



# Surprise! We're the top for climate concerns

JEAN GRAY

As political parties wage their campaigns for votes in local government elections on 7 May, new evidence reveals that people in Newham are more concerned about climate change than residents in any other area of London.

And in a borough that has the worst air pollution levels in the country, people back up their words with actions, being more likely than Londoners overall to take smaller environmentally-friendly steps in day-to-day life.

The study, carried out at the University of East London's Sustainability Research Institute (SRI) shows that if you are living in the Borough, you are more likely to be deeply concerned about climate change and keen to play your part in tackling it - but many feel constrained by cost,

availability and limited choices day-to-day.

That is the message from research based on a survey of more than 570 Newham residents and supported by focus groups across the Borough.

The study found that concern about climate change in Newham is significantly higher than the London average, with residents also more likely to say its impacts are already affecting their everyday lives. Nearly three-quarters would support Council-led action on climate change and more than half trust Newham Council to deliver it.

Across food, travel, home energy and consumer choices, residents are already making changes where they can. Many report going meat-free at least once a week, using public transport or active travel for non-work journeys, reducing electricity use at home and repairing, reusing or recycling goods rather than replacing

## Julie's jaunt from barre to bar

See page 16



## PUT YOUR QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES FOR MAYOR

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them. However, the research also highlights a persistent gap between willingness and ability. Cost emerges as a major barrier to greener home energy and heating, while availability and suitability limit options such as food growing, active travel and switching to low-carbon technologies - particularly for renters and those in insecure housing. Preference and habit also play a role, underlining the importance of education, information and visible local alternatives.

Dr Mehri Khosravi, senior research fellow at SRI and one of the report's authors, said the findings challenge the idea that communities like Newham lack interest in climate action.

"What we see very clearly is that concern and motivation are already there," she said. "The challenge is that many of the barriers residents face are structural - linked to affordability, housing and access - and these are not things individuals can fix on their own."

The research points to strong public support for practical, place-based solutions, from better public transport and safer walking and cycling routes to improved recycling services, more sustainable food options and clearer guidance on low-carbon energy choices. Focus group participants also called for deeper engagement with faith groups, community organisations and residents with green skills to

help shape local action.

Dr Khosravi added that the findings underline the importance of a just transition that works for everyone.

Jacob Heitland, Director of Climate Action at Newham Council, said: "The research confirms that our residents have always been at the forefront of climate action in ways that connect directly to their everyday life - from choosing healthier diets to using more active travel options than the London average."

He said the Council will use the findings to boost their efforts through more engagement with the public.

See our political round-up on pages 10-11.



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ABC audited



Publishing date: 27/03/2026

## Council Notebook

By Peter Landman

# Homes crisis: Council is putting its house in order

Newham's housing crisis is continuing to ease as the Council implements plans for recovery with the government housing regulator.

Newham is still working to repair the damage to its reputation after the regulator issued a devastating C4 grading over its poor housing record.

The Cabinet meeting on 17 March was told the Council is signing up to a legally-binding voluntary improvement programme which will, according to Councillor Blossom Young, Cabinet Member for Housing Improvement,

“rebuild trust, restore pride in our Housing Services, and provide high quality homes.”

At the same time council residents and council officers have been meeting to put in place new fire safety measures and there have been estate visits involving residents, housing officers, and ward councillors.

On the challenge of homelessness, the Cabinet agreed to add 41 more Temporary Accommodation units from The Burgoynes Depot and Greenhill Centre in Manor. Originally, the plan

was to develop these sites for shared ownership.

The Cabinet has also agreed to renew the Newham partnership agreement with the North East London Integrated Care Board. This agreement manages a common fund of £211 million and promotes better integration between the Council's health and social care work and the NHS services.

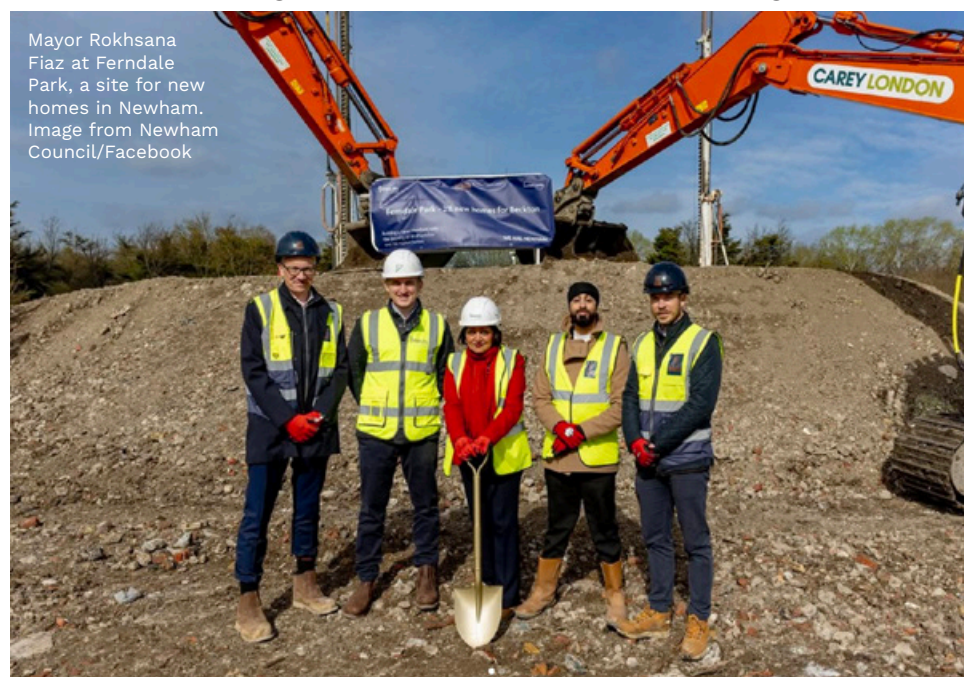
### Five-year Newham Domestic Abuse Strategy

The Council Cabinet has agreed a far ranging and comprehensive strategy to counter the scourge of domestic violence and abuse.

The strategy involves linking up with a wide range of organisations, and covers personal care, support, prevention and training. Specifically, the Council is working on a follow up project with Safe Lives charity, which specialises in support actions to combat domestic abuse.

### More action on community safety

The Council is seeking approval for capital funds of £2 million to modernise CCTV installation, and to contract a company to provide technical support. At the same time the Cabinet has agreed to issue Borough-wide Public Safety Protection Orders against street harassment and misuse of fireworks; and where necessary, misuse of car parks.



## Newham's £521 million budget includes plan to avoid future crises

After a period of uncertainty and fears of bankruptcy Newham's Labour-controlled Council has finally signed off on a £521 million budget for the coming year that includes plans to build up cash reserves to avoid future financial crises.

The Council will create a contingency budget of £10 million, with extra funds from a new business risk reserve, in which £20 million has been allocated.

The turnaround in finances has been boosted by the government's Fair Funding Review which gives more support to councils in poorer areas where the population is increasing. As a result Newham Council has received £44 million which eliminated a projected deficit.

This year the Council will get an



Image: Sarah Agnew/Unsplash

additional £11 million income from an almost five percent increase in Council Tax and a reduction in the number of people who qualify for council tax relief.

There is also a £.5 million cut in

adult social care and health costs and a further £7 million from adjustments in pension investment, waste collection and costs of fees and charges.

Significantly, there will also be a £15 million reduction in the huge cost of temporary accommodation for homeless people and the Council will reap a £55 million windfall from greater efficiency and more use of information technology in council administration.

Not everyone was happy at the Council meeting on 26 February where the new budget was agreed. Newham Independents voiced their opposition and walked out of the meeting after their leader Councillor Mehmood Mirza said they would not support the budget over poor council services and excessive rents.

# Election battles loom as Labour's old guard turns to Reform UK

AIDAN WHITE

Two men who quit Labour after decades in the leadership of the party in Newham announced in March their return to frontline politics – as members of Reform UK.

The former Labour Mayor of Newham Sir Robin Wales, who was deselected in favour of the current Mayor, Rokhsana Fiaz, in 2018, and ex-councillor Clive Furness have joined the Reform leadership in London.

Furness, who was a Newham councillor for more than 20 years, will stand as Reform's candidate for mayor of Newham.

Sir Robin will take on the job of overseeing Reform's work in the capital as the party's London director of



Sir Robin Wales.  
Image: Labour Party

local government.

Taking aim at Labour's Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, he said London

had seen "soaring crime, failing services, and a party that prioritises the wealthy elite over the working class it was built to represent". He said Reform represented a chance to "transform our society".

For his part, Furness said Labour was "completely out of touch with the communities it was meant to represent" and had "abandoned its core principles" and the working class. He cited the "Balkanisation of Britain", with people increasingly voting along religious and racial lines, as one of the reasons he was joining Reform.

