



Your independent community newspaper

WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

Free
July 2023, N° 100

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Dead fish in River Lea spark environmental concerns



Dozens of dead fish were seen floating on the surface of the river after a day of heavy rain.

by Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

The death of “dozens” of fish in the River Lea last month is under investigation by the Environment Agency.

Following heavy rain on 20th June the agency, which has a fisheries team, responded to reports of dying fish and eels in the Lea Bridge area. It believes the deaths were caused by low

levels of dissolved oxygen in the river and deployed aerators next to the bridge to “create a safe haven”.

Local resident David Ogle, who visited on 21st June, told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) he saw “dozens” of dead fish in a 100-yard area south of Lea Bridge. He added: “This never used to happen, and certainly not with the frequency our waterways are being destroyed right now.”

A spokesperson for the Environment Agency said that although its officers are still investigating, they believe the cause of the deaths was a combination of high temperatures and “low atmospheric pressure” caused by thunderstorms. However, they added: “Our officers are investigating to rule out any other causes such as pollution.”

“Our officers are continuing to monitor the incident and we will deploy additional

resources as necessary.

“It is important that members of the public who spot fish in distress report it to our 24/7 incident hotline 0800 80 70 60 so that we can investigate.”

Theo Thomas, who founded the London Waterkeeper campaign group, has offered an alternative theory. He suggests “detritus” has built up on urban streets and other hard surfaces, which may have been carried into the river by the rain, and

said: “The sun was blocked and bacteria fed on the muck – oxygen fell.”

Monitoring data showing the quality of the river water in the Walthamstow Marshes area on the day of the heavy rain shows that oxygen levels plummeted at the same time as turbidity (cloudiness) increased.

Theo told the LDRS the River Lea “teeters on the brink” every summer due to the way “industrial amounts” of pollution on roads washes straight into rivers on days of heavy rain. He added: “Instead of creating areas to slow down and filter this water, we’ve increasingly paved so much of London.”

Theo said other issues the river faces are “high levels of nutrients” that cause large stretches of green duckweed to cover the surface and block other plants from receiving sunlight. He believes the river has higher nutrient levels due to the amount of treated effluent released from nearby Deephams Sewage Works, in Edmonton.

Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and Waltham Forest Council were contacted for comment but had not responded at the time of publication.



Large numbers of dead fish were seen dead in the River Lea last month. Credit London Waterkeeper

NEWS

Waltham Forest cabinet member makes bid to become Mid Bedfordshire MP

Cabinet member Alistair Strathern is Labour’s candidate to replace Conservative MP Nadine Dorries

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter



Cllr Strathern has been campaigning in Mid Bedfordshire **Credit** East of England Labour

A senior Labour councillor in Waltham Forest has been chosen to run as his party’s candidate for Nadine Dorries’ seat after she announced plans to resign. Alistair Strathern had been Waltham Forest’s cabinet member for children and young people since September 2021 before being moved from the role after being selected last month as Labour’s Mid Bedfordshire parliamentary candidate.

Cllr Strathern, who also works part-time at the Bank of England, has said he is “absolutely delighted” to have been selected for the constituency he grew up in.

He told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) that Mid Bedfordshire has been “let down by a part-time MP”. The Labour councillor added: “Speaking to the towns and villages across Mid Bedfordshire, it’s clear they feel the impact of this lack of presence in the challenges they face and the local issues that have been left unaddressed for far too long.”

However, he would not provide specific examples of neglected local issues when pressed. According to a self-titled website created for his campaign – which was later taken offline – Cllr Strathern said he has “a proven track record” as a councillor in Waltham Forest through “fixing up housing”, delivering new youth centres and free breakfast provision.

The 33-year-old, who has represented Higham Hill ward since 2014, told the LDRS he anticipates stepping down from his councillor role if he is elected as an MP.

After coming under pressure to do so last month, council leader Grace Williams moved Cllr Strathern away from his

place for Dorries’ seat remains uncertain as she has not yet formally resigned. Cllr Strathern – who has launched a petition calling for Dorries’ resignation – will continue to receive a yearly allowance of £39,304 as a cabinet member.

If Dorries does trigger a by-election by stepping down Cllr Strathern will run against Festus Akinbusoye, the Conservative police and crime commissioner for Bedfordshire. The Liberal Democrats have announced their candidate is Emma Holland-Lindsay, who is a local councillor at Central Bedfordshire Council.

Conservative group leader Emma Best, who urged the leader to replace Cllr Strathern earlier this week, said she is “pleased” about the announcement. But Cllr Best told the Local Democracy Reporting Service: “The cabinet role of 15-minute neighbourhoods also includes extremely important projects and engagement activities, especially over this summer, and we look forward to engaging fully with Cllr Strathern over what will be a very busy time in the borough within that role.”

However, whether a by-election will actually take

place for Dorries’ seat remains uncertain as she has not yet formally resigned. Cllr Strathern – who has launched a petition calling for Dorries’ resignation – will continue to receive a yearly allowance of £39,304 as a cabinet member.

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However, whether a by-election will actually take

Call to protect renters’ rights

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

Renters’ rights should be protected by a new team of Waltham Forest Council “tenants rights officers”, a group of housing experts has advised.

The eight housing experts formed a commission earlier this year to “look afresh” at how the council can push for more affordable homes in the borough.

The commission – which included executives from housing developers, housing associations and academics – met in five private sessions before publishing a set of actions the council should take.

It noted that private renters are “disproportionately impacted” by the housing crisis, with their health and wellbeing affected by the “broken market”.

To help protect their rights, the commission said Waltham Forest should create a team of tenants’ rights officers to support renters with advice and “health and wellbeing initiatives”.

A committee of councillors met last month to scrutinise the commission’s final report and voted to “strongly” support the idea of a tenants’ rights team.

Uzma Rasool called for “more boots on the ground” to protect tenants from landlords who act unlawfully. She added: “I’ve had tenants who report issues and say that if you complain to the local authority the landlord will try to get you out.”

“Tenants who report issues say if you complain the landlord will try to get you out”

The commission also called for the council to come up with a “private rented sector strategy” to increase the number of affordable homes. This could include council-built rental homes and tactics to tackle “rogue landlords”.

