experienced doctors and nurses.

The state-of-the-art centre which offers day-care diagnostic procedures in many different specialities and fast day-care elective surgery also contains a sports injuries clinic and a fracture clinic.

It offers elective surgery including, orthopaedics, gynaecology or urology as well as general surgery. These include hip replacements, hernia repairs, gall-bladder removal and hysterectomy.

One patient, who had knee surgery at the centre, is quoted on the hospital trusts' website:

"When I got the call, I wasn't aware that the surgical hub was up and running at the Gateway Centre at Newham University Hospital, but I'm so glad it is! It means I can have my surgery – and improve my quality of life – sooner than I thought".

The services available at the Gateway

Surgical Centre can also be accessed by private patients in East London.

In a bid to cut waiting time, Barts Health, which Newham Hospital is part of, has also joined forces with hospitals from other NHS trusts to form the Orthopaedic North East London (NEL) Surgery Network to allow clinicians to provide care at any of the trusts' sites.

This coordinated cross-border approach, according to Bart's Health, had, in some cases, helped to reduce waiting time from 18 to three months, with significant benefits to patients' quality of life.

Rej Bhumbra, Trauma and Orthopaedic Consultant Network Director, explained: "This is a great example of how we can demonstrate the benefits of working closer with our colleagues across departments and specialities and the direct benefits this brings to patients." ●



Youngsters making a career out of helping Newham residents

Aidan White meets young pioneers in the council's housing services

A group of young people, some of them from Newham's toughest neighbourhoods, are reaping the benefits of a pioneering apprentice training scheme that aims to improve the quality of residents' lives.

Newham council's housing services are expanding recruitment of local school leavers, equipping them with basic skills in home maintenance including specialist training as carpenters, plumbers, electricians and gas engineers.

Newham is the only borough in London building a home-grown team to strengthen its residential repairs and maintenance service.

"This scheme is important," said Councillor Shaban Mohammed, the Council Housing Lead, "we are building a workforce around Newham kids, taking advantage of local talent and giving life-changing opportunities."

He said the council planned to get local schools involved in the initiative. "Not everyone is an academic," he said. "We help kids get off the streets, ensure they get good jobs and that they contribute to the community."

There are now 23 apprentices based at the council's Bridge Road Depot in Stratford and a further ten will be recruited. They all receive the London Living Wage. After a two-year multi-skilling course they can specialise. Young electricians sign up for four years and gas engineers for three years.

Competition for places is growing. "In the year 2021 to 2022 we had 50 applicants; last year it was 150 applications and there is likely to be even more this year," said Harjinder Birdi, the lead on apprenticeships.

In February *Newham Voices* joined Councillor Mohammed and Greater London Assembly member Unmesh



Images below left and above: Apprentices at Monthly RMS Toolbox meeting with Cllr Shaban Mohammed on 6 February 2023. © Andrew Baker

Desai at the Council's Bridge Road depot in Stratford to meet some of the apprentices during their monthly 'toolbox' meeting.

Within the group there is pride in working for Newham. One said: "I get that I'm representing Newham and constantly wearing a Newham uniform. You begin to see Newham in a positive way."

But all of them experience challenges. Not least they sometimes have to deal with unhappy residents. Many people are facing the hardships of the cost of living crisis, and some of them will not hold back in voicing their frustrations when the repair team arrives. There are other experiences, positive and touching - one told of finding a rough sleeper camped out in the loft of an apartment block, another spoke of the surprise at working with a flying pet pigeon in the room, others spoke of making friends with lonely residents who just want someone to talk to.

The apprentices all come from Newham, but they bring different learning experiences. Suliman, from

East Ham, for example, was a talented young footballer. "I used to play for Charlton and signed up from 12 to 16, but I wasn't sure about what to do when that didn't work out," he said.

With the support of family members he joined the scheme and it has worked well. "The people working alongside take care of me and it's a good environment," he said. "It brings a bit of peace and gives me focus and reduces stress and worries."

Another apprentice is Niyaz who works in the administration department and has completed a three-year mechanical engineering course at NewVic. He wasn't sure about the future but has been inspired since tak-

ing up the job at the depot. "This work brings more value to my life and to the community," he said.

Another comment was, "I was lost in what I wanted to do and I was running around with the wrong people. Getting into something like this helped me see Newham in a different way. There's a dark side, but Newham has a good side too."

Helping to improve people's homes opens the door to meetings that broaden their horizons and give them confidence in dealing with people. "I was with an older lady," said one, "when she started to cry. She just wanted to talk about her problems."

The experience for many of them was summed up by Mohammed: "There are lots of problems for young people these days - some people doing drugs or others who are getting violence," he said. "I do feel very lucky. At the end of my apprenticeship having these skills will open a lot of doors."

The apprenticeship scheme is just one part of the development of the repair and maintenance service at Newham where Head of Services David Frost is keen to expand the depot's role as a factory for producing parts and units needed to upgrade homes. The depot in Stratford currently produces window frames.

"We would like to increase our manufacturing capacity," he said. "The aim is to give opportunities for even more jobs and work for Newham people with benefits for all our residents." ●

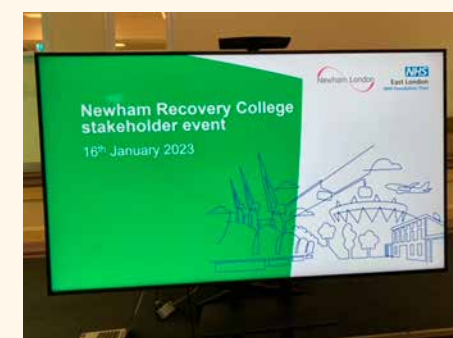
Newham to get Recovery College

FARZANA RAHMAN

Recovery colleges help people improve their health and wellbeing through courses on health conditions and now there are plans to open one in Newham later this year.

