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WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

Free
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Leyton's Asha Philip (far left) celebrating her bronze medal at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, with 4 x 100m relay teammates Imani-Lara Lansiquot, Dina Asher-Smith and Daryll Neita. Read more on Waltham Forest athletes' Olympic success on p7 © Team GB/Sam Mellish

Council court battle over young Afghan refugee's age

High Court ruling says age of refugee, who arrived in the UK in 2019, was "not lawfully assessed" by Waltham Forest Council. The case continues

by Victoria Munro,
Local Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest Council is embroiled in a High Court battle after claiming an Afghan refugee lied about being a child. According to the refugee, known

only as M to protect his identity, he fled Afghanistan at the age of 13 and arrived in the UK, alone, in October 2019 at age 14.

He was taken into care by Waltham Forest Council but the council later decided he was really an adult man, estimating he was between 19 and 22 when he arrived in the UK.

The council based its decision on M's "mature physical appearance" and alleged "deliberate withholding of vital information" during an interview with two social workers in May 2020.

Charity Refugee Council helped M challenge the decision, arguing he had not been allowed to defend himself, but in October

that year, the council argued his lack of growth and wisdom teeth proved their original conclusion was correct.

Following a hearing in June 2021, High Court deputy judge Dan Squires QC ruled the council had "not lawfully assessed" M's age and carried out its assessment "in a procedurally unfair manner".

In his written judgement, he wrote: "The ability to accurately assess a person's age, especially when they may be close to 18, from the development of their teeth is an area of significant controversy on which there is not a clear and reliable expert position."

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NEWS



FELLOWSHIP IS LIFE

SEPTEMBER 2021

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Waltham Forest Echo is the borough's free community newspaper. We publish monthly and distribute 17,500 free copies of each issue – and we will continue to do so during the ongoing public health crisis

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Whipps Cross 'delay in care' due to 'inadequate' scanning

An inspection earlier this year found the service responsible for X-rays and ultrasounds was not up to par



Whipps Cross University Hospital

by Victoria Munro,
Local Democracy Reporter

Whipps Cross Hospital is scanning patients with “ageing equipment [that does] not always work”, according to a recent inspection.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) announced on 30th July

that the hospital’s diagnostic imaging service, responsible for X-rays, ultrasounds and other scans, was “inadequate”.

Inspectors visiting in May found equipment issues “delayed patient care” and that a programme to replace old equipment had not fixed the problem, as some new purchases were unusable.

Nicola Wise, head of hospital

inspection, said the CQC had “several serious concerns” about what it found, including reports from staff that they were scared to raise issues.

She said: “We found that ageing equipment did not always work, resulting in a delay to patient care.

“In some cases, new equipment had been purchased but could not be used, as it had not been integrated into the software systems.

“We [also] found rooms containing specialist equipment were not always locked, posing a risk to staff, patients and visitors.”

The inspection team reported that the hospital’s radiographers “did not always have time, or permission, to keep up-to-date records of systems that were indicating faults”.

They were also “deeply concerned” by staff reporting they were afraid to raise concerns in case they were “treated unfavourably” by managers – and that they felt some allegations of “bullying, harassment, racism and sexism... had not been resolved”.

Wise added: “We told the trust that it must ensure that the governance and risk management structures for completing and

monitoring risk assessments are improved and that it must manage the staff rota more effectively.

“I am pleased to report that the trust has already taken urgent steps to address our concerns. We will keep a close eye on the situation and return to inspect to ensure that improvements are made and fully embedded.”

Responding to the report, the group chief executive of the hospital’s trust, Barts Health, said it is “accelerating... efforts to make lasting change happen more quickly”.

Group chief executive Dame Alwen Williams DBE also said it was “concerning to hear that some staff have had experience of bullying, harassment and sexism”, calling this “unacceptable”.

She said: “We have a responsibility to listen to what our hard-working team is saying, and respond appropriately and sensitively.

“We will be ensuring staff have the resources to sustain improvements we need to make.

“We are committed to eliminating discrimination, ensuring equality of opportunity and promoting good relations between all people [and] are continuing to investigate every complaint made.”

Changes at the Echo

by Elizabeth Atkin

In this issue, we report on the inquest linking Whipps Cross Hospital to a man’s death (p4), the bus lane making Waltham Forest Council £1.3million per year in fines (p5), the council’s court battle over locked-up teens (p5) and criticism of the council’s estate-sprucing scheme Proud Places (p18).

Meet the borough’s Tokyo 2020 Olympic medallists (p7), celebrate a decade of The Mill community centre (p9), and enjoy interviews with Rhythm Kitchen founder Delroy (p13),

social enterprise Mbilla Arts (p14) and beloved local bus driver Mohammed (p18). Our regular columnists Penny Rutterford (p15) and Michelle Edwards (p19) also feature.

I’m particularly pleased that this edition of the paper highlights several of Waltham Forest’s inspirational people and community organisations. But sadly, it will be my last as editor.

Happily, the editor role will now be held by Victoria Munro, who you may recognise as the Local Democracy Reporter for Waltham Forest, Redbridge and Havering. It’s a much-deserved

promotion for Victoria, as she’s been doing exceptional work in local journalism for the past three years.

The *Echo* has already grown so much in 2021. We print 7,500 more papers each month, have four more newsstands, an increased physical presence in Leyton and Leytonstone – plus our online readership has more than doubled, with a new website design forthcoming. In Victoria’s extremely capable hands, the paper is bound to continue this upward trend.

But without the ongoing support of *Echo* members,

advertisers, contributors and readers, none of this would be possible. Thanks to all of you, and to everyone who has taken the time to get touch with me, sharing their views, feedback, ideas and letters.

It’s been an honour to be your editor, and I’ll continue to do my bit for the paper: as a reader, a voluntary contributor and as a digital advisor to our publisher, Social Spider CIC.

If you’d like to get involved with the Echo, please do get in touch.

Visit walthamforestecho.co.uk
Email wfecho@socialspider.com

NEWS

14-year-old charged with Chingford murder

Dad James Markham, 45, was fatally stabbed on 9th August

by James Cracknell
& Elizabeth Atkin

A teenager aged 14 has been charged with the murder of a 45-year-old man in Chingford.

The boy was charged with the murder of James Markham, who died on Monday, 9th August, from stab wounds. He has also been charged with possession of a knife in a public place and breach of a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO).

The teenager, who cannot be named for legal reasons, appeared at Stratford Youth Court on Friday, 13th August.

A second boy, also aged 14, was arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to murder but has been released under investigation. A 16-year-old girl, who was arrested on suspicion of assisting an offender, has also been released under investigation.

“Police were called to Churchill Terrace, in Chingford Mount, at 6.20pm, following reports of a disturbance. James was seriously injured and pronounced dead at the scene”

Police were called to Churchill Terrace, in Chingford Mount, at 6.20pm on 9th August, following reports of a disturbance. Dad-of-three James, aged 45, was found seriously injured. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Waltham Forest Council’s cabinet member for community safety, Ahsan Khan, issued a statement following the incident saying: “My heart goes out to them [James’s family] at



James Markham

this devastating time. Your pain is our pain and the people of Waltham Forest grieve with you.

“I urge anyone who has any information to do the right thing and come forward. James’ family deserve nothing less.

“Incidents like this should never happen in our city. Waltham Forest Council works hard with a range of partners to tackle at root the factors that draw some of our young people into violence.

“We have invested heavily in our Violence Reduction Partnership programme, which aims to strengthen the community, support local families, and reduce violence in Waltham Forest so that our residents feel safer.

