

ENFIELD DISPATCH

Nº.32 THE BOROUGH'S FREE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

MAY 2021

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Eurasian beavers, which went extinct in the UK around 400 years ago, could soon be gnawing their way around Enfield Credit David Parkyn

You better bel-eaver it!

Project to reintroduce beavers in Enfield revealed

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

Beavers could be reintroduced to Enfield – 400 years after they went extinct in the UK.

The semiaquatic rodents have been making a comeback around the country in recent years, with small populations now thriving in rural locations. But the idea of bringing them back to London is now also being explored, with Enfield set to be a frontrunner because of its large swathes of Green Belt land.

Enfield Council has allocated £40,000 of external funding to spend on drawing up its plans for a beaver reintroduction trial in the borough. It has not confirmed where this would happen but Mathew Frith, director of conserva-

tion at London Wildlife Trust, says north-west Enfield is one of only two or three viable locations across all 32 boroughs of the capital.

Mathew told the *Dispatch*: "When you look at London and its river catchments, there's not many places where beavers could actually flourish. The north-west of Enfield is one of the places it might work, but only if all the right elements came together."

"I expect the £40,000 will be spent on preparing a large paddock and putting substantial fencing in place. It is important to take a precautionary approach and not raise expectations."

In Devon, wild beavers are now roaming freely, but Mathew said that in London it was unlikely you could reintroduce beavers without fencing them in.

"I think what is being proposed in Enfield is a kind of captive scenario. For them to be wild you'd struggle to find somewhere where they wouldn't interact with dogs or cars."

"We are trying to get on top of the science and what beavers mean for flood management and river siltation. We would be supportive of measures which take a precautionary approach – but it has to be thoroughly tested and measured."

Mathew said London Wildlife Trust had not yet been contacted by the council but said he was willing to lend the organisation's conservation expertise to help with the project. "The way this will become successful is through information sharing and discussion, to ensure mistakes aren't made," he added.

Beavers are known as 'bio-engineers' and are valued for the

role they play in managing water habitats. A council spokesperson said: "Enfield Council is in the early stages of examining with local partners and Natural England the feasibility of a beaver reintroduction trial."

"At present beavers can only be released into secure enclosures in this country. This option is being explored, however there is no specific programme or timescale at this point."

"By damming small streams and creating ponds beavers can help to reduce flood risk in urban areas further down the catchment area. They are considered a 'keystone species' due to their ability to create diverse habitat for other creatures, which help support the whole ecosystem."

Eurasian beavers are native to the UK but were hunted to extinction in the late middle ages.



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

Publisher
David Floyd

Editor
James Cracknell

Designer
Jonathan Duncan

Head of Advertising
Klaudia Kiss

Head of Operations
Page Ballmi

Engagement Manager
Penny Dampier

Contributors
Emma Kolaru, Leonie Eisenberg, Heather Rose, Olivia Devereux-Evans, Alison Moore, Andrew Warshaw, John Machin, Vilma Jackson, David Williamson, Jodie Webber, Steven Murdoch, Emma Friddin, David Cockle

CONTACT

Call 020 8521 7956

Email EnfieldDispatch@socialspider.com

ADVERTISING

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No cladding fund payout

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

Edmonton residents caught up in the nationwide scandal over cladding have had their application to a £3.5billion government fund rejected – despite their balconies posing a fire hazard.

Leaseholders at Prowse Court in Fore Street will have to foot bills of between £12,000 and £15,000 per flat despite not being made aware of the flaws in their building's design when they moved in.

Fire safety standards have been tightened in the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster in 2017, but this has led to thousands of people living in blocks of flats across the country being told that their buildings are now deemed unsafe. It has meant they have been unable to move as banks won't give them a mortgage until they make the necessary repairs.

At Prowse Court, while the main structure does not have flammable cladding, the block's inset balconies are timber-clad and residents have been told it must all be replaced. Housing secretary Robert Jenrick launched the government's new cladding fund in February to help leaseholders pay the bills they have been landed with, but it was criticised for not going far enough and leaving some residents to still pay significant costs.



Prowse Court in Fore Street, Angel Edmonton, was built in 2015

Prowse Court resident Basim Jafar found out last week that the problem with the building's balconies was not eligible for any award from the fund. He told the *Dispatch*: "Our application to the fund was on a wing and a prayer. The fund expressly excludes balconies unless they are integral with the cladding."

"The government issued advice on the removal of timber from balconies and then went ahead and expressly excluded any such work from the fund knowing that leaseholders would have to pay – and if they can't pay, forfeit their leases."

Prowse Court is owned by an off-

shore property investor, Adriatic Land, which has denied responsibility. Homeground Management was appointed as freehold manager by Adriatic Land, but said in a statement last year: "The onus must be on the government to resolve the challenges in buildings like this."

A government spokesperson said: "Only buildings which meet the criteria for the Building Safety Fund are eligible for funding. The government has been clear that building safety is the responsibility of the building owner and they should meet the costs of remediation without passing them on to leaseholders wherever possible."

Candidates vie for votes

Voters in three borough wards are due to head to the polls on Thursday 6th May, with one by-election race looking too close to call.

Eligible voters in Chase, Jubilee and Southbury wards will each get a chance to select one new councillor. It comes after two Labour councillors resigned, while another died last summer.

Chase ward is by far the most marginal of the three seats up for grabs, with the top Conservative candidate just 60 votes away from being elected at the last poll in 2018. The vacancy in Chase arose after one of the ward's three Labour councillors, Vicki Pite, resigned last December after falling out with the town hall's leadership team.

A recent controversy could have a big influence on the vote, with many

Chase residents upset at how the future of Whitewebbs Park has been handled. Nearly 3,500 people signed a petition against the council's invitation for outside organisations to bid to run a large part of the park in 2019, including its golf course. While no preferred bidder has been announced, controversy was stoked in March when the council confirmed the golf course would not be reopening following lockdown.

A campaign video for Labour candidate Chris James stated that "Labour is investing in your greener future" and that she was standing to "secure Whitewebbs' future for sport and leisure" as well as make "green improvements at Four Hills Estate" and create a new footpath linking Hilly Fields and Trent Park.

Both the Conservative and Lib Dem candidates have pledged to fight to protect Whitewebbs Park

and reopen its golf course. Tory Andrew Thorp said he would "work to protect our green space" and "oppose any changes to Whitewebbs Park", while Lib Dem Guy Russo states in his campaign video that he wants there to be "no loss of free and meaningful public access" as well as "no damage to the ancient woodland or biodiversity".

Green Party candidate Catherine Davies said that if proven to not be financially viable, the golf course should be "rewilded", while Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate Mira Glavardanov said she was standing in Chase to "prioritise housing need, not super-rich developers".

The by-elections in Jubilee and Southbury are more low-key than in Chase, with little prospect of Labour being beaten in either ward. For more election coverage go to enfielddispatch.co.uk.

Towers appeal

The developers behind a controversial 17-storey proposal in Southgate have appealed against the decision to reject it.

Enfield Council's planning committee last summer turned down the planning application to build 216 homes at Southgate Office Village after expressing concerns over the scheme's impact on the adjacent conservation area and its affordability. But Viewpoint Estates has now lodged an appeal with the government, which will be determined by an upcoming planning inquiry.

Archive move

BY SIMON ALLIN, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

A local studies archive containing information on Enfield's history will be moved into the same building as the council's head offices.

Councillors confirmed Enfield Local Studies Library and Archive will be relocated to the ground floor of the Civic Centre in Silver Street, Enfield Town. It is currently based on the first floor of the Dugdale Centre at Thomas Hardy House, but the council's decision to move its children and family services staff to the building meant it had to find the archive a new home.

The move has been opposed by many local groups, including The Enfield Society.

Licence review

BY SIMON ALLIN, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

A proposed Palmers Green gambling venue that ran into strong opposition from residents will have its licence reviewed.

The decision means residents can now make their views heard on the licence for a Merkur Slots gaming centre in Green Lanes. Local campaigners said most people were not aware of the original consultation on the licence because of lockdown restrictions. A petition against the venue subsequently gained more than 4,000 signatures.

Following the public outcry, council leader Nesil Caliskan wrote to the national licensing authority calling for a review. People who want to express their views on the venue can now email licensing@enfield.gov.uk with the consultation period ending on Tuesday 18th May.

