

2024: A year of change for Newham

AIDAN WHITE

A cost of living crisis at home and horrifying headlines about war abroad dimmed the prospects for peace and goodwill at the turn of the year, but nevertheless, 2024 promises some reasons to be cheerful for the people of Newham.

- From 1 January hundreds of people in community groups across the Borough will start work on 119 neighbourhood projects, spending £1.6 million to improve the lives of local people (See Page 7);
- Newham's bid to become the next London Borough of Culture will bring people together in pride and celebration and provide a springboard for the Boroughs' long term cultural ambitions (See Page 8);
- On the political front there will be a general election and the creation of a third parliamentary constituency for Newham – Stratford and Bow;
- And 12 years after the historic Olympics in Stratford, Newham will take back planning control over the Olympic Park area as the London Legacy Development Corporation winds down its work.

With Newham's political parties gearing up for election campaigns for Parliament, the Greater London Assembly and for London Mayor, *Newham Voices* asked party leaders on the Council for their hopes for the forthcoming year.

Mehmood Mirza on behalf of Newham's three Independent Group councillors said: "As we move into a new year we look forward to a general election when we can

get rid of the worst government in living memory.

"We want a completely new approach to politics which focuses on everyone being properly housed, children attending nurturing schools, being able to get GP and hospital appointments when they need them, and proper social care and welfare benefit system. We need our utilities and transport systems to be publicly owned and not run for profit.

"In Newham the independent group will work hard to

make sure the local council works for all of the people of Newham in a much better way than they have for the last few years, and does everything it can to achieve the above aims."

Labour Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz said: "We must win against the divisive politics of hate and for the future of our country to get the Tories out. This government has cut funding to Newham by £203m since 2010 and wreaked havoc with economic failure and a cost of living crisis.

"In 2024, we'll support our residents with over £6.5m to help 30,000 households and 19,000 school children with holiday food vouchers, as well the £6m Eat for Free programme for every primary school child.

"We'll continue our £2 billion investment in homes our people can afford and work with residents to tackle fly-tipping, and hold the police to account to make our streets safe.

"We'll tackle toxic air pollution harming our health and focus on investments into the Borough to help people acquire skills and access living wage jobs, as well as support our small businesses.

"In 2024 we'll be fearless in promoting Newham and its people because we are passionate about enriching their lives."

For the Green Party, Cllr Danny Keeling said it was time to help those families facing the worst of the cost of living crisis. "If I could have a new year's wish for Newham," they said, "it would have to benefit those most struggling. No-one should have to make decisions on whether they feed their children or themselves, or whether they can afford to put the heating on in the winter.

"The existing eat for free scheme, where all primary school children receive a healthy meal at school, must be expanded to include all secondary school children.

"This would ensure better education for children and less stress on parents and guardians. The wealth inequality in this country has only got worse and worse over the years and in a country as rich as ours we shouldn't have to worry about our children going hungry."



Keep cool and save lives

See page 3



Awards for our heroes

See page 4



"Buckingham Palace reception" by Ian Jones is licensed under CC BY 2.0

My challenge to the Royals

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Farewell to a best friend

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Newham Voices is a not-for-profit newspaper published by Social Spider Community News: Visit socialspidercommunitynews.co.uk

Editor-in-Chief

Aidan White 07946 291511

Editor

Jean Gray

Chief Reporter

Neandra Etienne

Designer

Mary Schrider

Editorial Team

Mickey Ambrose, Dean Armond, Irfan Badshah, Andrew Baker, Sylvie Belbouab, Fawn Bess-Leith, Cecilia Cran, Phoenix Debola, Noah Enahoro, Annette Fry, Wendy Jackson, Peter Landman, Shofa Miah, Phil Mellows, Zhenreenah Muhxinga, Sheila Nursimhulu, Samiro Fortes Oliveira, Julia Omari, Farzana Rahman, Rebekah Samuel, Daphne Stedman, Lorraine Tapper, Winston Vaughan and Beatrice White

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HAVE YOUR SAY – LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@newhamvoices.co.uk

Playground plea as children wait

As a local resident and mum to a young child I am very interested in the ongoing repairs in East Ham Central Park playground, and I also appreciate the parent-led campaign that preceded it (by volunteers calling themselves Poor Play Newham). You featured this campaign in September, and I think an update on it would make a good news story for the paper.

So far, I think the repairs are taking longer than the notice put on the gates suggested it would. The

playground was fenced off as they worked on it for more than a week. However, my fingers are very much crossed that we see a big improvement and that soon you could share the campaign's success.

I love *Newham Voices*, it has really helped my awareness of what's going on in the Borough. I pick it up in Central Park as I really like to see local press covering the issues people care about, especially ahead of a general election year.

It was sad seeing my son's reac-

tion as play equipment disappeared and I am relieved to see some action being taken at this point. I just hope that repairs are completed soon and that my son can use the play area as intended! He was only one year old the last time that the zip wire was working, he's now two and a half, but he's enjoyed pretending, running from one platform to another and saying 'zoom!' Seeing the real thing in use will be even better.

Olivia Varley-Winter

Borough of Culture: but let's do it right!

If we're successful, and Newham is designated a Borough of Culture in 2024, it will mean a focus on creativity and culture with additional funding, for a whole year.

But it's worth remembering that there have been several cities and boroughs of culture since 2017, but the experience is not always as wonderful as we all hope.

I was close to another such local borough of culture in the past, and many locals actively involved in cultural activities did not find it as good an experience as they'd hoped.

We all have expectations of what it will look like for everyone in our community. But that will not happen automatically. The lead person for the project should know how to encourage and engage with local community organisations.

If that doesn't happen it could lead to events bringing in culture from elsewhere that are nothing to do with the focussed borough. Examples included dancers from Brighton to perform in the London borough I was involved with, a circus from Wales, and bonfire builders

from the West Country!

There was, and will be, funding available for local organisations to apply to run special events and initiatives, maybe extensions of what they do, or new activities. But this can be oversubscribed, meaning in my experience around only one in ten had successful applications. Large five figure sums were granted, which could have funded several smaller lower cost initiatives.

Additionally, bad feeling was caused before the year had hardly begun. There was clearly an uneven spread of where activities would take place across the area, leaving some parts with nothing happening. Some activities were insensitive to the diversity of the borough – such as alcohol-focussed events, in an area with culturally low alcohol consumption.

For an area suffering from knife crime, it was shocking that one event displayed locally produced designer kitchen knives, glorifying the blades, which sold for a few hundred pounds each. Other "Artisan Independent producers" were cor-

porate businesses, the likes of which would sell to Fortnum & Mason.

There was local opposition, meaning volunteers were not easily forthcoming to help and there had to be paid advertising on social media to recruit people. Existing community organisations even built a "Not The Borough of Culture" Facebook group, sharing tales of how they had been sidelined from being involved in what should've been a huge celebration, but promoting what they were still doing that year.

It was clear the team running the Cultural year had very little knowledge or sensitivity to the existing local cultural community. There seems to be no long lasting legacy of that year.

Of course, I hope we get the Borough of Culture for Newham, but I do hope we have learned from the past and those running it can work with the people of our Borough, so that it can truly reflect the amazing diverse cultural potential of our community.

Name and address withheld



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Climate change strategy: keep cooler and save lives

Peter Landman reports from the Newham Council Cabinet meeting on 5 December

With the focus on the recent world climate crisis talks in the United Arab Emirates, Newham Council took time to agree its own response to the climate crisis at the Cabinet and Council meetings last month.

The Cabinet discussed a combined Council Officer and Consultants' report, Newham's Just Transition Plan which was also discussed at the Council Meeting of 11 December.

The main aims of the report are to outline a range of climate change actions and a strategy for future change. The importance of this is also highlighted in the report which shows that the strategy could be a lifesaver for the Borough. Deaths of residents in London increase with just two days of temperatures in excess of 24 degrees – and future temperatures could be as high as 45 degrees.

Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz said the Council is already moving ahead by bringing electric vehicles into the Council fleet; switching to street lighting with 100 percent renewable electricity; introducing the parking emissions scheme; ensuring building work is leading

to more energy efficiency and more green space; and planting more trees across the Borough.

The strategy will be underpinned and rolled out under the leadership of a Director of Climate Action and a new Climate Action Working Group.