“However, we know there is more to do. We are determined to use all the resources we have available to us to achieve it.”

Anyone with information is asked to contact the police on 101, giving the reference 5735/09AUG. Information can also be provided to Crimestoppers anonymously by calling 0800 555 111.

On 25th August, a 30-year-old man, Kieran McHugh, was charged with a separate knife-related murder in the borough.

Abdi Khadar Adan, 32, died of stab injuries in hospital, after police were called to a Lea Bridge Road property at 4.31pm on Sunday, 22nd August.

COMMENT



Credit Wikicommons

Why I’m going on a council tax strike

Local resident Sarah Eastwood is making a monetary protest against the Edmonton Incinerator

From September, I am going to be withholding £10 of my council tax each month.

I’ve been a resident of Waltham Forest for over 20 years. I’m a parent and an active member of the community. I’ve always paid my taxes promptly and in full – but I am so horrified by plans to spend £680 million from council taxes (paid by residents of seven North London boroughs, including Waltham Forest) on building an enormous new incinerator to replace the current one in Edmonton, that I feel I have no choice but to take a stand.

Incineration produces incredibly high carbon emissions. The planned incinerator will produce an estimated 700,000 tonnes of CO2 per year – which would equal just over 10% of North London’s total emissions from 2018 – and lead to highly damaging air pollution.

There has been an ongoing local campaign against the new incinerator, which has presented huge amounts of

evidence and personal testimony – but the North London Waste Authority (NLWA), who are responsible for the incinerator plans on behalf of Waltham Forest and six other boroughs, have refused to engage in any meaningful discussion.

“My difficult decision to strike will hopefully force a proper public debate about what is happening”

They have not conducted modelling of local health impacts and have failed to update their plans in the light of falling waste levels (according to gov.uk statistics) and higher recycling targets. The new incinerator will have a lifespan of over 50 years, and will have far too high a capacity to be met by local waste – so instead waste will have to be brought in from other parts of the country to be

burnt in our neighbourhood.

NLWA counter that the incinerator will produce renewable energy – but energy from incinerators is dirtier than natural gas. They claim there’ll be carbon and toxic particulates capture, but this technology is still at magical thinking stage. They claim there is no alternative, but they’re already massively failing against even the current recycling targets and failing to adopt proven ‘Reduce Reuse Recycle’ innovations.

At times, it can feel that as one voter or taxpayer, there is very little that we do to make an impact on these decisions. Though we’ve raised our concerns, we are not being heard. My difficult decision to strike will hopefully force a proper public debate about what is happening.

To discuss my plans, email:
NLincineratorCTS@protonmail.com

To find out more about the incinerator, visit
walthamforestecho.co.uk/tag/incinerator

NEWS

Inquest links Whipps Cross to man's death

Coroner concludes that Whipps Cross Hospital's failings were "closely connected" to death of 67-year-old patient Raymond Maxwell

by Victoria Munro,
Local Democracy Reporter

A Whipps Cross patient died after receiving a "suboptimal" dose of medication for four days, an inquest revealed in August.

Raymond Maxwell, 67, died on 8th September 2019 of a pulmonary embolism, meaning blood clots from deep vein thrombosis elsewhere in his body blocked the arteries in his lungs.

Raymond was admitted on 4th September and was prescribed Inhixa, a blood thinner. However, according to the hospital's guidelines, he received only half the dose he should have.

At his inquest's conclusion, coroner Nadia Persaud said there were "clear failings" in his care and "poor clinical decision making" regarding his risk of venous thromboembolism (VTE).

She said: "At no time during his four-day admission was a full and accurate VTE risk assessment carried out."

"The trust guidelines required him

to receive 40mg twice-daily [because he weighed more than 100 kilograms] but he was prescribed and administered once daily.

"This reduced dose was recognised by two pharmacists, who documented on the drug chart the need for his dose to be adjusted but did not draw this to the attention of the medical team.

"Following the inquest, a Barts Health spokesperson said the trust wished to offer its 'deepest sympathies' to the Maxwell family"

"Had he been provided with a dose in accordance with the trust's guidelines, this would have provided more assurance that all that could have been done to prevent the fatal pulmonary embolism was done.

"But, on the evidence available, it is not possible to conclude a higher

dose would have prevented his death."

The court heard evidence from Dr Chris Miller, who is unconnected to Whipps Cross or its trust Barts Health, that there is overall a "lack of evidence" on whether heavier patients need a higher dose of Inhixa.

Persaud also noted in her conclusion that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence does not require patients of Raymond's weight to receive a double dose.

However, she remained concerned by the three assessments of his risk of developing VTE carried out during his stay in hospital.

None of the three doctors, two of which have not been identified, spotted all the risk factors in his case: his age, obesity and history of deep vein thrombosis.

The third doctor, only four weeks into her medical practice, gave evidence that she rushed an electronic assessment purely to view his notes, as accessing them was not possible until it was done.

She added that she intended to go back and fill it out properly later, although this never happened.

The day before his death, Raymond was seen by a registrar [ward round doctor], who told the court he noticed the low dose but "decided against" increasing it to avoid raising the risk of an internal bleed.

Persaud considered this "poor clinical decision making" because, after realising guidelines were not being followed, there "should have been careful consideration of the risk of both bleeding and VTE".

She decided against concluding Raymond died of "natural causes" and opted for a narrative conclusion, arguing the hospital's failings were "closely connected" to his cause of death.

She added she was still deciding whether to write a report to prevent future deaths and was awaiting more evidence from Barts Health NHS Trust on how it had learned from the incident.

Following the inquest, a Barts Health spokesperson said the trust wished to offer its "deepest sympathies" to the Maxwell family.

They added: "We take the concerns raised at the inquest very seriously and will shortly provide the coroner with a full account of the improvements we put in place to prevent any repetition.

"The trust is about to introduce electronic prescribing of medicines, which will lead to significant improvements in the safety and accuracy of medicine prescription and administration."

Continued from Page 1

"While dental maturation or a lack of growth may indicate that a person is within a few years of 18, it cannot definitively determine whether the person is, say, 19 as opposed to 16/17."

Deputy judge Squires QC therefore decided the council's evidence from October 2020 was not compelling enough to make up for its failure to conduct a fair assessment earlier in May.

He noted that the social workers who decided M was not a child based this largely on their view that he "was not sufficiently forthcoming about matters which would enable his age to be determined", such as the age of his siblings or how long he had attended his religious school.

He wrote: "Where it is proposed to take a decision on the basis that a person is believed to have "deliberately withheld information", or that there are "discrepancies" or inconsistencies in their account, that is precisely the kind of situation in which fairness requires the person be able to comment prior to a final conclusion being reached.

"According to the refugee, known only as M, he fled Afghanistan at the age of 13 and arrived in the UK, alone, in October 2019 at age 14"

"They may have answers to the assessors' concerns and fairness requires they be permitted to respond to the concerns before a final decision is taken.

"Indeed, in the present case it is not clear what "discrepancies" or lack of "consisten[cy]" the [council] was referring to."

He ruled that M's case should go before the Upper Tribunal Court, which will "carry out the necessary fact-finding determination" to estimate his real age.

A spokesperson for the Refugee Council, who are supporting M's legal challenge, confirmed a date for this hearing has not yet been set.

A Waltham Forest Council spokesperson said: "We do not discuss cases involving children and young people where there are still active proceedings.

"The council has a duty to ensure it accurately assesses the circumstances of anyone who requests help to make sure they receive the appropriate support to meet their specific needs."