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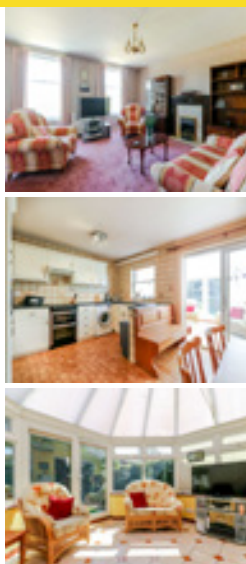
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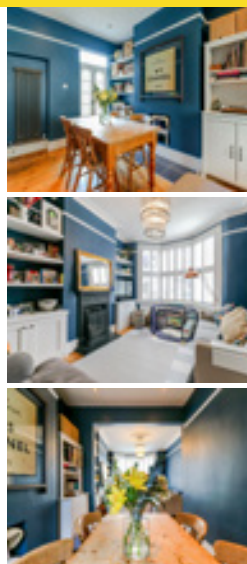
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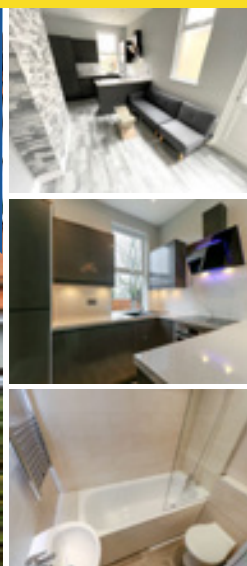
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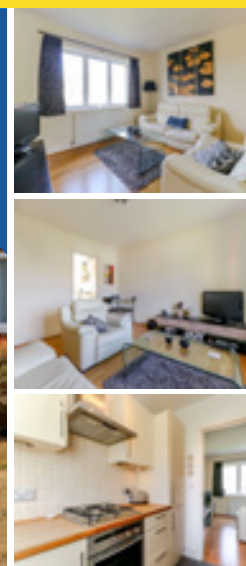
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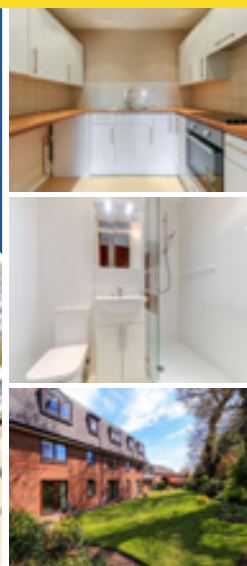
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Generating closer community ties

Emma Kolaru from Enfield Town Schools' Partnership on the launch of a new intergenerational project in the borough



Older people living in care homes will be connected with young people in the borough through the project Credit My Home Life

environment' for some time yet so protecting the most vulnerable in our community will be a key element of this project. These challenges, however, also present learning opportunities for everyone involved. I am excited about working on a project which will be designed by the programme users and will need to combine online interaction with face-to-face experiences for both the younger and older generations.

The ultimate aim is to embed a culture of community within our schools. Wouldn't it be great to equip our children and young people to tackle global issues locally and show that small positive actions can all make a big difference?

The project is jointly supported by The Dunhill Medical Trust, an independently-awarded funder; the #iwill Fund, from the National Lottery Community Fund; and the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. I'd like to thank all the organisations funding this project. We are incredibly grateful to you and I, for one, can't wait to get started!

To find out more and get involved: Visit etsplondon.org

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The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us all how much social interaction and friendships matter.

We've seen how reduced family and friendship contact has increased isolation and loneliness across our community, especially in older people. I am passionate about providing children and young people with opportunities that allow them to develop as individuals and which support them to make positive change.

This is why I am thrilled that Enfield Town Schools' Partnership (ETSP) has been awarded funding to deliver an intergenerational project in Enfield. It forms part of a national initiative called 'Care Home Friends and Neighbours: Intergenerational Linking' – from charities My Home Life England and The Linking Network – which is bringing young people from schools and youth organisations together with older people living in care homes across England.

The project will give children and older people living in care homes the opportunity to come together to share in new experiences, learning, stories and laughter. A key focus is to promote social action across the generations, empowering

both younger and older people to have a positive impact on our community. It will help improve children and young people's confidence and develop their social and leadership skills, as well as develop and strengthen community connections.

Anna Theodosiou, Bush Hill Park Primary School's headteacher and chair of ETSP, says: "Our drive is positive change. We will offer pupils from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to be decision-makers on our intergenerational project, which will bring a creative and unique perspective that can influence outcomes and benefit all involved."

"Our drive is positive change"

Throughout the pandemic everyone has become more aware, and appreciative, of a wider range of jobs which have sustained the country during a period of immense social disruption. Care home workers have been part of this vital group of 'key workers' who have supported our communities by helping keep vulnerable older people safe.

It is my hope that this project will continue to raise awareness of how vital these roles are. We plan to invite a representative from this group to sit on an advisory group to help direct the project's delivery.

We all need to work in this new 'Covid



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Help climbing the career ladder

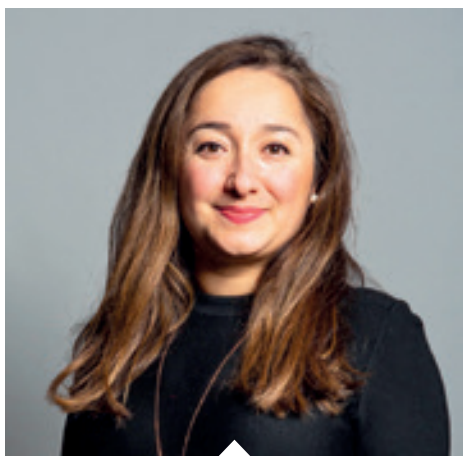
Heather Rose from Loving Social Media on the local help being offered to young people entering the world of work

Last month Loving Social Media had the pleasure of working alongside local MP Feryal Clark in creating an online careers fair for young people living in Enfield North.

Our goal from the outset was to present young local people with a wide range of exciting, progressive employment opportunities. During such uncertain times, it is vital that we reach out to young people who are at risk of long-term unemployment – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The event kicked off with a few inspiring words from Feryal and our very own Garry Kousoulou. Both reminisced about the many jobs they have taken on during their lives, the highs and the lows, and the valuable lessons learned as a result.

Through a series of virtual sessions that ran throughout the day, young people were joined by local and national employers to help them explore job roles and discuss career prospects. Some of our speakers included staff from the NHS, Network Rail, the civil service, education charity Teach First, the Metropolitan Police, The Prince's Trust, and many more incredible organisations.



Enfield North MP Feryal Clark co-hosted the careers fair last month with Loving Social Media, based in Lancaster Road

Garry livestreamed his session, which was soon shared all over Facebook, Twitter, and local online communities. He advised young people on how to get into the digital sphere, the tools that you need to succeed, and what to expect from a social media role – a talk that has now been viewed by more than 300 people!

Through this collaboration with Feryal, we were able to reach those seeking employment, open vacancies and voluntary roles

and provide them with priceless resources and insights into industries that they were previously not familiar with.

We believe this fair has had a real, positive impact on local youth. Not only did it give many young people the chance to potentially find their dream job – it has also acted as a friendly, safe space to network. It created an opportunity to interact with other like-minded individuals and to get a sense of the skills they can harness and ultimately take beyond the workplace and out into their community.

Here at Loving Social Media, our team is highly creative, meticulous, and dedicated to our clients' every need. If you are interested in social media, content creation, graphic design, copywriting, or feel passionate about developing small, independent businesses that reflect local living – get in touch! We would love to hear from you.

We are now aiming to hold a careers fair in Enfield annually, and hope to meet many more of you soon – next time face to face! Young people are the future and they must not be forgotten.

Put your best foot forward

Alison Moore from North London Hospice invites people to join in the charity's big fundraising event of the year



Fundraisers taking part in last year's My Big Fun Walk

May is National Walking Month, so why not put your boots on and start practising to take part in My Big Fun Walk?

Sarah Bernarde is one of more than 450 people who have signed up already to take part in our biggest fundraiser of the year. She said: "My Big Fun Walk is a great way to give something back to the North London Hospice, which has helped me so much in the four years since my father died in their care."