Although polls suggest that there will be big changes in the leadership of local government in London following the upcoming elections on 7 May, Newham is one of two councils where

Labour is expected to win a majority of council seats.

In spite of this, in recent by-elections both the Green Party and the Newham Independents Party have made gains.

Candidates declared so far in the race for election as Newham Mayor are:

- Terri Bloore, Conservative and Unionist Party
- Areeq Uddin Chowdhury, Green Party
- Clive Furness, Reform UK
- Forhad Hussain, Labour Party
- Mehmood Mirza, Newham Independents Party
- Laura Willoughby, Liberal Democrats

## Sir Robin finds his tribe at last

Local activist **Simon Shaw** reflects on the former mayor and political adversary who has joined Reform

Sir Robin Wales, the former Labour Mayor of Newham who was deposed by Rokhsana Fiaz, always presented as a man destined for greater things. Yet for all his ambition, he never made it beyond being a big fish in a very small pond.

After a period of absence from the political limelight, Sir Robin has resurfaced, making headlines by quitting Labour and joining Reform UK.

During his tenure as Mayor of Newham from 2002 to 2018, the satirical magazine *Private Eye* memorably dubbed him "Sir Robin Wal-Mart" in its Rotten Boroughs column — a feature dedicated to local government controversy. Newham supplied ample material.

His memorable controversies – attempts to sell off Queen's Market to make way for a supermarket, and his prolonged and bitter dispute with the Focus E15 campaign, which aimed to secure housing for single mothers – set the tone of his administration.

In February 2015, Wales was found guilty of breaching the Council's Members' Code of Conduct. Kevin Blow, who brought the original complaint, captured the prevailing atmosphere:

"One of London's most powerful and imperious Labour politicians has received his first slap on the wrist in recent memory. For years, Wales has cultivated the idea that he is completely unassailable — someone whose displeasure people should fear."

It was footage of Wales's unrestrained fury towards the Focus E15



Image: Focus E15

His memorable controversies – attempts to sell off Queen's Market and his prolonged and bitter dispute with the Focus E15 campaign, which aimed to secure housing for single mothers – set the tone of his administration

campaign — which ultimately led to that finding.

Sir Robin and I crossed swords more than once. The current Mayor greets me with a friendly hug. Under Wales, encounters carried a different energy altogether. There were moments when he and his cadre of right-wing Labour machine politicians seethed at any criticism.

When the 'Save the Atherton' campaign uncovered cabinet papers warning that a proposed new leisure centre might be unaffordable — and that this could cause reputational damage to the Council — it clearly struck a nerve. Our record-breaking petition demanding a debate and formal submission to

Council was simply rejected, without explanation or engagement.

Wales never managed to break into national politics, even during Labour's more aggressively macho Alastair Campbell era, but his arrogance and relentless courting of controversy may have been too much even for hardened Labour bruisers like John Prescott to stomach.

So welcome back, Sir Robin. Many of us who once took pride in opposing you are watching with interest. If the populist far right is to be your last hurrah, it will at least bring your career to a fitting conclusion. You have at last found your tribe. Many always suspected, now we know.

## Fight or flight? Airport consultation

London City Airport is asking Newham residents for their views on plans to introduce an additional landing approach which it claims will lead to long term benefits such as fewer flights and less noise exposure for some residents.

The change would allow aircraft with greater capacity to use the airport. "By enabling quieter and more efficient aircraft to operate at London City Airport, we can deliver the benefits of growth while lessening the impact on those who live nearby," a spokesperson claimed. It would also create 4,000 new jobs.

The public consultation is open until 17 May. For full details on how to get involved go to [www.londoncityairport.com/ACP](http://www.londoncityairport.com/ACP)



Image: Henry Ren/Unsplash

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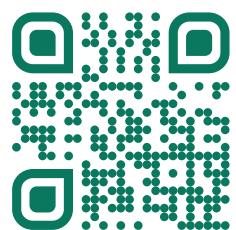
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# Taking pride in Newham: A beacon of diversity for Britain

A year-long independent investigation has confirmed that diversity is a source of strength for the people of Newham and contributes to civic pride.

The Independent Commission on Inclusion and Belonging in Multi-Ethnic Newham consulted with residents, community groups, institutions and businesses, to understand how they feel about inclusion in one of the most diverse places in the UK.

But although the report confirms that most people in Newham see its diversity as part of everyday life, with new people regularly moving in and out of the Borough, the report finds challenges too.

Sunder Katwala, Director of British Future, who chaired the Commission, urged Newham to provide leadership on the national discussion of diversity. Newham could become a beacon of good practice on inclusion and belonging.

“As London’s most diverse borough,” he said, “Newham should lead the way on inclusion – bringing new arrivals and long-standing residents together to build a shared pride and stronger community.”

More work is needed, the report says, to identify how people from different backgrounds in the Borough can come together to connect.

It recommends the development

**The Olympic Park: time for a community festival?**



Image: Tom Wheatley/Unsplash

of a calendar of community events, including a Newham-wide annual community festival in the East Bank or Olympic Park, funded by local businesses and institutions – taking

the place of the much-loved ‘Newham under the stars’ event.

And in a nod to the dangers of political divisions, the report says vigilance is required to monitor how wider

events – such as political debates to international conflicts – can stir up tension in such a multi-ethnic area.

A new ‘Newham Changemaker Network’, led by local foundations, is also recommended to train and support emerging leaders to champion inclusion and the Commission iden-

**Inclusion does not happen by accident. It requires active effort**

tifies a central role for the Council to join up key institutions in the area around a shared action plan. It urges the Council to protect the Borough’s free, accessible and neutral community spaces, in particular its libraries, youth clubs and community centres.

Mayor of Newham Rokhsana Fiaz, said: “This independent report sends a powerful message: in Newham, diversity is not a problem to be solved, it is a strength to be celebrated.

“The report is clear that inclusion does not happen by accident. It requires active effort, honest reflection and a commitment to tackling barriers wherever they exist.”

Newham Council will now review the report and set out next steps in response to the recommendations.

## Glittering prize for West End star Darcy

What a year it has been for ten-year-old Newham actor Darcy Tosun. Not only has he made his debut on the London stage, but he has now won a prestigious award for his portrayal of Young Thomas in *The Land of the Living* at the National Theatre, alongside actor Juliet Stevenson.

Darcy collected his WhatsOnStage award for Best Child Performance during a glittering ceremony at the London Palladium on 8 March.

Darcy also appeared on the ITV 6 o’clock News on 6 March, where he spoke about his nomination and the personal challenges his family faced during the production, as his mum had been diagnosed with breast cancer.

His father Serhat said: “As a family, we are extremely proud of Darcy. He is a Newham boy and it



means a great deal to celebrate this success with the community that has supported him along the way.”



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# Dance and sport focus for people with Parkinson's

NEANDRA ETIENNE

Newham Voices was invited to the English National Ballet's Dance for Parkinson's group open day during *Let's Dance* day 2026 at the Mulryan Centre for Dance in Canning Town.

Dame Arlene Phillips attended the event, which was for people living with Parkinson's and their families. She said: "For me, the most beautiful experience is watching someone who maybe has tremors but as they listen to the music and begin the dance with a gentle reaching out I see how steady they have become."

The step-by-step film and resource pack is for all *Dance for Parkinson's* groups across the UK.

Meanwhile, throughout February and March West Ham United marked the *Level Playing Field's Unite for Access* campaign, an annual celebration of



Dance for Parkinson event  
image ©Roswitha Chesher

good access and inclusion at sports venues, by acknowledging members of the club's Disabled Supporters Association (DSA).

DSA represents a cross section of disabilities. They volunteer to work with the club to further improve match day experiences, to make the London Stadium and Victoria Road fully accessible.

DSA member Nick Pace was diagnosed with Parkinson's when he was 47.

He told the club: "Exercise is the only thing that's known to stop Parkinson's, so I've been playing for a walking football team for five years."

Nick will be attending West Ham United Foundation's walking football, tai chi and meditation activities free event at the Parkinson's Activities Day at New City College Redbridge on 8 April from 9.30am - 4pm, to coincide with World Parkinson's day on the 11 April.

[whudsa.com](http://whudsa.com)

## Health awareness days for April

SHEILA NURSIMHULU

April brings together a number of national and global health awareness campaigns, offering a valuable opportunity for Newham people to talk about their health, access to services, and community wellbeing.

These awareness days play a critical role in improving our health by encouraging early engagement with screening, and reducing stigma around mental health, long-term conditions and diversity. It's all about fitness and wellbeing.