Among future proposals are plans to make homes, workplaces and schools energy efficient and to end reliance on fossil fuels; to lessen air pollution by avoiding car travel; and to develop a circular economy, by doing more repair work and bringing used and worn-out objects and materials back into use.

The strategy will also encourage local community initiatives and see the planting of as many trees, shrubs and plants as there are residents of Newham. There will also be new plans for waste management in the light of the new East London Waste contract with consultation with other boroughs.

Part of the climate change strategy also includes applications for funding support from Transport for London for More Healthy School Streets – keeping roads next to local schools as far as possible car-free at peak times – and for

more places for more bicycle parking. Other funding applications are for local resident-led traffic improvement schemes and for improvements to Jupp Road around the new South West Stratford station entrance.

Brighter future for Hamara Ghar in Upton Park

At present the Hamara Ghar Sheltered Housing Complex is a rather drab looking 10-storey 1960s block, housing 192 flats situated by Queens Market in Upton Park. But change is on the way. Cabinet agreed a contract to brighten up the block, including the reception and communal areas, and to install an energy efficient heating system.

Fresh action to confront homeless crisis

The Council has agreed a number of new measures to address the homes crisis across the Borough. Among the measures is a plan to rebuild 10 Victoria Street, close to Stratford Town Hall. This was originally planned as accommodation for single people, but is now housing homeless families.

The Council has decided to rebuild rather than renovate and will create a building that will be wheelchair accessible,

energy efficient and will provide 124 new homes.

At the same time the Cabinet agreed the Council should acquire the freeholds of new

homes in developments at Beam Park in Rainham and Burnt Mills in Harlow, which will be let to homeless families at affordable rents. (See page 5)

Muslim leaders press MP Brown over Gaza

A group of 22 leaders of various groups within Newham's Muslim community has written to West Ham MP Lyn Brown seeking a meeting to discuss the humanitarian crisis and continuing war in the Gaza Strip.

Many local leaders are deeply troubled by the Israeli military response to the attack by the Hamas leadership in Gaza which on 7 October launched a brutal terrorist attack on Israel, claiming 1,200 lives with more than 200 people taken hostage.

But the ferocity of the Israeli military response – a two-month long siege, invasion and relentless bombing campaign which has killed more than 20,000 Palestinians, the majority of them women and children – has prompted widespread protests in Britain and around the world.

In Newham there have been calls for more political action to bring about a ceasefire.

The letter from representatives of mosques and Muslim organisations in the Borough, and specifically from Lyn Brown's West Ham constituency, have written to her "to express our disappointment with your continuous refusal to meet with us in Newham, despite our repeated requests".

The group is offering to meet in Newham "privately, in secure locations and without any publicity" to discuss their concerns over the Labour party's stance on the Gaza war". But Lyn Brown has said she would prefer to meet in Parliament.

The Labour Party has opposed a full ceasefire and as reported in *Newham Voices* last month Lyn Brown did not support a Parliamentary motion calling for a ceasefire. Sir Stephen Timms, Newham's



©Sylvie Belbouab

MP representing East Ham, was one of 56 Labour rebels who defied the party leadership and voted for a ceasefire in a motion proposed by the SNP in November.

As *Newham Voices* went to press, we had received no reply from Lyn Brown's office to our approach for a comment on this latest letter which was signed by:

Shaykh Abid Siddiqui, Newham Council of Mosques; Maulana Abdul Wahhab, Darul Atfal; Hafiz Jamil Ahmed, East End Islamic Centre; Imran Talati, Quwwatul Islam; Asim Uddin, Masjid Ibrahim; Mufti Shah Hamza, Motala Foundation; Abidah Uddin, Newham Peace and Dawah; Saffiyah Amejee, Wellbeing Community; Mohammad Nurru-zaman, Darul Arqam; Johura Qureshi, Southern Road SRE; Shakira Begum, Sisters Circle; Mufti Shah Shuaib, Imam Motola Academy; Ali Akhter, Al Hira Masjid; Rozina Iqbal, Taqlis; Hajera Balaribi, Palm Leaf Counselling; Mufti Umair Zulfikar, Riverine Centre; Shafia Begum, Newham Sisters Connect; Husnaan Raza, Al Khayr; Zaheer Mumtaz, Green Street Masjid; Sharmina Banu, Sukoon Project; Umar Naveed, Minhajul Quran; and Anas Khan, Newham Muslim Forum.

Speak Out aims to help people with learning disabilities

A free monthly drop-in group for people with learning disabilities and autistic people has launched in Newham – offering a safe space for people to speak out and make friends.

Voice and rights charity VoiceAbility is hosting the Speak Out Newham drop-in group at Chargeable Lane Resource Centre on the second Monday of every month, running from 1pm to 4pm.

It's a chance for people with learning disabilities and autistic people to speak about issues affecting them, be listened to and have their voice heard in local decisions.



The first hour – 1pm-2pm – is dedicated time for people with a learning disability and the last hour – 3pm-4pm – is for autistic people, with 2pm-3pm for both communities.

Tina, who is autistic, attended the Newham drop-in last week and said: "The VoiceAbility meet-

ing was exactly what was needed, thank you. I will be back for the next one!"

The next Newham drop-in session takes place Monday 9 January from 1pm to 4pm. You can just turn up, but to find out more contact Trish Moody at trish.moody@voiceability.org or on **07770 012 959**.

VoiceAbility also provides a wide range of free advocacy services in Newham to support people to be heard in decisions about their health, care and wellbeing. For more information visit voiceability.org/newham or call the helpline on **0300 303 1660**.

Awards for Newham's community heroes

Newham celebrated its local heroes at the annual civic awards on 5 December during a gala evening of tributes, toasts and entertainment held at the Old Town Hall Stratford.

The second year of the awards, which are endorsed by the Council on the basis of nominations from within the community, honour the inspiring individuals and organisations that contribute to making Newham a better place.

The Mayor, Rokhsana Fiaz, said: "Newham is fortunate to have so many truly dedicated individuals who work tirelessly during their lives to make a difference to our local community. We have an incredible wealth of talent." She said the Civic Awards would now become a regular annual event.

Awards to recipients under 12 categories included one to the past Chair of Council, Cllr Winston Vaughan, who is also a director and supporter of *Newham Voices*.

Bryan Collier received the Honorary Alderman of the Borough Award and Honorary Freedom of Newham Awards went to David Mann, Jane Williams and Laiba Sheikh

Other winners were Sian Jones who won the Good Neighbour Award for her leading role in her community, including organising recreational events and tackling social problems in areas such

campaigns, including the Ageing Well Strategy Resident Advisory Group.

The Youth Excellence Award went to Rameez 'Ramzy' Saleem who plays a leading role, as a co-chair of the Children in Care Council, in changing the way in which the Council is held to account for the services it provides to young people. He was one of the first cohort of young people trained to be a Young Commissioner, to ensure that services in the Borough meets the needs of young people.

Other winners were the Royal Docks Living Wage Action Group who won the Community Wealth Builder Award for work to increase the number of employers paying decent wages in Newham and the Chain Reaction Theatre Company who won the Create and Thrive Award for their work with marginalised, vulnerable and 'at-risk' young people.

Maryland Primary School took the Green Champion Award for its support for protecting the local environment and in recognition of its dedicated and passionate group of pupils called Eco-Warriors, who ensure that everyone at Maryland understands the importance of sustainability and limiting climate change.

Awards also went to Discover Children's Story Centre based in Stratford and The World Shirdi Sai Baba Organi-



Maryland School winners and above left, Bryan Collier, and right, Katie Blake. Images ©Andrew Baker



All the winners! Above, Newham Chief Executive Abi Gbago and Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz, right, with winners Sian Jones and, right, Rameez Saleem. Images ©Andrew Baker

as community safety, housing repairs, often in conjunction with relevant statutory agencies.

The Outstanding Contribution Award to Katie Blake recognised her 19 years as a Council volunteer and her support for a wide variety of community

sation UK, particularly for work promoting cultural understanding and harmony within Newham's diverse population. Finally, the Well Newham Award went to Your Place (formerly Anchor House in Canning Town) for its work providing accommodation for homeless people.

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Housing crisis: affordable homes targets missed

PETER LANDMAN
AND AIDAN WHITE

In the days before Christmas hopes of providing more social housing in Newham suffered a double setback with agreement on two major development plans that fall well short of the Council's pledge to deliver 50 per cent affordable homes in new building projects.