For the second year running we are asking people to make the event their own, walking roughly eight-and-a-half miles in their local community while raising money for end-of-life patient care. More than 800 people took part in 2020, raising £85,000, and we're hoping to top those figures in 2021!

Throughout the pandemic, North London Hospice has continued to provide its end-of-life care and support to more than 3,000 people and their families in Enfield, Barnet and Haringey, but as a charity we rely on our communities to fund most of our work. With our fundraising events programme cancelled over the last 13 months, our shops closed and individual supporters finding their fundraisers postponed, the last year has certainly been a challenge.

We're hoping our supporters will join us in force this year for My Big Fun Walk and help us raise the much-needed funds to continue our vital work. Participants can choose a route that takes in favourite landmarks, walk in memory of loved ones, and complete it in one day or over the weekend. How and where you take part is entirely up to you! If you prefer, you can walk one of our pre-planned routes in your local community.

We're also inviting local schools and businesses to take part across a week that they choose in June. Schools can dedicate their 'daily mile' for a week to the hospice and local businesses can ask staff to walk to work, walk in their lunch-break, or even install a treadmill in the office for the week! It's a great way to fundraise and get fit at the same time.

To find out more and to sign up to take part in My Big Fun Walk: Email fundraising@northlondonhospice.co.uk Visit bigfunwalk.co.uk

A feast for the senses

How an allotment plot became a haven for children with autism

BY OLIVIA DEVEREUX-EVANS

At Ponders End 'sensory garden' is getting a makeover ahead of its reopening this summer.

Sonny the Snail's Sensory Garden was set up in 2019 to help children with sensory deprivation, such as autism. It contains a series of homemade features that are intended to appeal to all five senses, such as a music wall, sensory boards, pond, pirate ship, a train, plus lots of herbs and flowers.



Sonny the Snail's founder Kari Payne with garden volunteer Hayes Rees, a fundraiser with MacMillan

Founder Kari Payne named the space at Falcoln Fields Allotments after her son, Sonny, who is autistic and had the idea for a community sensory garden. Kari explained the snail was added to the name because she likens autism to a snail – things take time but they get there.

Kari told the *Dispatch*: "It is not like going to the park where you have got certain groups that are staying together.

"When I take Sonny to the park it automatically feels like he is being singled out, because of the way he is. At Sonny the Snail's he is not looked at as different. Autism is the norm down there.

"It is beautiful because you can just 'be'"

"Everyone has got their own personality. It is great to see everyone experiencing happiness. Sonny's is a glorious place for anyone that has not got a garden."

Donations are now being sought to replace tools that were stolen over the last year while

the garden was closed because of the pandemic. Kari also wants to "re-energise" the space and tidy it up before it reopens. She aims to sell the fruit and vegetables grown on a nearby allotment to raise more funds, and is even creating a 'snack shack' to provide sandwiches and other refreshments for visitors.

"Children can grow their own vegetables and paint their own plant pots," said Kari, emphasising the importance of the garden. "They can get messy, and they can get mucky. It is ideal for the elderly. Anyone with mental health problems.

"It is beautiful because you can just 'be'. It is nice to be able to look up at the sky rather than at a tower block."

Sonny the Snail's has received an influx of community support and donations following the difficulties it faced in the last year, and Kari does extensive fundraising with other charities as well. This year, she is working with the Sea Cadets and MacMillan Cancer Support to raise money in conjunction with Sonny the Snail's, and volunteers from both charities are helping to spruce up the garden.

For more information about Sonny the Snail's Sensory Garden and to donate or volunteer: Visit facebook.com/sonnythesnail



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Parents grateful for school officer's kindness

Lesley Ansell has always been there for families at Eldon Primary School when they've needed it

At some time or another we all need a little help, but might feel too embarrassed to ask for it.

That's when you need someone like Lesley Ansell, who works at Eldon Primary School in Edmonton as a safeguarding and outreach officer. She's worked at the school for around 25 years in a variety of roles, but has always been there to lend a helping hand to pupils and parents when they need it.

Lesley has helped find school uniforms, organised breakfast deliveries, signposted struggling families to where they can get financial and housing support, offered help during bereavements and, according to one parent, "often manages to turn tears of desperation into hopeful laughter".

Lesley told the *Dispatch*: "I like to support families in need, in all sorts of



Lesley Ansell has been a familiar face around Eldon Primary School for around 25 years

ways – cooking, budgeting, organising. I think as I get older people start to think I'm their nan!

"Edmonton is an area of high deprivation and there is a lot of different need. It is easy to judge but until you find yourself in that situation, you don't know what struggles people go through.

"It can be as simple as making a phone call for someone, if they don't know where to go for help. When they are in genuine hardship and they don't know how to access funding, sometimes I apply for grants to get them school uniforms and that sort of thing.

"If they don't have family in the area it is nice to have someone who can be there to support them."

Lesley was nominated as an 'Enfield Community Hero' by someone who didn't wish to be named, but has known Lesley through the school for many years and said: "She is on the end of the phone 24/7.

"Having spoken with many mums and dads it's obvious that there's no-one who doesn't benefit from Miss Ansell's kindness; she judges no-one and her discretion means that very little of what she does gets recognition.

"Eldon [Primary School] has an unsung hero for sure, who quietly goes about helping in so many ways. She is like everyone's mum or favourite aunt.

"We would like to take this opportunity to shout out for Miss Ansell who does so much for so many. Eldon and its community are a better place with her."

Nominate your heroes

Dispatch readers are welcome to nominate their own 'Enfield Community Hero' – someone who you think has gone above and beyond to help support the local community. Simply email your nomination to EnfieldDispatch@socialspider.com



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The Whitewebbs whitewash

Whitewebbs Park user Andrew Warshaw explains why he has lost patience with Enfield Council

The way Enfield Council has conducted itself over the closure of Whitewebbs Park Golf Course has to be one of the most disgraceful own goals ever when it comes to misjudging local public opinion.

Anyone who tuned into last month's council scrutiny committee, or has followed the council's reasoning in terms of how it reached such an unpopular decision, cannot fail to have come to any other conclusion.

When it launched its bid process for leasing the land that includes the golf club, the council promised residents an inclusive consultation process, without which no preferred bidder would be chosen.

Such community engagement and the assurance to "consult with the Friends of Whitewebbs Park" and "engage with members before selecting a preferred partner" has been, apart from a

few ill-thought-out platitudes, conspicuous by its absence.

It's an utterly unacceptable situation, not least for the thousands who have signed the "Save Whitewebbs" petition. Worse, it has led to a deep level of mistrust and all manner of suspicion over what the debt-ridden council might be secretly planning in order to line its empty pockets. We have all heard the rumours.

While we have been assured that the golf course will not be used for housing development or landfill and that it will remain open for public access and enjoyment, some of the 'facts' the council has trotted out to try and convince us that the golf club's closure was the right thing to do need to be seriously challenged.

The suggestion that Whitewebbs has been losing too much money and that mothballing it now is cheaper than keeping it open flies in the face of logic. Just when golfers across the country were crying

Whitewebbs Park Golf Course has not been reopened since the easing of lockdown, causing local anger Credit: Enfield Council



out to play as lockdown rules were eased, so the council decided to close our nearest and most affordable public course. It was the very time when it would have generated a substantial cash income.

Then there are the on-the-record statements that the course had effectively been closed for the last year. The truth? It was open from June to October 2020. Who on Earth are they trying to kid?

Perhaps most scandalous of all is the argument that there are plenty of other courses to play in Enfield. Unless they are being deliberately disingenuous, none of the council bigwigs has ever played any of these. There is a fundamental difference between a pay-and-play public course affordable to the average golfer, and privately-owned courses which can cost over £1,500 to join. It's out-

geous to lump them together and the council should be ashamed.

No-one would deny that the closure of the course has opened it up to more joggers and dog walkers. But this misses a vital point. For many, golf is just as important for physical and mental wellbeing.

Don't just take my word for it. An open letter sent to the council recently by Middlesex Golf Ltd, the governing body for amateur golf in the historic county, described the closure of the course as "devastating" to the borough. The nearby private alternatives "are not always accessible and often too expensive for the 'vulnerable residents' you wish to support".

It continues: "During the pandemic we have all become much more aware of how important key workers are to our daily lives and of the vulnerability of the elderly, most of whom earn low wages and pensions."