The issues for this month are:

- Stress Awareness alerting us to the importance of wellbeing and the growing impact of chronic stress on mental and physical health.
- Bowel Cancer Awareness: why early detection and screening are critical
- Testicular Cancer Awareness: younger men need to know that early diagnosis is a lifesaver.
- World Autism Awareness Day on 2 April promotes support for autistic people and their families.
- World Health Day on 7 April led by the World Health Organisation,

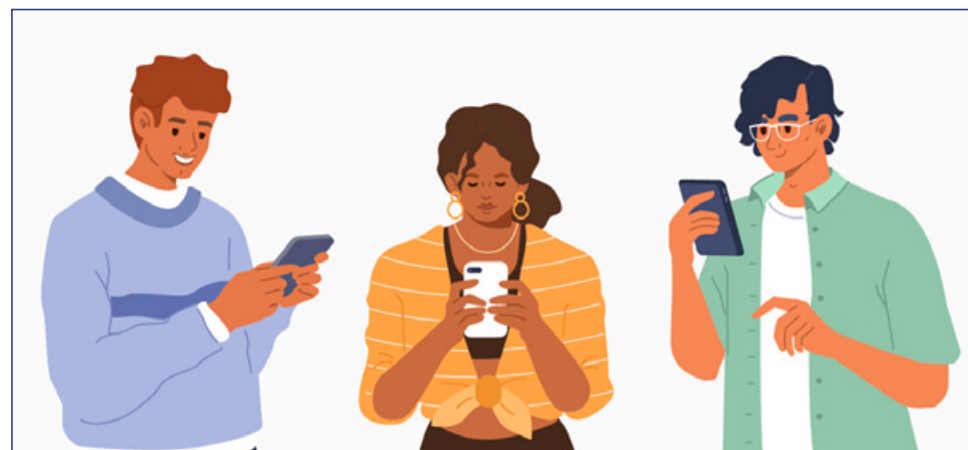


Bruno Nascimento/Unsplash

draws attention to global health priorities.

- World Parkinson's Day on 11 April puts a focus on a condition that affects over 145,000 people in the UK.
- World Malaria Day on 25 April highlights the need for prevention and treatment.
- World Day for Safety and Health at Work on 28 April focuses on occupational health.
- Lesbian Visibility Week from 20 to 26 April emphasises inclusive healthcare and representation.

For access to health and wellbeing services in the Borough, visit: [newham.gov.uk/health-adult-social-care/health-wellbeing-newham/1](http://newham.gov.uk/health-adult-social-care/health-wellbeing-newham/1)



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**Jefta van Dintther**

REMACHINE



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# OUT AND ABOUT IN NEWHAM

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

## ART

**Tower Gallery** artist call out for their new exhibition *Liminality* closes on 28 April.

For the submission brief and form, email [towergallerye13@gmail.com](mailto:towergallerye13@gmail.com)

**Hopeful Futures Art Group's** *Colour Spectrum of Voices* exhibition will be on display in Stratford library from 1-29 April to coincide with World Autism Acceptance month.

The diverse artwork is created by autistic adults and adults with learning disabilities in Newham.

[hopefulfutures.net](http://hopefulfutures.net)

## POETRY

**Newham Poetry Group** is running poetry sessions at Forest Gate Library on Thursdays, 6:15pm - 7:45pm from 19 February to 16 April.

Please note that poetry sessions are open exclusively to registered members.

If you haven't attended before, please register in advance by emailing [newham-poetrygroup@gmail.com](mailto:newham-poetrygroup@gmail.com)

## THEATRE

**Stratford East's** upcoming production of *Choir Boy*, by Tarell Alvin McCraney and directed by Bristol Old Vic artistic director Nancy Medina, follows the journey of a gospel choir at an elite all boys' school, as they nav-



Choir Boy cast  
©Mark Senior

igate spirituality, sexuality, race, identity, and brotherhood in their journey to becoming men.

Local actor Terique Jarrett, who plays Pharus, described his character as: "A young talented queer boy trying to figure out how to grow up into a man in the outside world." He added that he would be bringing "humanity as opposed to stereotypes" to the character.

Terique also told *Newham Voices* that he is excited for the audience to experience "the soulful singing and humour".

Terique won the Black British Theatre Award for Best Male Actor in a Play for his performance in *Choir Boy* at Bristol Old Vic.

*Choir Boy* runs from 26 March - 25 April.

Stratford East's recent pantomime *Mama Goose* has been nominated for Best Script and Best Pantomime in this year's The Pantomime Awards.

The ceremony takes place on 19 April in High Wycombe.

[stratfordeast.com](http://stratfordeast.com)

## BOOKS

**Lucy Apps** launched her book *Gloria Don't Speak* at the Newham Bookshop on 24 February.

The book is about Gloria, a 19-year-old woman with learning disabilities who is dealing with vulnerability, violence and the desire for connection.

Lucy, who was named the best debut novelist 2026 by the *Observer*, told *Newham Voices*: "I am pleased to have published a book that centres the experience of a woman with learning disability. More than anything I'm hoping it will be an entertaining and moving read, but I also hope it will increase awareness and understanding."

Lucy explains why her book is set in Newham: "I have lived here most of my life. I wanted to write a book which centered Gloria's point of view, and she is a person who notices lots of small sensory details, so I wanted to set the book in an environment I knew well, so those details were easily available for me when writing. I also love Newham, for all its



Lucy Apps ©Neandra Etienne

## MUSIC

iron maiden silver printed coin on record landscape dark The Royal Mint



**Royal Mint** released a coin to celebrate Iron Maiden's 50th anniversary. The coin design, which was created by Iron Maiden artist Albert 'Akirant' Quirantes, features the band's iconic mascot Eddie and hidden references to the band's career, albums and world tours.

Iron Maiden performed at

a sold out gig at the London Stadium in June 2025 and has been nominated to be inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame. The inductees will be revealed in April 2026.

The Cart & Horses in Maryland is recognised as the birthplace of Iron Maiden.

[cartandhorses.london](http://cartandhorses.london)

flaws, and wanted to capture its essence."

Lucy is one of the *Observer* best Debut Novelists of 2026. *Gloria Don't Speak* has been longlisted for the 2026 Women's Prize for Fiction. The shortlist will be announced in April.

**Michael Rosen's** 80th birthday book signing takes place on 11 April from 11am - 1pm at Newham Bookshop

There is a free goodie bag for the first 25 customers.

[newhambooks.co.uk](http://newhambooks.co.uk)

## FAITH

Local award winning rapper, broadcaster and author **Guvna B's** Faith Journey was featured in an episode of *Songs of Praise*. The episode is available to watch on BBC iPlayer.

@guvnab

## EXHIBITION

London-based artist **Thomas J Price's** new sculpture, *A Place Beyond*, was installed outside V&A East Museum on 12 March, ahead of the museum's public opening.

V&A East Museum includes two permanent "Why We Make"

galleries offering a new, topical look at the V&A's global collections, "New Work" creative commissions and live events, *The Music is Black: A British Story exhibition*, which opens 18 April, and a café by Jikoni.

V&A East Museum opens to the public on 18 April.

V&A's new book *The Making of V&A East* is edited by Tim Reeve and Gus Casely-Hayford with Brendan Cormier.

[vam.ac.uk](http://vam.ac.uk)

## FASHION

*Newham Voices* was invited to attend the official on schedule **London Fashion Week (LFW)** shows for Grxy Scale and Krishna Sabbarwal who showcased their designs on the runway for the Newham based fashion charity Carmel Rock.

*Newham Voices* was also in attendance for the LFW London College of Fashion (LCF) MA Fashion Design Technology student's catwalk show. LCF is based in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park Stratford.

All events are subject to change. Please email your event details and news to [neandra.etienne@newhamvoices.co.uk](mailto:neandra.etienne@newhamvoices.co.uk)



Thomas J Price unveiling 'A Place Beyond', outside of London's V&A East Museum. David Parry/PA Media Assignments for the V&A.

# How we can restore the public's trust in politics

**Simon Shaw** continues his series of interviews with leading local politicians

Canning Town and Beckton MP James Asser and I meet at the floating Good Hotel in the Royal Docks where my bike (entirely innocent) has been locked in a prison cell.

Interestingly, the whole building used to be a prison before it was shipped from its former home in the Netherlands. This for James, and me, is what makes the area so interesting.

We begin by talking about the area he has represented as an MP since July 2024 – previously he served as a councillor for Beckton from 2018.

“There’s a huge community spirit here,” he says. “You know, people talk about this East End thing of community as if it’s a past thing. I don’t think it is. I think it still exists.”

He is on a mission to big up the history of the area. “If you’re building stuff, you’ve got to reach back into what was there before,” he says. “We’ve got the new museum coming to Canning Town, it’s a really fascinating chance to celebrate the Borough.

“We’ve also got a new park coming, which I’ve nagged the developers about, and it’s called Marmalade Park, as that is where the marmalade factory was once. I think it’s a perfect name.”

We move onto more pressing issues such as the low turnout at the last general election in James’s constituency – 46.2 percent, well below the national average of just under 60 percent.