Plans for a private development of 871 new homes in Canning Town have been given the green light by Newham Council, but none will be used as social housing.

And a second development, under the Council's direct control through its development company Populo Living, for new homes in Pier Road in North Woolwich and Cyprus in Beckton will deliver 565 new homes, but only around 32 per cent of them will be affordable, comfortably missing the Council's 50 per cent target.

Both these plans were given the go ahead on 18 Decem-



Visualisation of development in Beckton. ©Populo Living

ber by the Council's Strategic Development Committee.

The project at Pier Road, adjacent to Woolwich foot tunnel, includes 350 new homes of which 127 will be classified as affordable, and will provide new homes for at least 85 families on Newham's

housing waiting list. At Fennaldale Road, close to Cyprus DLR Station, there will be 215 homes of which 54 will be genuinely affordable.

In total the number of affordable homes will be around 100 less than promised.

The Canning Town plans

will lead to the construction of seven tower blocks ranging from eight to 30 storeys high as part of the private Crown Wharf redevelopment from Barratt London.

Of the 871 homes, 630 will be for the private sector while 241 'genuinely affordable'

homes will be split into 153 shared ownership and the final 88 will be at London affordable rent.

On 11 December at the full Council meeting councillors raised concerns about the commitment to providing at least 50 per cent affordable homes in all new housing developments.

A resolution adopted at the meeting called for a rewrite of the local development plan and possible scrutiny of the financial model of the Council's wholly-owned property developer Populo Living.

The promise of at least 50 per cent affordable housing is a flagship policy aiming to make inroads into the Council housing waiting list which is one of the longest in the country. There are around 34,000 households on the waiting list, but only around 600 properties become available each year.

At a Council cabinet meeting on 5 December Populo admitted that they couldn't meet the target at the North Woolwich and Beckton projects and said the plans had been hit by high national interest rates, and a run-down of working capital.

The joint motion that was agreed at the Council meeting called for a rewrite of the Local Plan, and for possible scrutiny of Populo's financial model.

In the Council debate on housing, the Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz stressed that there were three major regeneration schemes underway in Newham and that the Council had borrowed £2 billion for housing development.

Meanwhile, Newham's plans to move some of the Borough's homeless families to towns around London are facing new problems.

Following reports two months ago that councillors in Chatham had objected to plans to buy space for Newham families in the Kent town, a new plan to buy a block of flats in Harlow that could house up to 500 homeless people has also run into local opposition.

A Harlow Council spokesperson said: "We are extremely disappointed that Newham Council are pursuing this proposal and that other councils continue to place their residents in temporary housing outside of the areas they live."

Newham has the highest number of households in temporary accommodation in the country – 5,883 as at the beginning of April.

MSG Sphere doubts remain

NOAH ENAHORO

Last month the Mayor of London rejected the bid for the MSG Sphere to be built in the Stratford Olympic area, but failure to finalise the rejection has left some uncertainty.

Khan's rejection of the 300-high two-billion-dollar entertainment venue was gladly accepted by Newham's political representatives in November. Rokhsana Fiaz, the Mayor of Newham, called Khan's decision 'monumentally significant,' stating that, "He has placed the health and well-being of residents living in Newham first." She added: "We have always argued that the intrusion of the MSG Sphere on the lives of our people will be huge."

Newham's local Green councillors, Nate Higgins and Danny Keeling, both heavily involved in the campaign to stop the sphere and councillors for the ward where the MSG

Sphere would call home, also welcomed Khan's decision.

Perhaps those most delighted, and relieved, by Khan's decision were the members of the 'Against the MSG Sphere London' campaign, made up of Newham residents, some living mere metres away from the MSG's proposed site.

The group had been engaged in a five-year long battle with the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC), who

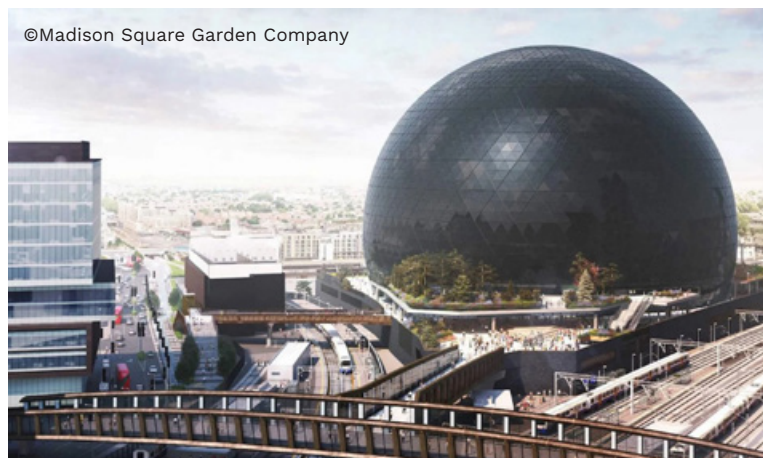
approved the initial planning application in 2022, as well as the company behind the sphere, Madison Square Garden. "This decision is a testament to the power of residents and grassroots campaigning," they said on X, formally known as Twitter.

Despite Khan's rejection, Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, prohibited the LLDC from carrying

out the decision, signalling to some that he would look to defy the Mayor's decision. Gove's interventions have, however, seemingly failed to woo over the company behind the sphere.

"Mr Gove's action, although commendable, still appears to us to be more of the same, and we cannot continue to participate in a process that can be so easily undermined by political winds," a spokesperson said. "As we said previously, we will focus on the many forward-thinking cities."

Soon after their statement, it appears that they have found a 'forward-thinking' city of their choice. Earlier in December, South Korean media outlets reported that a deal between the MSG Sphere company and Seoul would make the city become the new home to its brand-new sphere, and the first on the Asian continent. If agreed, construction would start in 2025.



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WE ARE NEWHAM.

More than 10,000 vote for £1.6 million community projects

Newham's flagship local democracy programme – People Powered Places – has seen more than 10,000 votes cast for 119 community projects across the Borough with the winners sharing a funding pot of more than £1.6million.

Following shortlisting from an original pool of 366 entries, residents voted for their favourite projects in eight neighbourhoods.

During 2023 community assemblies were re-launched as People Powered Places. Newham's participatory budgeting programme has since gained new momentum and reached more residents and voluntary, community and faith sector organisations than ever before.

Councillor Charlene McLean, Cabinet member for Resident Engagement and Experience said: "This year's People

Powered Places programme has put Newham on the World map as a leader of participatory democracy.

"The people of Newham have truly embraced this programme and are now exercising their power to directly affect where £1.68 million is

spent on local projects across the Borough.

"From mental health projects and peer support groups to youth-led projects and community gardens, this money, directed by the people for the people, will be a real game changer. I can't wait to

see the projects come to fruition."

The projects cover a wide range of issues. The Young Entrepreneur's Book Club is a project aimed at empowering the ambitious youth of Newham, aged 15 to 25, to unlock their entrepreneurial potential.

Another is the local climate change education initiative, ClimateYouChange. Their focus is on community sharing of knowledge about changes all of us can make to lower our carbon footprint, as individuals, community groups and together with the decision makers at a local and national level.

Resident-led working groups will monitor those who have been awarded funds alongside Council officers to check on their progress and offer support. Newham residents will have an opportunity to fol-



low the progress on Newham Co-create website and at the next People Powered Places event in summer 2024.

Cllr McLean (pictured above) said: "I'm really excited about all these projects and look forward to seeing how they develop and inspire others to come together to make a difference in our communities. We will make sure to update all residents as the projects come on stream so everyone can share in the success."



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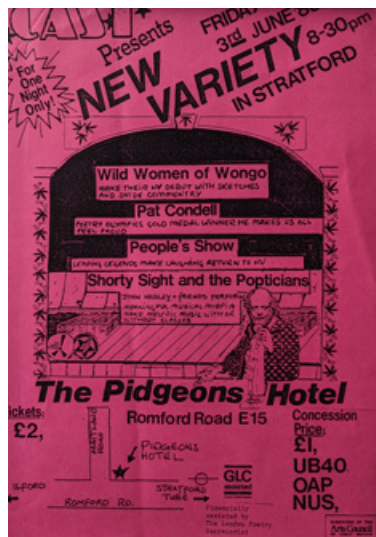
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OUT AND ABOUT WITH NEANDRA

January Arts and Newham's Culture Bid



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Newham Heritage Month 2024

The theme Places and Spaces will explore the buildings and streets, parks and squares that were and are significant to Newham's communities.