"Whitewebbs offers these important groups an affordable way to socialise, exercise, and play sport. This is now going to be stripped away from them."

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Why I don't welcome low-traffic neighbourhoods

Bowes Park resident John Machin questions whether Enfield Council is willing to listen to local voices

It's true, as Adrian Day wrote in the *Dispatch* last year (*Why I welcome low-traffic neighbourhoods*, Page 8, Issue 16), that if we are to address climate change, pollution and ill health, there needs to be changes in our behaviour.

He said we must reduce our dependence on cars, but only 29% of Londoners get to work by car, compared to 67% in England. Car use in London peaked at 50% of all journeys in 1990, and has been falling ever since, replaced by public transport, walking and cycling. Londoners 'get it'.

But is it enough? The low-traffic neighbourhood (LTN) in Bowes ward, where I live, has put residents behind a bottleneck of road blocks that opens only on to the North Circular. While I personally oppose this scheme, the wider argument still depends on whether the LTN actually works, and for whom does it work? The more I look into it, the more sceptical I become.

The most important claim in favour of LTNs is that they reduce air pollution. Within the LTN, I'm sure they do. But where does the traffic go? Who pays for the lower air pollution enjoyed by residents within the LTN?

Supporters of LTNs point to studies purportedly showing how traffic 'evaporates' by reducing short, unnecessary journeys. The trouble is, LTN closures need only add a few minutes to each longer, necessary journey to outweigh the pollution reductions resulting from the shorter 'evaporated' ones – and the delays now in the Bowes area are way above a few minutes.

So, families living on main roads are the ones who pay. Their children have lungs, too. If behaviour change is needed in London then, in a democracy, it's of paramount importance that local politicians take their residents with them on the journey from now into the near future. Yet, they are behaving in the most counterproductive way.

Enfield Council's leader, Nesil

Caliskan, described LTN protestors as "thug like" on Twitter. The deputy leader, Ian Barnes, insists LTNs were in Labour's 2018 local manifesto, but they weren't; 'Quieter Neighbourhoods' were, and there's a big difference. Mayor of London Sadiq Khan even turned his back on us when he came to Bounds Green during the mayoral election campaign.

"Without legitimacy, opposition is likely to grow"

Ian Barnes also claims the Bowes Park LTN was campaigned for by residents. The basis for this claim is a 2018 petition to parliament by Bambos Charalambous MP for an LTN trial, which was supported by 377 residents, plus a 2019 'perception survey' that attracted just 263 responses.

In August 2020, when the LTN was rushed in, some residents (including myself) formed a protest group. We got 1,600 signatures on a petition against the LTN. None of this appears to matter to Enfield Council; it's clear they intend to press ahead regardless.

Some LTN supporters talk of

a 'controversy/construction/acceptance curve'. You might say that governments, both national and local, routinely implement policies that half the electorate disagrees with. Yes, but the democracy mechanism usually clunks around first. It's imperfect, but it's our system. It means that when we don't get our way, we don't feel cheated.

This time, the usual prior consultation procedures were circumvented because of the emergency Covid-19 legislation the government brought in. No clunk. The consultation now running concurrently with the LTN trial doesn't even pretend to offer a 'no thanks' option, only allowing suggestions for 'improvements'. Moreover, a compromise option – the use of ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) cameras to allow local drivers to pass through filters – has been scotched by Cllr Barnes.

To those who believe in LTNs, I say this: as democrats, you should be as dismayed as I am that the council is pushing them through in this way. Without legitimacy, opposition is likely to grow. Do you think the climate emergency is best tackled by force or persuasion?

To put it another way, are you willing to take the risk that the council's tactics might torpedo the wider effort?



The Bowes Park LTN trial scheme was introduced last summer without a prior consultation

LETTERS

Send us your letters

Got an opinion on something in Enfield? We accept letters of up to 150 words from people and organisations in the borough. Email EnfieldDispatch@socialspider.com before the next deadline on Tuesday 18th May

Secrecy over Whitewebbs

Dear Enfield Dispatch

At last month's overview and scrutiny committee meeting the leader of Enfield Council, Nesil Caliskan, and director of property Mark Bradbury, were challenged on their failure to consult park users and other community stakeholders on the future of Whitewebbs Park and its golf course.

In 2019, the council promised to consult with the Friends of Whitewebbs Park during the tendering process and Mark specifically said the council would "engage with members and stakeholders before selecting a preferred partner".

This has not been done. The whole mismanaged process of marketing the park is being conducted in secret. The council and its officers have reneged on promises of consultation with the people of Enfield.

Major property deals involving public land should be transparent. It is our land, and the council is merely a custodian of it, for the public good. If the shortlisted bids for Whitewebbs Park are of good quality then let residents see them so that we can voice informed opinions.

Sean Wilkinson

Chair, Friends of Whitewebbs Park

Little more conversation

Dear Enfield Dispatch

We observed that having limited interactions with people outside their household, as well as not being able to meet with friends or family indoors, has been difficult for most people. To help, Volunteer Centre Enfield has set up Enfield Conversation Cafe, a social group for furloughed residents, graduates, or recently unemployed, to reduce isolation and loneliness.

We will bring a few people together who would like to have conversations and share what is happening for them, all with openness, and no judgement. It will also be a great opportunity to meet new people, make new friends, have a face-to-face conversation about a whole range of topics, from holidays to hobbies, to plans for after lockdown.

We could possibly change our perception, inspire a generation, and create a new future.

Email volunteering@enfieldva.org.uk.

Meera Vasudevan
Volunteer Centre Enfield

Thank you, Betty!

Dear Enfield Dispatch

While wholeheartedly endorsing the tributes to the wonderful Monty Meth, I should like to remind readers of his equally wonderful wife, Betty, who deserves not only our deepest condolences but also our deepest gratitude for her support of Monty and for her independent charitable work in schools and the community. They say that 'behind every great man there's a great woman'. Betty is that dedicated, strong woman.

Ingrid Cranfield
Former Labour councillor

LTN battles

Dear Enfield Dispatch

In March, Fox Lane and District Residents' Association (FLDRA) held its annual general meeting online and, although it had to adjourn for technical reasons, it was clear that voting for the committee had become a battleground over the Fox Lane low-traffic neighbourhood (LTN).

Accusations have been flying that Better Streets for Enfield was trying to 'take over' the residents' association for its own agenda. However, what hasn't been mentioned is the fact that many of the 150 meeting attendees were themselves rallied by the One Community Against Enfield LTNs local group and that the agenda included two vexatious motions aimed against local residents who were standing for election, purely because they support the LTN.

While Better Streets supports the Fox Lane LTN trial, we would prefer FLDRA to maintain a neutral stance and are concerned that, in the past, this hasn't been the case. A neutral stance can allow an open discussion about the impacts, both positive and negative, and measures that may help tackle the issues that LTNs try to address.

Adrian Day
Better Streets for Enfield

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years and they distribute tools to every continent. The new retail store will be a reliable one-stop shop for car parts and motor accessories – all at competitive prices. They stock popular ranges of Draper tools, and if any item is currently not in stock it can be ordered for next-day collection – or posted direct to the customer for a small postage fee.

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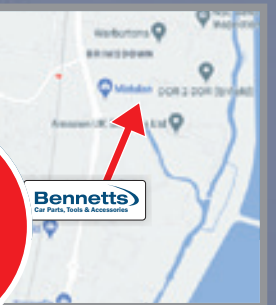
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Fears over future of Enfield's culture venues

Disagreements within the council have spilled out into the open

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

A major row has erupted within Enfield Council over a proposed shake-up of the borough's culture venues, the *Dispatch* understands.

Discussions are taking place at the civic centre over the future of Millfield Arts Centre (which includes both Millfield Theatre and Millfield House), Salisbury House Arts Centre and Green Towers Community Centre – all in Edmonton – with the former potentially being handed to an outside organisation, and the others potentially being transferred to the council's housing department.

But private disagreements between the council leadership and the culture team over the proposed moves have now spilled out into the open, after a petition was launched last month calling on the council to “save Paul Everitt and the Enfield cultural team from redundancy”.

Paul Everitt is the council's head of culture and the petition was launched by Emma Rigby, founder of community organisation Love Your Doorstep. The petition states: “Enfield Council are pushing out Paul and his team [...] We believe it's because Paul voices his opinions to the administration, putting Enfield's culture and leisure at the absolute forefront of his job,

and this makes the administration very uncomfortable.”

