



Your independent community newspaper

WALTHAM FOREST ECHO

Free
Feb 2024, N° 107

Email WFEcho@socialspider.com
Facebook [/WalthamForestEcho](https://www.facebook.com/WalthamForestEcho)
Instagram [@walthamforestecho](https://www.instagram.com/walthamforestecho)
Tweet [@WFEcho](https://twitter.com/WFEcho)
Visit walthamforestecho.co.uk

News

Asylum seekers in abrupt eviction from Walthamstow hotel

► P. 3

News

Chingford homeowners on speed bump 'misery'

► P. 4

History

The Leytonstone department store known as the 'Harrods of the East End'

► P. 8

Comment

Our homes can be solar power stations

► P. 10

Interview

Walthamstow local Ash Bibi on her time in TV show 'Traitors'

► P. 12



Punk-rock band Split Dogs causing a commotion at Luna in Leytonstone. The live music venue's owner has launched a £75,000 crowdfunding appeal to keep it open. Read more on pg.11 Credit Daniel F. Say

Primary school in Palestine flag row warns it may shut after 'serious threats'

by Marco Marcelline

A Leyton primary school that ordered a pupil to remove a Palestine flag patch stitched to his coat has warned parents it may move

all lessons online if "serious threats" to its staff continue.

In a letter addressed to parents on 10th January, the Lion Academy Trust, which runs Barclays Primary School, said that a "serious threat was received

in writing" over the Christmas period. The letter also states that an "anonymous caller made a series of racial slurs and a further threat to commit criminal damage (arson) against the school and to individual staff".

The letter continued: "If this situation does not revert to a normal mode of operation or should the trust believe despite these measures, the safety of children or staff cannot be assured, then we will – with limited notice

– close the school and revert to online learning for as long as we believe it is necessary".

As a result of the threats, the school said it has procured

Continued on Page-8



NEWS

Council allows reduced affordable housing offer at BlackRock development

A minimum affordable housing offer that falls 10–15% short of targets was accepted pending ‘robust’ review

By Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

Waltham Forest Council handed the world’s largest hedge fund a big discount on affordable housing in a huge Blackhorse Road property development.

In December, Blackrock Property Fund UK, owned by BlackRock, and NEAT Developments won permission to build 1,800 homes and a new industrial space at Uplands Business Park.

Waltham Forest Council’s planning committee agreed the development could go ahead despite the minimum affordable housing offer falling 10% to 15% short of the council and Mayor of London’s target of at least 35%.

Many of these homes, which are classed as affordable, will be aimed at “intermediate” prices such as discount market rent – usually 80% of local rents – or shared-ownership.

Only the first phase of the large



An illustration of how the development is expected to look Credit Allies & Morrison

development has won full planning permission, with the second phase securing an “outline” green light from the council.

Waltham Forest has agreed that in the second phase the affordable homes deal will either be 20%, and evenly split between low-cost and intermediate-cost, or 25%, and split 30:70 between social rent and intermediate.

Phase one includes a large industrial space and one 119-flat build-to-rent tower that

will include 35% of the rooms rented out at discount market rent which is about 80% of local rental rates.

On the advice of Waltham Forest’s planning department, the planning committee granted permission on the condition that a series of “robust reviews” are carried out during construction to decide whether more affordable homes can be included.

Ahsan Khan, the council’s housing lead, said: “The plans for the

redevelopment of the Uplands Business Park are separated into distinct phases. So far only detailed plans for Phase 1 have been approved, subject to GLA referral, and will deliver 35% affordable housing which is compliant with London Plan policies.

“The proposals for the second phase have not yet progressed beyond the outline planning application. Detailed plans will be fully assessed and considered by the council over the coming years, and if agreed will be subject to robust and detailed viability reviews to help ensure the minimum of 25% affordable housing proposed by the developer can be exceeded, with a target of over 35%. Developments normally rely on grant funding from the GLA to help deliver affordable homes, which is only available at a detailed planning stage.”

The application will now go before the mayor, who has a final decision on large planning applications.

Advertisement

The member organisations of WFWellComm CIC are:
Community Transport Waltham Forest, Social Spider CIC, HEET.

WFWellComm CIC Board:
David Floyd, Social Spider CIC
Tom Ruxton, HEET, Helen Tredoux,
Community Transport WF

Contact

Call 020 8521 7956
Email WFEcho@socialspider.com
Post The Mill, 7–11 Coppermill Lane,
Walthamstow E17 7HA

Advertising

Call 07732 000430
Email klaudia@socialspider.com

WFE is published by Social Spider Community News:
Visit socialspidercommunitynews.co.uk

WE'RE A
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
BUSINESS WHERE SOCIETY PROFITS

ipso. Regulated

Waltham Forest Echo is regulated by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). For more information on the Echo's complaints policy and how to make a complaint visit: walthamforestecho.co.uk/complaints

ADVERTISE WITH US

Our newspapers are a growing and valued part of the local community – loved by readers who want to read about what matters to them. Be part of that and advertise with us!

Our publications *Waltham Forest Echo*, *Haringey Community Press*, *Barnet Post*, *Enfield Dispatch* and *Newham Voices* cover a wide area of North and East London

For the borough of Waltham Forest, we distribute 15,000 free copies to readers via local, community venues, and door-to-door, with a total estimated readership of 45,000 people.