Grants are available of up to £5,000 for individuals and £8,000 for constituted groups and organisations.

Newham Heritage Month, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, is organised by Newham Council.

The deadline to submit applications is 10am on Monday 8 January 2024

<https://www.newhamheritagemonth.org>

V&A East has announced their first exhibition **The Music Is Black: A British Story**. Curated by Jacqueline Springer, it will open at V&A East Museum, East Bank in 2025.

The exhibition, in collaboration with the BBC, Sadlers Wells East, UAL's London College of Fashion and UCL East, will celebrate 125 years of Black music in Britain.

There will be a series of special activities, events, displays and live performances.

The Music Is Black: A British Story will also spotlight the creativity and impact of East



Sam White, 'Kano and Ghetto, i-D Live, Cargo, March 2005' © Sam White

London on Black British music including Newham's D Double E, Kano and Ghetts (formerly Ghetto).

www.newhamgenerals.com

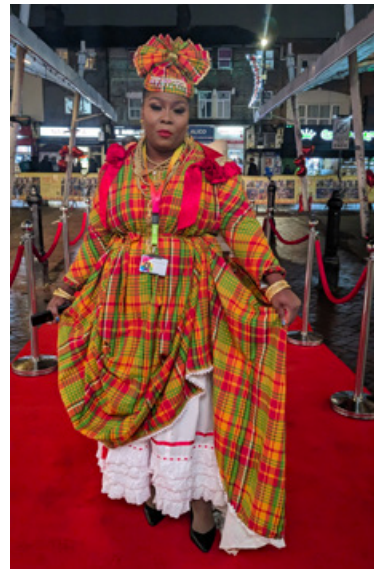
www.ghetts.co.uk

www.kanomusic.com

www.vam.ac.uk

Mayor of Newham, Rokhsana Fiaz and Councillor Dr Rohit Kumar Dasgupta kick started **Newham's Borough of Culture Bid 2025** during a launch event hosted by local actor Ashley Joseph at Queens Market (27 Nov 2023).

The Borough of Culture Bid launch event was an opportunity for Newham creatives to showcase their talent through dance, drumming and live music.



Sakafet London Caribbean Traditional Dress ©Neandra Etienne

Residents enjoyed diverse food options from the Market of Culture. There was also the chance to see Newham's initial co-produced ideas for the bid programme year and meet some of the creative talents in Newham that have helped shape the bid.

Rokhsana Fiaz said: "Unifying our cultural ambitions for past, current and future Newham, to recognise and celebrate our diversity of culture and creative expression, I am very excited to have launched our bid to become the London Borough of Culture 2025.

"Newham has a longstanding commitment to celebrating culture, spearheaded by local organisations like Rosetta Arts,

East London Dance, 3 Mills Studio, The Line and many more who work collaboratively with us on many programs to ultimately enable greater creative expression which is a key component of our community wealth building agenda to drive growth in the Borough."

You can watch Newham's Borough of Culture Bid 2025 on the Newham Council's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/@LBNewham

Please contact weareculture@newham.gov.uk with any further questions or ideas.

www.newham.gov.uk/homepage/237/join-our-newham-bid-to-become-the-next-borough-of-culture

Nine London boroughs have applied to become the 2025 and 2027 London Borough of Culture.

Applications for London Borough of Culture 2025 and 2027 (and Cultural Impact Awards) closed on 30 November 2023.

Shortlisted applicants are invited to interview with an external panel of experts in February 2024. The winners will be announced in March 2024.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan will award each successful borough £1.3m to put towards hosting culture and community events locally.

Croydon is currently the Borough of Culture until March 2024.

www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/arts-and-culture/current-culture-projects/london-borough-cul



Tee Fabikun with a design inspired by her ©Neandra Etienne



www.newham.gov.uk/become-london-borough-culture

A mural at **Carpenters Estate** as been unveiled. The Community designed mural, unveiled on 3 November, is a representation of cultural diversity of the residents living on and around the Carpenters Estate.

Local residents took part in four workshops delivered by artist Rose Hill and Co-Creative Connection between July and August. There was also a dedicated workshop with

Carpenters Primary School.

The mural has an anti-graffiti design and can be moved when the area is regenerated.

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

The Biggest celebration of **Drag Culture** returns to ExCeL London

The full cast of Series 5 RuPaul's Drag Race UK will be opening RuPaul's DragCon UK with the specially programmed After Hours Party.

RuPaul's Drag Race judge Michelle Visage and over 100 Drag queens from across the Drag Race franchise will be in attendance.

RuPaul's DragCon UK is brought by World of Wonder, the media agency behind the Drag Race global phenomenon, who have been shining a light on marginalised voices since the '90s.

RuPaul's Drag Con UK 2024 returns to ExCeL London on 13 and 14 January
uk.rupaulsdagcon.com



New year, new notes

Newham Music will open their new venue in January with a programme of music activities for children, young people, families and the wider community.

Visit www.newham-music.org.uk for updates.

Our Chief reporter on events that reflect culture, history and heritage in Newham



Treasured memories of Benjamin

The announcement of the death of poet and pioneering writer, lyricist and musician Benjamin Zephaniah prompted an outpouring of tributes from people in Newham who had the privilege to know him and were influenced by his work.

Newham Bookshop was one of his favourite places and 20 years ago Zephaniah joined a live studio debate on Channel 4 News, filmed in the bookshop, to discuss why he turned down an OBE.

He said: "I'm in a Bookshop full of people, these are the people I write for. I don't write to impress the Queen, I don't write to win awards and to get OBE's and join an Empire's club."

Rachel Archer, born and brought up in Newham, the daughter of Vivian Archer manager of the bookshop, said:

"He was a great family friend and for most of my childhood was a familiar presence. What started with a friendship with my mum through her bookshop grew into a friendship with the whole family. He attended birthday parties, my school plays, and would call me when I was sick to cheer me up. He was always surrounded by children, he was like a magnet.

"I don't think I realised he was from Birmingham until I was in my 20s, he was so perfectly sewn into the fabric of my Newham life. It was a great surprise to learn that he was nationally and internationally famous. He was Newham's poet and he belonged to us!

Her mother, **Vivian**, added: "His book signings were legendary with huge queues, he spent time with everyone. So many young people started reading because of him, and

learnt a love of poetry. He never flinched from his political principles, he was very outspoken on Empire and conscious of his roots. He was an open and warm human being. Newham is and should be proud of Benjamin's love for Newham and its people."

In 2013 Benjamin wrote of his beloved shop as it celebrated its 35th anniversary: "For 35 years Newham Bookshop has stayed both local and international at the same time, truly reflecting the local people and their ideas. This bookshop

"Newham has the honour and privilege of being a place where Benjamin Zephaniah excelled with his creativity, deepened connections through beautiful friendships and cemented a loving bond with our Borough because of its diversity.

"Benjamin moved to Newham in 1980 and got stuck-in across a range of social justice initiatives including housing, food and child-care co-operatives. It was in Newham where he was able to publish his first book of poetry, *Pen Rhythm*. As he



©Keith Martin/www.e7f8



Discover Story Centre Launch Party



Photo courtesy Paul Romane



Photo courtesy Zita Holbourne

has helped the local people pass exams, fall in love, meet authors, become authors, get work experience, get life experience, learn to read, understand Britain, understand the world, understand themselves, and engage in political struggles to liberate themselves and show solidarity with others."

Political leaders also joined the tributes. **Rokhsana Fiaz**, Mayor of Newham, said:

rests in peace, we will never forget his power."

Sir Stephen Timms, Labour MP for East Ham since 1994 said of him: "A remarkable man - loved having him living in Newham. His is a joyful and fantastic legacy."

Discover Story Centre, another of his favourite spots in Newham, said: "Our team is incredibly sad to hear the news about Benjamin Zeph-

aniah. "We are lucky to have many treasured memories of Benjamin over the years — from touring our building over 20 years ago when Discover was just an idea to celebrating our opening day in 2003 (pictured) and sharing conversations with local children from our Children's Forum **Paul Romane**, the Local Musician, Poet, Artist and Filmmaker, had personal memories of a close relationship.