The council has declined to comment on the situation but the *Dispatch* understands that while no redundancies have been confirmed, a restructuring of the culture team could lead to several people's jobs being made obsolete.

The proposal for Millfield Arts Centre is to lease the venue to a separate theatre company. A key part of the disagreement within the council revolves around Edmonton potentially being left without any council-run culture venue, if the moves went ahead.

There have also been long-standing disagreements over the future of the Dugdale Centre in Enfield Town, which the council is set to reduce in size so that it can use the first floor as office space. Enfield Local Studies Library and Archive is being relocated to Enfield Civic Centre.

A new five-year culture strategy was launched by the council last autumn. In it, council leader Nesil Caliskan and deputy leader Ian Barnes wrote: “Culture surrounds us and is within us across Enfield: it is who we are and shapes the way we interact with each other.

“It both influences the path of history and is influenced by history itself, as well as being borne from religion and our multicultural traditions. It is the food we



Millfield Arts Centre is one of three Edmonton culture venues said to be part of an internal council reorganisation

eat, the languages we speak across the borough, our values, beliefs and customs.

“For some it might simply mean discussing a book or enjoying our cultural gems like Forty Hall and the Millfield Theatre, while for others it could mean a desire to write poetry, paint, compose songs, make films, create video games or take to a stage and dance.

“But our culture is constantly evolving and as a council we must keep pace with it and harness its power and economic benefits for all our residents.”

Yasemin Brett, a Labour councillor and former cabinet member for arts and culture, said: “Arts and culture are in many ways the driving force of any community, what brings people together creatively

to project a positive vision for the future of Enfield.

“Post Covid it is these arts activities, people and organisations that will help us overcome the terrible mental health crisis suffered during the pandemic.

“Any changes to this important area of work must take place with full consultation and transparency with all groups and those involved.”

Community action to tackle littering

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

Two local businesses have teamed up to help protect the environment in Enfield by setting up new community litter-picking groups.

Chamberlains Estates and Botany Bay Farm and Shop are organising a series of events this year aimed at tackling the problem of littering in the borough.

The first event was held in March and saw volunteers fill up several big bags with rubbish collected in and around the village of Botany Bay, helped by Mick Keeble and daughter Vickie Keeble from Botany Bay Farm and Shop.

More events are now scheduled, including in Enfield Town and Hilly Fields Park. Andrew Ryde, a partner at Chamberlains Estates, is helping to organise the new litter-picking groups. He told the *Dispatch*: “Bins in local parks are often full and then we get people tying dog waste to tree branches.

“The amount of fly-tipping I see while driving

around is awful. People have to book appointments at the moment to use the only recycling centre in the borough and it's not enough.

“As a community we have to do something. I think once we start cleaning up an area people will hopefully think twice about littering again. When the litter is already there, often people don't think about it.”

The next event will take place on Sunday 9th May from 9.30am, starting from Windmill Hill and including Chase Green and Gentleman's Row. The litter-picks are also supported by national charity Cleanup UK.

Andrew said: “The first event at Botany Bay went really well – we had twelve people volunteering and lots of rubbish collected. Neighbours were meeting neighbours they've not met before.

“I think it is something we can replicate and I am going to try and roll it out to other parts of the borough.”

To sign up as a volunteer:
Email mail@chamberlainsestates.com



Volunteers with the rubbish collected at their Botany Bay litter pick in March
Credit: Botany Bay Farm and Shop

The Three Inch Fools performing at a previous Broomfield Festival
Credit: Wilson Smith



Best of Broomfield

David Williamson from the Friends of Broomfield Park on what's planned for this summer's Broomfield Festival

After a year without much sign of live arts and culture, the Friends of Broomfield Park are determined to create a summer to remember.

Broomfield Summer Festival runs from May to October, using the 'Broomfield Bowl' – an old bowling green, repurposed for live outdoor events. We are planning a kaleidoscope of more than 40 events featuring music, theatre, cinema, dance, storytelling and food – something for everyone in the community.

In 2020 we were able to run three pilot events complying with Covid-19 rules, which showed us that we can run events safely at Broomfield Bowl and highlighted the appetite for more. Over the winter we have been forging partnerships with local and national organisations to create more events in the park this summer.

Working with local theatre producer Andrew Lynford, we are bringing touring theatre groups to Broomfield Park, including lots of fun family events, as well as Shakespeare and Gilbert and Sullivan. Andrew says: "I am so excited to see Broomfield Bowl become an import-

ant performance space and theatre companies are enthusiastic to make this one of their regular gigs."

Local performing arts schools Centre Stage and Chickenshed also feature in the programme. Carole O'Shea, principal of Centre Stage, says: "Last year we had to cancel all of our performances due to the restrictions, so we are delighted to perform outdoors at Broomfield Bowl this summer."

The Hazelwood Players are a group of former parents of Hazelwood School in Palmers Green. They are creating a brand new 'summer panto', a madcap tour around the world with lots of jokes and music but with a serious message about the environment at its core. Moira Foster, one of the production team, says: "We were all involved in school pantos which the children loved, so we are excited to try it out as a summertime event at the Broomfield Summer Festival."

The Ghanaian and Mauritian events in Trent Park attract thousands of people, but organiser Dennis Tawiah saw another great opportunity with Broomfield Summer Festival. He said: "Our big events are great, but we would

also like to do something more intimate, with smaller groups and with a strong community feel, and Broomfield Bowl is an ideal place to try out this new approach."

Ian Barnes, deputy leader of Enfield Council, is also delighted to see such community effort going on in Enfield's parks. He said: "Broomfield Summer Festival is exactly what we need right now to lift the spirits after a hugely challenging year, and it's exactly what we envisaged when we launched our new culture strategy."

"It's fantastic to be working in close partnership with Friends of Broomfield Park, generating such amazing events in our borough."

Broomfield Summer Festival is packed with new events and annual traditions such as Blues Sundays and Talkies Community Cinema outdoor screenings. There's lots to enjoy, whatever your tastes.

Friends of Broomfield Park is a volunteer-led, not-for-profit community group. Proceeds go towards supporting activities in the park.

Broomfield Summer Festival starts on Friday 21st May. For more information: Visit fobp.events

Making role models

Enfield performance artist Vilma Jackson on the launch of her all-deaf TV panel show

The Vilma Jackson Show aims to challenge societal norms, help the successes of deaf artists to be seen and celebrated on a wider scale, and to shine a light on the poor representation of people with black, Asian, and deaf identities in television and film.

Opportunity and representation has always been lacking in these industries. While I have been building a career performing on screen and stage, I have always been aware of these challenges, and I wanted to create a platform where they are acknowledged and debated, and hopefully to inspire action.

The Vilma Jackson Show is filmed in two episodes, and in the first I am joined by Kelsey Gordon, Rubena Aurangzeb-Tariq and Signkid. I invited people to come along and it was just a natural communication. It wasn't like it was too staged, it was just a natural flow. Once I started the first question, it became this beautiful conversation.

Our discussion highlights the talent within the hearing and deaf community and the barriers to progress within various industries, such as the favouritism that occurs with the deaf representation. The second episode is due for release shortly, and addresses the wider debate around diversity, inclusion and equality, to highlight that these issues do not only apply to the hearing world; they run deep into the deaf community and every corner of our society.

This project is incredibly

personal to me and I am so proud to be able to share it with the world. I am black, deaf, and a woman. Each of these present barriers but together they place me in a small minority.

When I was growing up, I was fascinated by television and the stars performing on it. I was fascinated by the Marx Brothers and Charlie Chaplin (who were not actually deaf) but I never saw anyone like me. Things are improving, but very slowly, and I want to highlight these issues for both hearing and deaf people.

It's so important to me that people of all backgrounds have role models in life and feel they can do anything they choose. As well as promoting diversity among the guests on my show, I have also employed a diverse production crew. These jobs are not easy to secure for those with hard of hearing or deafness, and that needs to change.

The development of The Vilma Jackson Show has been

funded by Arts Council England and is my second commission from them. My first is called *Triple Oppression* and explores my personal struggles, aspirations and

successes growing up. The show achieved critical acclaim and won four international awards.