He admits this is hugely worrying. “Democracy is a participation sport.



If people aren’t getting involved, there’s a real question about why. It’s a question for all of us, across all parties, about how we engage people and encourage them to turn out”.

He blames Boris Johnson for creating a culture of lying in British politics. “It’s a privilege to represent people. People are giving you a trust, and you should treat that with respect.” He says it’s time to “give people a sense that there is some decency in politics”.

He admits Labour in power faces challenges. “We’re not even two years into a five-year term yet, so there is more than enough time to actually listen and

reshape what we’re doing,” he says. “But I think people don’t feel listened to. We have to prove we can deliver. We’ve clearly not done that yet.”

We move onto local issues, the closure of the East London Gymnastics, Richard House Hospice, City Farm, Libraries, Gateway Retail Park and Calverton School.

James admits that all council budgets are under stress, but there will be no library cuts. He says that financial pressure has been lifted thanks to extra government funding.

The loss of the Richard House Hospice was, he says, “a huge blow to

the local community, and particularly to the families. Some work has been done with other hospices, but there’s a lot of work going on now to see about whether we can get that resurrected or serviced again’.

The City Farm he says was in a state of dilapidation, when it closed but he’s hopeful. “Let’s get something out of the ashes of what’s happened here and look at all the parks, look at all the facilities.”

Regarding the retail park he says the business model failed, but talks are continuing and on the East London Gymnastics Centre he says it was another huge loss “but I would like to see, longer term, if we can provide new sports facilities”.

As for Calverton School and falling rolls in the Borough, he says this is a challenge as the population is shifting, “but we are building lots of new stuff”. In all of this there is a sense of loss, so the question is how to move on.

James relies heavily on his optimism in pessimistic times to address the question. He knows that there is much to do, to win back support, and to replace what has gone. He doesn’t place himself in any ideological corner, preferring his own sense of political values to show him the way.

“When I was on the Council, I used to tell people I was a municipal socialist,” he says. “That’s probably where I really am. You can get into all sorts of labels. But for me it’s all about what we need to deliver for people – better lives, better opportunities, better education and, of course, equalities. For me equality is at the heart of it. That’s what got me into politics”.

## Greens commit to ban pension investment in Israeli arms economy

Areeq Chowdhury, Councillor for Canning Town North and Green Party candidate for Mayor of Newham has announced that he will fully divest Newham Council from companies complicit in the Gaza genocide, if elected in May.

Newham Council claims to not have direct investments in Israeli arms companies but has continued to block freedom of information requests from Newham’s Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (PSC) outlining

Newham’s pension investments, the Green Party claims.

If elected as Mayor in May, Chowdhury would ensure no council money is spent in companies affiliated with Israel, across all investments.

The Green Party says its proposal immediately commits to divestment, going further than Labour’s current approach of cyclical review processes which has delayed divestment requests from the PSC and Green Councillors.

Chowdhury (pictured centre right)



announced the policy at the Green Party’s first ever community iftar, held at the Beckton Community Centre. A food drive held as part of the iftar, raised the equivalent of nearly 700 portions of food and ingredients for the food bank at the Your Place homeless shelter in Canning Town.

In his speech at the iftar, Chowdhury said: “The people of Newham stand with the people of Palestine, and the Green Party will make sure that view is represented in our Council.”

## MAYORAL ELECTION: SPECIAL FEATURE

# Labour's new man promises politics with a difference

AIDAN WHITE

Although he won't admit it, Forhad Hussain is the man to beat in the race to be Newham's next elected Mayor.

He has the guile of a seasoned politician who doesn't count chickens, but there's also an air of charm and confidence about him when we meet at the coffee shop next to East Ham Town hall.

Newham Labour's choice to be the party's third Mayor since the introduction of elected mayors in 2002, has promises to make – a new leadership style, more local democracy, more openness and transparency, better partnerships to solve crushing problems of housing and poverty, and above all, change through collaboration with the people of Newham.

"We are going to do things differently," he says. "We must stop doing things to people. Instead, we will put Newham residents first by focusing on issues that matter to them and let them shape their local communities."

He plans to put Newham's eight community neighbourhoods at the



forefront of decision-making. "Under my leadership we will have community led initiatives," he said. People will have a meaningful voice with ballots over controversial topics like Low Traffic Neighbourhoods.

He was a councillor and Cabinet member from 2010 to 2018 in the administration of Sir Robin Wales. "We achieved a lot in terms of delivering for the community," he said. "We had community neighbourhoods and I want to get back to that model of empowering residents."

Some policies worked spectacularly. "For example, we successfully invested in schools. We now have the best schools in the country," he said. "That

hasn't happened by accident. Up until 2018 we had a Labour administration that was delivering."

He ducks a question on the legacy of the Olympics, but he says the community spirit generated in 2012 can be used again, this time to bring fresh regeneration and to breathe new life into neglected parts of the Borough.

"My leadership style will be very different from my predecessors," he says, marking a break with both the current Mayor Rokshana Fiaz and Robin Wales. "My approach is about collaboration, delegation and bringing people together," he said.

Whether it's the challenge of building new council homes in the teeth of a paralysing housing crisis, or confronting the scourge of poverty and deprivation he believes new partnerships will provide answers.

Hussain, a family man in Newham, grew up and was educated in the Borough before a degree course in aeronautics at Imperial College. He is proud of his grassroots credentials. His experience as a councillor and spells in the NHS, and as a teacher is a pre-

cious asset. He says "I understand the impact of decisions made in the Council because I've lived it."

But there's work to be done. "We have work to do to stabilise the public finance, but the key thing is to make sure we deliver what we promise."

He sees public safety, cleansing, parking as important local challenges and he welcomes the prospect of an extra £217 million in Labour government support for Newham over the next three years. "This will protect our front line services," he says.

He also hopes to put fun back into Newham life with a return to big events in the Borough – sporting activities, music festivals, and community firework nights. As a passionate sportsman – he is a member of the England Wales Cricket Board Trust – he is aiming for an all-round celebration of community.

But as the election looms he has a warning: "We need to make sure that we don't go down the path of Reform." Instead, Newham needs a new vision that will embrace values of community, family, love, and connectedness. Values that help us find common ground."

## Plea for next Mayor to focus on cycling

JONATHAN ROTHWELL

Co-ordinator of Newham Cyclists

Newham's branch of the London Cycling Campaign has a simple request of all candidates for Mayor in the May elections – build a safe, connected cycle network in Newham.

The biggest barrier that stops people cycling is safety, which is a valid concern after three cyclists have been killed in Newham in the past 15 months. But Transport for London (TfL) research shows that there is a huge, unmet demand for cycleways on four key corridors in Newham.

More and more people are turning to



Image: Jonathan Rothwell

cycling to get around, so the next Mayor will need to move faster to make cycling safe everywhere and fun for everyone.

The four high-priority routes that criss-cross Newham are from Stratford to Ilford, Leyton to Silvertown, Canning Town to Barking, and Manor Park to the Woolwich Ferry.

Building safe cycle routes on this grid would form the core of a safe, connected cycle network, giving thousands of people a cheap, fast way to access work, education, shopping, and other opportunities.

Less than half of Newham's households have access to a car, and many car owners want to drive less, not more. Building a safe, connected cycle network with funding provided by TfL would give thousands of residents an alternative to the car for local journeys – with reliable journey times, fresh air, and no stress over fuel prices.

Newham residents can show support by emailing local party leaders via [lcc.org.uk/campaigns/streets-for-cycling/](http://lcc.org.uk/campaigns/streets-for-cycling/)

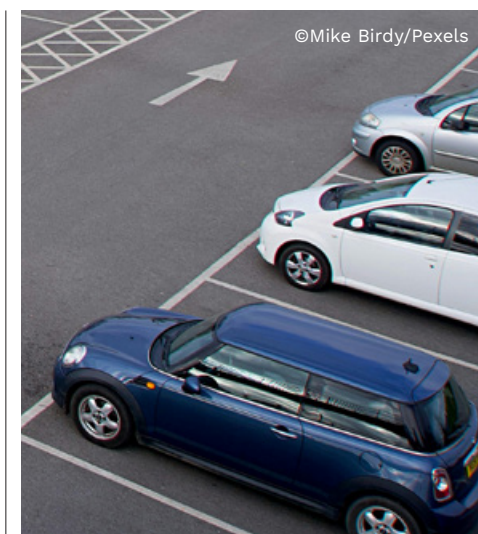
## Election pledges to spend millions on free parking 'blatantly unfair'

The London branch of the countryside campaign group the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) has warned Newham voters over election promises to provide free resident parking permits by both Newham Independents and the Labour Party.

The CPRE says this would cost the Council £5 million in lost revenues, at a time when London councils are struggling with unprecedented levels of underfunding.

"Over half of Newham households have no motor vehicle access but will foot the bill regardless of cuts to other services", a spokesperson claimed.