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NEWS

Charity wins court battle against council over locked-up teens

Case against Waltham Forest Council used to highlight lack of accommodation for young offenders in London

by Victoria Munro,
Local Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest Council has failed its legal duty to accommodate arrested teenagers and prevent them sleeping in police cells while awaiting trial, a court has ruled.

Local councils are obligated to securely house suspected young offenders, in order to minimise their distressing time in custody, unless it is “impracticable” or they are a danger to the public.

But the Court of Appeal ruled the council did not have a “reasonable prospect” of ever being able to fulfil this duty because there are no secure accommodation providers in London.

Charity Just for Kids Law brought a judicial review against the council on behalf of a then-16-year-old boy from Waltham Forest, who was arrested in Lewisham in 2018 and spent a night in the police station because there was nowhere for him to go. The charity states it hopes to use the council as an example to criticise the lack of suitable accommodation across London.



Credit Grant Durr/Unsplash

In 2018, the Waltham Forest teen was one of 342 requests by police across London to securely house an arrested juvenile, of which only one was met. Jennifer Twite, from Just for Kids Law, said: “It is a national scandal that we do not provide proper accommodation for our most vulnerable children when they are denied bail.

“It has been known for a long time that there are insufficient secure children’s homes, and the fact that there are none in the London area is unbelievable.

“I hope that this case demonstrates [that] the current position is both unlawful and unacceptable and will lead to

serious improvement in this area.”

The charity’s first request for a judicial review was dismissed in March 2020, after the court found the council had “a reasonable system in place”, but has now been granted on appeal.

Explaining his ruling, Lord Justice Rabinder Singh wrote: “Having a reasonable system in place means more than simply having a telephone service or ‘negotiating’ with the police to see if secure accommodation is really required.

“It includes at least the reasonable prospect, in practice, of being able to provide such secure accommodation in a case where it is needed.

“In practice, there is no realistic prospect of secure accommodation being available for a child in response to a request from the police.

“The system was inherently likely to fail in the sense that, as a matter of routine, the answer to a police request would be ‘no’.”

However, he added: “There simply are no units available which can realistically be used either within London or within a sufficiently close distance that a child could properly be produced in good time at a magistrates’ court.

“The stark reality is therefore that children are having to be put into police cells overnight as the norm rather than the exception.”

In the case of the 16-year-old, due to appear in court the next day, the nearest secure accommodation was in Hailsham, East Sussex.

Responding to the ruling, a council spokesperson said it planned to lodge an appeal “in due course” and was working with other London councils to find “a permanent solution”.

They said: “We take our duties around young people in police custody extremely seriously and their welfare needs are always the top priority.

“The nearest overnight secure accommodation found for the 17-year-old boy in this case was 90 miles. As he was expected in court the next morning, this was both impractical and not in his interests.

“We [and other councils] have put a proposal to the government of two sites in the capital that will resolve this issue and ensure young people are supported during what is a traumatic time.”

At the time of the ruling on 30th June, Lord Justice Singh noted there was “no evidence” the council had applied for government funding to resolve the issue.

Bus lane brings in over £1 million in yearly fines

Council accused of using lane, near Whipps Cross Hospital, as a “warped income generation scheme”

by Victoria Munro,
Local Democracy Reporter

A bus lane near Whipps Cross Hospital earned Waltham Forest Council more than £1 million in fines in the last twelve months.

In the year before 1st August, 26,309 fines were issued to drivers who strayed into the 24-hour bus lane on Whipps Cross Road, totalling more than £1.3m in fines.

This means just over a tenth of the council’s total income from fining drivers in that period, which was more than £12.5m, came from this one bus lane.

The sum was revealed through a Freedom of Information request, submitted by Redbridge resident Helen Watson, who says she and her son received three

fines from the bus lane in one week – and has accused the council of using it as a “warped income generation scheme”.

She argues the way Green Man Roundabout is set up makes it easy to accidentally stray into the bus lane, which ends just before the junction.

Speaking to the Local Democracy Reporting Service, she said: “I’m not one of those people that complains about parking, I hardly drive, but I think this is just an outrage.

“Isn’t there something really wrong with the traffic management on this road that £1.3m of fines have been issued to residents for making a mistake in their driving?

“If this level of error is being made, the council needs to look at its signage, its road layout and whether the position of the bus lane gives motorists space to

safely approach the junction.

“I would like the council to... find out why so many residents are being penalised and issue an apology to all the local people it has blatantly fleeced for the last twelve months.”

In 2014, the *East London Guardian* reported that the council had installed a new CCTV camera at the junction, leading to an increase in fines.

However, deputy council leader Clyde Loakes told the Local Democracy Reporting Service that the road is “one of the busiest highways” in the borough and that the “vast majority” of drivers are able to avoid the bus lane.

He said: “A recent vehicle count estimated that some six million vehicles use this road in both directions every year.

“The vast majority – more than 99% – do so without straying into the bus lane

and so do not attract fines.

“The enforcement of bus lanes is a vital part of keeping the traffic flowing. It is particularly important around hospitals especially for older people and those with restricted mobility who may have no option but to attend appointments using public transport.

“Between 2017 and spring of 2019, a major reconstruction converted the junction from a roundabout to a junction controlled by traffic lights. The work included dedicating cycle lanes from every direction and was part of a £15m improvement plan for Lea Bridge Road.

“All signs and lines used in this, as with other roads in Waltham Forest, strictly follow Department for Transport standards, and are therefore fully compliant with legislation.”

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NEWS

Olympic wins for Waltham Forest women

Leytonstone's Bethany Shriever and Leyton's Asha Philip both won medals at Tokyo 2020



Bethany Shriever Credit SWPix.com

by Elizabeth Atkin

Waltham Forest had a stellar run at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games – with two of its athletes winning medals.

Leytonstone-born Bethany Shriever, 22, took home gold in the women's BMX racing.

The men's silver medallist, Kye Whyte, from Peckham, picked her up on the track post-win, taking her for a spin – in part to celebrate, but also because Bethany's

legs had cramped up following the race. "I just gave it everything," Bethany told BBC Sport afterwards. "I had nothing left in my legs at the end there. I was lucky Kye was there because I honestly couldn't even walk. So to have him there to lift me up and to celebrate together was amazing."

"Honestly, it's crazy. I'm still speechless, still overwhelmed... Pretty much the perfect day – I gave it all I got, and got rewarded with this gold medal"

Of her win, she added to Eurosport: "Honestly, it's crazy. I'm still speechless, still overwhelmed. The amount of support me and Kye have been receiving is out of this world. Pretty much the perfect day – I gave it all I got, and got rewarded with this gold medal."

Bethany's winning streak continued just a few weeks later on 23rd August – she took the top title at the women's BMX World Championships in the Netherlands.

Meanwhile, top Leyton sprinter Asha Philip – already a Rio 2016 bronze medallist – added another amazing bronze to her collection in the 4 x 100m relay.

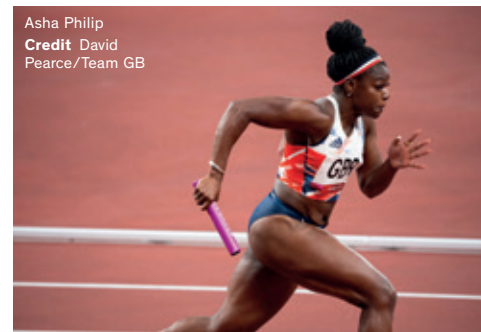
Asha and teammates Imani-Lara Lansiquot, Dina Asher-Smith and Daryll Neita broke Team GB's record with a time of 41.88s – 0.86 behind gold winner Jamaica and 0.43 behind silver medal winner USA.