I really hope my show helps elevate people's voices and improves understanding of the challenges of being a black or Asian deaf person.

Watch 'The Vilma Jackson Show': Facebook /VCRJ90



Station mosaics unveiled



The mosaics at Palmers Green Station, made by Alex McHallam and Tamara Froud, take inspiration from the area's parks and open spaces



All images courtesy of Amanda Eatwell: Visit amandaeatwellphotography.com



On Platform 1 at Palmers Green Station, four mosaic panels have been installed as a celebration of the local green spaces; the parks, rivers and gardens of the local area. Designed and made by Alex McHallam and Tamara Froud, the works were commissioned by Palmers Green Action Team (PGAT) and funded by Govia Thameslink Railway, the parent company of Great Northern which operates the railway station. Local knowledge really helped Alex research for material for the designs, as she grew up in the area. The artists also worked

on one of the panels with pupils from Broomfield School. Alex said: "I was thrilled to be asked to create site-specific work in an area I know so well. Once I had seen the arches on the platform I knew I wanted to fill them with art. "They are so inviting, as they suggest windows or doors into another view."

There is also a small reference to the pandemic as Alex and Tamara have included a discarded face mask with their initials on the 'parks' panel. She added: "There is no doubt that

the project has been shaped by the pandemic and we felt we wanted to acknowledge it as well as celebrating all the area."

Jenny Saunders, customer services director for Thameslink and Great Northern, said: "We owe a huge 'thank you' to Alex and Tamara for conceiving and creating this fabulous set of mosaics."

For more information about the artists:
Email alex_mchallam@outlook.com
Email mosaicallsorts@gmail.com

Advertisement

Walking the rainbow

Bush Hill Park author Jodie Webber on her new book

They say there is a book inside everyone, waiting to be written. But I'd never had any ambitions to write a book, it just kind of happened to me!

After the birth of my daughter in 2017, I decided to start my own business in marketing. I joined lots of local networking groups and met some fabulous people – some who would be key in the journey of my book, but I didn't know that yet.

It was late in 2019, when she was two years old, that my daughter Bobbie grabbed my face in her hands and said "mystic bunny boy" – really loudly! I had no idea what she was talking about. Neither did her nursery. It was something she would do repeatedly – my mother's intuition knew it was something I needed to listen to.

I used to tell Bobbie a rainbow meditation story before bed that I had created, and it always helped her stay calm and have a restful sleep. I realised that "mystic bunny boy" was her trying to create a character for our story together, which was amazing!

It wasn't until summer 2020 that I finally put the wheels in motion. With lockdown affecting so many people's mental health,

I thought perhaps our little story could help parents and children alike – the time was right for us to publish it.

I reached out to a few people in my network, who not only had the skills I needed to get a book published, but also gave me the confidence to go for it. Bobbie and I are now on a mission to help as many people as we can through sharing it.

When I wrote *Mystic Bunny Boy Walks the Rainbow* I thought it was aimed at younger children, between two and five years, but actually we've had great feedback from parents of older children and those with autism, who have really connected with this as a bedtime book.

It incorporates simple meditation practices, such as controlled breathing and visualisation written through the story, and parents are enjoying it as a chance for them to relax and bond with their children – which is amazing! The funny thing is, now I've written a book I have ideas for more coming into my head all the time. I think there will be a few more *Mystic Bunny Boy* adventures yet to come!

Get your copy of 'Mystic Bunny Boy Walks the Rainbow':
Visit mysticbunnyboy.com



Spreading the massage

Palmers Green massage therapist Steven Murdoch on how he has been able to give something back to the NHS staff who saved his life

Volunteering as a complementary therapist has given me the perfect way to say ‘thank you’.

Last month saw the reopening of therapies such as massage and reflexology. Like many other massage therapists, lockdown has presented me with many challenges, but it also brought a very special and personal opportunity.

Last November, I received notice through my professional association that University College London Hospital (UCLH) was looking for volunteer complementary therapists to offer much-needed treatments for a new NHS staff wellbeing project.

When I realised it was the UCLH, I couldn’t believe it. It isn’t too far-fetched to say that if it weren’t for the amazing staff of this hospital, I wouldn’t be alive today.

In 2017, at age 49, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. I remember the meeting at UCLH with the consultant urological surgeon. He was pretty straightforward. He told me I was young to have prostate cancer and described the tumour as having both animal cancer cells and monster cancer cells. He said it was a very aggressive cancer and if we didn’t act, I would likely only live another few years.

As I left the appointment, the consultant’s words were ringing in my head. “Let’s not mess around. We’ll remove the whole prostate. Animals are bad enough. We definitely don’t want more monsters.”

Three weeks later I had a prostatectomy for the removal of my prostate at UCLH. The size and positioning of the tumour meant the procedure wasn’t straightforward. This



meant more time in hospital and more time under the care of their brilliant staff.

While in hospital, strangely, I feel like I’m going into a place of worship – I have that much gratitude and reverence towards the staff. I’ve wanted so much to give something back, and now I am.

UCLH is innovative and pro-complementary therapy, so it is no surprise to see a staff wellbeing project like this being launched. I have been volunteering at the hospital since early March, giving clinical massage treatments for pain relief to staff referred through the occupational health team.

Similar to my Palmers Green treatment room, at the hospital I am treating musculoskeletal pain conditions, such as low back pain, tendinitis, and shoulder rotator cuff injuries.

It is still early days for the project, but there is so much gratitude – and not just from those receiving the massage. I’m pinching myself to have this opportunity to give something back to the staff of a hospital that means so much to me.

For more information about Steven Murdoch Clinical Massage:
Call 020 7661 7044
Visit stevenmurdoch.co.uk

Enfield smokers second-slowest to quit

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

Enfield has fallen far behind most of the rest of the country in its efforts to reduce the prevalence of smoking, research shows.

In 2019 the government set out a target to achieve ‘smoke-free’ status by 2030, but based on current quit rates, Enfield borough is not meet expected to meet the target for another 800 years.

The smoke-free target would be considered to have been met if all smokers had either quit or switched to other lower-risk forms of smoking, such as e-cigarettes or vaping. Using the latest data from Public Health England, research by retailer Vape Club shows 97% of areas in England will miss the target, with just four out of 135 local authority areas on track to meet it.

In Enfield, the current smoking rate is 15.8%, and only 0.31% of these smokers are

successfully quitting each year, providing a smoke-free year of 2816 when combined with take-up rates. This is the second-worst local end date for smoking in the country, behind only Havering. In England as a whole 13.9% of people are smokers, with a quit rate of 1.89%, giving a smoke-free year of 2051.

The 2030 target includes an ultimatum for the industry to make smoked tobacco obsolete. A recent Public Health England report found that “using a vaping product as part of a quit attempt in local stop smoking services



Data shows Enfield is not due to become smoke-free until 2816
Credit: Andres Simon/Unsplash

had some of the highest quit success rates – between 59.7% and 74% in 2019 and 2020”.

Dan Marchant, owner of Vape Club and founding member of the UK Vaping Industry Association, said: “More than half of UK smokers wrongly believe vaping is as dangerous as smoking, resulting in more people continuing to smoke – a habit that kills over 78,000 people in the UK annually.”

Dr Zirva Khan, a GP and expert on smoking, said: “Unfortunately because of the pandemic, many healthy lifestyle changes people had started to make, including smoking cessation, abruptly came to a halt.

“I have seen many of my patients take up unhealthy habits again like smoking as a way of coping with the stresses they have had to face. Education needs to be holistic, and not just focused on the health benefits, but social and financial advantages too.”

Enfield Council, which is responsible for public health in the borough, declined to comment.

New ways to contact your GP

Emma Friddin from Healthwatch Enfield on how local GP access is improving

In the last few months, lots of you have been getting in touch about problems contacting your GP.

The messaging throughout the pandemic has been that the NHS is ‘open’ and that you should still contact your doctor with any health concerns. However, many of you have said that your experiences have been quite different.

In all the reports we have recently published, one of the key consistent findings has been the problems local people have been having contacting health services during the pandemic. One of the solutions has been the use of digital technology for appointments, such as video calls and telephone calls. This was one way to continue ‘seeing’ patients during the height of lockdown but, because of the speed these solutions were needed, processes were introduced hastily, causing teething problems.