Committee chair Andrew Dixon agreed with this, saying a major concern in private renting is “unaffordability” with some landlords setting “tests of income” which exclude low-income tenants.

Overall, the commission said the council was a “leader” in delivering new housing and praised it for delivering the highest proportion of affordable homes in London.

However, commission chair Geeta Nanda wrote that the borough is on the “frontline” of the nation’s housing crisis, with a private renters market that is “at breaking point”. The council should have “honest conversations” with residents about issues such as inflation and shrinking budgets which “constrain its ability to act” and may require “compromises”.

NEWS

New ice centre opens as concerns remain over environmental impact



Dancing on Ice judge Robin Cousins at the launch of the new ice centre **Credit** GLL



Twin Olympic-sized ice rinks at new facility expected to attract half-a-million yearly visitors and boost local economy by £1.5m

by Marion Willingham & James Cracknell

The long-awaited new Lee Valley Ice Centre building has been officially opened – amid protests over its environmental impact.

Four years after the new facility in Lea Bridge Road was first announced, ice skaters and other users began using its twin rinks, as well as a gym, exercise studio and café, on Saturday, 17th June.

Olympic gold medalist and former *Dancing on Ice* judge Robin Cousins visited the centre ahead of the opening and said: “I skated at the opening gala of the old Lee Valley Ice Centre in 1984. It’s fantastic to see that journey continue with this stunning new state of the art space – the perfect place to launch Skate UK, our new national learn-to-skate programme.

“Having these two Olympic-size rinks

in London is a game-changer.”

The new ice centre is owned and operated by Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA). The original cost of the facility was cited as £30million but is now thought to be closer to £40m as construction costs increased. Two years ago Waltham Forest Council agreed to contribute £1m itself to ensure the project could be completed.

The facility is now expected to boost the local economy by as much as £1.5m annually and attract half-a-million visitors a year, double that of the old Lee Valley Ice Centre, which could not cope with demand.

Shaun Dawson, chief executive of LVRPA, said: “The stunning new Lee Valley Ice Centre replaces our much-loved old venue which had, for 37 years, provided a wonderful place for people of all ages,

especially young people, to meet, socialise and stay active.

“At a time when many sport and leisure facilities across the country are at risk of closure, I’m so proud that we have gone beyond simply protecting the old centre, to have instead more than doubled the capacity and created a truly inspirational venue.”

Grace Williams, leader of Waltham Forest Council, added: “It is going to be absolutely fantastic having such a world-class venue in our borough [...] The venue is going to become a focal point for so many people, with the council helping fund a range of community-based programmes working with young people and a whole host of different local groups.”

The new ice centre has not been without controversy, however, as it is almost double the size of the previous centre and encroaches on protected marshland which houses a variety of species, including hedgehogs.

Wildlife campaigners staged a protest at the opening, citing concerns about how the development has impacted habitats. The Save Lea Marshes group are also demanding that the nearby Ox Bow Island be closed to the public to protect its natural habitats.

The campaigners claim LVRPA opened the island to the public as an extension of the ice centre’s café, putting wildlife at risk. They say that the ice rink project itself, which began construction in 2021, has been rife with “greenwashing” and habitat destruction.

Caroline Day, from Save Lea Marshes, said: “It’s one thing to do things for your own objective that actually harm wildlife, but then to say you’re doing it for the good of wildlife is taking it a step beyond what is palatable.”

LVRPA maintains that the work on Ox Bow Island is unrelated to the ice centre

project, and that it is merely formalising an existing access route to the island. It says this work is to dissuade anti-social behaviour and protect wildlife.

The campaigners claim that the work has taken place during the swans’ nesting season, and even destroyed their nest, though LVRPA denies this.



The new ice centre has two Olympic rinks **Credit** GLL

Local resident Ian Phillips, who creates grass snake habitats, found that since construction of the ice centre began a group of snakes he had recorded by the ice centre moved further north than he has seen in ten years of observing the species.

In order to justify developing on protected Metropolitan Open Land, LVRPA asserted that the ice centre development would produce a “biodiversity net gain” despite the clearing of plants from an important wildlife corridor to make way for the large building.

The ice centre project includes £1.5m of landscape and environmental initiatives, with new ponds, 171 new trees, bat boxes and invertebrate hotels introduced.

Ian said: “You can’t just flick a switch and have new habitat that just appears and works and functions in the same way as established habitat.”

An LVRPA spokesperson said: “It will of course take time for these habitats to mature but the area will become a more biodiverse site.”



Lee Valley Lions ice hockey team **Credit** GLL

FEATURES



How Waltham Forest can feed itself

Greg Frey on a project to help residents to grow more food in their gardens

First, some stats. Nearly half-a-million children in London face hunger during the school holidays and 3.2 million adults across the UK reported not eating for a whole day because they couldn't afford food. Meanwhile, we have lost 70% of our wildlife in the last 50 years, and the climate crisis has become impossible to ignore. We need rapid action from our government but this is also a moment for us to step up and start changing things ourselves. This is why we decided to start the Time To Grow! network of food growers in Waltham Forest. We are people with unused gardens, working with experienced food growers, working with people who want to learn and have time to give. We share compost, seeds, skills and time. And all of our food is shared between residents, volunteers and Walthamstow's Gleaners Cafe –

who turn it into delicious meals at a price people can choose. We started a year ago as an experiment. Would people really want to donate their garden space to growing fruit and veg? And, would volunteers really be up for donating their time? The answer has been a clear 'yes'. So far we're growing in eight gardens across Waltham Forest, three in Hackney, and with many more offers that we don't yet have the capacity to support. We're driven by a big dream of a city that can support itself. Why does London import 99% of its food? Why are we dependent on big chains to feed ourselves? And what will we do as supply shocks

continue to put prices up? Times of crisis can also be an opportunity to build something better. While we could wait for the government or charities to come and help, we want to reclaim our abilities to support ourselves. Some 2000 hectares of Waltham Forest is private gardens. Taking Waltham Forest's own gardening social media influencer Alessandro Vitale's (Spicy Moustache) garden yields as a benchmark, we could grow almost half the amount we need, worth roughly £700m. And that is without even mentioning the benefits to wildlife, carbon sequestration in soil, health improvements, connecting to nature, reducing food waste and so on. So why wouldn't we? To do something at such a scale we'll need all the help we can get. If you want to get involved with Time to Grow: Email: timetogrowwalthamstow@gmail.com Visit timetogrow.uk