30-year-old Asha, who attended Connaught School for Girls in Leytonstone as a youngster, is the former World Youth Championships 100m gold medallist.

She also has two silvers for the 4 x 100m relay, from the 2017 and 2019 World Championships.

Bethany and Asha aren't the borough's only recent Olympic medallists. At Rio 2016, Walthamstow's own Lutalo Muhammad won silver in taekwondo.

Gold went to the Ivory Coast's Cheick Salia Junior Cisse in a nail-biting match, which he took in the final second. Lutalo previously won bronze at London 2012.



Asha Philip Credit David Pearce/Team GB

Are you eligible to claim for the Windrush Compensation Scheme?

WINDRUSH REACH

In April this year, the Waltham Forest, Antigua & Barbuda and Dominica Twinning Association (WFTA) was one of 14 grassroots organisations appointed by the Home Office to promote and support access to the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

What's happened so far?

The programme was launched on Windrush Day (22nd June). WFTA has been, and will continue to provide, information surgeries, family and intergenerational drop-in events. Its first online drop-in event, on 31st July, was in collaboration with the Claudia Jones Organisation. As well as providing valuable context and insight from those directly making applications on behalf of eligible individuals, the online event included cultural music, a Windrush-inspired film, and interactive discussions within a safe space for those participating.

Two further events are scheduled for September – an online drop-in session on 8th September with Citizens Advice Waltham Forest, and a face-to-face



Windrush Reach launch 22nd June 2021, Mervin Caesar-John (left), Mayor of Waltham Forest Cllr Elizabeth Baptiste (right)

event on 18th September, also with the Claudia Jones Organisation.

What is Windrush and who are the Windrush Generation?

The name 'Windrush' derives from the HMT Empire Windrush ship, which brought one of the first large groups of Caribbean people to the UK in 1948. The Caribbean was, at the time, part of the British Commonwealth, and these citizens were British subjects, free to permanently live and work in the UK. They were responding to the UK's post-war call to fill essential roles in the health and transport services.

What is the Windrush scandal?

In 2017, it emerged that hundreds of Commonwealth citizens, many of whom were from the Windrush generation, had been wrongly detained, deported and denied legal rights – as a result of a 2012 UK government 'hostile environment' policy, deliberately designed to make the UK unlivable for undocumented migrants.

Many of the Windrush generation arrived as children on their parents' passports, and as the Home Office had destroyed thousands of landing cards and other records, many lacked the documentation to prove their right to remain in the UK. The burden of proof was on individuals to prove their residency pre-1973, demanding at least one official document from every year they had lived here. These individuals began to lose their access to services, were placed in immigration detention centres, denied travel abroad or even deported to countries they hadn't seen since they were children.

Partner with the WFTA

Windrush Reach is a London-wide project, and the WFTA welcomes the opportunity to share this important initiative and partner with any organisation that has a network or community of Windrush generation individuals.

Email wftwinningassociation@gmail.com or visit www.wftwinningassociation.org/windrush-reach.html



LETTERS

Safer streets

Dear Waltham Forest Echo

I recently completed your online safety questionnaire [for a research project about the impact of knife crime in the borough. To learn more, visit bit.ly/3goFp6D]

I think one of the things that would make our borough safer would be to maintain the streetlights in working order.

Unfortunately, Waltham Forest Council do not check on streetlights. Instead, they rely on members of the public to report them online. Obviously, this depends on people having the internet, being computer-literate and bothered to report those not working.

So, there must be non-functioning lights all over the borough. It is probably quite a high percentage. There is one outside my premises, and those in the avenue of trees by a nearby bus station do not work. I have reported them.

Not checking or maintaining them must save the council a lot of money – but it must add to street

crime, and the fear of it. I know that research has shown that good lighting does deter crime, as well as making people feel safer.

Jean Anderson
Walthamstow resident

Breaking ground

Dear Waltham Forest Echo

We know that more and more young people are at risk, which is why the charities Childline and Missing People are working together to create a new service designed for them.

Following a successful pilot in Waltham Forest and Bradford, we have launched Is This OK? – a groundbreaking free and anonymous Chatbot for children and young people at risk of, or currently experiencing, sexual or criminal exploitation and/or abuse.

From the very beginning, young people have been at the heart of Is This Ok? Members of the Waltham Forest Young Advisors and Youth Independent Advisory Group took the

opportunity to help shape a service that will provide support to them and their peers.

We really care about reaching out to young people who no longer think of themselves as children, but desperately need support and a lifeline. They can trust us and be confident that however great the risk, Is This OK? understands the importance of confidentiality.

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LICENSING ACT 2003 Notice of Application For a Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **Andrei Axinte** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a premises licence for the premises, known as John Dory Seafood, situated at **625 High Road Leyton, London, E10 6RF**.

- The application seeks to permit supply of alcohol on and off the premises between the hours of 12:00 and 23:00, Monday to Sunday.
- The proposed opening hours are 10:00 to 23:00 Monday-Sunday

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

Any person wishing to make a representation in respect of the above activities may do so in writing to the Licensing Service, Licensing Section, 3 The Square, Leyton, London, E10 5NR.

Representations must be received no later than **23rd September 2021**.

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. A person is liable to an unlimited fine on conviction should such a false statement be made.

The service is currently available in Waltham Forest, Bradford and Stoke-on-Trent, and will be scaled up over the next year across the UK, with a view to becoming a national service. Visit isthisok.org.uk to learn more.

Wendy Robinson
Service Head at
Childline London

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LICENSING ACT 2003 Notice of Application For a Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **Milcana Tesfay** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises License at **530 Forest Road Luluyana Cafe E17 4NB**. The nature of the application is as follows:

- To permit the sale of alcohol/late night refreshments
- During the times: 09:00–24:00 sale of alcohol 23:00–24:00 late night refreshments, everyday

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

Any person wishing to make a representation in respect of the above activities may do so in writing to the Licensing Service, 3 The Square, Leyton, London, E10 5NR.

Representations must be received no later than **14/09/21**

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

LICENSING ACT 2003 Notice of Application For a Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that **Cf Grill & Chill Ltd** has applied to Waltham Forest Council for the grant of a Premises Licence in respect of **595 High Road Leytonstone, London, E11 4PA** and intends to carry on the following licensable activities:

- Sale of alcohol, provision of late night refreshment and provision of regulated recorded music between the following opening hours.
- Monday to Thursday, 16:00–23:00; Friday to Saturday, 12:00–02:00; Sunday, 16:00–22:00; Bank Holiday Sunday, 12:00–02:00; New Year's Eve, 12:00–02:00

The Licensing register may be inspected at the Licensing Authority, Waltham Forest Council, 3 The Square, Leyton, London E10 5NR, between 10am and 4pm. Any representation by a Responsible Authority or Interested Party must be made in writing to the above address by **10/09/2021**.

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application. The maximum fine for which a person is liable on summary conviction for the offence is £5,000.

Signed: Tafari Francis
Dated: 13.08.2021

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COMMENT



Credit: London Fungus Network

Mike, founder of London Fungus Network, introduces the borough's first ever Fungus Fortnight

Straddling urban East London and rural Essex, Waltham Forest is one of London's greenest boroughs. As well as providing habitats for wildflowers, trees, birds and mammals, its parks, woodlands and urban landscapes are also home to a wonderful diversity of fungi – if you let them find you.