The groups says it is a regressive move which evidence shows is very likely to increase car use, resulting in increased emissions, pollution and road danger, in a borough which has already recorded the worst air quality in the country.



©Mike Birdy/Pexels

"We urge Newham's next Council leader, whoever they are, to continue finding ways to reduce car ownership and use, for the health of all residents in a borough where the majority of residents don't own or use a car."

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## Next edition print deadlines

***Newham Voices* issue #65 May**

**Print date:** 23rd April

**Publication date:** 24th April

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**Call** 07728 520 116



# Making Friends: Call for children to take part in film

Film makers are looking for children in Newham to take part in a documentary about childhood friendships. Five Mile Films is casting children aged five to eight who find it hard to make friends, for its series *Will You Be My Friend?*

Executive Producer Adam Chapman says it is “a heart-warming look at childhood friendship. It follows children who may feel left out, overwhelmed in social situations, or unsure how to connect with other kids their age.”

The film puts a focus on childhood connections and shows across three half-days, a team of leading child psychologists helping each child build the confidence and social skills to form real friendships. Each child is then sensitively matched on a playdate with a potential new friend from their local area.

He added that friendship difficulties, loneliness, and the effects of modern childhood – from screens to the lingering social impact of Covid – are topics many Newham parents worry about.

There is an application form at <https://bemyfriend.tv> and a there is



Antonius Ferret/Pexels

a short video call-out which can be shared on digital platforms available at [vimeo.com/1172616866/c62d7c88e6?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci](https://vimeo.com/1172616866/c62d7c88e6?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci)

# Passport to fun with cheap tickets for youngsters

Thousands of young people in Newham will get access to cheap or free tickets to cultural events as part of a council-run programme. Newham Council says its “cultural passport” will help remove financial barriers stopping young people enjoying culture. For the full story visit our website at: [newhamvoices.co.uk/2026/03/18/young-people-in-newham-to-benefit-from-cheap-tickets-for-local-culture-events/](https://newhamvoices.co.uk/2026/03/18/young-people-in-newham-to-benefit-from-cheap-tickets-for-local-culture-events/)



The Last Days of Pompeii exhibition. ©Newham Council

# Shared play is the key to connecting families, says report

In an era where families increasingly share the same physical space but are often disconnected by busy lives, competing demands and individuals staying in their own space, researchers are turning their attention to everyday moments of interaction to better understand how families connect.



Image: Karola G/Pexels

In a pilot study supported by Kinder at the University of East London’s Institute for the Science of Early Years, parents consistently described shared play as a positive and meaningful experience. Many parents reported feeling closer to their children, more emotionally in sync, and more engaged during everyday interactions when they took part in shared play.

During shared play, parents and young children were observed to move physically closer, show greater emotional alignment, and communicate in more responsive and connected ways.

The research forms part of the Kinder Play Study, led by Professor Sam Wass, Director of UEL’s Institute for the Science of Early Years, and co-led by Muhammad Ehatisham Ul Haq, Technical Director at the Institute. The study explores whether and how shared play may be linked to communication, emotional connection, and closeness within families. Stage two of the research is now underway.

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Discover.org.uk





LOCAL NOTICES

Published 27th March 2026



# Newham Council, Members Allowance Scheme 2026/2027

As part of the legislation that sets out the arrangements for the payment of member allowances, details of the scheme for each year, should be published within the local authority's area. At the Council Meeting on the 26 February 2026 the Council approved the Member Allowance Scheme for 2026/2027 having had due regard to the London Council's Independent Remuneration Panel report (available as an appendix to the full council report). The following details the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) Scheme, with full details of the Members Allowance Scheme available on the council's website.

**Basic allowance** - All Councillors are entitled to a basic allowance to cover all travel on council business within the borough, subsistence costs and incidental

costs such as the use of their home including telephone rental costs. The approved basic allowance for 2026/2027 is £15,960 and may increase on the 1st April 2026 retrospectively by the Local Government Pay Award applicable for 2026/2027 when confirmed and will be the allowance until the 31st March 2027.

**Special Responsibility Allowances** – Councillors who hold certain positions, such as a portfolio within the executive or being the Chair of a Committee are paid a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) to cover their expenses in carrying out their extra duties. The SRA applicable for 2026/2027 are detailed below. Councillors are paid the SRA in addition to their basic allowance. If a councillor holds more than one position, they are only paid the higher SRA. The Mayor does not receive the basic allowance.

Band	Newham based roles in band	Payment (£) for 2026/2027 as below + %LGP Award increase for 2026/2027 (when known).
5	Directly Elected Mayor	£93,575
3	Cabinet Member (2 to 9); Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Chair of Health & Well-Being Board	£37,255 (+supplement of £5,652 for Statutory Deputy Mayor) (Excluding Basic Allowance)
2	Deputy Cabinet Member, Commissioner, Chairs of major regulatory committees (Strategic Development & Licencing) / Committee Scrutiny Lead Member / Chair of Scrutiny Sub-Committee / Chief Whip of Majority Group/ Other Committee Chairs (Local Development, Pensions Committee, / Chair of Council / Leader of Principal Opposition Group	£15,523 Excluding Basic Allowance)
1	Vice Chair of Council / Majority Party Group Secretary / Assistant Whip of Majority Group / Chief Whip of Principal Opposition/ Leader of Second Opposition Group / Members of the Licencing (Act) 2003 committee which meets with exceptional frequency or for exceptionally long periods	£3,105 (Excluding Basic Allowance)

**Co-opted Members & Further Information**

Some committees are required to have non councillors among their members known as co-opted members. These co-opted members are entitled to an allowance to cover out-of-pocket expenses. For 2026/2027 the allowance is £598 for Committee Members and £1,435 for Chairs of Committee and may increase on the 1st April 2026 by the Local Government Pay Award applicable for 2026/2027 when confirmed, until 31st March 2027. Full details of additional allowances for childcare / dependents, travelling allowances and subsistence allowances are available on the council's website ([www.newham.gov.uk](http://www.newham.gov.uk)).

Copies of the Members Allowance Scheme and payments made under the scheme are available upon request from [DemocraticServices@newham.gov.uk](mailto:DemocraticServices@newham.gov.uk)

**LICENSING ACT 2003**  
Application for a New Premises Licence

I Josephine Dodoo have applied to NEWHAM COUNCIL for a premises licence for **No 8 Silley Weir Promenade, Royal Albert Wharf E16 2AJ London** so that the following licensable activities may be provided on the following days and hours:

- Sale of Alcohol**
  - Sunday - Thursday 11:00 -23:00
  - Friday - Saturday 11:00-01:00
- Provision of Regulated Entertainment**
  - Sunday - Thursday 11:00 -23:00
  - Friday -Saturday: 11:00-01:00
- Provision of Late-Night Refreshment**
  - Friday -Saturday: 11:00-01:00

Newham Council's Licensing Register is kept at the office of the Licensing Team, Town Hall, 328 Barking Road, East Ham, E6 2RT (open from 10.00am to 4.00pm 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 **09/04/26**.

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 a person to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with the application.

**LICENSING ACT 2003**  
Application for a New Premises Licence

We Boulderling Stratford LTD have applied to NEWHAM COUNCIL for a premises licence for **City Boulderling Stratford LTD, 234 High Street, Stratford, E15 2JA** so that the following licensable activities may be provided on the following days and hours:

- Sale of Alcohol**
  - Monday to Friday: 12:00-22:00pm
  - Saturday and Sunday: 12:00- 20:30

Newham Council's Licensing Register is kept at the office of the Licensing Team, Town Hall, 328 Barking Road, East Ham, E6 2RT (open from 10.00am to 4.00pm 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 **17/04/2026**.

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 a person to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with the application.

**LICENSING ACT 2003**  
Application for a New Premises Licence

We Radiate Festival Limited have applied to NEWHAM COUNCIL for a premises licence for **Beckton District Park South, Stansfeld Rd, London, E6 5LT** so that the following licensable activities may be provided on the following days and hours:

- The retail sale of alcohol**
  - Monday - Sunday 09:00 - 22:30
- The provision of regulated entertainment to include plays, films, indoor sporting events, boxing or wrestling, live/recorded music, performance of dance and activities like music and dance (of a similar nature)**
  - Monday - Sunday 09:00-23:00
- Opening hours**
  - Monday - Sunday 09:00-23:00

Newham Council's Licensing Register is kept at the office of the Licensing Team, Town Hall, 328 Barking Road, East Ham, E6 2RT (open from 10.00am to 4.00pm 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 **9th April 2026**.

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 a person to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with the application.