They originated in America and now exist in more than 20 countries. The first Recovery College in England was set up in London in 2009 and there are now more than 80 across the UK, providing people with courses on a range of topics covering mental and physical health.

The Newham Recovery College is due to launch in late 2023 and will provide sessions for anyone over the age of 18 living or working in



the Borough.

The individualised education plan aims to promote and support the wellbeing of each student through education and discussion.

For further information go to: elft.nhs.uk/news/help-shape-plans-newham-recovery-college



Shaban Mohammed, centre, and Unmesh Desai, right, in the depot factory.

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Council's local plan could be a blow to West Ham Park campaigners

DAPHNE STEDMAN

Campaigners against the proposed housing development at West Ham Park nursery site are concerned that Newham Council's draft local plan says the area is a potential housing site rather than parkland.

Consultation on the updated Newham Local Plan for 2023-2038 closed recently with residents invited to respond. (See <https://newhamco-create.co.uk/en/projects/localplan>). The local plan is very important because it sets the policies by which Newham would assess any planning application to build on the nursery site in West Ham Park.

The "Trees not Towers" campaign group, set up by Friends of West Ham Park, continues to oppose plans to build luxury flats in the park on the old nursery site, currently derelict greenhouses.

West Ham Park is owned and operated by the City of London Corporation, rather than Newham Council, and at 77



Above: West Ham Park nursery site courtesy friendsofwesthampark.co.uk/protect-our-park/; Inset: City of London proposal for the site.

acres is the largest park in the Borough. As reported previously, the Corporation has decided that the building of flats on this disused area in the park will go ahead to generate income for the park.

Newham already has the least publicly available green space per person,

with the provision of play space for children even worse at 10 per cent of the national standard. And this is in a borough with a growing population.

On close inspection of the draft local plan, the West Ham Park Nursery Site is highlighted as an area for potential housing rather than parkland. It is unclear whether this is a deliberate action or an omission. However, those opposing the use of this land for hous-

ing say it will not be helpful if the proposed development goes to planning.

The campaign group says that the critical issue, then, is that the nursery site should be designated public open space to help Newham meet their Plan's commitment to create more

Newham already has the least publicly available green space per person, with the provision of play space for children even worse at 10 per cent of the national standard.

open space for the forecast increase in population of nearly 100,000. It should not be included in the list of possible residential housing locations.

To keep up to date on the current campaign you can email protectwesthampark@btinternet.com or check out the webpage friendsofwesthampark.co.uk/protect-our-park/

Birdwatch Weekend at West Ham Park

ALISON GIBSON

About 60 local residents enjoyed a frosty but sunny weekend of birdwatching at West Ham Park on 21 and 22 January to practise identifying birds in preparation for the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch the following weekend.

The Friends of West Ham Park teamed up with volunteers from the RSPB Central London Local Group to put on guided walks and opened up the community vegetable garden where a variety of birds could be seen visiting the feeders.

On guided walks around the ornamental gardens participants were

amazed to learn that more than 30 bird species are recorded in a year. This time sightings included a great spotted woodpecker, long-tailed tits and a coal tit – a rare visitor to the park.

Beginners picked up lots of tips, such as where to spot Britain's smallest bird, the goldcrest, and which tree had visitors from Scandinavia – redwings – feasting on its fruits during the December snow. We also learnt that birdwatching involves patience, while waiting for a jay to emerge from a bush so we could admire its colourful feathers.

At the RSPB information stall, a frequent question was about how to choose binoculars. A good place to start would be to visit RSPB Rainham Marshes, where binoculars can be tried and hired.

For more inspiration about birdwatching in London, participants were invited to attend a talk on Urban Bird Migration by David Lindo, the famous Urban Birder. See the video on the RSPB Central London Local Group's YouTube channel. ●

Alison Gibson is a member of Friends of West Ham Park and RSPB Central London Local Group.



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Note: Our next issue goes to print on 30 March 2023

Stratford shoppers contribute £1000 to earthquake appeal

Stratford and Newham shoppers have been big-hearted in their response to the devastating earthquake and humanitarian disaster in Turkey and Syria.

Customers at Morrison's in Stratford donated more than £1000 in a special appeal to help the survivors of the earthquake in which at least 50,000 were killed and millions displaced from their homes.

Store manager Tarek Rahman said: "Our customers are always ready to respond. I feel proud that as a community we have played a small part and created a platform for our customers to show their support and solidarity."

"It was just a fantastic response," said Lutfa Begum, the store's Community Champion.

The store contribution was part of

a national effort. In the first week of the appeal which is co-ordinated by the Disaster Emergency Committee more than £50000 was raised in donation from Morrison's customers. ●



Morrison's Stratford store management team, from left: Tim Drage, Tarek Rahman, Eunice Boakye, Lutfa Begum and Naz Islam.

Plaistow South Big Local celebrates women's day

Plaistow South Big Local (PSBL), one of Newham's leading community networks, is organising a special story-telling event on 8 March - International Women's Day.

Everyone is invited to come and hear stories and share their feelings on a day that celebrates the work of women and the struggle for equal rights which is still taking place around the world.

The event will be held at the Memorial Community Church in the Parker room at 395 Barking Road, E13.

Later in the month on March 20 there will be another PSBL tea party and get to know you event at the Swift Centre next door to the Memorial Community Church, from 11.30 to 1-30.