Helping people in need

A 'Community Living Room' initiative in Leyton is providing support and encouragement for vulnerable people

by Karolina Zagrodna

Free warm meals and drinks with guest chefs working their nutritional magic; workshops from art therapy to afro hair treatment; a marketplace for local makers to sell their products; and Caribbean music vibes in the background. These are just some attractions on offer at the beloved Pepper's Ghost pub in Leyton High Road. During the pandemic years, it was our communities that showed, over and over again, that they could be the driving force in helping many people in need, especially in London – a city where many live in solitude and anonymity. The 'Community Living Room' network was initially started as a winter event, running on Thursdays and Fridays, hosted by the Pepper's Ghost pub, and organised by a community interest company called The Skills Within, based in North London. Nathan 'Nate' Gabbidon, who is a former youth counsellor as well as the CEO and co-founder of The Skills Within, has always been passionate about bringing out the spirit of local communities.

Nate is committed to helping the community and young individuals find their path to success. Alongside his co-founder Natalie, through the projects organised by The Skills Within, they offer a range of expertise and can help anyone, ranging from counselling, family therapy, visa and immigration inquiries. In response to the cost-of-living emergency, a winter spaces network was designed by Waltham Forest Council to ensure that there is support available in every corner of Waltham Forest. With this funding provided by the council, The Skills Within provides a space for people to relax, meet and socialise in an inclusive and warm environment, while enjoying a free hot drink or meal and access to important services. The Skills Within is currently collecting items ranging from coats and jumpers to personal hygiene products and games, as well as unwanted Christmas gifts, which will be donated to those in need. Products can be dropped off in Leyton on arrangement. The Community Living Room at Pepper's Ghost runs on Thursdays and Fridays from 12pm until 6pm. For more information and to make a donation: Call 07985 122 654 Visit theskillswithin.com



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NEWS

Whipps Cross rebuild ‘fully funded’

Latest funding commitment from government means demolition work on site can recommence in autumn



Plans for the rebuild of the hospital

by James Cracknell & Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

Local political leaders have welcomed a fresh commitment from the government that a new Whipps Cross Hospital building will be “fully funded” and completed by 2030.

The Leytonstone hospital – which won planning permission in 2021 for a complete rebuild – was first included as part of the government’s promise of “40 new hospitals” in 2019. Only two of these are now complete, with another five under construction.

In May, Health Secretary Steve Barclay said the government had increased the new hospital programme budget from £3.7billion to “over £20bn” and claimed that preparation works at the new Whipps Cross Hospital site “can now proceed” despite being halted last summer.

Barclay’s latest pledge adds to a list of contradictory statements over funding for the new hospital. During a visit to Whipps Cross in August last year, he announced he had approved “up to £28million” for the first stage of the project, a new multi-storey car park. But in January this year, he said specific hospitals are unlikely to be funded until “after 2025”.

While the Department for Health and Social Care told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) that funding for specific hospitals will only be confirmed after a future government spending review, the redevelopment director at Whipps

Cross has since stated that the new hospital “will be completed by 2030”.

In a statement on the Barts Health NHS Trust website, Alastair Finney welcomed the government’s commitment and added: “Whilst recent progress has been slow, we have made good progress on all of the work that has been within our direct control, including securing planning permissions and demolishing dis-used buildings to prepare the site next to the current hospital for construction.

“Over the coming weeks we will be working closely with national colleagues from the [government’s] new hospital programme to agree the next steps and timelines for completing our business case and for constructing the first of two new multi-storey car parks and then the new hospital itself.”

Barts Health, which runs Whipps Cross

Whipps Cross site plan



Hospital, has yet to submit its business plan for the rebuild project. There had been fierce criticism over a proposed reduction in the number of beds at the new hospital, but Barts has since committed to retain the same number as Whipps has currently.

Alastair told the LDRS in May: “Once the detailed plans and next steps are agreed, we will produce our business case and submit it to the government for approval.”

Reacting to the government’s latest funding commitment, Waltham Forest Council leader Grace Williams said: “For decades, Waltham Forest Council has been campaigning alongside residents and hospital staff for improvements to Whipps Cross.

“The importance of this issue for local people was demonstrated by the 11,000 of you who signed our ‘Whipps Won’t Wait Campaign’ petition. Thank you to everyone who got involved – your support has been vital in showing the government the strength of local feeling on this issue.

“I also can’t express my gratitude enough to the wonderful nurses, doctors and NHS support staff who have worked so hard for so long in dilapidated buildings.

“The government has announced that the hospital will proceed, beginning this autumn, and we will at last have somewhere that is fit-for-purpose for the 21st Century.

“I know the affection local people have for Whipps Cross. Many residents will have been born, had babies of their own, and had relatives cared for at the hospital. We now have the opportunity to build on the emotional attachment the community has for Whipps, and create a legacy for future generations.

“We will hold the government to account to make sure this happens without further delay, and that the money they’ve promised is used well to meet the needs of residents.”

In a newsletter to constituents last month, Leyton and Wanstead MP John Cryer said: “It had looked very much as if the government would pull the plug on many of the hospitals it had pledged to rebuild due to the hole it dug itself into under Liz Truss’ leadership. It is a great relief for the project to be given the green light, considering the significant money already spent on preparing for the project.

“The plans were not without controversy, and included a cut of 50 beds.



Alastair Finney, Whipps Cross redevelopment director

After numerous meetings and letters, Barts Trust wrote to me to say that the new hospital would have the same number of beds as we have at present. That was a step forward, although demographic changes mean that, in my view, bed numbers should be rising.”

In a statement, campaign group Action-4Whipps said: “This would’ve been really welcome news a year or so ago, so it might be worth asking ‘why now?’.