He said: "Benjamin and I went back over 40 years. We were both members of The Whole Thing/ Page One Co-operative. My first job when I joined in the early '80s was collating Benjamin's first book *Pen Rhythms* with Derek Smith upstairs at 53 West Ham Lane E15. I was a budding musician at the time and we would do a few gigs on the same bill before he started getting the bigger gigs. Whenever I did some recording I'd ask him to record something with me and he never said no. When he released a new book we would sometimes go out flyposting in Hackney with a pot of glue and some of his posters.

"In 2006 my late partner Tersia was ill with cancer and Benjamin was kind to her and gave us respite. When she was dying she asked him, on her deathbed, to mentor our son, Otis and to write a poem for her funeral. He said he'd never done poems for funerals, even his family, but he did it.

"After her passing I asked him to record a poem. He suggested his Stephen Lawrence poem which at the time he hadn't recorded. We recorded

it in Capel Rd, Forest Gate in 2012. I will miss him and his enormous presence, thank you Benjamin for the part you played in my family's life...go in peace my friend."

Another friend, the writer, artist and activist **Zita Holbourne**, said: "He was my neighbour, we worked together on campaigns and actions for equality, justice, rights. To mark an anniversary of the British Council a poetry concert was organised at Theatre Royal Stratford East and a group of six local primary school children, which included my son, were selected to perform two poems Benjamin and I wrote. Their performance at the Theatre was a huge hit and when asked what was his top highlight throughout his time at primary school, my son wrote about that master-class with Benjamin.

Another favourite spot in Newham was **The Wanstead Tap**. Remembering his visit on 7 December 2018 They said: "For anyone who was lucky enough to see Benjamin Zephaniah that night at the Tap, it will surely be a night they will never forget. He spoke to and for everyone who packed our small arch, packed so tightly hanging off his every word. Switching between laughter and tears, rage and inspiration Benjamin for that 75 minutes showed us all how to be better people, how to laugh and cry and see the good in people through his poetry, his infectious laughter and his belief in the power of words. Unforgettable and so sorely missed."

benjaminzephaniah.com



Benjamin and Vivian Archer (Newham Bookshop) Ex Libris podcast, Dec 2019

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Happy 150th Anniversary West Ham Park

CHARLOTTE COOK

It will be a Happy New Year and an exciting 2024 ahead for West Ham Park which celebrates the 150th anniversary of the creation of the park, and its dedication to the local community.

The Friends will be working with the Corporation of London on a number of activities, and we are seeking suggestions about how to mark this wonderful year. The key date for the diary is 20 July!

West Ham Park has an amazing history, and we are very keen to further celebrate this: the Dr Fothergill Exhibition in the Rose Garden is a super starting point; then there is the history of other previous occupiers – the Gurney family (who are still very much involved in the Park's management) and Elizabeth

Fry (the philanthropist and prison reformer who lived in a house where the Army Reserve Centre is today), as well as today's Park Rangers,



some of whom still live and work in the Park.

The Park has also had many visitors, none of which are more important than those who enjoy, play in, walk in, and attend the park on a regular basis. But perhaps our King might be able to attend for the anniversary (as did his

predecessor), and certainly the Lord Mayor of London.

And of course, one of the main reasons for the acquisition of West Ham Park for the benefit of local residents was to ensure that the land was saved from a potential sale for building purposes. This is something which continues, with ongoing plans for the development of the former nursery site unfortunately, into this anniversary year, and which we as the Friends will continue to oppose.

As a time for celebration, and with our best wishes to you for 2024, we look forward to welcoming you to West Ham Park, and to seeing you during this very special year.

Charlotte Cook is the chair of Friends of West Ham Park

'Places and Spaces' – Newham Heritage Month 2024

DEAN ARMOND

Newham Heritage Month returns for a fifth time in 2024 to reflect the rich and diverse history and heritage of the Borough. Building on the success of previous years, the programme will select a theme and then invite individuals and community groups to come up with projects that celebrate different aspects of the topic.

The NHM 2024 Steering Group held a competition in October to select the theme and nearly 600 people voted to choose 'Places and Spaces'. This was followed by a successful application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and so the programme for next year will now have £100,000 of grant funding available.

The first event was 'Inspiration Day' on Saturday 2 December at Stratford Library where the Newham Archives and Local Studies search room are located. Access to these resources and the staff will

provide support for project ideas and explore routes to learn more.

Available for public access are a range of resources to find out about the history of Newham and its people including local newspapers, local parish and council records dating from 17th century to today, school records, electoral registers, historical maps, books, newsletters, and an extensive photographic collection as well as museum artefacts (which are not on display).

An integral part of all projects is to create a record that can be added to the online Newham Heritage Month archive so that others can share in the project.

Participation in Inspiration Day allowed people to speak to the NHM 2024 team and learn more about what they are looking for in the grant applications.

The following week an online surgery was held on Thursday 7 December to support those individuals and

groups considering applying for a grant.

The submission deadline is 8 January 2024, for both residents and groups.

The successful applicants will be informed shortly afterwards, allowing several months to prepare for NHM 2024 which will run from 1-30 June.

Newham Council Heritage Month 2024 Launch: www.newhamheritagemonth.org/blog/newham-heritage-month-2024-launch/

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Newham primary pupils are tops in maths, reading, and writing

AIDAN WHITE

Newham's primary schoolchildren are top of the class in England having turned in a "remarkable" set of results in the latest league table of country-wide performance for 11-year-olds.

The 11-year-olds in the Borough have got top marks in Key Stage Two tests in England for improvement in maths. Reading improvements put Newham primary schools in the top three nationally.

In combined reading, writing and maths assessments the youngsters score 71 per cent against the expected standard, that's 11 full points higher than the average for England.

Councillor Sarah Ruiz Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education said; "These results represent a remarkable achievement, first for the children themselves, but also for the parents, carers and in particular the brilliant teachers we have in Newham.

"It cannot be overstated how brilliant these results are, espe-



Photo: Laura Riviera/Unsplash

cially for a group whose early years in Primary School were so profoundly disrupted by Covid-19 and school closures.

"It is a testament to their resilience and the brilliant teachers, parents and carers who also faced the enormous challenge of delivering learning in the home, and online."

Newham Chief Executive Abi Gbago added: "These results are as outstanding as they are inspirational. The teachers in our schools stand in a class of their own, delivering great education in a borough where deprivation impacts too many families."

Senior citizens are not forgotten

PETER LANDMAN

Age UK East London has set up the Newham Older Persons Reference Group (OPRG) as a forum for older people. The meetings attract an average of 60 people.

Group Coordinator Grace Patient says: "Our main aims are to voice elderly people's opinions on important issues and influence decision makers through the diverse range of experience of our members."

In between meetings Grace produces a newsletter, in which she lists a full range of helpful contacts and main upcoming Council and community group events.

At their last meeting on 11 December, Larissa Howells, Age UK East London Director of Services, gave a report back on her strategy consultation with members.

The main points are to:

- give priority to health and care services that promote

independent living.

- recognise the ill health effects of living in loneliness, and to seek to reach elderly people living in isolation.

Jason Strelitz, Newham Council Director of Adults and Health, presented options in which the OPRG could retain its independence, and yet still work closely with the Council.

James Kealey from Transport for London took on board members' experiences of difficulties on local travel.

He has been invited to the next meeting to give a presentation on Dial a Ride.

Besides these meetings, Age UK offers one to one advice, advocacy, basic coaching on access to a computer, support for unpaid carers, and easing in hospital discharge.

Grace also circulated a list of places that give help on filling out forms. Contact her at: grace.patient@ageukeastlondon.org.uk

Books

I Always Wanted To Be A Dad: Men Without Children

Robert Nurden on his regrets over a childless life

The family of four looked in high spirits on their jaunt into central London. The kids were pulling faces and snatching each other's iPhones as the chilled parents looked on. The scene that played out on the train seats opposite me was so normal that it verged on the banal. We exchanged watery smiles across the aisle.

Then it hit me. Run-of-the-mill it might have been but my life was as far removed from this domestic drama as it was possible to be. I have no children, and at 72 I never will have. Just when I thought I had come to accept my loss, decades of mute grief came flooding back.

The gut punch that such displays of happy family life can inflict on me is a familiar one for many men and women who don't have the children that they always dreamed of having, whether that is due to infertility, poor judgement or just bad luck.

This gut punch is not just loneliness; I have a partner who has grown-up children and I have many friends. But my life is fundamentally different because I am not the father that I expected to be. I missed out on parenthood, the social status that brings, the responsibility, the opportunity for caring and nurturing, the legacy of children and grandchildren, and having these people to look after me in later years.