Plaistow South Big Local has also been highlighting two community initiatives - the work of New City Primary School which has opened a food bank and uniform store to help families struggling financially in the cost of living crisis and the opening of new equipment at Greenway Orchard.


The special education needs equipment was received thanks to funding from Plaistow Community Assembly.

8th March 2023

International Women's Day

Celebrate your success with PSBL

Make International Women's Day your day and do what you can to truly make a positive difference for women.



The equipment is situated by the gate at Boundary Road and adds to the attraction of the Greenway Orchard where volunteers meet on a Thursday between 11-2. Contact them at Greenwayorchardgg@gmail.com

More information at info@psbl.org.uk

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New research will highlight home truths from Canning Town

A Newham-based charity that has been working for more than 24 years to uncover and share the hidden histories of East London is launching a new project on housing in Canning Town during the 1960s and 1970s.

The project – *A Home Fit to Live In* – is being launched by Eastside Community Heritage which plans to highlight how Canning Town was the testing ground for the Parker Morris standards, a ground-breaking blueprint for high quality council homes.

“These homes had larger rooms and bathrooms and they set standards for social housing which were beneficial for people throughout the UK,” said Judith Garfield, Eastside Director.

The Canning Town experiment was successful in influencing changes in housing policy and design and the standards became mandatory for all new town builds in 1967 and all council houses in 1969.

“Sadly these standards are often not being followed today in many of the new builds and developments that are taking place,” she said.

Eastside has received a £10,000 grant by The National Lottery Heritage Fund



Ronan Point made headlines but at the same time Canning Town led a council house revolution

and the project will involve interviews with Canning Town residents about what life was like living in the area at that time.

These oral histories will be added to Eastside’s public archive and form the basis for an exhibition, website, and series of workshops with community groups and young people, to pre-

serve and celebrate the historic role of Canning Town in housing policy and improved living conditions.

At the end of Kildare Road, there is a string of 39 homes that seem ordinary at first glance, but house an important history. These homes, completed in 1964, were a test-bed for the Parker Morris standards, an innovative new housing policy centred around improving space and living standards.

Eastside is seeking to interview Canning Town residents, especially those who lived around Kildare Street, Beaconsfield Estate, Addington road, Pretoria, Birch close and Sycamore Close, about their experiences of home and housing in the 1960s and 70s.

Eastside also offers the opportunity for 6–8 volunteers passionate about heritage to undergo oral history training and work on the project.

The project highlights a pioneering aspect of housebuilding at a time when Canning Town was also in the headlines over the notorious Ronan Point disaster – the tower block collapse in 1968.

The 22-storey building partly collapsed on 16 May 1968, only two months after it opened. A gas explo-

sion caused the collapse of a corner of the building, killing four people and injuring 17 others.

The spectacular failure of design and poor construction led to a loss of public confidence in high-rise buildings, and major changes in British building regulations.

“Ronan Point is in itself its own story,” said Judith Garfield. “We did a special project on the disaster several years ago.”

Eastside Community Heritage has compiled a Hidden Histories archive, open to the public, which now contains more than 4,000 oral histories and 40,000 photos of East Londoners, dating from the 19th Century to the present day. Detailed information on Ronan Point is also available.

The new project aims to provide new insight into life more than half a century ago and celebrate Canning Town as a historic centre of housing standards innovation, sparking open conversations about home and quality of living.

For more information, contact Freya at Eastside Community Heritage at freya@ech.org.uk and 0208 5533 116 or visit www.hidden-histories.org

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Or simply scan the QR Code



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New housing hub opens

DEAN ARMOND

Newham’s plans to give people with housing problems more face time were boosted recently with the opening of a second Housing Service Hub in Canning Town.

The provision and maintenance of housing has always been central to the vision of Newham Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz and on Monday 30 January she launched the latest Council initiative when she opened the Housing Services Hub at Ferrier Point, in Forty Acre Lane. Housing Services Cabinet member Shaban Mohammed and several local Councillors also attended.

The hub is the second office opened – the first was in the Broadway in Stratford – and gives residents the chance to meet someone face to face to discuss their housing issues.

Housing Services have long made resident engagement a high priority, beginning with the creation of the Housing Liaison Officers who allow residents to talk directly to a Council Officer about Housing issues and concerns.

This was followed by the Estate Community Fun Days which have now become an annual event. Housing Services host these events on a number of estates to allow residents to meet Housing Officers and colleagues

from other departments in a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

Building on these successes, the creation of Housing Hubs is the latest development in the direct delivery of Housing Services to residents, ensuring that personal contact is available at locations convenient for local communities.

The Housing Hubs act as a ‘One Stop Shop’ where residents can meet Officers to discuss their housing issues in person.

Following the success of the first Housing Hub in Stratford, where more than 2,000 council tenants and leaseholders visited in the first 12, the second continues a process of making housing services more easily accessible to more residents across the Borough. ●



Ferrier Point opening

Child care boost following pledge to end ‘bidding war’ over social workers

Local authorities in London including Newham are working together to protect the quality of children’s social care in the face of the rising costs of expensive agency staff and ‘bidding wars’ over social workers.

London Councils, which speaks for all London boroughs, says councils facing immense finance pressures and challenges recruiting and retaining children’s social workers have agreed pan-London pay rates

They have also agreed not to use any agency candidates who left permanent posts elsewhere in the capital within the past six months.

Boroughs say this unprecedented level of collaboration will reduce competition between one another over children’s social care staff.