“Might it be a result of pressure from MPs who are worried about keeping their seats? Especially when faced with disgruntled constituents who can see no sign of their promised new hospital.

“So maybe Whipps will get a new car park before the general election – then we’ll be back to how much funding and when.”

Advertisement

Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
Notice Under Article 13 of Application for Planning Permission

Proposed development at:
23 College Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9DF

Take notice that application is being made by:
Mr Henning Voelksen

For planning permission to: Installation of solar PV panels to front roof slope, rear dormer roof slopes and side gable. Addition of insulated render to side gable elevation and insulation over roof finishes to rear dormer roof. Installation of heat pump with outdoor unit set on boundary in rear garden.

Local Planning Authority to whom the application is being submitted: Waltham Forest Council

Local Planning Authority address: London Borough of Waltham Forest, Environment and Regeneration, Waltham Forest Council, London E17 4JF

Any owner of the land or tenant who wishes to make representations about this application, should write to the council within 21 days of the date of this notice.

Signatory: Mr Henning Voelksen
Date: 30.06.2023

Statement of owners’ rights: The grant of planning permission does not affect owners’ rights to retain or dispose of their property, unless there is some provision to the contrary in an agreement or lease. Statement of agricultural tenants’ rights: The grant of planning permission for non-agricultural development may affect agricultural tenants’ security of tenure. ‘Owner’ means a person having a freehold interest or a leasehold interest the unexpired term of which is not less than seven years. ‘Tenant’ means a tenant of an agricultural holding any part of which is comprised in the land.

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

Notice of application for the variation of a Premises Licence under section 34 of the Licensing Act 2003

Notice is hereby given that Fizzy Wine Ltd. has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the variation of an existing Premises Licence at: The Arch Deli, Arch 211 Grove Green Road, Leytonstone, London E11 4AJ. The nature of the application is as follows:

- Amend the plan of the premises.
- Varying the hours for the sale of alcohol consumed on & off the premises: 09:00–23:00 daily
- Varying the hours that the premises is open to the public: 09:00–23:00 daily

The Licensing register listing full details of the application is kept by the Licensing Service, Town Hall, Fellowship Square, Forest Road, London E17 4JF. 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, Town Hall, Fellowship Square, Forest Road, London E17 4JF or via email: Licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk

Representations must be received no later than: **20th July 2023.**

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.

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Help is at hand!

Community support groups are springing up across borough as pandemic takes hold

There are a lot of people who are struggling with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. It's not just the physical effects, but the mental and emotional effects too. Many people are feeling isolated and alone, and they are struggling to cope with the changes in their lives. This is where community support groups can help. These groups are a place where people can go to get help and support from others who are going through the same thing. They can provide a safe space for people to share their feelings and experiences, and they can offer practical advice and help. There are many different types of community support groups, and they can be found in a variety of places. Some are run by local authorities, some by charities, and some by volunteers. Whatever the case, they can all provide a valuable service to the community.

are mental health issues. But there are many other things that can affect mental health, such as stress, anxiety, and depression. These things can be caused by a variety of factors, including changes in lifestyle, work, and relationships. It's important to remember that mental health issues are not a sign of weakness, and they can be treated. There are many different treatments available, and it's important to find the one that works best for you. Community support groups can be a great place to start. They can provide a safe space for people to share their feelings and experiences, and they can offer practical advice and help. There are many different types of community support groups, and they can be found in a variety of places. Some are run by local authorities, some by charities, and some by volunteers. Whatever the case, they can all provide a valuable service to the community.

It's as times like these we have to support each other

Waltham Forest Community Support Group is a group of people who are helping each other through the pandemic. They are a mix of people from all different backgrounds and ages, and they are all doing their best to help each other. They have a variety of activities and services, and they are open to anyone who needs help. If you are struggling, please get in touch with them. They will be happy to help you.

Issue 61 was produced a week after the UK entered lockdown and highlighted all the places residents could seek help



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News	News	Arts & Culture	Features	Crime
New award half height of the Great Northwood for the Northern Lake	New wing with public spaces lighting in the new wing	Arts and Culture, 14, writer Elizabeth, guest in local	Cherry blossom 20	Charged after 11 months after a report of 15
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Syrian refugee facing deportation to Rwanda

Concerns have been growing in Waltham Forest about a Syrian refugee facing deportation to Rwanda. The man, who is in his late 30s, has been in the UK for several years and has a family. He is currently in the UK on a temporary basis, but his status is uncertain. The Home Office has decided to deport him to Rwanda, a decision that has caused significant concern among local residents and community groups. The man's lawyer has argued that the deportation is unlawful, but the Home Office maintains its decision. The case has been referred to the Immigration and Asylum Tribunal for a final decision. The man's family is currently in a state of distress, and they are seeking legal advice. The case highlights the challenges faced by refugees in the UK and the impact of government policies on their lives.

Issue 92 carried an interview with a Syrian refugee facing deportation to Rwanda

Former editors of the Echo have picked out their favourite front pages from the past nine years of the paper.

and telling her that I hadn't written it. So I wrote the bid. Then we got the money and we had to start a newspaper. Over nine years and 100 issues on, we're still here (and now have five other local publications operating on the same model).

"Thanks to Sheena for the inspiration to get started and to everyone else who's worked for, written for and read the paper since then."

special – both the team at Social Spider and the many contributors and readers who get in touch, tell their stories and share their opinions. Working with all of them was easily my favourite part of the job as editor!”

Victoria Munro, editor
September 2021–June 2023

“Editing *Waltham Forest Echo* has been by far the best job I’ve had in journalism, in a period when good local journalism jobs are becoming increasingly scarce.

“I had the opportunity to investigate hundreds of low-income households being forced out of London, speak to some truly fascinating people, and cover stories that other publications would have had little interest in.”

David O'Driscoll, long-time contributor
 “One of the reasons I got involved with the *Echo* was my belief in the lamentable state of our national news media and a sense of anger and disempowerment at what they choose to report. There is evidence that fewer people are reading or listening to the news now, yet research also tells us that people continue to trust the local media. This was reflected after two pieces I wrote for the *Echo*, which demonstrated the impact local reporting can have.