The fungi and their reproductive organism (mushrooms) play a vital role in recycling nutrients and providing nourishment for plants and animals, as well as being a source of fascination for people.

Though unlike many countries in Europe and beyond, wild mushrooms have something of a bad rep in the UK. “Is it poisonous?” is often the first question people ask when they encounter a wild mushroom. Sadly, it's all too common to find patches of mushrooms stamped on, kicked over, or cut down in the prime of their life by a lawnmower. There's a perception that there is something ‘harmful’ about all encounters between humans and our fungal neighbours.

But in recent years, we have seen

a shift in attitudes on fungi, from fear to fascination. So during the lockdown of summer 2020, the London Fungus Network was launched to help city-dwellers get to connect with the urban fungal kingdom/queendom.

Led by volunteer rangers from London National Park City, the network is hosting a programme of fungi-fuelled art, inspiration and fun this autumn with support from Waltham Forest Council. Waltham Forest Fungus Fortnight will take place from 2nd to 17th October, bringing people together for films, forays, workshops and art installations celebrating the



Credit: London Fungus Network

world of fungi at local venues across the borough.

The fortnight kicks off with the UK premiere of *Planet Fungi* on 2nd October, a documentary following Australian photographer Stephen Axford and local tribal guides on a fungal safari of the Eastern Himalayas.

We'll also be exploring the fungal diversity closer to home, with outdoor education, arts and mushroom forays on Shroom Sunday (10th October) at Chingford's Pimp Hall Nature Reserve, where people can learn first-hand how to identify common species of mushroom and the role they play in the ecosystem.

Other highlights include mushroom-inspired food and poetry workshops. We'll also be co-creating a sculpture of ‘the first mushroom’, called Prototaxites – a giant fungus which dominated the Earth's landscape in prehistoric times – with artists from the Leyton-based Casa Mundi Studio.

For further details, visit fungusfortnight.org or follow @londonfungusnetwork on Instagram

Find the Facebook event at facebook.com/events/353928199435885

The Mill's decade

Iranzu Baker and Zoe Dowsett explore the past, present and future of Walthamstow's vibrant community centre

In September 2011, the former St James Street Library building became The Mill – following a ‘Save Our Library’ campaign, ran by local residents, with help from Nesta's Neighbourhood Challenge grant.

Since then, the centre has let the community choose what they want to make happen. The Mill provides space, resources and support for local people to run groups, events and activities, and to give something back.

Alison Griffin – one of the original St James Street Library campaigners, now a trustee of The Mill – has seen first-hand how the centre has brought Walthamstow together over the last decade.

“There's so much incredible work that goes on day-in, day-out at The Mill,” she explains. “The events that stand out the most include hosting an Olympic Torch breakfast, when it touched down in Walthamstow [during London 2012], as well as signing the long-term lease for the building with Waltham Forest Council.”

Mumtaz Ahmed, one of The Mill's long-standing volunteers, first visited the centre when it opened in 2011, and started volunteering a couple of years later.

“I knew straight away that I wanted to get involved,” she shares. “The Mill makes sure that everyone who visits feels welcomed – it's been really inspiring for me.”

To celebrate the decade, The Mill is hosting a tenth birthday party on Sunday, 19th September at its Coppermill Lane (E17 7HA) address.

Everyone's invited to enjoy an afternoon of dancing, arts workshops and performances by locals. In the run-up to the party, The Mill is also running arts classes with children, who will then showcase their creations at the anniversary celebration.

Victoria Bureyko, who is one of many organisers, encourages everyone to get involved.



“We've got loads of events happening, including birthday card-making workshops and a grow-your-own-idea scheme, where we will help you to run your own community project.

“Very excitingly, we're launching our first oral history project, where volunteers will be trained up to gather stories from inspiring Walthamstow residents.”

Wondering what a second decade of The Mill might look like? Chair of trustees Ingrid Abreu Scherer says it's all about being a consistent presence.

“The Covid-19 pandemic hit our community hard, and we'll be continuing our mission to reach people who feel lonely, or isolated, and to support ideas that can bring people together again.”

Centre manager Natasha McFadzean says new upgraded facilities could be on the cards, too.

“One of our focuses is to invest in improving the building and facilities through our Build The Mill project.

“Although The Mill is a fantastic space, it wasn't originally designed for how it's currently being used, and for the many ideas that people have for activities. Some of the groundwork has already been done... [but] it's a huge undertaking.

“The project will require a big effort in fundraising, community engagement and refurbishing the space, but when the project is complete, we'll have a sustainable space that will be there for the community for decades to come.”

To find out more about The Mill and its 10th anniversary celebrations, visit themille17.org/events or email info@themille17.org

PHOTOGRAPHY

Life on the High Street

by Joe Donohoe





These black and white film photographs were taken during the last twelve months and convey my perspective of the lives of people living in Walthamstow.

There are many visible reminders of the Covid-19 pandemic here, but my hope is that these photographs help to illustrate the resilience and fortitude of the local community.

Life on the High Street is as crowded, restless and diverse as ever. Market traders and shoppers gather on the streets, each with their own story to tell.

In spite of a global pandemic, life in Walthamstow still goes on.

We want your photos! Please send in your images of people and places in Waltham Forest to penny@socialspider.com



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Wanis International Foods welcomes Mayor of Waltham Forest



Cllr Elizabeth Baptise and The Youth Mayor's Team went behind the scenes at the company's Leyton head office



World foods company Wanis International Foods, founded in 1964, makes it possible for us to have many of the best-known (and best-loved) African, Asian, Caribbean, European and South American food brands here in the UK.

Think: Miracle, Tropical Sun, Encona, Tropical Vibes, Africa's Finest and Tilda. With some 900 brands and over 10,000 products on offer, that's far from all. These products can be found all over the country in retailers, major supermarkets, on Amazon and other online stores such as Ocado – and are distributed beyond the UK to more

than 30 countries across the globe. But did you know that their distribution centre, and award-winning wholesale cash and carry, is based right here in Orient Way, Leyton? On Tuesday, 17th August, the Wanis team welcomed the Mayor of Waltham Forest, Cllr Elizabeth Baptise, for an in-person tour of the

120,000 square foot site, along with members of the Youth Mayor's Team (YMT) – one of Waltham Forest Council's core youth engagement groups. During the tour, the mayor and YMT members, aged 15 to 25, experienced first-hand the inner workings of one of Waltham Forest's largest employers – and its most ethnically-diverse employer, too, with staff from 28 different nationalities working at the Leyton location alone. Alam Ameer, Operations Director, led the day's tour with an overview of Wanis' key brands, while Commercial Director George Phillips explained how importing works. Meanwhile, Quality Control Manager Emma Ashton-Oner highlighted the importance of proper food labelling. Wanis also shared that while the biggest world food market in the UK is currently Asian, other big sellers include Caribbean and West African products. Cllr Baptise said of the visit: "The YMT thoroughly enjoyed the experience of

the tour of the warehouse, and the insight into the import and export of products distributed by Wanis International." She also appeared happy to see Tortuga, the classic Caribbean rum cake, on offer – a beloved brand often difficult to find. As part of the visit, Wanis pledged to support the mayor's chosen charity: Sickle Cell Society, as well as doing community outreach itself, led by Paul Harrison, Community Brand Ambassador – supporting the UK's first Caribbean rugby team, and helping local food banks with more than 23,200 cases during the pandemic. **To learn more about Wanis International Foods, visit:** www.wanis.com **To support the Mayor of Waltham Forest's chosen charity, visit:** www.sicklecellsociety.org/about-us

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*People making things happen

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INTERVIEW

Perfect rhythm

We meet the founder of 2021 TripAdvisor award-winning Rhythm Kitchen

by Elizabeth Atkin

“It’s great to be recognised on such a global platform,” says Delroy Dixon, the owner of local Caribbean restaurant Rhythm Kitchen – after his Walthamstow eatery was awarded a 2021 Travellers’ Choice award from TripAdvisor last month.