Now the pandemic is easing again, lots of GP practices in Enfield have introduced a new digital system called ‘Patches’. This service is easier to use than previous systems, enables patients to choose their preferred language, and provides quicker responses. So far, the feedback we have heard is positive, but we are keen to hear more. Have you had experience using Patches? Or another system your GP is using? Let us know your thoughts!

For those unable to use digital systems, there’s always the option to use a telephone. More in-person visits are being conducted now that coronavirus cases are lower, but health service providers are aware Covid-19 is still here and that keeping both patients and staff safe is a priority.

In other news, North Middlesex University Hospital is restarting non-emergency (planned) surgery. It’s also seeing more patients for appointments and focusing on supporting staff to recover from the impact the pandemic has had on their wellbeing.

If you have visited North Mid recently, you’ll notice they’ve made improvements to their car parking by introducing a pay-on-exit policy. This means you can pay when you leave the car park, rather than when you arrive, which can be helpful when you don’t know how long you will be. It’s something many of you have been requesting for a long time and shows how North Mid has listened to feedback.

Get in touch with Healthwatch Enfield:
Call 020 8373 6283
Visit healthwatchenfield.co.uk

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AROUND THE BOROUGH

ENFIELD HIGHWAY

Thousands sign petition backing pub

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

MORE THAN 5,000 PEOPLE have signed a petition against a pub company evicting the popular management team of a Hertford Road boozier.

The Red Lion has been run by Ray and Tracey Bell for 19 years and built a reputation for its varied entertainment, live music, and support for local charities. But owner Star Pubs is ending the couple's lease when the current term expires in September.

Shortly after pubs had been allowed to reopen for the first time in four months, Ray told the *Dispatch* that under direct control of the Heineken-owned pub management company the boozier would lose the character that made it special.

He said: "We've put a lot into it over the years. But they want to run it as a 'managed house' so it will basically be like just another Wetherspoons [type] pub.

"It's nothing we've done – we have got no debt and we are very successful in the area. What's



The Red Lion in Hertford Road has been run by Ray and Tracey Bell for 19 years

changed is the landscape. Tenants like us are now allowed to request MRO [market rent only] so we don't have to be tied into buying the beer the company wants us to.

"Pub companies have been trying to regain control over their pubs to stop it happening. We are a victim of circumstances, because we are a successful pub and our lease is up."

A petition was launched calling on Star Pubs to change its decision, saying the company "obviously doesn't know what an asset they have with

Ray and Tracey running this local community pub in the heart of the borough". Ray said they had been "humbled" by the response.

A Star Pubs spokesperson said: "Our plan is to retain The Red Lion as a great local pub catering for the needs of the whole community, with entertainment and viewing sport at the heart of its offer.

"We recognise The Red Lion is an important asset to Enfield and we want to ensure it remains sustainable for the long-term."

BOWES PARK

Life sentence for four attempted murders

A MAN WHO CARRIED OUT a "frenzied attack" on a woman and her three children at a Bowes Park home has been given a life sentence.

Liban Malhamoub, 45, of Livingstone Road, admitted four counts of attempted murder at the Old Bailey in January, having previously denied the crimes, and was sentenced last month.

The court heard how Malhamoub inflicted at least 50 knife wounds on his victims – a mother, aged in her 30s, and her three daughters, all aged under twelve – subjecting them to "extreme violence" and inflicting devastating injury. All parties involved were known to each other.

Police were called on Saturday

6th July 2019 to reports of an injured woman in the street in Livingstone Road. Officers and the London Ambulance Service



Attempted killer Liban Malhamoub

attended and the woman and three girls were found suffering from serious stab injuries. They received extensive medical treatment and, remarkably, all survived.

Malhamoub was arrested at the scene and was charged with attempted murder two days later. At court last month he was handed a life term and told he would serve a minimum of 32 years behind bars.

Detective Superintendent Adam Ghaboos said: "This is a tragic case in which a woman and three children suffered horrendous injuries in an unprovoked attack. I would like to commend their bravery and resilience. Their strength has been incredible."

CHASE SIDE

Royal rebuild

BY SIMON ALLIN, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

A CHARITY HAS WON PERMISSION to build 'affordable' and family-sized homes as part of a redevelopment of one of its Enfield sites.

Councillors approved plans by The Royal British Legion to build ten flats and six three-bedroom houses at its base in Holtwhites Hill. Six of the homes – two houses and four flats – will be classed as 'affordable', while ten will be three-bedroom, family-sized units.

The scheme was approved at a meeting of the planning committee in March, where councillors praised the housing mix and called for more schemes like it to be brought forward.

Alex Houghton, commercial team leader at The Royal British Legion, told the meeting the building was surplus to requirements and only used for monthly meetings and as a base for administration. However, a small office building for the charity will be retained as part of the development.

MERIDIAN WATER

Contracts signed

ENFIELD COUNCIL HAS SIGNED a series of commercial contracts to help with the delivery of infrastructure at Meridian Water.

The local authority was awarded £170million last year by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

and will use it to build roads, bridges, cycle lanes and parkland, as well as the water, gas and communications networks required to deliver 10,000 homes

and 6,000 jobs.

The companies now signed up are Vinci Taylor Woodrow, BAM Nuttall and VolkerFitzpatrick,

"This will be a major step forward"

which will collectively support the delivery of £90m-worth of infrastructure works.

Council leader Nesil Caliskan said: "Successfully delivering the infrastructure on the site will be a major step forward in what will be a transformational plan for the area."

WINCHMORE HILL

Suburban glory

A NATIONAL NEWSPAPER HAS named Winchmore Hill as one of the best places to live in London.

The *Sunday Times* put the suburb among its top-five best places to live in the capital after describing it as "homespun suburbia at its neighbourly best, offering well-proportioned houses, excellent schools, and a friendly local high street".

The "star attraction", according to the paper, "is Grovelands Park; 90 glorious acres with tennis courts, bowls and golf as well as a lake, a stream, woodland walks, all overlooked by a grand Georgian mansion that John Nash probably didn't expect to be occupied by the Priory Clinic when he designed it in the 1790s".

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The new Enfield Station (today's Enfield Chase) when first opened in 1910
Credit Enfield Local Studies and Archive (ELSA)

The railway that transformed Enfield

Historian David Cockle, from The Enfield Society, takes a look back at the fascinating history of the Hertford Loop

Great Northern Railway (GNR) opened its new branch line from Wood Green to Enfield on 1st April 1871, just over 150 years ago.

This was a modification to the act of parliament, passed in March 1865, for a new railway from Hornsey to Hertford. GNR wanted an alternative route to provide relief to the busy section of its main line south of Hitchin.

The plan was to join up the Hatfield to Hertford (Cowbridge) branch, just south of Hertford. Trains would then head west to join the Great Northern Main Line south of Digswell Viaduct, by means of a new north-facing curve.

However, a financial crisis in 1866 caused the Hornsey to Hertford line beyond Enfield to be abandoned, making Enfield the terminus of the new route. There were initially just two intermediate stations on the branch line; Palmers Green and Winchmore Hill. Bowes Park opened later, on 1st April 1880.

The branch had to cross the valleys of the Pymmes and Salmons brooks, which led to some high embankments. Where the line crossed Salmons Brook, at Grange Park, was particularly troublesome, with the heavy clay soil causing slips. The Board of Trade sanctioned the new branch on condition that a 10mph speed restriction be imposed over the embankment. Additionally, a watchman was stationed at the line side, in case of any further slips.

There were initially 16 weekday trains and five on Sundays, nearly all running to Moorgate Street via Farringdon Street (both stations are now sans 'street'). One mid-morning train actually ran through to Victoria via Ludgate Hill and Brixton. The frequency gradually increased with North London Railway running trains from Broad Street to Enfield in 1875 and South Eastern Railway running trains through from Woolwich in 1879.

It was not until the late 1880s that suburban development arrived around Bowes Park, by which time the train service had increased to nearly 30 a day. Palmers Green and Winchmore Hill, meanwhile, remained rural in character until the 1900s, when estate land became developed.

Suburban traffic steadily increased, but competition arrived in 1907, with the electric trams running from Finsbury Park along



The original GNR terminus station at Windmill Hill, Enfield, in 1898
Credit ELSA

Green Lanes to reach Palmers Green (1907), Winchmore Hill (1908) and Enfield (1909). This caused both relief and concern for the GNR; serious peak-hour congestion at Kings Cross was relieved, but some off-peak traffic was lost. Competition from the tube also led to the withdrawal of the cross-London trains to Victoria and Woolwich in 1907.