“The first was about a successful campaign with the local community football team, Coppermill Swifts, which opposed Secret Cinema’s use of Low Hall Sports Ground. A key aspect of our success was the coverage we received in the *Echo*, followed up with reports on the BBC and ITV. This was instrumental in Secret Cinema’s planned event failing to go ahead.

“I also wrote another piece about the many football fans who were disillusioned with modern football and were returning to watch non-league games – in this instance, Walthamstow FC. BBC News picked up on this and, since then, Stow’s attendances have been growing. Both reports show the *Echo*’s importance.”

Elizabeth Atkin, editor
January 2021–September 2021
“It’s no surprise to me that *Waltham Forest Echo* is celebrating its 100th issue! I’ve watched the paper go from strength to strength over the years, and think the print edition is particularly special and important – vital in providing local news to residents, ensuring it doesn’t get lost amid an onslaught of 24/7 national stories on TV and online.
“The people behind the *Echo* are also very

NEWS



New council cabinet role to oversee ‘15-minute neighbourhoods’

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest Council’s leader has created a new cabinet role to oversee the creation of “15-minute neighbourhoods” in the borough. The creation of the role, which Kizzy Gardiner was originally appointed to, follows the approval of a new “corporate framework” on the policy earlier this year. The 15-minute neighbourhoods term usually describes designing a city to make sure that everything a person needs – such as work, shopping, education and health-care – is within a 15-minute walk of where they live. In addition, after six months of research last year, the council’s strategy focuses on “experiences” in a neighbourhood as well as “things”. It follows three main themes: everyone taking part and fulfilling their potential; benefiting from shared prosperity; and improving the borough together.

At a full council meeting Grace Williams said £500million in capital spending on projects over the next five years will “bring the plan to life”. She added that 15-minute neighbourhoods will help create “a safer, fairer, greener borough” that is “entirely resident-focused” with “resilient communities [that] focus on the people that live there”. Cllr Williams added: “The council will enable people to fulfil their potential, sharing prosperity, and be part of that decision-making process.” Building projects that the council is investing in include developments on council-owned land at Waltham Forest Town Hall and Soho Theatre. To oversee the 15-minute neighbourhoods, Cllr Gardiner was promoted to a cabinet member position, which has a yearly allowance of £39,304, as a promotion from her junior ‘cabinet commissioner’ role focusing on youth hubs and engagement, which paid £22,948.

Addressing the 46 Labour councillors in the town hall chamber, Conservative group leader Emma Best asked whether the backbenchers felt left out and joked that by the end of the year there would be a “cabinet member for cooking dinner” who could also help them “cook the books”. However, only three weeks after taking the role, Cllr Gardiner was given the children’s and young people’s portfolio instead, swapping with Alistair Strathern as he bids to become an MP in Bedfordshire (read more on page-2). The council leader made few other changes to her cabinet team. The role of overseeing finance has been given to Paul Douglas, cabinet member for public service, and Elizabeth Baptiste’s cabinet commissioner role has switched from focusing on ‘shaping places’ to ‘renters’. Cllr Williams has also asked Catherine Deakin to focus on health equality following the Sir Michael Marmot report into health inequalities in the borough.

Council apologises to Leytonstone mum for seven years of damp

Farzana Begum said Waltham Forest Council failed to stop leaks despite repeated complaints

by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest Council has apologised to a Leytonstone mother who has been living in a damp-damaged flat for seven years. Council tenant Farzana Begum has lived with a severely damp wall in the hallway of her flat in Fred Wigg Tower in Montague Road since 2016, when she moved in. Safety concerns about electric shocks from wiring running in the water-damaged wall led to her hallway fire alarm and light switches being disconnected two years ago. Farzana told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) that the council had not stopped the leaks, which appear to come from her neighbour’s bathroom, despite her repeated complaints over several years. She said: “We wake up in the morning and have to walk straight past this. “I don’t think anyone should be living like this – it’s not fair – they said they will do something and take pictures and then nothing happens.”

The damp has also damaged the frame around Farzana’s new fireproof front door to the extent that it must be held in place by masking tape. The mother of two young children said she feels increasingly stressed as she suspects that the dampness affects her daughter’s breathing. She told the LDRS that she rarely invites friends over as the wall is so embarrassing and regularly “plays” on her mind. She added: “I can’t have friends over – when I see my friends’ places they have perfect houses. “I started thinking, are they picking on me? It plays in my head. Everyone else has nice doors. “I just want the problems to be solved, if they want to pay for plastering that’s fine, I just want the leak to be solved.” Another Fred Wigg tower resident Sonia McKenzie said: “It’s a simple situation that could have been dealt with years ago, it shouldn’t have taken this long. “The question is, if nothing is being actually done, what are they getting paid for? “To me, it’s a breach of the council’s tenancy contract because it’s poor service.” The council recently set up a



After the leak appeared to have stopped in 2018, the council’s repairs contractor Morgan Sindall re-plastered her wall, but the dampness soon returned causing peeling paint, mould and limescale to build up. with Farzana’s flat. He added: “We have arranged for an urgent visit by a council officer to visit her home to assess the situation, and we will also be working with our contractors to find out why this issue was not fixed earlier.”