**LICENSING ACT 2003**  
Application for a Variation of the Premises Licence

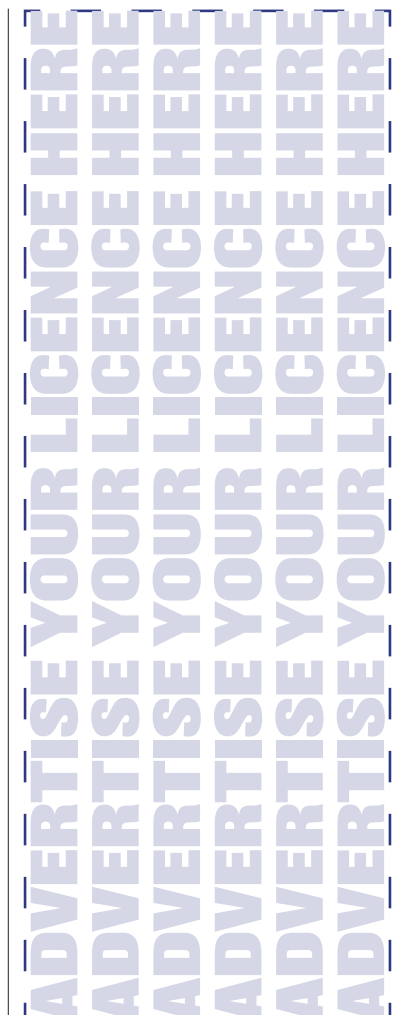
Notice under Section 34 of the Licensing Act 2003. Notice is hereby given that Mr Mahendran Sivapragasam has applied to the London Borough of Newham Council for a variation of the premises licence for **NKS Food & Wine, 118 Keppel Road, East Ham, London E6 2BG** to:

- Extend the hours for the sale of alcohol for consumption off the premises to be from 08.00 to 00.00 daily all week.
- To remove the embedded restrictions listed at page 1 of the premises licence.
- To add new conditions (see application form).
- Change the trading name.

The address of the Licensing Authority where the register is kept and the application may be inspected during normal business hours is the Licensing Team, East Ham Town Hall, Barking Road, London E6 2RP, or on the Council's website [www.newham.gov.uk](http://www.newham.gov.uk) Email: [licensing@newham.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@newham.gov.uk)

Any representations by any other person or responsible authority must be received in writing by the Licensing Authority by **20th April 2026** stating the nature and grounds for making such representation.

It is an offence under Section 158 of the Licensing Act 2003 to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with an application. The maximum fine on summary conviction for this offence is an unlimited fine.



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## COMMUNITY NEWS ROUNDUP

By Neandra Etienne



### New homes tribute to Neil Wilson

Newham Council named their new housing scheme in Plaistow South ward after the late Councillor Neil Wilson.

The New City Road development scheme, which is part of their 'Affordable Homes for Newham' housing delivery programme, will deliver 28 new homes at 100 percent social rent and includes three adapted homes for people with disabilities.

Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz, who was joined by Neil's Brother Colin Wilson at the unveiling, said: "Neil was a champion for his community, and there is no better way to honour his legacy than by providing high-quality, permanent homes for Newham families."

### Rapper on mental health

Newham rapper and broadcaster Guvna B was part of a panel discussion on mental health and male suicide during the special episode of Radio 1's

*Life Hacks* with the Prince of Wales. The episode is available on BBC Sounds, BBC iPlayer and YouTube

@guvnab

### Celebration of Ramadan hosted by West Ham

West Ham United hosted a Community Iftar at The Foundry in Beckton during the month of Ramadan.

The gathering welcomed participants from grassroots football programmes, club and West Ham United Foundation staff, members of the club's Inclusive Irons supporters' group, and women's team player Inès Belloumou.

Inès Belloumou said: "Ramadan means a lot to me, and this is my first one in London. I came today with my mum to share this Iftar with Muslim and non-Muslim peo-



ple. The club has been very supportive and has been helping me during Ramadan. My teammates too have been great."

whufc.com

### Neandra back on the air!

New CommuniTEA Chat Arts and Culture/Sports show, hosted by *Newham Voices* Chief Reporter/Arts and Culture Editor Neandra Etienne, is scheduled to return on Revive FM 94.0 community radio station in April.

revivemf.co.uk

### St Bon's young "MPs" tribute to Sir David

St Bonaventure's Catholic School launched the Sir David Amess Children's Parliament UK National Mace Tour at St Bonaventure's on 13 March.

On the day there was a formal swearing-in of seven newly elected "Child MPs" from partner primary schools. These young representatives will participate in a historic debate to be held in the House of Commons Chamber in October 2026.

Students and staff also joined

together to honour Sir David Amess' memory and learn more about the Children's Parliament initiative.

Sir David Amess first discovered his passion for politics at the school, where he founded a 'Revolutionary Party' aged eleven to 'abolish homework.'

Following his passing, St Bonaventure worked with Parliament to install a dedicated plaque in the main chamber in his memory.

stbons.org

### Lucy statue plan for Forest Lane Park

The centrepiece of the Restoration Project for Forest Lane Park agreed by Newham Council will be the creation of a new statue dedicated to community activist Lucel Tate, who worked at the maternity hospital located in the park, in the 1970s. Lucel Tate House is located near Forest Lane Park on Idminton Road E15. The new project, which has received Lottery Heritage funding, will improve the park's biodiversity and usage.

newhamco-create.co.uk

# Marian, making a world of difference

CHRIS EK

What do the Dalai Lama, the King's MBE award, Sean Connery, Steven Spielberg, Harrison Ford, George Michael, young people in Newham from refugee and migrant backgrounds – and I – have in common?

The answer is Marian Spiers. A vibrant Scottish woman who has grabbed life by the lapels.

She is Director of independent Newham charity, Dost Centre for Young Refugees and Migrants, and is responsible for funding and running a youth programme and activities supporting young people, most of them unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from over 60 countries who came to this country alone.

Marian, born in 1967 in Scotland, gained her Diploma in Youth and Community Work

and travelled over ten years to more than 65 countries. In Spain, dressed in Scottish tartan for the 1982 World Cup, she was invited to dinner by Sean Connery and his wife.



Marian image by Dost young person

Marian spent a month in the Sahara, worked with street kids in South America, sold sandwiches to posh banks in Hong Kong, and crewed a small sailboat to Israel, where she worked on a Moshav tomato farm.

She taught English in several countries including Jordan, in

1991, where she taught young Palestinians Scottish dances – then performed for the UN. Marian went on to teach and travel from Czechoslovakia to India, where she lived with orphans in a mountain-village with no showers nor beds, only cold water and buckets.

At 30, Marian returned to the UK and attended many adult education classes, sometimes three a day, to network in East London. In between English, cookery lessons, football tournaments and endless daytrips, Marian is a fund-raiser. BBC Children-in-Need have provided support for the past 12, as have many other local funders and the Council.

Dost operates in three Newham centres: one in Plaistow and two in Custom House. For more information contact Marian at Dost on 07852855711.

www.dostcentre.co.uk

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# SOMETHING'S BREWING

*How often do you get the chance to run your local pub?  
Phil Mellows meets a woman who did just that*

Ever thought it might be nice to run your local pub? It can happen, as Julie Howell has discovered.

When the pandemic closed the dance studio she'd run in Stratford for 25 years, it brought an abrupt change of career. At a loose end she went to help her daughter behind the bar at her Craft Union pub in Chingford. She quickly learned the ropes, and when the Fox & Hounds in Forest Gate came on the market with the same pub company she jumped at the opportunity.

"I had to," she says. "I live very close to the pub in Station Road, and it had been my own local for years. I was already part of the family here."

Julie is now celebrating her first year as manager of the Fox & Hounds and enjoying its latest refurb. "It's made it brighter and cosier, and I think it's defi-



nately attracted some new customers."

The pub is a single room that goes back further than you think, arranged around an island bar. There are screens showing live sports all round, but they're not too intrusive, and a pool table at the end. Beyond that there's a decent-sized garden with its own out-

door screen. And there are tables out front, too, for those who like to watch the world go by. It's always busy on this corner opposite Forest Gate Station.

Julie is serious when she talks about the Fox & Hounds being "a family". "Everybody knows everybody and we have a truly diverse crowd here. Children are allowed in until 8pm, and I'm proud of the fact that women feel safe to come in on their own."

"We have a star team of staff who take care of people, but really everyone looks out for each other."

Like any good community pub, it raises a lot of money for charity, including more than £300 for Great Ormond Street Hospital at Christmas. "The people here are very generous," says Julie.

Last Easter customers brought in dozens of Easter eggs for children at Newham General. And this Easter the Fox & Hounds is staging a Fun Day for families, with egg-hunts, face-painting and more.

That's on top of regular entertainments such as Friday karaoke, Saturday DJs and quizzes and bingo mid-week.

"You've got to keep giving people reasons to come in," says Julie, who clearly enjoys throwing a party!