A significant development had come in 1898 when the new Enfield to Stevenage line was approved. This would provide the long-awaited alternative route to relieve the main line. But it took considerable time to arrange the finance and contracts and it was not until January 1906 that the first contract was let for a four-and-a-half mile section out to Cuffley.

The extension started at Grange Park, in order for the line to gain height and cross Windmill Hill via a new bridge. Two viaducts were also built, one north of Gordon Hill (Rendlesham), to carry the line over Turkey Brook, and one south of Cuffley (Soper's Farm) to cross Northaw Brook.

The old Enfield terminus was converted into a goods depot, while a new station (today's Enfield Chase) was built adjacent to the new bridge over Windmill Hill.

On 4th April 1910, the Cuffley extension was opened with its new stations; Grange Park, Enfield, Gordon Hill, Crews Hill and Cuffley. The majority of trains turned back at Gordon Hill, with 16 going through to Cuffley. As Crews Hill and Cuffley had little

housing, the demand for travel was low.

The First World War delayed completion of the next extension, from Cuffley to Stevenage. It involved boring two tunnels, Ponsbourne and Molewood. Two viaducts south of Hertford were built to carry the line over the rivers Lea and Mimram. Eventually, on 4th March 1918, a single line opened for freight trains providing the desired link through to the main line – and the 'Hertford Loop' was born.

By December 1920, the track was doubled, and on 2nd June 1924 new stations opened at Bayford, Hertford North, Stapleford and Watton-at-Stone.

Most stations had goods yards handling domestic coal and general merchandise. The Palmers Green yard was extended in 1928, with two new sidings serving a loading wharf for building material on the west side of the line.

Winchmore Hill sidings lay between Vicars Moor Lane and Green Dragon Lane and, up to the early 1950s, there was an early-morning milk train to Kings Cross, loaded with churns for Nix Dairy. But the busiest yard was at the old Enfield terminus; among the goods it handled were bananas for Fyffes, which set up a banana ripening plant there.

As late as 1962, a coal concentration depot was established at Enfield, receiving fuel direct from collieries. This was short-lived, as in 1974 the Enfield sidings were closed and the land sold for housing.

In the early days of the Hertford Loop, trains consisting of up to eleven gas-lit coaches were pulled by small tank locomotives. There were first, second and third class compartments. Improvements came in 1925 when new, smooth-riding 'Quadart' coaches with articulated bogies were introduced. These were hauled by new powerful Class N2 tank locomotives, which had seats for 600 passengers and ran for almost 40 years.

In 1958, diesel trains replaced some steam trains and, in summer 1959, all passenger trains were scheduled as diesel trains, heralding the end of steam on the route. In 1976, the line was electrified, and trains started taking a new shorter route to Moorgate via Highbury & Islington.

“There was a morning milk train to Kings Cross”

The latest improvement came in 2019, when the first-generation electric trains were replaced by new Class 717 trains, and the best-ever timetable saw 180 trains scheduled each weekday.

During the pandemic, passenger numbers plummeted to 15%, but this is now increasing steadily. It remains to be seen whether the number of commuters travelling to the City reaches pre-Covid levels, but the trend shows leisure travel increasing faster.

The Hertford Loop is now assured a bright future, both as a diversion from the main line, and in serving North London's suburbs and Hertfordshire.



Andreas and Chris Evangelou outside The Fit Factory in Cockfosters

Boxing brothers fighting fit as new gym opens

The Evangelou brothers are celebrating opening their own gym in Cockfosters, reports James Cracknell

Two former boxing champions have opened a gym in Cockfosters after overcoming the economic challenges presented by the pandemic.

Chris and Andreas Evangelou – who both became International Masters champions at the height of their professional boxing careers in 2014 – were forced to delay the full opening of The Fit Factory in Station Parade by several months, after the second wave of the pandemic hit last winter.

While they had been able to trade as a coffee shop in the interim, the pair were finally able to celebrate the official launch of their gym last month after the government confirmed it would lift restrictions and allow leisure venues to open.

The Fit Factory, which occupies a former dry cleaners unit, has been fitted out with six punching bags, weights and other exercise equipment, while the front area serves coffee, smoothies and snacks. It is only permitted to allow individual adults to train initially, until 17th May, but children are currently

allowed to take part in a range of group classes.

Chris, who also works as an actor and recently starred in Guy Ritchie gang movie *The Gentlemen*, told the *Dispatch*: “We have spent six or seven years trying to find a place like this. We wanted somewhere local to us because we are both from Enfield and we have a big following in the area, especially in the Greek community.

“We wanted to give something back to the boxing world. We have a wealth of knowledge and we want to train young people.”

While The Fit Factory is not being run as a boxing club, Chris and Andreas want to use the gym to introduce young people to the sport, with few nearby facilities available for training. The brothers’ father, Costakis Evangelou, also happens to run Edmonton Eagles Amateur Boxing Club, should any young boxers wish to compete locally.

“Even after boxing around the world and acting in films, this is the biggest venture of my life,” Chris said.

“We’ve put our life savings into

this, we didn’t have any loans. We are boxers at heart and we will always fight to succeed in life – it’s rare at the moment to see a business opening rather than closing.”

A year ago Chris found himself out of work, when his acting career was put on hold because of the pandemic, while he also had to pause his personal training business. But the spare time helped him and Andreas put together their business plan for the new gym.

Andreas said: “I have worked in a lot of youth clubs but many of them have closed in recent years – what after-school activities are there for kids now? There is not a lot going on in Cockfosters and Oakwood.

“We want kids to be doing something healthy and productive. During lockdown they’ve been stuck at home but now we’ve got this space here for them to support their physical development, as well as their emotional wellbeing, and help with anger management issues and conflict resolution.”

For more information about The Fit Factory: Visit thefitfactory.co.uk

Tackling racism in football

Enfield Town FC player says more needs to be done, writes Andrew Warshaw

The scourge of online racist abuse targeting black professional footballers has reached alarming and disturbing levels, with calls for social media companies to crack down and name and shame the culprits.

While the non-league game is certainly not immune from some of the disgraceful comments posted on established platforms, instances are thankfully relatively few and far between.

Enfield Town FC prides itself on racial integration, all the more so being a supporter-owned club. But defender Jeremiah Gyebi is fully aware of what happens further up the pyramid and believes a lot more has to be done to stamp it out.

Jeremiah represented the club at the recent Enfield Stand Up to Racism meeting, conducted via Zoom, and in a powerful address to delegates denounced those who use anonymous accounts to hurl racist comments online yet somehow get away with it.

“Anyone can create an account with a fake name and fake picture and go and abuse a player,” said Jeremiah. “There should definitely be something in place whereby if you sign up for a platform, you have to identify yourself properly, maybe a passport or driving licence.

“That way the culprits could be tracked down and prosecuted.”

Jeremiah, thankfully, has not experienced any racism so far in his career but sympathises with professional players such as Wilfred Zaha of Crystal Palace who are getting tired of taking a knee without seeing any tangible results.

“I am still for taking a knee but it’s not enough to eradicate racism in football,” he said. “I sometimes feel it has been put in place just for the sake of it. It’s the right thing to do but it’s not enough.

“If a fan is caught being racist there should be harsher penalties. Maybe even a lifetime ban, something that can scare others.”

Jeremiah would like to see football anti-racism charity Kick It Out do even more to get the anti-discrimination message across.

“I remember when I was 17 attending a workshop given by Kick It Out. Thinking about it now, four years later, I didn’t feel that they went deep enough into the subject in terms of how to stop it.

“Enough is enough. Let’s be honest, if a white player has a bad game, he just gets told he’s not good enough. But when someone uses the colour of your skin to justify why you’ve had a bad game, for a young player to experience such a thing – perhaps a teenager making his debut – that’s beyond me.

“It’s time for black footballers, when they step out on the pitch, to not have fear about being racially abused.

“The same goes for players’ families, who are also abused on social media. It’s unacceptable in 2021 and, believe me, it has a huge effect on the player. No-one wants to go out on the pitch if they think their family might be abused if they make a mistake.”

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