The win means that Rhythm Kitchen, in Hoe Street, is one of the top 10% highest-rated properties on the entire review site, which covers countless global restaurants and tourist attractions.

“It gives great recognition to the whole team,” Delroy adds. “They make it possible to enjoy the ambience, the food.

“Last year was extremely hard for everyone, not just hospitality businesses. I’m proud that we’re still here. And it does feel good that [our customers] came back and supported us.”

Delroy founded Rhythm Kitchen in 2011, having previously studied to be a chef at Waltham Forest College. The journey started in Stratford, when Westfield was first being built.

“My passion for food sparked at around 13/14,” he shares. “I decided I wanted to be a chef after seeing my mum [and] my dad cook at home... and went to the local college.

“I left the industry for a bit, but as Westfield was being built, I decided to send in an idea for opening a Caribbean restaurant. It was a massive leap in the dark, as I’d never run a restaurant before – even though I could cook.”

The plan worked – and in 2018, the opportunity to expand and open Rhythm Kitchen in Hoe Street came up. He’d always wanted a restaurant on the high street, he says, as well as in his local area.

“I have seen positive changes in Waltham Forest [over the years],” he says of the borough. “I can see Waltham Forest going on the up in regards to infrastructure, the businesses there, and the community growing.”

For the uninitiated, Rhythm Kitchen Walthamstow’s must-tries are the salt-fish fritters – “one of the best around” – and either jerk chicken or classic curry goat for the main.

There’s also the popular monthly ‘rum club’ – which allows connoisseurs to sample over 130 rarer rum brands from across the globe (though, naturally, not all at once).

But Delroy says he’s got a particular focus on customer service, too – as one

of his original aims with Rhythm Kitchen was to challenge the “negative” stigma attached to Caribbean restaurants.

“I wanted to get a positive image for Caribbean food throughout London.

At the time [we started], I felt that people looked at Caribbean food quite negatively – whether that was from the service they received to the food quality.

“I thought, ‘I want to change that’. One thing that’s always been important to me, apart from the food, is having good customer service – which I think we’re doing.”

It seems TripAdvisor’s reviewers would agree. So, what’s next, post-pandemic and post-award? Delroy says it’s too early to say – but a third Rhythm Kitchen could potentially be on the cards for 2022.

“Whether that’s in Waltham Forest, I’m not sure... but the plan would be to open something larger, with an outdoor space, so you can get a different kind of vibe.”

To learn more, visit rhythmkitchen.co or follow @rhythmkitchenuk on Instagram

“It’s great to be recognised on such a global platform”



Rhythm Kitchen founder and Waltham Forest local Delroy
Credit Rhythm Kitchen

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Walthamstow Rhythm
Kitchen’s chicken platter
Credit Rhythm Kitchen



BUSINESS



Seneke Sillah
Credit Robin Sinha



Seneke's drum circle
at Gnome House
Credit Robin Sinha

Making magic with Mbilla Arts

Elizabeth Atkin meets co-founder Chantelle Michaux, whose social enterprise brings African drumming, dance and art to Waltham Forest

“There is something about the drum that has an effect on your physiology. When you hear the drums, your heart beats faster. The adrenaline starts pumping.

“There’s a direct correlation between your feet touching the floor and the drummer’s hands on the drum – that’s what really elevates it for me, that relationship. There’s a fantastic, high energy and you sweat, you just let go – and you feel great afterwards.”

It only takes a few seconds for Chantelle Michaux, co-founder of Mbilla Arts CIC, to make you want to experience the social enterprise’s African drumming and

dance workshops for yourself.

“A lot of the traditional dance forms have become social dances, but there’s always an origin,” she adds. “There’s a story with the dance form, and the really great dance teachers will tell you stories about it, as well. That’s the real magic.”

There’s a story behind the formation of Mbilla Arts, too. The social enterprise is devoted to promoting and teaching African performing arts, and was created in 2006 by Seneke Sillah, a musician from The Gambia living in Chingford (but performing around the world), and Walthamstow-based dance educator Chantelle.

Both have the same passion. Seneke grew up performing mbalax, the traditional music style of the Wolof people of The Gambia and Senegal – who also gave Mbilla (meaning ‘antelope’) its name – and plays djembe, a distinctive type of rope-tuned goblet drum.

Chantelle, meanwhile, says her journey started in Sydney, where she was taught African dance by a Guinean artist. She spent two months in Guinea, later moving back to London. She flew back and forth to West Africa – before quitting her job and spending six months learning dance in The Gambia.

“I loved The Gambia so, so much,” she tells the *Echo*. “A lot of artists come from all over West Africa to The Gambia, because they can earn money in the tourist industry. It was a very laidback place to be. It was wonderful.”

After her life-changing trip, she settled

back in Walthamstow, with a desire to pass on what she’d learnt.

“I was really inspired by children’s participation in the arts in West Africa,” she says. “And I came back [to London] and wanted to get more involved. I got a job working for Waltham Forest [Council] in arts and education, but gradually people would say to me: ‘Ah, I didn’t know you studied African dance, why don’t you come and teach the kids?’”

She began teaching in 2000, teamed up with Seneke, and the rest is history. Later, a third director, drama tutor Selina Jeremiah, joined the company.

“We felt that there was a market for [our workshops and sessions] and it’s just grown from there. We do all sorts of work now, and we have lots more artists who are affiliated with us,” Chantelle says, sharing that they also offer arts and drama sessions, even spoken word – and that their reach is now extending beyond the borough.

“In September, we’re going to be doing health and wellbeing workshops for NHS staff, which is really exciting,” she says. “For NHS staff to have some fun and let go and do a bit of drumming and dance – because obviously they’ve had a pretty tough time after the last year and a half.”

There’s more to Mbilla’s workshops than letting go – studies have shown it can have tangible health benefits, too.

A University College London study, published in 2018, found that group djembe drum-playing reduced stress levels, and decreased negative thoughts.

Another recent study showed that, over a period of several sessions, group drumming can produce an anti-inflammatory response in the body, as well as helping to reduce symptoms of mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.

Here at home, there are plenty of weekly clubs and workshops to attend. Mbilla’s Monday drumming class takes place at Gnome House, Walthamstow for a fee, while a Saturday club – which combines African drumming with Colombian dance and art – is a free drop-in session.

So, what’s the connection to St James Street? Well, it’s actually the location of Mbilla Arts CIC’s office. They share half a CRATE with local basketball team, Waltham Forest Flames.

It is, Chantelle says, mostly a way for them to provide work experience placements.

“I’ve worked with children for a long time – but you can’t [offer work experience] when you operate from home,” she says. “This meant that we could have four young people doing work experience with us in 2019... and a Kickstart placement this year.”