With boroughs also working more closely with agency suppliers of social workers, children’s services departments report they have better control of costs, as well as upholding high standards through more information sharing on references and improving



©DGLimages/shutterstock

retention rates.

There are around 5,600 children’s social workers in the capital and agency workers account for 22 percent

of the workforce – the highest of any region in England.

The new policy aims to stabilise the workforce and bring important ben-

efits to vulnerable children. Children have expressed frustration at frequent changes to their social workers. Minimising staff turnover will encourage long-term relationships with individual social workers leading to more trust and better outcomes for children and families.

The collaboration across the capital is part of a wider workforce programme led by the Association of London Directors of Children’s Services. Every London borough is sharing staffing and recruitment data transparently and contributing to a shared strategy aimed at reducing competition and improving the working environment for social workers.

Children’s social care represents a major finance pressure point for London boroughs including Newham which has made this a priority in its spending plans in the coming year. London Councils estimates that boroughs collectively overspend on their children’s social care budgets by around £200 million each year. ●

Advertisement



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An artistic brainwave pays tribute to the docks

In our regular series on monuments across the Borough, Julia Omari discovers a sculpture that provides a great place to watch the world go by

Dockhands by Paula Haughney is a public sculpture carved from Portland limestone that stands on the junction of Coolfin and Freemasons Road in Custom House.

Due to its size – it measures just 107 x 82 x 83cm – the piece is easy to miss but with benches nearby, it makes for a good spot to sit and take in the art.

Sculptor Paula Haughney was commissioned by the London Borough of Newham in 1994 to create a new work of art as part of a renewal plan to improve the Freemasons Road area.

She consulted with the local community to discover what was important to them. Focus groups said that art that connects to the historical use of the land and its people was to be the focus.

Dockhands, which was created from one stone, shows a pair of dock workers' hands holding a brain full of docker's memories. Those memories have been carved into the brain in the form of animals, cranes, chains, ships, water, fish, flora and other mar-

itime objects that dockers would have worked with.

Set in the pavement ahead of the memorial is a plaque that reads: "Dockhands by Paula Haughty 1995".

The area is currently undergoing more improvements and residents recently voted for an extensive redevelopment plan but the Dockhands monument ensures that the past lives on. ●



Dockhands memorial with inscription (inset). Photos by Julia Omari

TV launch for West Ham Speedway back in focus

NEANDRA ETIENNE

The premiere for *Lost Stadiums: West Ham Speedway* took place at The Good Hotel in Royal Victoria Dock. Everyone who was part of it was invited, contributors as well as some of the project's partners.

Lost Stadiums: West Ham Speedway is about the disappeared stadium at Custom House. It also includes a look at the history of The Royal Docks in Newham.

West Ham Speedway Stadium, a 120,000 capacity arena, once stood in Custom House on the Royal Docks. The first 'dirt track' race was in the summer of 1928, the final season took place in 1971 with the stadium closing in 1972.

Through oral history stories, some of which were told by the riders, the documentary focuses on what the Stadium meant for the local people and how it was a reflection of Britain and East London during those times.

During his speech at the premiere Director, Writer and Executive Producer Neil Cole said:

"It's not a sport documentary, it's not a history documentary, it's not a sociology study – it's hopefully all of these things."

West Ham Speedway stadium is still remembered in the area. Local roads are named after the Speedway riders and there is a Heritage plaque dedicated to the stadium.

Lost Stadiums: West Ham Speedway will be available on streaming digital platforms later in the year and there is a possibility for further community screenings at local hubs.

You can see some behind the scenes clips on The Royal Docks History Club Facebook Page

This documentary was part of a wider project run by the Royal Docks Learning and Activity Centre (RDLAC) and funded by National Lottery Heritage.

www.rdlac.org
[RoyalDocksHistoryClub](https://www.facebook.com/RoyalDocksHistoryClub)



Former West Ham Hammers riders Bengt, Alf and Stan. From: *Lost Stadiums: West Ham Speedway*.

My Newham Julia Omari meets Steve Farrugia

How long have you been connected to Newham?

I was raised in Newham, originally born in Mile End but moved to Plaistow at the age of one. I have lived in Newham for all but four years of my life (three years in Essex 2016–2019) I have also always worked in the Borough.

What's your favourite Newham moment?

Meeting French footballer Zenadine Zidane at The Olympic Park when the Champions League Final was being held in London. The fact that not only does Newham have such an amazing open space like the Olympic Park, but someone of such prestige to be in the Borough was amazing to me.

Most inspirational Newham person?

Jermain Defoe and Kano. To have reached the heights in their respective professions, having come from an area often spoken down on shows everyone that you can achieve anything, regardless of where you are from.

Favourite place to eat in Newham?

I wanted to name a place that is not a corporate giant in the food industry,



Steve Farrugia

so it has to be Effes in Canning Town. Turkish place, great food!

Favourite Newham outdoor space?

Two places, the Greenways and West Ham park. Both great places to run and very safe to do so. You see other runners, get to recognise them and before you know it, they become a friendly face when out and about.

How would you spend a free day in Newham?

Most likely spent running or at the gym.

Tell us about your relationship with the London Marathon.

The London Marathon is an event I have always had a connection with, from the moment I saw it on TV for the first time. I said I would run it one day and I am now in training to run it for the second time in under seven months as the event has returned to its pre Covid slot of April. I am running the event for WellChild, an amazing charity. I get a huge buzz out of running events like the London Marathon and the fact I can raise funds for a charity is fantastic.

Finish the sentence, Newham is...

Home. My place. It may get negative press at times but where in the world doesn't? Newham is home.