I just thought it would happen in time and become complacent.

Quite naturally, this issue of unwanted childlessness mostly focuses on women. The trope basically goes that men don't ever want children (not really) and when they end up with them it is because a woman twisted their arm to have them. Not true! At least not any more. Men can feel just as deprived as women when this doesn't happen. I know: I'm one of them.

The phenomenon of male childlessness is more widespread than society acknowledges. Some 25 per cent of men over 42 are childless,



For those who wanted children but life didn't work out that way, the triggers are everywhere.

according to Dr Robin Hadley's book, *How is a Man Supposed to be a Man?* The numbers are growing, which has massive implications for health and social care provision. It has to be said, of course, that many thousands of adults remain child-free by choice.

But for those who wanted children but life didn't work out that way, the triggers are everywhere. Childless men dread Father's Day. I usually hunker down and read a good book. The advertising industry is geared towards the ideal family. Chats at work about one's colleagues' children are commonplace and driving past schools as parents collect their kids can hurt; everyday ambushes like these can plunge a dagger into the heart of the parentless.

I regret so much in my life. I look back at wrong turns, poor decision-making, bad timing. Should I have worked harder at making a relationship work? Should an ex-girlfriend and I have decided that she should have an abortion? Later on, there was a miscarriage. Then there was a broken engagement.

I just thought it would happen, so I blame myself for complacency. I look at my friends who never wanted to be dads yet have four to whom they devote a scant amount of time. There are the hard-

ly-there fathers – alcoholics, absentees, adulterers, abusers or just not very good ones – and you wonder if you would have done a better job.

I first started to get broody in my early forties. The problem was potential partners were the same age and were divorced and either had children and didn't want more, or were past the age of having children. I could have settled for a compatible but childless relationship but I still wanted my own kids.

Traditionally, men want to leave a legacy by seeing the family name continue. Those who are not fathers often find a substitute activity such as teaching, nursing, charity work or sponsoring a child to try and fill that yawning gap. I returned to teaching but it was nothing like caring for one's own offspring.

So, why didn't it happen? Why will no child of mine ever phone up and say: "Hi, Dad! How are you?" Dr Hadley suggests that one may need to go back to one's childhood to find part of the answer. Anxiety over early years' attachments with one's care-givers may cause one to have problems with trust. That certainly resonates with me.

Is it all too late for me, then? Yes, basically. It's time to clear up the widespread view that men can procreate with ease into old age. Statistics show that fewer than two per cent of fathers are 50 or over. The Mick Jagers of this world are a rare species. Quite apart from a stack of evidence showing the medical dangers of fathering late in life.

There are upsides. I have the freedom to do things fathers can't do. I belong to a Facebook group called the Childless Men's Community, which is very supportive. And I have written a book. Here I am meant to fashion a neat conclusion but there isn't one – except of course to say that you can never have everything you want.

I Always Wanted To Be A Dad: Men without Children, by Forest Gate author Robert Nurden, was published in August 2023 and is available from Newham Bookshop and via his website: robertnurden.com.

No Christmas tinsel at the Miller's Well

BOBBY WAZZO

There was no Christmas cheer at the Miller's Well, East Ham, on its final evening, 29 October. J.D.Wetherspoon inflicted its second pub closure in Newham.

The company had just raised a glass to its first full year profit since the pandemic, reaching £42m with sales rising just under 11 per cent. That follows losses of £230m over the last three years so there is some rationale to selling off poorly performing outlets.

But the loss of the Miller's, and particularly the Hudson Bay in Forest Gate, hit hard the many tolerant and diverse members of their local communities who relied on the Wetherspoon pubs for good honest grub, as well as a pint of real ale, now becoming rare in the Borough as 'craft' gassed up beers at inflated prices take over.

One real ale supporter thought he should show solidarity, and travelled down from Manchester especially.

Jamie Kent, pictured, had already visited 842 Wetherspoon pubs and needed to tick off the Miller's before it went. He said: "The atmosphere tonight is pretty poor, but I am sure it is normally much better. There are characters here who are trying their best to cheer things up but there are only a few hours left."

However, the pub has since re-opened under new management. Many of the hand pumps have been removed and keg beers installed. But great news is that the carpet has stayed!



Advertisement

LICENSING ACT 2003 APPLICATION FOR A PREMISES LICENCE

Wendy's Restaurants of U.K. Limited have applied to NEWHAM COUNCIL for a premises licences for:

Wendy's Stratford, The Stratford Centre, 52 Broadway, E15 1NG so that the following licensable activities may be provided on the following days and hours:

The provision of late-night refreshment:

- Sunday – Thursday: 23:00 – 00:00
- Friday and Saturday: 23:00 – 02:00

Newham Council's Licensing Register is kept at the office of the Licensing Team, East Ham Town Hall, Barking Road, East Ham, E6 2RP. (open 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday), 020 3373 1925, where details of the application may be inspected.

Any representations against the application must be made in writing and received by the Licensing Team at the above address, by no later than the **16/01/2023**.

Individuals, businesses and other bodies may make representations in relation to the application. Representations must be relevant and can only be on the licensing objectives of the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance, and the protection of children from harm. Copies of all representations will be sent to the applicant. Persons making representations will have to appear at the Councils' Licensing Sub-Committee.

Note: It is an offence, liable on conviction to a fine up to £5,000 for an applicant to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with the application

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Spare a thought for the pub trade during dry January says Phil Mellows, as he reminds us that there's more to pub life than strong drink

In the wake of the festive season, it's not just pub-goers who might suffer from a hangover. Pubs themselves often find life a struggle.

It's always been the case that people, quite sensibly, choose to take it easy in the New Year. For one thing they don't have the cash to splash over the bar.

In recent years various charities have taken advantage of that by organising a formal Dry January, making it more popular. But, for me, this is the time when you really need the pub to provide warmth and cheer in the gloomiest month.

The pub needs us, too. Christmas and New Year might have filled the tills but there are still bills to be paid, and the prospect of few customers coming through the door. So this is a plea to help them – and yourselves – by popping into your local this month

A while ago the BII, otherwise known as the British Institute of Innkeeping, ran a campaign titled *Not Just a Pub* to highlight the social benefits. And you can enjoy those benefits without having a drink.

Today there's wider range of soft drinks and no and low-alcohol alternatives to booze and if, like me, you prefer to moderate your moderation, so to speak, there's more choice among lower strength beers since the government changed the duty banding last August to reduce tax for brews below



Photo: Jonas Jacobsson/Unsplash

3.5 per cent abv.

Suddenly, if not surprisingly, the market has been deluged with draught beers of around 3.4 per cent. I've tried quite a few of them and most are pretty good. I'm sceptical whether you can make a decent brew below 2.9 per cent, the previous threshold, but a few percentage points and the judicious use of hops make a big difference.

So if you still need an excuse to go to the pub, there it is.

A tasty way for women to bridge cultural divides

ZHENREENAH MUHXINGA

Our Community Cares, the community organisation in Canning Town which works with some of Newham's most vulnerable women, particularly those who are isolated, illiterate or non-speakers of English, has found that cooking is a delicious way to help women learn, make friends, and broaden their horizons.

To date the OCC's most successful project has been Food with a Story, which used cooking as a way of communicating and connecting across cultural boundaries.

Established around 2010, OCC is the brainchild of Rose Small, who was working as an English teacher in Newham. Rose found that many of the women she was working with often had very limited or no English and were suffering without space to express themselves and grow outside



Photo: Ashwini Chaudhary/Unsplash

of the home. Some were even victims of domestic abuse.

The group meets in the Keir Hardie Methodist Church, Canning Town, though the organisation has no religious affiliation.

What began as quite a small, informal organisation quickly grew into some-

Table of Love and Loss

REBEKAH SAMUEL

Families of murdered and missing loved ones united in grief at the second Table of Love and Loss on 3 December at East Ham Town Hall.

Opening to a crowd of over 260, Anjum Mouj of London Black Women's Project spoke of a system continually failing families. She said: "Our people are relegated to victims, but today we give them back their identities."

Organiser Ayse Hussein established the event in 2022 in memory of her cousin Jan Mustafa, and another woman Henriett Szucs, murdered in Newham by Zahid Younis, a known offender. Ayse explained: "I'm forever told, 'let Jan rest in peace'." But she then read an extract from one of the diaries in which Jan expressed the hope that others would not have to endure what she was going through.