For more information on the Monday djembe class for adults and Afro-Colombian Saturday club, or to book a workshop or event, visit mbillaarts.co.uk

Follow Mbilla Arts on Twitter and Instagram @Mbilla_Arts, and Facebook @MbillaArts

This article is part of our Shop St James Street Initiative, in partnership with St James Street Big Local

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ARTS & CULTURE

Our very own love story

Artillery's Penny Rutterford reflects on this year's vibrant, exciting and community-focused E17 Art Trail



See Saw Sounds at St James' Park **Credit** Jane Sharp

We're still basking in the afterglow of another wonderful E17 Art Trail, here at Artillery.

Did you see giant rain sticks in St James' Park? Did you spin Frieda's web with a hand drawn zoetrope? Did you visit the pop-up sculpture park in the forest?

It is almost impossible to single out particular highlights. Each of us will have our own, which reflects the diversity of what was on offer.

We tried to find many different ways to capture moments of the festival. So, we were thrilled when local sound engineer, composer and DJ Engin Hassan approached us to volunteer with the idea of producing an E17 Art Trail podcast.

He gathered a group of volunteer guest presenters, including Other Theresa, Sue Wheat and Adam Graff. He said, quite simply: "It has been an amazing experience".

Other Theresa, a local writer, poet and teacher, agreed: "We know that art doesn't grind to a halt when the trail ends. Emerging tentatively from a global pandemic, I was interested to find out how artists had responded.

"I also knew there would be people in vulnerable groups who might not be able to visit studios and galleries in person, so it was a way of reaching out to the local community. Additionally, the fact that there would be a permanent record of conversations with artists seemed really important."

Another record of this year's E17 Art Trail has been a series of short films, by local filmmaker Natalie Sloan of Little Red Hen Films. She was, like many of us, "blown away by the variety of exhibitors and the quality of the work on display".

"I was also impressed by the number of schools and groups that used the trail as a means to engage the community in artistic activities."

It is always exciting to see how creatives are buoyed by their experience of taking part in the E17 Art Trail, particularly making connections and reaching a wider audience.

Children's author and spoken word poet, Kweku Ackom-Mensah aka Uncle Kweks, recently moved to Walthamstow. His books are inspired by his love of hip-hop and grime.



Uncle Kweks reading his kids' books at Gnome House **Credit** Jemima Duncalf

Uncle Kweks gave two readings during the festival, and shared: "The arts community has been so supportive. The families that showed up on the day were fantastic!"

"It was a massive confidence booster. It was so cool to see a room full of kids laughing along at the books, getting involved and reading together.

"I sold loads of books on the day, which was phenomenal. Since then, I've been contacted by multiple libraries across the borough and [am] doing a series of live readings and book signings supporting the Summer Reading Challenge.

"I'm really looking forward to working with more of the community and seeing what comes next."

Nurturing and providing opportunities for artists to find ways to develop a professional practice is very



The pop-up sculpture park at St Peter's in the Forest **Credit** Helen Bur

much our mission. Through the Kickstart scheme – which aims to provide work opportunities for young people aged between 16 and 24, who are on Universal Credit – we were joined this year by Bob Bicknell-Knight as a festival assistant.

Bob is a multidisciplinary artist, curator and writer. Speaking about his role, he explained: "I've mostly been in awe of the artistic community in Walthamstow.

"Having only really worked within private or commercial art spaces before, I was

really interested in working within a community-focused arts organisation, one that was concerned with enriching and supporting the lives of artists and the general public."

Bob had rarely visited Walthamstow before he worked with us, but by the end of the festival, he told us he had fallen a little in love with our arts community. And we love it, too.

Listen to the podcast series and see the E17 Art Trail films by visiting linktr.ee/E17ArtTrail

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For a role profile/application form please email office@wfma.org.uk

Deadline 25 September **Interviews** w/c 11 October 2021 **Start date** ASAP

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ARTS & CULTURE

Distant Fellowship

Few weeks remain on William Morris Gallery's exhibition



Distant Fellowship Credit Felicity Crawshaw



Distant Fellowship Credit Felicity Crawshaw

by Emma Curzon

The William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow is still taking bookings for its ongoing exhibition *Distant Fellowship* – which examines the links between

William Morris and South Asia. *Distant Fellowship* is focused on “exploring and problematising Morris’s connections with South Asia”, according to the gallery’s website. It also explores the ways in which Morris’s ideas and work remain

relevant in a multicultural contemporary society. The exhibit was created by Priya Sundram and Nia Thandapani – founders of multidisciplinary design studio Studio Carrom, based in Woodford Green and Bangalore in southern India.

Inside the gallery, there are also interventions throughout the gallery’s permanent exhibitions, showcasing work by eight other contemporary artists, designers and architects with ties to South Asia. “[It] explore[s] how their

practices connect with and can have a conversation with Morris’s work,” says Studio Carrom’s website. “In contrast to how South Asian art and design is often presented in British museums as predominantly historic, this intervention brings contemporary work into the gallery space.” The exhibition partially coincided with South Asian Heritage Month, which ran from 18th July to 17th August. First celebrated in 2020, the grassroots movement aims to raise awareness of the history and heritage of Britain’s South Asian community. As well as work on display at the gallery, a design by Studio Carrom was wrapped around the entrance gateposts of Walthamstow’s Fellowship Square until 15th August. The design was printed by hand in India, using hand-carved wooden blocks.

The ‘Distant Fellowship’ exhibition runs until 19th September. Admission is free, but visitors are encouraged to book in advance to guarantee access.

To find out more and to book tickets, visit wmgallery.org.uk



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Leytonstone Loves Film is created by local creatives and residents; produced by the Barbican in partnership with London Borough of Waltham Forest. Supported by Arts Council England

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Waltham Forest



Leytonstone Loves Film, our annual celebration of the movies, is back, championing local filmmakers and organisations in this creative corner of east London. This year the festival will be a hybrid of real life and virtual events – there’s outdoor and indoor

screenings, workshops, online events and more. Among the in-person events is a screening of Nattawut Poonpiriya’s 2017 hit *Bad Genius* in Leytonstone Library. It’s organised by Not Another Film Club, a group of four alumni from our Young Film Programmers initiative.

Ademola Bello from the group says: ‘This film was one we all found really fun. It’s like *Ocean’s 11* but in a school. I wanted to show it because usually there’s a very specific type of non-Western film that makes it into like the canon of “Oh, this is a good non-Hollywood movie”. And *Bad Genius* is just a fun movie

that anybody can enjoy. When it comes to films from foreign markets, people tend to want art house versions because they look down on pop films. But pop films can be really good as well.’ Fellow film club member Isaac Gold explains the group specifically seeks out films to ‘discover something from places you wouldn’t expect to look or wouldn’t normally see films from.’ The foursome also aims to do more than simply screen films at their events, says Nicole Rego Freitas. In the past, they’ve organised talks from experts. ‘For Leytonstone Loves Film, we wanted to do something more fun. So we’ll be doing a quiz after the film, and we’re partnering with local Thai restaurant Singburi to bring food.’

Allissa Tai agrees with Bello: ‘This film did very well in Asia. I think it’s already in the process of getting a Hollywood remake. But we shouldn’t need to remake these films with white Americans, they’re perfectly great as they are. Even though it’s based in Thailand, the subject matter is really relatable. ‘As a group, a major way we think about film is as a medium of building communities. This film can relate across cultures, but we’re adding another dimension by having the communal experience of a quiz and meal in the local community.’ Whether you come for the physical events, or pick the online options, there’s so much to discover at this year’s festival of film.