## Good reads in Newham

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

- **Flesh** (signed copies, paperback edition)  
By David Szalay
- **Hooked**  
By Asako Yuzuki
- **Bethnal Green**  
By Amelie Skoda
- **A Poem in the Sky**  
By Benjamin Zephaniah
- **Where Are You, Eddie?**  
By Michael Rosen
- **The Adventures of Portly the Otter**  
By M.G. Leonard

– Compiled by David Ceen, Newham Bookshop

## Lessons in the park

BY DRIES INDESTEEGE  
Friends of West Ham Park

One morning I entered the park slightly earlier than usual, to the immense satisfaction and excitement of our two dogs, as in their opinion it is never too early to start a squirrel hunt. Like most mornings, the park greets me with the lovely scent of trees, the chittering of birds, the rustling of wind, and the panic of squirrels.

"Excuse me, sir?," a tiny voice behind me exclaimed. I slowly turn and discover a very confident girl, maybe six or seven, looking up at me with kind determination. "Can I pet your dog, please?"

"Yes, yes you can, this one is friendly, she's a girl. Oh, and thank you for asking first." With a slight

tilt of her head she replies: "My mommy says that I shouldn't run after dogs, and first ask if they'd like to be petted. I like to pet them."

"That's very wise. You're so much taller than them, and they might be scared at first. Here, I'll give you a treat, hunker down to make yourself small, hold out your hand and wait for one of them to come to you."

Never failing to spot an opportunity, one of the dogs swiftly but carefully wolfs down the offered bribe. "Oh! That tickles! Can I pet her now?"

"If she lets you, yes, let her sniff your hand and then you can slowly pet her."

"She's so soft...what about the other one?"

"That one doesn't like to be petted, I'm afraid, she's only interested in chasing the squirrels."

At that moment, an impudent squirrel has the audacity to cross the grass. Our other dog squeals an alarm and both of them set off in pursuit. After a short but intense sprint, the squirrel is long gone up a tree and from a safe distance haughtily stares down at those two pesky dogs barking up at it.

"Come on, you'll be late for school," calls the girl's mother in the distance. "Nice to meet you and your dog, sir," says the girl and runs off.

What a gentle little girl. I think I know what she may ask for for her birthday...



## Award winning short film now available online

An award-winning film by local writer and director Joe Borg has launched globally on Omeleto, one of the world's leading online platforms for short films.

The film, *Resaca*, has screened at 16 film festivals worldwide, winning two awards – Best Drama at Film Tottenham and Best Screenplay at the Fastnet Film Festival in Ireland. Joe, who is of Maltese heritage, was born in Barking and grew up in Ilford, but is currently based in East Ham.

He says the film explores grief through 'a light comedic lens', with the message that grief is a universal language. It tells of a severely hungover man who finds himself on a reluctant walk with a new neighbour. The pair must overcome a language barrier to find common ground and a much-needed support.

[youtu.be/fj9Xag8rKc?si=5qhkBih-bo-vbX1ZY](https://youtu.be/fj9Xag8rKc?si=5qhkBih-bo-vbX1ZY)  
[triplewaterproductions.com](http://triplewaterproductions.com)



Image: Sandi Mager/Unsplash



For full details or to request a copy, visit: [newhambooks.co.uk](http://newhambooks.co.uk)

# Golden moments recall heroism of driver in West Ham terror incident

JULIA OMARI

Commemorations were held at West Ham Station last month to mark 50 years since London Underground tube driver Joseph Stephen, known as Julius to his family, was shot, dying at the scene, after he confronted a member of the Provisional IRA.

The terrorist was believed to be travelling to Liverpool Street station via the Metropolitan line with a 5lb (2.3kg) bomb when it prematurely detonated on 15 March 1976.

A memorial was held by the Ancre Somme Association (ASA), a Northern Ireland-based charity that promotes remembrance and education, on 11 March on Platform 2 of the current Hammersmith and City line, the site of the explosion.

Local MPs, councillors, family, friends, residents and transport staff gathered to pay tribute to Joseph's bravery and sacrifice.

Speaking at the event, Lt Col Ant Maher, Patron of ASA, paid an emotional tribute recalling that harrowing day when nine people were injured, seven by the bomb, and two from gun violence. Post Office engineer Peter Chalk was shot but survived, while Joseph, was killed.

James Asser, MP for West Ham and Beckton, said: "Joseph is a perfect example of the best of public service. His actions that day probably saved many more injuries and many lives."

A second memorial, held on 15 March by Transport for London, saw colleagues from across the network reflect on Joseph's service and legacy.

Brenda Ani, a Senior Stations Delivery Manager for the Jubilee and Northern lines, said: "I'm really honoured to commemorate Joseph. What he did was truly heroic."

Mr. Stephen, aged 34, became the first posthumous recipient of the Queen's



Image: Julia Omari

Joseph is a perfect example of the best of public service. His actions that day probably saved many more injuries and many lives

Gallantry Medal. He was originally from Grenada and moved to England as part of the Windrush Generation. He married Janet, and together they had a son, Mark, who was just four years old when his father died.

Family member Anne-Marie Grant, goddaughter of Joseph's widow Janet, attended both events. Though born

after the attack, she said she had grown up hearing stories of his courage and had long wondered why there had been little public recognition of the man who would have been her godfather.

She recalled that Mark Stephen had previously attended a plaque unveiling with his mother in March 2022, to



Image to left: Gary Ashe Area Manager Transport for London, Brenda Ani, Senior Stations Delivery Manager for the Jubilee and Northern lines and Goddaughter Anne-Marie Grant, ©Julia Omari; Top image: Joseph Stephen and wife Janet on their wedding day, photo from family; Above image: ASA Poppy Wreath, ©Julia Omari.

recognise 46 years since his father's death, but had since passed away. Janet was unable to attend the memorial due to poor health but gave her blessing.

The attack formed part of a wider IRA bombing campaign in Britain during the 1970s, which saw attacks in mainland UK cities such as London. Fifty years on, the commemorations are a reminder of both the human cost of the conflict and the courage shown by individuals in moments of crisis.

## BASS launches album to archive poetry and sound

Newham has turned up the volume on poetry with the Newham Poetry Prize's latest initiative: Barz and Stanzas Soundscaped (BASS).

BASS is a bold new archive of local voices and a powerful way to experience a debut album led by founder and producer Be Manzini (pictured right), alongside collaborators connected to the Borough. Blending poetry with melody, the project fuses storytelling, rhythm and sound into something fresh, expressive and unmistakably Newham.



It's a movement gaining momentum across the Borough that began in March with a historic preview for Jazz East at Sadler's Wells East, followed by vibrant showcases at The Hope Café and The Good Hotel, and even reached Stratford Town Hall during a full Council meeting. Each stop has drawn strong support, reflecting pride in Newham's rich cultural identity and creative energy.

The response has been powerful. The first volume of poems—eight in total—has resonated deeply with res-

idents. Many say it has filled them with pride to live in or come from Newham, while others say it makes them wish they did. It's a celebration of voice, poetry of place, and shared experience.

Be Manzini and guests will continue appearing at live events, on radio and online throughout April. To experience Where Poetry Meets Melody, visit: [www.youtube.com/@BASS-e.6](http://www.youtube.com/@BASS-e.6)

For updates, email [newhampopetryprize@gmail.com](mailto:newhampopetryprize@gmail.com) or follow @[newhampopetryprize](https://www.instagram.com/newhampopetryprize) on Instagram.

# SPORTS SHORTS

Compiled by Neandra Etienne



London Lions ©Nathan Green

Stratford based basketball club **London Lions** won the SLB Trophy Final with a 74-68 victory over the Newcastle Eagles. [thelondonlions.com](http://thelondonlions.com)

**Jubilee Line FC** earned a well-deserved 3 points in their 6-5 win against the current Division 1 champions Over-ground FC in March.

Jubilee Line FC are scheduled to play Victoria Line FC on 21 April. [x.com/LULLeagueLondon](http://x.com/LULLeagueLondon)

**Newham Primary** Boys District team reached the English Schools FA National Cup Semi-Final after beating Greenwich 4-0.

Their manager Paul Belcher from The Tapscott Learning Trust said: "This was a great result for the boys." Newham District trials for Newham students in Year 4 or 5 will take place in June, July and September 2026

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

**Clapton CFC** women's first team are scheduled to play a home game at the Old Spotted Dog Ground on 12 April [claptoncfc.co.uk](http://claptoncfc.co.uk)

London Pulse are scheduled to play home games on 4, 10, 19 April in the Netball Super League at the Copper Box Arena. London Pulse were crowned champions in both the title and play-offs last season. [londonpulsenetball.com](http://londonpulsenetball.com)

**West Ham United's** Men's First Team players visited the club's Foundation Community Hub at The Foundry in Beckton. Activities, on and off the pitch, included: a Foundation Girls football tournament and Post-16 Football and Education and Employability programmes.