Ayse added: "For this reason I will never stop."

The mother of a murdered girl, who had journeyed from Dorset, described the event as "healing" and "very much a part of my loss and grief".

Simon Harding, senior investigating officer on Jan and Henriett's case, now a specialist crime consultant, said police are aware that areas like missing persons need improvement and more resources, particularly where workload to officer ratios are too high.

"Sir Mark Rowley has promised changes in the Met. We must work together and give him and our police the chance to do it," he added.

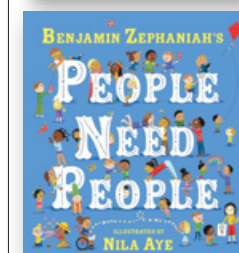
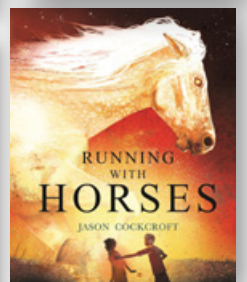
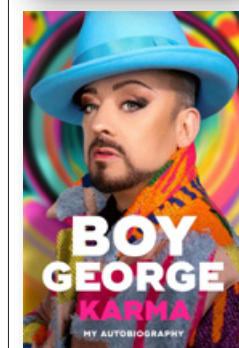
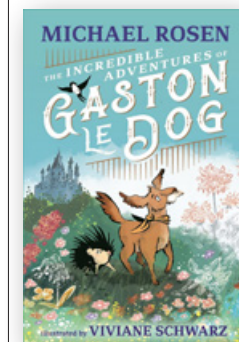


Good reads in Newham

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

- **Karma: My Autobiography** (signed copies available) By Boy George
- **Ghosts: The Button House Archives** By Mat Baynton and others
- **Green London: Exploring London's Parks and Gardens** By Nana Ocran
- **People Need People** (Illustrated by Nila Aye — signed copies available) By Benjamin Zephaniah
- **The Incredible Adventures of Gaston le Dog** (Illustrated by Viviane Schwarz) By Michael Rosen
- **Running with Horses** By Jason Cockcroft

– Compiled by David Ceen, Newham Bookshop



thing bigger and In 2013 the idea for the Food with a Story project was born.

The project came from the very simple realisation that food, and particularly cooking it, is a fantastic way to communicate across cultural boundaries and breaks down language barriers. For 12 months the women took it in turns to cook lunch, drawing on the recipes and specialities of their own cultural heritage for the rest of the group in the church's small kitchen.

The women were cooking familiar recipes, often handed down from mothers and grandmothers, and the process created a safe, restful space in which they felt comfortable sharing. The project culminated in the production of a recipe book.

OCC plans to expand their services and launch new projects, including one to develop IT skills amongst older members of the community.

The group has also opened another food bank/club at the Memorial Community Church Barking Road London E12 8AL. Every Wednesday from 11am to 1pm. Contact Rose on **0786 164 7346** or email info@ourcommunitycares.co.uk

For full details of these books, and to request a copy, visit: www.newhambooks.co.uk



SPORTS SHORTS

Compiled by **Neandra Etienne**

E13 Events presented **Ryan Bat-trum** with his frame to commemorate West Ham United's recent FA youth cup victory.

@e13events

West Ham United U21s Kaelan Casey, Patrick Kelly, Levi Laing, Dan Chesters and Lewis Orford supported **Irons Supporting Food Banks** in the lead-up to Christmas as part of the Players' Project.

The players were joined by founder John Ratomski at the hub on St Marks Industrial Estate in Silvertown. John showed the players the many items of food and clothing that had been donated by Hammers fans and West Ham United.

The players helped load items into cars and vans and took the goods to Ascension Church Community Centre in West Ham, one of the many places supported by Irons Supporting Food Banks in East London.

There, they met members of the church community and signed autographs. They then posed for photos with the FA Youth Cup and U18 Premier League South Division trophies, which the players had won in a memorable 2022/23 campaign.

Irons Supporting Food Banks has a longstanding relationship with the Club, and Joint-Chairman David Sullivan has made several personal donations throughout the years, including when he helped to fund the purchase of a new delivery van.

Ratomski stated: "It has been great to have the Academy boys here. It has been good to be able to show them what West Ham fans do in the community and to get them involved and get their support."

ironsfoodbanks.co.uk

West Ham United U21s have reached the last 16 of the Bristol Street Motors Trophy for the first time in the Club's history.

They will play Wycombe Wanderers in Bristol Street Motors Trophy last 16 in the week commencing 8 January

www.whufc.com



John Ratomski with the U21 players



City Mill Skate @Morley Von Sternberg

Via a programme of events, skate lessons and workshops, Stratford based **City Mill Skate** brings together a diverse community of skateboarders who want to use the spaces between buildings and bring fresh perspectives to the sport itself.

www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-east/city-mill-skate

Clapton CFC Grounds Committee, won the Grounds Management Association award for the Best Volunteer Grounds Team! (Dec 2023)

Clapton CFC January fixture list is available on their website

www.claptoncfc.co.uk

Local musician **Ghetts** has committed to pay for the annual membership for 150 youngsters for 2024 at Newham and Essex Beagles AC. The club has a proud history of success at the very top of athletics, with world class notable athletes who include Daley Thompson CBE, Iwan Thomas MBE, Christine Ohuruogu MBE, Sir Mo Farah CBE, Asha Philip and Jonathan Broom-Edwards MBE.

www.newhamandessexbeagles.co.uk

Newham Council has joined forces with the **Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)** to transform eight tennis courts in three parks across Newham, as part of the nationwide Parks Tennis Project.

The courts in Plashet Park, Royal Victoria Gardens and Little Ilford Park have undergone work, including court resurfacing, repainting, new fencing, nets and posts and a new gate access system.

The LTA and Newham Council will work together to ensure free park tennis sessions are available on the courts, providing regular opportunities for anyone to pick up a racket and play free tennis access for two hours a week.

www.lta.org.uk/play

Active Newham are working with the National Tennis Association to deliver FREE Adult Wheelchair Tennis on the tennis courts at Little Ilford Park. Carers must stay with participants for the duration of the activity. Starting January 2024, Thursdays, 6 - 7pm

activenewham.org.uk

Newham Sports Club's free programme for primary aged children during the Christmas school break includes 2hrs of sports, hot meal & a unique learning experience each day.

Ages 5-11 - Tuesday 2 - Fri 5 Jan, 10-2pm, Rokeby School

newhamfutsalclub.co.uk

Strawberry Kiwi Arts are offering a free taster kids Street Dance class on Friday 12 January at Britannia Village Hall.

strawberrykiwiarts.com

East London Dance are offering young people aged 7-11 (Key Stage 2 only) and 11-17 (Key Stages 3-5 only) free in-person Hip Hop and Street dance classes.

All levels welcome

Term Dates: From Thursday 18 January - Thursday 28 March 2023 (no session 15 February)

Thursdays after school from 5.30pm-7pm, starting on 18 January, 2024, The Talent House, 3 Sugar House Lane, E15 2QS

www.eastlondondance.org



East London Dance



Etty & Tyler anniversary celebration and launch of Full Cycle @Sylvie Belbouab

Frames of Mind new Heritage Lottery Funded project Full Cycle looks at the history of cycling in Forest Gate, through the eyes of Edward Etty, better known as Ted. At 95 years old, Ted has lived in Newham most of his life, running the Etty & Tyler Motor and Cycle Repair Shop since the 1950s.

They celebrated 60 years in business with the launch of the Full Cycle project.

framesofmind.uk

Dates and times of all games and events are subject to change. Please email your news game fixtures to neandra.etienne@newhamvoices.co.uk

WEST HAM FOCUS

This month we expand our coverage of West Ham United – both men and women. We welcome two new correspondents, **Edward Otto** and **Piper Bradford-Reynolds** from the University of East London Department of Journalism, who will provide player profiles and a regular review of how West Ham are performing in the top flight of women's football

Player Profile: Lucas Paqueta

By Edward Otto



Lucas Paqueta is a professional footballer who plays as an attacking midfielder for Premier League club West Ham United. Paqueta currently represents the Brazil national team.