COMMENT



We need to make outer London travel more sustainable

Centre for London researcher Zarin Mahmud on how travel in outer London needs to change

We all know that we’re facing a climate change crisis. We also know that the way we travel can make a big difference. By walking, cycling, or taking public transport, we can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and congestion, while improving air quality. But when the same journey takes ten minutes by car but over half-an-hour by public transport, it’s easy to see how the less sustainable option can be the more attractive one. This is the reality for many of us living in outer London, where there are fewer reliable transport options. The reality is that travelling sustainably is often difficult for us. Residents of inner London have a range of options available to them, with e-bikes, e-scooters, frequent buses and multiple tube stations densely packed in the centre of the city. But in outer London, the same level of infrastructure just doesn’t exist, especially for local journeys. In outer London, where more children, families and older people live, a large proportion of people’s journeys are local trips – to schools, local shops, and relatives’ homes, among many others. The gendered nature of caring responsibilities means that women generally make these more frequent, short trips

throughout the day. In contrast, men tend to make fewer trips, typically long-distance journeys during peak hours. But urban planning in London has often focussed on transport networks that carry people into central London, reflecting a male bias. As a result, outer Londoners are often left with limited attractive options to travel around their local areas. Infrequent and unreliable public transport options, and the lack of safe crossing points, cycle lanes and shared transport options can prevent people in outer London from travelling in more sustainable ways around their local areas. That’s why many people in outer London are reliant on cars, even for short local trips. More than half of all car trips made in outer London are less than two miles in length – only ten minutes on a bike. Research commissioned by a Green member of the London Assembly found that nearly a quarter of outer Londoners feel forced to own a car (24%), compared to only 14% of people in inner London. The reaction to the Ultra Low Emission Zone (Ulez) expansion in some outer London boroughs demonstrates how many people feel that they have no option but to drive. Car dependency is more pronounced in outer London, with 69% of households owning or having access to a car in outer London, compared to 42% in

inner London. Acknowledging the differing travel needs and options available for people in outer London is essential to understanding how to enable more people to travel in more sustainable ways. That’s why at Centre for London we wanted to research the issue. Our new report explores the ways in which sustainable travel can be supported in outer London. We’re calling for national government to work with Transport for London and local authorities, providing the funding needed to improve the transport environment in outer London. This includes installing better street lighting, more cycle lanes for local journeys, more space for cycle storage and better car club parking. To improve the public transport options that people have in outer London, we’re calling for increased frequency of train services and a requirement to deliver new bus routes for new housing developments, so that people moving in have less need for a car. Improving the options that people have to travel sustainably for local trips is at the heart of making London a more liveable city. And it might save you having to drive next time you need to make a short trip.

Read Centre for London’s report on outer London travel: Visit centreforlondon.org/publication/sustainable-travel-outer-london

LETTERS

NHS protests waste of time

Dear WFE

SHOCK! HORROR! THE NHS uses taxpayer’s money to provide life-saving care! Whatever is the country coming to? The “protest” by the anti-progress socialists from ‘Save our NHS’ would have us think that the NHS wasn’t struggling to recover from the pandemic and, despite record funding and employing more doctors and nurses than ever, waiting lists and waiting times are falling only slowly. You’d think you could get referred to an NHS specialist in days and on to treatment in an NHS hospital in a couple of weeks. Sadly, that’s not yet a reality. So the Conservative government has told the NHS what a Labour government, under Tony Blair, told the NHS. Buy in spare capacity from the independent sector, at NHS rates, and get people treated. And what’s wrong with that? Far more treatments should be bought from independent sector and the government should encourage people to use it. Ideally, the Conservative government would restore tax relief on private medical insurance, which Labour removed, and turbocharge that. We might then move beyond petty ideological obsession with profit and actually get a healthcare system much more like France, Germany or Switzerland, where nobody cares about whether their doctor or hospital is making a profit, they just like the fact they get treated quickly.

Alan White Chingford

Parking permits

Dear WFE

I WANTED TO CONTACT YOU with regard to the recent article on parking permits and the consultation put out to residents of Ainslie Wood and how this can impact other roads who may also get a controlled parking zone (CPZ). It was made clear online, and the local councillors were trying to help, but the QR code and link on the consultation to oppose this parking scheme did not work! I myself have been trying to log my feelings on another council petition about the humps which continue to cause issues to cars/houses they are outside, but again the link does not work. It seems strange that so many of these links, to log your feelings against these projects, don’t work. Tracey Gauld South Chingford

Send us your letters

Got an opinion on something in Waltham Forest? Email wfecho@socialspider.com before the deadline on Monday 17th July.

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ARTS & CULTURE

The forgotten women who fought Covid-19

A new exhibition celebrates a group of women who saved lives during the pandemic despite not setting foot in hospital, writes Esther Freeman



Saira Mir Credit Elizabeth Dalziel

There is a group of women who, during the Covid-19 pandemic, saved lives. Yet none of them stepped foot inside a hospital. Remember winter 2019/20, when you first heard of that virus in some place called Wuhan? By February, it was in Italy, and people weren't allowed to leave their homes. I saw an Italian friend and asked after her family. "Well my grandma doesn't go out much anyway," she said. She was smiling, so I smiled back. I wasn't sure what else to do. Then things got real. Scientists jumped up and down waving proverbial red flags. The government dithered. Boris Johnson boasted about

shaking hands with people on a coronavirus ward. If he was attempting to calm things, it failed. There was panic buying and an obsession with toilet roll. On 23rd March 2020, the country went into lockdown. Among the chaos of those last days before lockdown, behind the doomsday headlines and bare supermarket shelves, I noticed something else happening. My WhatsApp groups, normally concerned with the wrangling of the Labour Party, were now filled with chats about mutual aid. Posts went up on Facebook for experienced sewers to join something called a 'scrub hub'. I saw a friend on her bike, declaring: "Can't stop, I'm dropping off donations for

the foodbank." Something extraordinary was happening, and women seemed to be driving it. I knew that unless there was a conscious effort otherwise, the story of the Covid-19 pandemic would be dominated by the things that rich, white men did. The amazing things unfolding from women in our community would get forgotten. I decided to not let that happen. With support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, I've worked with a team of oral history volunteers to record women's stories from the pandemic. Some call themselves activists, but others are simply retired tax inspectors or former teachers. All stepped



Averil Pooten Credit Elizabeth Dalziel

up to support their communities in some way. This summer my exhibition at The Mill will share some of their stories: the amazing Saira Begum Mir from the foodbank PL84U Al Suffa who, despite dealing with the loss of both of parents to Covid-19, kept the community fed; Averil Pooten Watan, who helped organise a pop-up vaccination clinic for undocumented migrants unable to get the vaccine through traditional routes, many of whom worked in care homes and were terrified of passing the virus on to their vulnerable clients; Ain Satar, a mutual aid organiser, who ensured people got medicines, groceries, legal help and more.