West Ham United Foundry visit

The players' visit was part of the wider West Ham United Players' Project which sees all members of the First Team squad take time to engage with a wide range of community activity. [foundation.whufc.com](http://foundation.whufc.com)

Rio Ngumoha, from Newham, was given his first Premier League start and was named Player of the Match during Liverpool's game against Tottenham Hotspurs on 15 March.

Rio, who is 17, was previously named Player of the Match during Liverpool FC's FA Cup fifth round game against Wolverhampton Wanderers on 6 March. Liverpool play Manchester City in the FA Cup Quarter finals on 4 April with the semi-final scheduled for Wembley on 25 April.

[@rio\\_ngumoha](https://www.instagram.com/rio_ngumoha)



Tre Grant-Barton  
©Christine Grant

**Tre Grant-Barton** won gold in high jump, and set a new personal best of 1.85m, at the Essex and Eastern Indoor Championship on 1 March.

Tre is coached by his uncle Dalton Grant, who is a 3x Olympian, European/Commonwealth High Jump champion, at the Dalton Grant Academy. He represents Newham and Essex Beagles Athletic Club and attends Stratford based Chobham Academy. [raisethemark.co.uk](http://raisethemark.co.uk)

**Active Communities Newham's** Easter holiday programme sports and activity sessions include junior Badminton at East Ham Leisure Centre and youth Multi-Sports at Forest Gate Youth Zone

- 30 March - 2 April
- 7 April - 10 April

[@gll\\_communities\\_newham](https://www.instagram.com/gll_communities_newham)

Dates and times of all games and events are subject to change. Please email your sports news, games and fixtures to [neandra.etienne@newhamvoices.co.uk](mailto:neandra.etienne@newhamvoices.co.uk)

## Rare West Ham programmes to go under the hammer!

A rare archive of early West Ham United football programmes is expected to sell for more than £10,000 when it goes under the hammer at Tennants Auctioneers, North Yorkshire on 1 April.

Dating between 1913 and 1945, the collection was put together by the vendor's grandfather, a devoted West Ham supporter. In total, the collection includes 164 programmes, which are being sold in ten lots.

Tennants' Sporting Memorabilia Specialist Kegan Harrison says of the collection: "This is a remarka-



ble collection, with some really rare programmes including one from the first match ever played at Wembley Stadium in 1923 when West Ham went up against Bolton Wanderers. Poignantly, there are also several programmes from the Second World War era, when numerous last minute team changes had to have been made, which are written in by hand".

The programmes will be available to view at Tennants Auctioneers, and full details and online bidding can be found on their website [www.tennants.co.uk](http://www.tennants.co.uk)

## Employment is on the up

Latest figures for February show the number of employees on payroll in Newham was 193,476, up 1.2 per cent on the same month last year.

Overall, employment in Newham is higher than a year ago, with employers reporting an increase of 2,257 in payroll headcount.

The figures are based on analysis of the latest Office for National Statistics payroll data by the employment and pay app WageSight.



Image: Tim Mossholder/Unsplash

# Crunch time for a club with a proud history



**Mickey Ambrose**  
reports on the Hammers' nerve-wracking bid to avoid relegation



West Ham have a great history – starting out as Thames Ironworks FC on 29 June 1895 and reformed as West Ham United in 1900 – but now they face the toughest challenge of the modern era as they strive to keep their place among England's footballing elite.

Like thousands of others I want the Hammers to stay up, but who could have imagined that, with a handful of games to play, they would be scrambling alongside London rivals Tottenham Hotspurs to avoid the drop to the Championship. What were the odds on that at the start of this year?

Yet that result meant nothing because they didn't turn up on 22 March against Aston Villa, a side trying to cement a Champions League top four slot. Fans were realistic; "we should have played for the point", said one, but Villa had other ideas with an attacking style the Hammers could not contain.

West Ham's defence seemed to be caught napping by Villa's first goal. It was well worked from a free kick practised on the training ground and curled in superbly from 20 yards by John McGinn's sweet left foot. They will look back at the rerun of the inci-

who had lost their last four Premier League games

But if West Ham have problems – and they do – what about Tottenham Hotspurs who were trounced 3-0 at home by fellow strugglers Nottingham Forest? It was an astonishing result which sent shockwaves through the Premier League. It was billed as the biggest game of their season, a six-pointer – and now relegation is a possibility. This loss and West Ham's defeat means Spurs stay just outside of the drop zone for now.

Look away now Spurs fans because you have not won any of your last 13 League matches, (drawn five lost eight) equalling their second longest winless league run in their history, recorded in 1912. The record of 16 was set in 1935 and could easily be broken.

In next month's edition I will be getting the views of former Queens Park Rangers, Newcastle, Tottenham

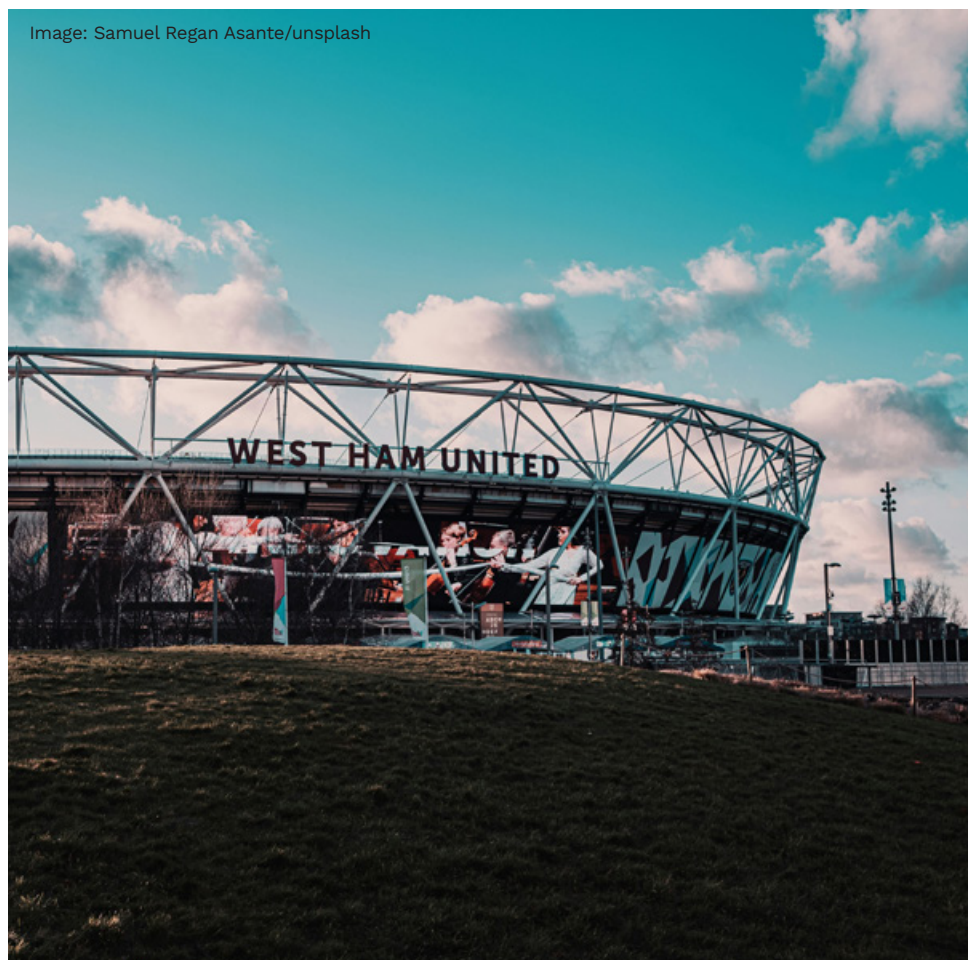
Hotspur and West Ham striker Les Ferdinand who made 14 appearances for the Hammers. Les will give our readers his opinion about where he believes both London clubs he played for will finish up.

In the meantime, with just seven Premier League games to go, can we really imagine either of these famous London clubs with their fantastic stadiums being relegated?

Looking at the remaining fixtures for both clubs, I cannot call it. From now on three points from every game is a must. Fans who pay good money need to get behind the team and, above all, it's time for all the players and coaches to play for the badge. One thing is for sure, every game will be nerve-wracking, but there is a proud history to be fought for at both West Ham and Tottenham.

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

Image: Samuel Regan Asante/unsplash



The Hammers played really well against Manchester City, the newly crowned EFL Cup winners, who are still challenging Arsenal for the Premier League title. West Ham were defiant, dogged and unflinching in their match against City, refusing to give up on the point that lifted them out of the bottom three for the first time since November 2025.

dent and think they should have done better.

Konstantinos Mavropanos made two astonishing goal-line clearances to rescue the Hammers but, inevitably, a second Villa goal was always on the cards. Ollie Watkins, freshly dropped from the England squad, cleaned up Marco Bizot's spillage save to secure the points for rejuvenated Aston Villa,

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