For more information on Steve's London Marathon fundraising efforts for Well-Child, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/mr2ap4bk>



SOMETHING'S BREWING



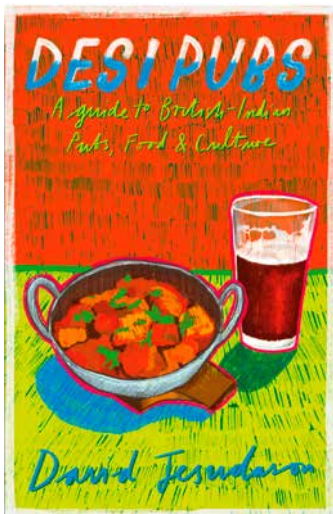
There's not much Phil Mellows doesn't know about pubs, but he's thrilled to say he has learned something new – a tradition of Indian pubs born out of 1970s racism

When you've been writing about pubs for as long as I have, it's a thrilling surprise when someone comes along and tells you about something you've somehow completely missed.

The someone is journalist David Jesudason and the something is desi pubs. Desi means the people and culture of the Indian diaspora, and a desi pub is run by Indians, usually Punjabi, and serves proper Indian food washed down with beer.

Jesudason is writing a book* about them for the Campaign for Real Ale. It doesn't come out till May, but you can have a taste of what it's going to be like from his blog, *Episodes of My Pub Life*.

Desi pubs have their origins in the struggle against racism. In the 1970s some pubs operated a colour bar, and Asians fought back by running pubs themselves for their own communities. The movement began in the West Midlands and spread to other parts of Britain with Asian populations, including parts of London.



Many have survived as welcoming, inclusive pubs with a spicy twist.

Newham doesn't have a desi pub, but it does have a desi club, the Century Club in Forest Gate. Jesudason tells the story in his blog.

Its founder, Peter Patel, is a Hindu, the son of Kenyan Asians. He loved pubs but he faced racism when he visited – and he wanted to eat Indian food. So in 1988 he gave up being a newsagent and opened the Century Club as a freehouse.

It doesn't sound like it was easy back then. He had to fend off protection rackets. But the Century became a safe space for everyone (including white police

from the station up the road), just as a pub should be, and it's still going strong today.

Peter Patel retired in 2018. You don't have to be a member now, though you do have to buzz in. And Jesudason assures us the food is "top notch".

You can pre-order *Desi Pubs: a guide to British-Indian Pubs, Food & Culture*, from Camra at shop1.camra.org.uk/product/desi-pubs

Winter coat drive: button up against the cold

NICK MONOPOLI

The Maryland Events Group held a Winter Coat Drive on a cold Saturday on 4 February.

The event was held at the Cart & Horses pub based in Maryland Point, Stratford E15.

It was a huge success with over 100 people coming throughout the afternoon. The goal was to collect as many unwanted coats as possible to redistribute to residents in need within the Maryland community.

In total 144 coats were donated, 111 re-homed and 33 went to Newham Health and Wellness Day charity to be handed out to the homeless and rough sleepers.

Afterwards there was a charity raffle and £110 was raised for Richard House, London's first children's hospice.

Maryland Events Group was set up by local residents as a way to bring the community together to support good

causes, create fun and inclusive events for all.

If you would like to get involved or find out more please email marylandeventsgroup@gmail.com or search for the group on their Facebook page Maryland Community Group. ●



Cecilia Cran who sadly is leaving us today is still full of the joys of spring

I can't quite tell if it is because it feels like one of the longest, coldest winters we've had in a while and so I am just willing the arrival of spring, or if the season is truly starting to change. Either way I'm already in full planning mode for which plants I'd like in my garden to be full of for the coming months. I have big dreams for creating an eco-friendly space that helps provide a welcoming habitat for all the important pollinators like butterflies, insects and bees. As well as trying to grow a garden that looks good and also provides food for the table. With the cost of living rising and impacting everyone's pocket, this year, I'm trying to grow as much seasonal produce as possible.



This month for my edible plant, I am growing nasturtiums, also known as 'Indian Cress'. The flowers, leaves and seeds are all edible, providing a peppery taste to salads, which can be made into a nasturtium pesto, or even added to a salsa verde sauce. They are one of the quickest and simplest, no fuss plants to grow and will produce beautiful, colourful flowers from early summer until the autumnal frosts. Details of how to grow these wonderful fiery red flowers and pretty green leafed plants below.

How to grow

There are two types of nasturtium – bush and climbers. Both are really easy to grow, for the purpose of this, I will be growing bush nasturtiums, in pots.

At this time of year, to give the plants the best chance of survival, until the risk of frost has passed (usually early April), I'll be starting my plants off under cover.

To get started, fill a seedling tray with simple, free draining peat free compost. Place one seed in each section. Make a hole around 4cm deep, drop the seed into it, then add soil, gently pat down to ensure the seed makes good contact with the soil and then water.

Nasturtiums are fast growing, so seedlings should start to appear after around 10–14 days. Nasturtiums like sunshine, so place them in a sunny spot. Then as soon as the first frost has passed, you can look to plant them out into the pot or directly in to the garden.

They grow quickly and also spread, so place the plants around 10–12cm apart, I would suggest a couple per pot, so they have space and you don't risk over-crowding. They like well-drained soil, so I will be mixing some fine gravel into the soil and they prefer low nutrient soil – so no need to feed them or add any fertiliser. In pots, it's important to ensure the soil does not dry out, but do avoid over-watering.