These stories are a sample from our larger collection, archived at the Bishopsgate Institute. They represent a fraction of the stories that exist out there, still untold. While we 'clapped for car-ners' we've never properly thanked these volunteers – the neighbours who helped neighbours. This exhibition is our attempt to do that. *Beyond Medicine: A Social History of Women and Pandemics* is on at The Mill in Coppermill Lane, Walthamstow, until 16th July. Further stories feature on the Rebel Women podcast, available wherever you listen.



Ain Satar Credit Elizabeth Dalziel



Leyton author publishes debut children's book

Leyton-based writer and musician Jester Arrow is releasing his debut children's picture book, *Perky the Pigeon*. The story focuses on Perky's big dreams of becoming a rock star, but highlights how difficult it can be to find your place in the world. Perky loves to sing and often tries to join in with human musicians, only for her plans to go awry in several humorous scenarios

After feeling uncertain, she very nearly gives up, but perseveres thanks to the encouragement of her best friend Speckle. Perky then finds Hailey the Human, who accepts her despite her being a very different musical partner. *Perky the Pigeon* seeks to reinforce inclusivity, perseverance and teamwork, as well as the joys of connecting with nature and music. Jester was inspired to write the book due to his sons' love of pigeons, combined with his own musical journey. He said: "Both nature and music are fantastic forms of therapy, especially when it comes to children. All forms of nature deserve appreciation, and pigeons are a somewhat maligned species, despite their great resilience and adaptability. "As the favourite animal of my sons, Benni and Theo, pigeons are much easier to engage with than the classic children's favourites. You don't have to visit a zoo or safari park to see them. They're just on your doorstep, which makes them accessible to all."

Jester's other passion in life is music and he believes it can sometimes be neglected in education, with its exclusion being detrimental to children and society. He concludes: "I hope that my *Perky the Pigeon* book will inspire children to experiment with music, but also deliver the underlying message that if you persevere you can achieve your dreams, despite the obstacles." *'Perky the Pigeon'* is published by Candy Jar Books and is available to buy online: Visit perkythepigeon.onlineneweb.shop Jester Arrow is available for readings and book presentations: Email jesterarrow89@gmail.com

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LISTINGS

DOG SHOW

Charity Dog Show
Sunday 2nd July, 1pm–4pm
The Larkshall Pub, 205 Larkshall Road, Chingford E4 6NT

Celebrity-hosted dog show raising funds for Animal SOS Sri Lanka, a Woodford-based charity helping to alleviate the suffering of street animals in Sri Lanka. Celebrities Samantha Fox and Gail Porter will be there to meet you all as will some of the Animal SOS Team. It will be a fun day for all dog lovers, with raffles, prizes, stalls and lots more. There will be five dog categories in the show; most handsome, prettiest bitch, waggiest tail, best rescue and best trick. Animal SOS Sri Lanka is currently caring for over 2,000 abused and vulnerable street dogs in southern Sri Lanka and is one of the largest sanctuaries in the world.

Free to watch, £5 for dog entries
Visit bit.ly/3NFQoJT

FESTIVAL

Dialled In: The Park
Saturday 22nd July, 12pm–9pm
Lloyd Park, Forest Road, Walthamstow E17 4PP

Dialled In is an artist-led movement platforming South Asian music, art and culture. Our purpose is to spotlight and platform the wealth of South Asian artistry by building long-term self-sustainable spaces to ensure our culture is held while it evolves and expands. Festival performers include drummer, composer and producer Sarathy Korwar, powerhouse singer-songwriter and Sarangi player Amrit Kaur, Tamil artist PRVNA, singer-songwriter sister duo Qazi & Qazi, as well as a slew of secret special guests. DJs during the day include producer and DJ Ahadadream, Club Kali co-founder DJ Ritku, and Bahrain duo party starters Dar Disku.

Tickets £10, free for under-12s
Visit dialled-in.com

CIRCUS

Revel Puck Circus presents
'The Wing Scuffle Spectacular: A Lion's Heart'
Thursday 13th until Saturday 29th July
Leyton Jubilee Park, Seymour Road, Leyton E10 7BL

This is a brilliant new circus show suitable for all ages. No animals, no ringmasters, no bad clowns. Where we balance and accommodate other bodies, extraordinary communities form. It just so happens the Pucks are 15ft in the air, somersaulting away from the path of a swinging chainsaw and moonwalking on a tightrope. This high-skill circus show contains acrobatics, the UK's only teeterboard trio and physical comedy, all performed with a heartfelt, hilarious and dangerous edge.

Tickets £11–£16
Visit bit.ly/432yl58

PRIDE

Rainbow Storytime for Waltham Forest Pride
Saturday 29th July, 2.30pm–4.30pm
William Morris Gallery, Forest Road, Walthamstow E17 4PP

Join us for Rainbow Storytime with the colourful and creative Belle, who'll be telling stories that highlight the beauty of difference and inclusivity. We welcome LGBTQIA+ families, friends, and allies. Drop-in for free storytelling sessions at 2.40pm, 3.10pm, 3.40pm, 3.40pm and 4.10pm. While you listen to the stories, we have a Pride flag colouring-in activity to enjoy. Numbers are limited for each of the storytelling sessions so please arrive in plenty of time. We offer a break-out sensory space for any children requiring some time away from the activities.

Free drop-in event
Visit wmgallery.org.uk/event/family-day-rainbowstorytelling

THEATRE

Greek Theatre Players present
'The Winter's Tale'
Wednesday 26th, Thursday 27th and Friday 28th July at 7.30pm; Saturday 29th July at 2.30pm and 7.30pm
The Open Air Theatre, Woodbury Road, Walthamstow E17 9RZ

We hope you will join us this summer for the 2023 production of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* at this magical venue hidden in the heart of Walthamstow Village. Written in 1610/11, towards the end of Shakespeare's career, *The Winter's Tale* has been variously categorised as a comedy, a romance and a 'problem play'. In our atmospheric open-air setting, we aim to represent all the elements of this intriguing play.