His reason behind signing for West Ham United. He joined West Ham because he was left awestruck by the passion of the supporters in East London. Speaking to the club's official website, the midfielder said: "After we played West Ham in the Europa League, we all said as players what a fantastic stadium it was and how great the fans were and what great energy there was in the place."

Career prior to European transfers. At ten, he joined Flamengo, a professional football club based in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Paqueta played with the youth team from 2007 to 2016 before getting

promoted to Flamengo's first team. He scored 15 goals in 67 appearances for the first team between 2016 and 2019 before moving to AC Milan.

West Ham. In 2019 he signed for the Hammers and is still there. He has made 39 appearances for the club and has scored six goals and has become a formidable part of the team's strike force.

Strengths. One of Paqueta's strengths is his ball control. The playmaker's close control and quick feet allow him to navigate through tight spaces and retain possession under pressure.

Another asset is his vision and passing range. The Brazilian possesses the ability to spot and execute precise through balls. A particularly memorable example was the pin-point accuracy of his ball through to Kudus who scored the second in the 3-0 victory over Wolves on 17 December.

Weaknesses. One of his weaknesses is the petulance he sometimes shows. He has been guilty of "showboating" and as a result he can lose the ball dangerously close to his own goal.

Another weakness is his end product. Perhaps he should be scoring more as his output is not great in relation to the number of goals and assists he has made.

Individual honours. Paqueta's career includes some notable achievements:

- UNFP Ligue 1 Team of the year : 2020-21
- UNFP Ligue 1 Player of the Month : October 2021
- UEFA Europa Conference League Team of the Season : 2022-23

Moyes describes him as Maverick. West Ham coach David Moyes rates the Brazilian international very highly. The Scotsman described the attacking midfielder as a "maverick" after the 2-1 Europa League win at Freiburg, even though his antics sometimes drive him mad!

Interesting facts. He has an older brother, Matheus, who also plays football.

His nickname Paqueta refers to Paqueta Island and the eponymous neighbourhood he grew up in.

He is a big fan of funk carioca, a Brazilian dance resembling the samba, and sometimes imitates funk dance steps during his goal celebrations.

Why the Prince needs to blow the whistle on the FA



Mickey Ambrose starts the new year with an appeal to our future king

In 2024 it will be eight years since the new Prince of Wales and heir to the throne spoke at a lunch in Wembley to mark his 10th anniversary as President of the Football Association.

Prince William said: "Our governance structure is in danger of falling short of modern standards of best practice; as the country's national sport, we ought to be leading the way."



Mickey Ambrose with Prince Phillip

Prince William appeared to publicly back outgoing chair Greg Dyke's efforts to reform the FA Council, by making it more representative and diverse. He continued: "There is a wind of change blowing through global sporting governance and we need to ensure we do not get left behind. I know the organisation is currently reviewing this issue and there is an opportunity to seize the initiative by the way in which we reform ourselves. This is an emotive issue, and it is one that you all have a stake in deciding."

Many of the guests that day were FA board members, very little has changed, apart from the FA becoming masters of tokenism.

After years of delay and foot-dragging the FA announced just this week that a woman, Rebecca Welch, would referee a men's Premier League match for the very first time and Sam Allison would become the first Black official since Uriah Rennie retired in 2008, some 15 years ago. However, there is no remorse or regret, such is the arrogance of the Football Association.

We are living through an era of wondrous catch-phrases, cloaked in the mysticism of being woke and PC,

with very little substance. We constantly hear expressions such as Social Justice or the acronym EDI, (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion).

Everything goes back to the idea that we live in a world where we are all equal and have equality of opportunity. Of course, no-one is calling for an equality of outcome, this would be absurd and would engender anger and resentment. People need to be awarded jobs based on their talents, not their ethnicity and gender alone.

For many years the People's FA campaign group, co-founded by myself and Nigel Fletcher, has asked the Football Association for a whole raft of statistical data, to look at how football can be made more diverse, especially off the pitch, where we still have staggering under-representation of our black and ethnic minority community, regardless of the fact that 48 per cent of players on the pitch are non-white British.

Yet, the response we get is always the same: "We do not have this information, nor do we have the methodology in place to collect statistics of this nature."

I have had the privilege of being an Ambassador/Presenter to the Royal Charities for many years and experienced first hand the remarkable work of the Princes Trust and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards. I cannot think of an institution in Britain which has done more to combat racism and engender a true and meaningful multicultural society, than the Royal Family.

I am therefore openly calling on HRH Prince William, the President of the Football Association, to set an 18-month deadline for the FA to undertake meaningful change across four metrics, which are all achievable.

1. The Football Association must ensure they are held accountable for their decision-making processes, in a clear and transparent manner and abide by freedom of information laws;
2. The FA must establish a dedicated research team, that will work alongside the FA Council, to facilitate the collection of data, especially in an effort to improve diversity and multicultural integration;
3. The FA will lead a fast-track pro-

gramme, for BME youth team players, who do not make the grade as players at Premier League Clubs, to become referees, and to work towards a more diverse match official representation;

4. The Premier League and Football Association need to establish programmes within each club, that will allow for a more diverse backroom and administration structure at each club, and that will pave the way for people of colour to be represented across all boardrooms at senior directorship level.

If the FA fails to attain satisfactory outcomes in these four key areas, then our heir to throne needs to reconsider his position as President of the Football Association, as it will affect his standing as our future monarch.

The battle for equality is something that will never end; all of us from all



Mickey Ambrose

communities need to come together to support each other and our shared values.

All that remains is for me to wish my regular readers a peaceful new year and may 2024 bring you all happiness and good health.

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

West Ham United women aiming high for 2024

PIPER BRADFORD-REYNOLDS

West Ham United women are aiming to make 2024 another year of steady progress as they consolidate their position in the Womens Super League, the highest league in English womens football.

The team were founded in 1991 and played their first friendly in 1992. With consecutive third place finishes in the league, the team was promoted to play in Division One for the 1995/96 season. In the same year they also entered the Women's FA Cup and had their first international player within the squad, England goalkeeper, Claire Lacey.

The 1998/99 season saw the team reach their first final in the Russel Cup and earn promotion into the Greater London League Premier Division, where they made an immediate impact finishing as runners up and claiming the title the year after. Following continuous improvements, the 2008/9 season was the year they lifted their first major trophy, the Essex FA County Cup. The next few seasons saw the Hammers fight relegation, narrowly miss out on promotions and continue their campaigns in various FA Cups.

In 2018, the Hammers were pro-



Image courtesy West Ham United

moted to the WSL where they currently sit 11th in the table, with hopes of finishing in a mid-table position. However, they are in the midst of a run of tough matches as they prepare to face Tottenham on 21 January.

Nevertheless, the team is aiming high for this year and with the January transfer window approaching, manager Rehanne Skinner will be looking to bring in new talent to strengthen their squad.

In future issues, full player profiles will be available for the squad members, starting with Lisa Evans and Mackenzie Arnold. Look out for their profiles in the February issue.

The Hammers play their home matches at the Chigwell Construction Stadium in Dagenham.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.whufc.com/tickets/womens-team-matches

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WE ARE LOOKING FOR PEOPLE IN NEWHAM WHO CAN HELP SUPPORT US TO PRODUCE MORE HIGH-QUALITY LOCAL JOURNALISM IN NEWHAM VOICES

- We have NO shareholders
- We have NO wealthy backers
- We are run by a small but dedicated team as part of a not-for-profit community interest company
- We hold authority to account, expose scandals, highlight inequality, promote good causes, and provide a platform for local people
- Every penny of income from Newham Voices helps us deliver more journalism in Newham
- Currently, we are just about able to cover the paper's costs (design, printing and distribution).
- Our editorial team is entirely voluntary and in future, we would like to create paid jobs for aspiring local journalists.
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OUR CURRENT MEMBERS

Aruthy A, Asesola Fani-Kayode, Hans Beck, Tee Fabukin, Jean Gray, John Gray, Norbert Lieckfeldt, Jane Lofthouse, Susan Masters, Ronan O'Brien, Florian Schmal, Christophe Peters, Irmgard Peters, Victoria Parkinson, Amin Rahman, Richard Stevenson, Richard Stubbs, Patrick White, Lee Woodyear, Maureen Wood, Robbie Judkins, Ann-Marie Ashton, Rosie Whicheloe, Clive Power, Daphne Stedman, Carlton Lubowa, Jared Shurin, Claire Pattie