Remember to regularly dead-head the plants once the flowers are spent, simply cut them off with scissors down to the closest leaf, I know it can sometimes feel a little odd, but doing this will encourage fresh growth.

The flowers and leaves of the nasturtium can be harvested at any time, with the younger, newer growing leaves being really flavourful and packing a powerful, peppery punch.

Green escape

This month, I'm exploring a little green gem in the east of the borough. Situated in East Ham – Goosely Playing Field offers a range of great facilities from excellent, free to book perfectly maintained tennis courts, a basketball court, a basic kids play area, some outdoor exercise equipment and a fab circular BMX track – one of the few in the borough.

The space also presents an impressive green expanse – I've said it before and will never tire of saying it – just how lucky are we to have such wonderful, well kept, green spaces in our borough?!



Photos courtesy Cecilia Cran

The huge central area, although not officially marked out is often used for 5 a side football games and practice or informal cricket matches. The outside of the park also offers a great and well-trodden walking or running route. The space is well maintained and cared for, a range of pretty trees have been planted around the site, which helps make it a much greener and gives it a slightly cosier vibe. It feels like one of our more active parks, so not necessarily where I'd take a picnic and sit and relax, instead it provides a really great space for all to have an explore and walk, or run around! ●

The Newham Voices team wants to say a big thank you to Cecilia who is leaving us for pastures new!

Newham celebrates the culture and achievements of our LGBT+ community

NEANDRA ETIENNE

Newham Council hosted a programme of activities that reflected the theme 'Art - Behind the Lens' for Newham LGBT+ History Month.

Highlights include: *SheHerTheyThem* first monthly social games night, film screenings, Queer life drawing, Drag Queen Storytelling and a conversation with Sabah Choudrey, author of *Supporting Trans People of Colour: How to Make Your Practice Inclusive*.

The month got off to a stirring start when Raze Collective, a charity dedicated to promoting the very best and boldest of queer performance in the UK, curated the launch Cabaret night.

Local performance artist Amazi, a hula-hooper/roller-skates/fire performer, has been a part of Raze Collective for two years. She performed at the Cabaret on launch night.

She told *Newham Voices*: "As a cab-

aret artist you perform all over the country and all over the world. So it's an absolute honour to be able to perform on my doorstep to my own community.

"It's such a wonderful event, in a stunning location and I'm really proud to call Newham my home."

Amazi also performs with hula hoop troupe The Majorettes who are based in East London and she is a proud Guinness World Record holder.

The Majorettes were part of the official entertainment for the London Olympic Games and were actually formed for the Olympics.

Amazi has broken records with The Majorettes. She holds two solo Guinness World Records for the 'Longest Duration Spinning 30 hoops' and for the 'Most Hoops Spun Round the Waist Whilst on Stilts'.

A lot of her work went quiet during the Covid pandemic so she put all her energy into breaking records!

She said: "I thought it would be a good way to spend my lockdown. Breaking records is a lot of work, but also so much fun!"

The Majorettes carry out projects in community groups and schools. Amazi is hoping The Majorettes will be performing as part of the Mayor's weekend in Newham as well as the King's coronation celebrations!!!

"Keep an eye out for us, our performances usually come with a workshop so you can get hooping too."

This programme is part of Newham Unlocked, the Council's cultural festival of events and activities, which highlight the rich and diverse mix of creativity that exists in the Borough. This ensures that residents get the chance to experience their local vibrant and diverse cultural community. ●

www.majorettes.online/community
<https://www.amazihoops.com>
<https://www.shehertheythem.com>



Good reads in Newham

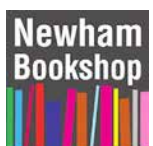
The Newham Bookshop in Barking Road tells us these are the top sellers this month:

- **Getting Better: Life lessons on going under, getting over it, and getting through it**
By Michael Rosen
- **Vagabonds: Life on the Streets of Nineteenth-century London**
By Oskar Jensen
- **Love Marriage**
By Monica Ali
- **Rainbow Grey: Battle for the Skies**
By Laura Ellen Anderson
- **The Boy Who Didn't Want to Die**
By Peter Lantos
- **Get Real, Mallory!**
By Daisy Hirst



Clockwise from top left: Kulbinder, queeros.east flag raising event; Amazi at Raze Collective launch night; Forest Gayte Pride with Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz; Flag Raising, East Ham Town Hall; and Newham councillors with the Mayor. All images ©Neandra Etienne

Compiled by David Ceen,
 Newham Bookshop
newhambooks.co.uk
 @NewhamBookshop



SPORTS SHORTS

Compiled by **Neandra Etienne**

In February, National Futsal League team **Newham Futsal Club** hosted a primary school futsal competition at Rokeby School alongside the Newham School Sports Partnership.

Nine schools took part in the mixed girls and boys competition, with Hallsville Primary School in Canning Town winning the tournament.

If you are interested in your child playing futsal, get in touch directly at info@newhamfutsalclub.co.uk



Newham Futsal Club

Congratulations to 'Mr West Ham' **Mark Noble** who has been announced as the winner of the Outstanding Contribution to London Football prize, at the upcoming 2023 London Football Awards in association with UK charity Willow.

Mark is due to collect his award at the London Football Awards ceremony on Monday 13 March at the Roundhouse, Camden.

Mark, who is also the patron for Richard House Children's Hospice, told the West Ham website:

"I feel so fortunate to have had such a memorable career with West Ham United - playing 550 games for the club I grew up supporting - and I am just very grateful to be recognised in this way by the London Football Awards."

www.whufc.com
[@Noble16Mark](https://twitter.com/Noble16Mark)



Mark Noble ©Will Moore

Active Newham are celebrating International Women's Day with a free sporting event at Newham Leisure Centre. All ages are welcome to try various activities including Boxfit, Badminton, Football and Cricket.