Tickets £10 adults, concessions £8, students £5
Visit greektheatreplayers.co.uk

CHILDREN

Tots and Toys
Every Tuesday and Wednesday, 11am–12pm
Hale End Library, Castle Avenue, Chingford E4 9QD

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Free entry
Visit walthamforest.gov.uk/events/tots-and-toys-time-hale-end-library

Submit your listings

We can include low-cost community events taking place in Waltham Forest. For next month's listings, email wfecho@socialspider.com by Monday 17th July.



AROUND THE BOROUGH

SOUTH CHINGFORD

Anger over introduction of controlled parking zone

by Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

Residents of more than 20 roads are awaiting the outcome of a council consultation on the introduction of a controlled parking zone (CPZ). If introduced on all roads being consulted in the Ainslie Wood area, more than 1,000 households would need to pay to park outside their home for the first time. In a public consultation which closed last month, Waltham Forest Council said it launched the consultation after receiving a “substantial petition” from more than 100 residents living on Royston Avenue, one of the roads in the area. The council also said that in a survey in 2020, “some residents” had called for restrictions because they had difficulties parking. In a letter to residents, the council said controlled parking would ensure parking spaces are “reserved for residents”. The letter

added: “Without a valid permit, drivers are less likely to drive to areas where permit parking operates and are encouraged to use more sustainable modes of transport to get to their destination – which reduces local congestion, air pollution and road danger.” CPZs have been introduced in the vast majority of the borough to the south of the A406 but are currently rare further north. For a CPZ to be introduced, at least 51% of respondents must support the proposals – although restrictions could still be imposed on individual roads. Permit prices range from £45 to £650 per year depending on the efficiency of the homeowner’s vehicle. Larkwood councillor Catherine Saumarez said there is “no appetite” for parking restrictions in the area and said the council “ignored” her ward councillor team’s repeated offers to provide their input before the consultation launched. Cllr Saumarez added: “It has led to real upset

and suspicion among residents.” Lisa Maguire, who lives on Coningsby Gardens, said she runs a dog walking and cat sitting business which would face a permit cost of at least £275-£880 per year. Coningsby Gardens resident Valdenice Loizou added: “It’s an additional and unnecessary tax on parking [...] imposed in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis!” Deputy council leader Clyde Loakes said: “Permit parking serves as a valuable tool utilised by councils to ensure that residents can conveniently park their vehicles near their homes. “We believe it is reasonable to request a small contribution from individuals for the management of the space and, by implementing permit parking, we aim to provide local people with enhanced access to parking spaces in close proximity to their residences.” This year the council anticipates bringing in £28.8m from parking charges, more than half of its total income from fees and charges.

WALTHAMSTOW

Extra stops for ‘Superloop’ bus route

Three new local stops on the ‘Superloop’ bus route from North Finchley to Walthamstow have been announced by Transport for London (TfL). Announcing its consultation on the X34 ‘Superloop’ bus route between North Finchley and Walthamstow last month, TfL published maps which include stops at Crooked Billet, Walthamstow Bell Corner and Walthamstow Market, as well as Walthamstow Central which was already known to be the route’s terminus. The X34 consultation is the second to be launched as part of the Superloop plans first announced in March by London mayor Sadiq Khan. TfL had



The ‘Superloop’ concept was revealed in March Credit TfL

originally said the X34 route would not be consulted on until next year. The idea behind Superloop is to provide faster and more frequent connections between outer London boroughs. Geoff Hobbs, TfL’s director of public transport planning, said: “The Superloop will have an important role to play as we strive for a greener, cleaner and more sustainable London. Feedback from the public is hugely valuable and I’d encourage everyone to respond to the consultation.” Another Superloop route, the X123, will travel from Walthamstow to Gants Hill Station, Ilford, Barking, and terminate at Royal Docks. A consultation on this is expected to launch later this year.

LEA BRIDGE

Cyclist injured in bike robbery



The high-spec bike stolen by thieves in Lea Bridge Road

A cyclist suffered serious injuries during the robbery of his £12,500 bike in Lea Bridge Road. The victim, a man in his 40s, was travelling between Lee Valley Ice Centre and Lee Valley Riding Centre when a group of males wearing similar black hoodies – and

also on bikes – gathered on the cycle path and pushed the victim off his bicycle. One of the group rode off with it into the marshes. One of the robbers repeatedly kicked the victim, causing them to suffer a broken jaw, broken collar bone and scapula, and lose a number of teeth. Detective Constable Helen Cordes said: “This incident left the victim with possible nerve damage and has resulted in him needing a number of surgeries. It is imperative we track down those responsible.” The incident occurred on Tuesday, 23rd May at 7.45pm. Anyone with information should call police on 101, quoting reference CAD7178/23MAY.

CHINGFORD MOUNT

Plans for new crematorium

by Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

A new “contemporary, purpose-built” crematorium in Chingford Mount Cemetery is set to replace the current temporary mortuary compound established during the pandemic. Waltham Forest Council is developing designs for a 450sqm building including a waiting area, family viewing area, chapel, crematorium space and office area. The council’s cabinet is expected to approve the £8.4m project this month although council leader Grace Williams said in June they still needed to ensure “proper scoping” and added: “It’s a really beneficial project, not only in terms of the service and the borough but also the local area.” The council believes a new-



Credit Sandy Millar vis Unsplash build crematorium could make a profit of £21m for the town hall over 25 years, on the basis of 1,200 cremations per year at a fee of about £900 each. Benefits of a new crematorium also include easing “funeral day logistics”, accommodating residents of diverse beliefs, reducing traffic and creating additional revenue.

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For a copy of the Trustee role description, please contact the companysecretary@citizensadvicewalthamforest.org.uk asap. To apply, send a copy of your CV with a covering letter explaining your reasons for applying. The closing date for applications is 5pm on Friday 1st September 2023.

Art Exhibition and Talk

Sunday 2nd July 3-7pm
Talk starts at 4pm

An exhibition of artists, makers and designers from the community of Leytonstone and Wanstead Synagogue

Featuring a talk from
Monica Bohm-Duchen
Writer, Lecturer and Curator

‘Insiders/Outsiders: Refugees from Nazi Europe and their Contribution to British (Visual) Culture.’

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