NEWS



Award-winning Walthamstow bus driver retires

Famously-positive W12 driver Mohammed Shabir says: “I love my job... and there’s no harm in smiling”

by Elizabeth Atkin

Award-winning local bus driver Mohammed Shabir has retired aged 66. Originally from Pakistan and brought up in Middlesbrough, Mohammed’s been driving London buses for 19 years – and has been at the wheel of the 158, 257, W19 and W11. He’s best known to locals as a long-standing W12 driver – with an infectious positive attitude. “To be honest, there’s no harm in smiling,” he says. “You know, when you go to a job, whether you like it or not, you still have to do the job. And if you do it better, and make somebody feel better, wouldn’t that be a better way?” His upbeat approach won him TfL’s Year of the Bus award for exceptional customer service in 2014. Judges called him “genuinely inspiring”. He won silver in the Top London Bus Driver category at the UK Bus Awards the same year.

“His managers have received more letters of commendation from the public than any other bus driver,” the UK Bus Awards said of his win – and last month, he received hundreds of comments praising his work on the private Walthamstow Life Facebook group. Mohammed is done driving buses due to his health – and says he’s looking forward to a trip to Pakistan. But he wasn’t quite ready to give up his beloved bus, telling the *Echo*: “I wanted to keep going until I was 70. I love my job.” He particularly loved his W12 route – through Walthamstow



and Leytonstone on to South Woodford and Wanstead. “I enjoyed it, especially meeting the elderly,” he shares. “They were happy to see me, because they knew they were going to get a good [bus] ride. Once they see me, that’s it, they’ll smile... “I treat everybody – doesn’t matter what race, what colour or whatever – equally.” After nearly two decades on the job, did he ever begrudge giving a cheery greeting? Far from it. “If I show my problems, you’re not going to help me, are you?” he jokes. And ultimately, he says, “it’s not what you are, it’s what you do and how you do it. “How you act with the passengers is your bread and butter. If you don’t look after them, you won’t have a bus to drive. If I see people running for the bus, I wait at the next stop for them.” When we ask if he has a message for his Waltham Forest regulars, he says simply: “Write down that I loved ‘em. You know, I’m really going to miss them, because it’s like a family.”

Scheme to spruce up estates criticised as ‘piece of publicity’

Councillor questions whether Waltham Forest Council’s £1million Proud Places project is the best way to spend cash

by Victoria Munro, Local Democracy Reporter

A scheme to spruce up Waltham Forest’s housing estates has been criticised as a “piece of publicity” and a potential waste of money by one councillor. Waltham Forest Council’s Proud Places programme will spend £200,000 a year for the next five years on improvements in and around housing estates. Residents who want to see features like a new community garden, landscaping or better play spaces on their estate have until 10th September to apply for a slice of this year’s funding. The council originally expected to choose how to invest this year’s money by the end of July, but the housing scrutiny committee heard the process is “taking longer than anticipated”. Speaking before the committee in July, an officer said the goal was to “make sure the external spaces match the inside of people’s homes”. They added: “Homes are so much more than the four walls people live in... there’s a lot of good that can come from this piece of work.” Committee chair Saima Mahmud agreed, adding: “You

can’t underestimate the impact even a flower bed can have on someone, particularly coming out of lockdown.” However, Conservative committee member John Moss said he “appreciate[d] the goal” – but was concerned by the uncertainty around the timing of the scheme. He told the committee: “If we are going to spend [£1million], we need something better than this. “The best way to waste public money is not to manage projects properly. It appears here that we have magicked up some money to pay for this, but I thought we were struggling financially.” He also questioned how the project was different from the borough’s Making Places scheme, which paid for art and cultural projects – and which he said “took many years” to come to fruition. Making Places focused on public outdoor spaces, rather than the borough’s estates, and delivered projects like the Albert Crescent Long Table and the theatre in Higham Hill Park. Residents who want to apply for improvements paid for by the Proud Places scheme should email proudplaces@walthamforest.gov.uk with the name of their estate and their ideas.



NEWS

Change of plans for Marlowe Road Estate

Michelle Edwards writes about the area's recent floods, plus revisions and quick consultations on the estate's redevelopment



A four-storey block being built, on Pinder Road
Credit Michelle Edwards

Depending on your age, you may have heard of the late TV joker Jeremy Beadle. Best known for ITV's *Beadle's About* (1986 to 1996) and *You've Been Framed* (1990 to 1997), he regularly pulled in millions on a Saturday night with his shows – featuring a hidden camera recording pre-planned pranks, along with humorous home videos.

Beadle's About relied on people's reactions to their family and friends' practical jokes. Just as the target was about to explode, Beadle would appear in disguise (typically, as a policeman or some other fictitious authority figure), and let the shell-shocked and/or irate victim know they had been set up.

I often find myself referencing Beadle during emotionally taxing conversations to explain away shocking or surprising situations. I called out his name in 25th July, when Wood Street and Walthamstow were being battered by torrential rain with numerous streets under water.

Trapped indoors with just a slice of Hovis to keep me company, I derived much dark humour from watching a broken broom I'd chucked out the night before seemingly compete for a swimming medal in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

I was further entertained by the PR

spin from council leader Clare Coghill, in an email newsletter dated 29th July. "My thoughts are with all those affected by this disaster who lost treasured belongings and household possessions," she wrote. "It was an awful experience for many people." No shit, Sherlock!

"There is no doubt that there is much for local and national agencies to reflect on following these floods..." A clever way to deflect blame, perhaps? Note that several residents said on Twitter, and in this paper, that they were unable to reach the council's emergency number when it was needed most.

(In a statement on 26th July, Cllr Coghill said the council's contact centre received more than 500 calls that Sunday, "on a day they would normally receive fewer than 100".)

Without meaning to minimise the awful experiences of those who had flooded properties, the same expression of sympathy or offer of help was not afforded to residents on Marlowe Road Estate in 2019/2020, after our properties were repeatedly flooded due to the failure of the council to secure void properties.

It seemed we were simply expected to suck it up. Even though a building surveyor visited my flat in February 2020, and promised to "wash carpets

in hallway, bedsit and storage cupboard" – the head of building services seems determined not to honour the promise and pay for the carpet cleaning.

But in another Beadle moment, I'm expected to complete a housing survey sent via email on 12th August, because the "housing team is committed to putting residents at the heart of service design and delivery". Somebody make it stop!

Countryside consultations

For the second time, Countryside have revised their plans for the development, and thought it wise to consult residents and stakeholders. Well, kinda.

I only knew the council's developer was consulting on updated plans for phases 2B and three of its five phases when I received a 'drop-in

consultation invite' in July – on the Saturday before the Monday date. After questioning the narrow notification window, I discovered there had been a webinar prior.

None of the residents I spoke with on the estate and elsewhere knew about the webinar, though the council insist "a delivery agency hand-delivered the initial leaflet". This isn't the first time my address or others have been missed.

Anything interesting in the consultation? Not particularly, in my opinion. Countryside claim they are responding to the needs of locals and increasing the number of 'affordable' units being built from 44% to 48%.

Note that there is a stark difference between social rent, affordable rent and market rent. Let me explain before Countryside and the

council are cheered on:

Social rent is usually paid to registered providers and local authorities by tenants. It is generally 'low cost' rent, set by a government formula.

In contrast, affordable rent is set at up to 80% of market rent (including soaring service charges). Somehow, these properties are also defined as 'low cost' rental accommodation.

Market rent is the value in which landlords base their rent off. Effectively, what they should be charging for the property – based on factors such as the amount of beds the property has, the area the property is in, and any outside space. Commonly, but not exclusively, landlords charge a premium.

All this is to say that, in some cases, housing developments produce 'affordable'-branded properties that are unaffordable for the masses.



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