Register for the event by contacting lisa.brivati@activenewham.org.uk

Saturday 11 March, 1:15pm-3:45pm, Prince Regent Lane, E13 8SD

[@activenewhamsports](https://www.instagram.com/activenewhamsports)



Divin Mubama

West Ham player **Divin Mubama** made a return visit to his former school St Bonaventure's to spend time with their football students.

Divin made his Premier League debut for West Ham during an away game against Arsenal in December 2022 and his FA Cup debut against Derby County FC in January 2023.

[@divinmubama](https://www.instagram.com/divinmubama)
[@divinM8](https://www.instagram.com/divinM8)

Ambition Aspire Achieve free family fun day includes Sports and outdoor games.

Booking are required and can be made at bookings@theaaazone.com

Sunday 12 and 26 March, 11am-3pm, Terence Brown Arc, Hermit Road Park, Canning Town E16 4JT

www.theaaazone.com



Queen's Roar exhibition

Inspired by the vibrant culture and rich footballing heritage of Newham's Green Street, **Queens' Roar** exhibition is on display at the Good Hotel London until April.

Local photographer Sylvie Belbouab documented the project, commissioned and produced by the Royal Docks Team, including a football tournament of Newham women's teams in Central Park.

Good Hotel London, Western Gateway, Royal Victoria Dock, E16 1FA

www.royaldocks.london/whats-on/queens-roar-exhibition

Newham Boys Boxing Club has started sessions at their new site at Queens Road West Community Centre.

Newham Boys is an amateur boxing club that was founded in 1981. 63 Queens Road West, E13 OPE

[@newham_boys_abc](https://www.instagram.com/newham_boys_abc)
[@NewhamboysABC](https://www.instagram.com/NewhamboysABC)

Forest Crusaders Women FC have made the decision to resign from The Greater London Women's Football League.

They hope to re-launch next season.

They will continue to have foundation mixed sessions for ages 5-10 year olds on Saturdays 10am-11am and advanced girl's sessions on Wednesday 7pm-8pm at Newham Leisure Centre.

<https://playmaker10-coaching.class-4kids.co.uk>

Active Newham's free youth Boxing sessions take place every Friday afternoon for 12-17 year olds

Book your place to take part Trinity Community Centre, Bothwell Close, Canning Town, E16 1QS

Mahbul.alam@activenewham.org.uk
[@activeNewham](https://www.instagram.com/activeNewham)



St Bonaventure's football team

St Bonaventure's football team and PE staff were featured on BBC The One Show for a segment about their alumnus Jermain Defoe

During the interview Jermain, from Canning Town, said that he has many amazing memories of his time at St Bon's.

www.stbons.org
www.jermaindefoefoundation.org

Former West Ham United player Rio Ferdinand OBE met with Jack Leslie's family and the **Jack Leslie Campaign**. Jack Leslie was inducted into the National Football Museum Hall of Fame, before the 'No Room for Racism' West Ham United home game against Chelsea.

West Ham United commissioned a bronze maquette created by sculptor Andy Edwards.

West Ham Academy Coach and former player Carlton Cole also presented Jack Leslie's granddaughters with signed West Ham shirts.

www.jackleslie.co.uk/jack
www.whufc.com



Rio Ferdinand OBE and Jack Leslie's family with members of the Jack Leslie Campaign
 ©Neandra Etienne



London Lions women's team

Stratford based **London Lions** men and women teams were crowned champions of the Women's British Basketball League and British Basketball League Cup 2023

Sam Dekker and University of East London scholar Holly Winterburn were named Most Valuable Players (MVP)

www.thelondonlions.com



Students from the University of East London visit St George's Park

Ten students in their third year of **Sport, Coaching and Performance** degree visited St George's Park, the home to all 23 of England's national football teams, on 25 January.

This was part of the career-minded aspect of the programme at **University of East London** in partnership with **West Ham United Foundation**.

The visit consisted of many practical activities, starting off with an on-pitch session led by a professional sports scientist, consisting of performance testing (linear sprints - see picture below) and a taste of how elite football players prepare for games.

Other activities throughout the day included tours, a workshop around elite athlete's nutrition, on pitch-rehab practices for injured footballers and a presentation from the students on how they would plan exercise for athletes suffering from ACL leg injury.

www.whufc.com

***All games and events listed are subject to change. Please email your April sports news and game fixtures to neandra.etienne@newhamvoices.co.uk*

Foul play over rights at FIFA



Mickey Ambrose nearly choked on his sandwich when he saw the latest news from football's international regulator

Thursday was a normal working day for me, attending meetings and rushing to grab a sandwich for lunch. Then as I flicked through the news pages on my phone I saw something that stopped me in my tracks.

There was FIFA president Gianni Infantino, pictured, announcing to the world that Saudi Arabia would host the World Club Championship in December this year.



Image via Instagram

What! After the scandals over human rights, including the deaths of migrant workers and exploitation issues, associated with the controversial World Cup in Qatar last year, which also involved a full FBI investigation into endemic corruption at FIFA, I couldn't believe it. Football was tying itself once more to a country that courts controversy over fundamental rights.

Sometimes I wonder whether the sports supremos and politicians, who have newly charged themselves with overseeing our national sport, are even living on the same planet as the average football supporter on the streets.

Where are their ethics, morals and values? They continue to insist that we should trust the 'New' FIFA president. Why?

This is a man who was taking selfies next to my friend Pele's open casket in Brazil with a wide grin on his face. While it has to be pointed out that Pele was not in the pictures, where was his sense of decency and decorum, and his respect for one of the most sombre moments in world football?

Yet we trusted him. So here we are, not three months later, listening to him brag about the billions in profits which the World Cup generated. Not one word of the foreign worker deaths.

So why should we be surprised that Saudi Arabia has been selected.

2022 was one of the bloodiest years on record in Saudi Arabia's recent history. Investigations show that at least 147 people were executed in Saudi Arabia in 2022. Eighty one people were killed in one single day, in the Kingdom's largest mass execution in

its history on 12 March.

The death penalty in Saudi Arabia is not confined to murder or drug offences as in many parts of the world, beheadings are also known to be handed down for blasphemy, treason (which includes criticising the Royal family), witchcraft and sorcery. There has also been the execution of numerous men for homosexuality.

The true number of how many people are facing the death penalty in Saudi Arabia is unknown because the authorities keep capital trials and death row shrouded in secrecy.

Saudi Arabia's judicial system – the legal system and judgements made in a court of law – is known for being unjust. Legal decisions, especially around the death penalty, are taken behind closed doors, court documents are forbidden from being published, charges are changed, and court sessions are indefinitely postponed, to name a few examples.

Investigations have found that fair trial violations and torture are endemic in death penalty cases, including the cases of child defendants. Saudi Arabia has a history of handing out the death penalty to minors.

One victim is Abdullah al-Howaiti, who was 14-years-old when he was arrested, tortured and forced to confess to a crime he could not have committed. He was still a minor when he was handed the death penalty.

At least 15 child defendants – those who committed 'alleged' crimes when they were minors – have been executed since 2013, despite Saudi Arabia announcing they were getting rid of the death penalty for those who committed crimes when they were minors.

So how will the media and the politicians respond to FIFA this time round? Rainbow laces anybody?

Finally, I would like to finish on a football matter, but this time as an ex-player, I would like to make an appeal to my fellow professionals playing today.

Chelsea's shock loss at home to Southampton was overshadowed by an awful and totally unnecessary injury to the Chelsea player Cesar Azpilicueta. This happened when the Southampton Striker Sekou Mara attempted a bicycle kick in the most improbable of circumstances, in a crowded penalty area, rendering the Chelsea player immediately unconscious.

The players knew how serious it was on both teams and immediately called first aid, before the player was taken in a neck brace to hospital.

Some of the greatest goals by the

greatest players have been overhead kicks, from Pele to Wayne Rooney and probably the greatest overhead kick of all time by Cristiano Ronaldo for Real Madrid in Turin, indeed the goal was so spectacular, the entire stadium rose in a standing ovation.

But come on lads, think! When young and fit we all know the sensation of sailing through the air and the almighty power we can generate in spectacular overhead kicks, but unless you consider the safety of your fellow players somebody is going to get killed or paralysed.

Meanwhile... Back on the terraces and in the dressing room at the London Stadium, there's also some hard thinking to be done about how to improve our performances on the pitch.

Every game from now on will be like a cup final for West Ham. Losing to Spurs put the Hammers in the rel-



Mickey Ambrose

egation zone. It's unthinkable that the Hammers could end up playing in the Championship next season at the London Stadium. But we'll have to fight to stay up. ●

Mickey Ambrose is a former Chelsea and Charlton player who lives in Stratford

Jack Leslie joins football's Hall of Fame

NEANDRA ETIENNE

Canning Town footballer Jack Leslie, who was denied an England call-up in 1925 because of his black heritage, was posthumously inducted into the National Football Museum's Hall of Fame before the 'No Room for Racism' West Ham United home game against Chelsea on Saturday 11 February.

National Football Museum CEO Tim Desmond told *Newham Voices*: "In 2019 we re-launched the National Football Museum Hall of Fame to be more representative of those players who have acted as trailblazers for the modern game.

"We were very proud to induct the first ever black player to be called up to the England men's team and for his story to become part of our country's football heritage.

"It is so important that Jack is remembered both at Plymouth Argyle where he spent his playing life but also at West Ham United who employed him after his retirement.

"It is fair to say his career would have been very different today and he would have no doubt won many caps for England.

"All those years later he is being given the respect he is due by the clubs, the FA, the fans and I am very pleased to say the National Football Museum."

Mr Desmond presented the award to Jack's family, alongside West Ham legend Sir Trevor Brooking and U16 Academy Coach for West Ham United and Club Ambassador Carlton Cole, the Jack Leslie Campaign team

and Plymouth Argyle ambassador Ronnie Mauge.

Jack Leslie's granddaughter Lyn said, "We think he would have been very proud, but also wonder what all the fuss was about for just doing his job and playing football.

"As a family we can't believe all that has happened in the last few years and are so pleased that his story will carry on and hopefully it might inspire children to follow their dreams."

Jack previously worked in the Hammers' boot room in the 1960s and 1970s after being approached by their manager Ron Greenwood.

He worked with Bobby Moore, Sir Geoff Hurst, Martin Peters, Sir Trevor Brooking and Billy Bonds before retiring at the age of 82.

West Ham commissioned a bronze maquette by sculptor Andy Edwards. A statue was unveiled outside Plymouth Argyle stadium in October 2022 by the Jack Leslie Campaign.

His Newham Heritage plaque was placed at his former Canning Town home in 2021. www.jackleslie.co.uk



Carlton Cole with Jack Leslie's granddaughters ©Neandra Etienne

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