Call Klaudia 07732 000 430
Email klaudia@socialspider.com

CREST

Join CREST Waltham Forest as a Trustee! Embrace our mental health hub, The Snug, champion day care at Colby Lodge, and foster community development at Harmony Hall. Shape our 2024 strategies with your skills. Be the positive change. Contact: admincrest@crestwf.org.uk

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

Prime Cash & Carry London Ltd of 24 Rigg Approach, Leyton E10 7QN is applying for a licence to use 24 Rigg Approach, Leyton E10 7QN as an operating centre for 2 goods vehicles and 0 trailers.

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds LS9 6NF stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice.

Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's Office.

We offer licence advertising for local businesses

Email licences@socialspider.com
Call 07732 000 430

ELECTRICIAN

- NICEIC Certificates
- 24/7 Fault Repairs
- Fire Alarm
- WiFi & Wired Internet Cabling
- Telephone Repair & Installation
- CCTV & Ring Door Bells

07544 800166

THE OLD STATION YARD CAFE



Afternoon Tea available to order via email – £25 per head. Vegan options are also available. Please give 48 hours' notice

Tel 07757 742305
Email oldstationyardcafe@gmail.com
Address 186 Wood St, Walthamstow E17 3NA

NEWS

Home Office set to evict hundreds of asylum seekers from Walthamstow hotel

Hotel residents were given just days' notice of the mass eviction

by Marco Marcelline & Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

Hundreds of asylum seekers are facing an abrupt eviction from a Walthamstow hotel they have lived in for years.

On 18th January residents at the hotel received a letter from the government's asylum seekers' housing contractor Clearsprings Ready Homes saying their rooms would "no longer be available" from Friday 26th January.

The company added: "We will aim to give you five days' notice of your move, although on occasion this may be less."

Those living at the hotel were told they were allowed to bring two pieces of luggage per person to the new accommodation.

In its letter, Clearsprings said it would find "suitable alternative" housing within the Home Office-funded "initial accommodation estate", which is usually hostels or hotels.

In the days leading up to 26th January, the Home Office told residents where they'd be moved to in a staggered process. A hotel resident speaking to the *Echo* said she was told her family would be moved to a hotel a 191 mile drive away in Bridgwater, Somerset.

The woman, who arrived at the Walthamstow hotel in July 2022, said she cried when she looked up where the new hotel was: "It's too far away. I'm really disappointed and upset."

A spokesperson for Clearsprings – whose profits doubled to £62.5million last year (2021/22) – said it "would not" comment on a media enquiry about evicting asylum seekers.

Waltham Forest Council leader Grace Williams said the council had "received communication from the Home Office that hotels would not close until April. The news has understandably caused a huge amount of hassle and stress for vulnerable people who need our help."

"We do not yet know where they are being moved to. We have not been given details

of the plan to continue supporting them. We consider them to be Waltham Forest residents who must be treated with compassion and respect.

"The timeframe makes decent planning and support virtually impossible. We have asked the Home Office for urgent assurances for each individual and family currently at the hotels."

A letter sent to Cllr Williams from a Home Office official seen by the *Echo* said that it was "often the case that relocation of asylum seekers occurs before the contract end date" for hotels.

In the letter, the Home Office official said they were "sorry to hear that notifications to asylum seekers about their moves from these hotels have caused concern".

They added: "It is my expectation that our provider, whilst working efficiently to decant from hotels that we are exiting, works closely with both hotel residents and relevant local partners to ensure this is communicated and handled smoothly. It is a matter of regret that this has not happened on this occasion."

The Home Office official additionally said that the abrupt eviction had advantages because it allegedly "minimises disruption to schooling, and avoids Easter and Eid-al-Fitr".

Sabrina*, a young Iranian woman staying at the hotel with her two-year-old daughter and husband told the *Echo* she was "really nervous" about her pending move.

She said: "All the time I'm thinking about my child and what will happen to her. My daughter has health issues. She [turned] two years [old] yesterday. Can you believe I couldn't celebrate for her. I couldn't say happy birthday because I was crying all the time and trying to pack. I'm full of tension and full of stress."

The mother, who arrived at the hotel in January 2023, is enrolled in GCSE courses at a local college. She expressed concern that her year of studies could end up being in vain.

She said she had spoken to her college course leader who told her no other college would accept her at this time of the year. "I must be in Waltham Forest for my [GCSE] exams. Even if they send me to another city, I will try to collect money to travel back here for my exam but staying here would be difficult because we have no family. Where would I stay? But if I don't come, one year of my [studies] would be wasted."

Sri-Lankan born Srizam* said he, his wife and three children were moved into the Walthamstow hotel by the Home Office in May 2023.

Srizam said his children, aged twelve, ten, and eight, were well settled in their respective schools and didn't want to leave their friends behind. His ten-year-old son is head boy at his school, he said.



Volunteers with donated suitcases for the asylum seekers Credit: Saira Begum Mir

"We are used to this place now, we are very familiar [with Waltham Forest]. I have permission to work, and I got a promotion to be shift manager at my work ten days ago. If we move, I will lose my job. If we move to a [new] hotel we have to start everything from scratch."

Srizam said he only had a "couple" of suitcases between his family of five. He was therefore planning to put the majority of their belongings in bin bags.

Local community groups quickly rallied around to support the asylum seekers. Saira Begum Mir, who runs the PL84U-AL-SUFFA

food bank in Walthamstow, helped to organise the distribution of suitcases and holdalls to the asylum seekers.

She said she knew many of the affected families and asylum seekers by name because they were regular food bank users. "They're like family to us. We've got to know them very well."

Meanwhile, a coalition of Waltham Forest community groups penned a joint letter addressed to Clearsprings that accused the contractor of treating the resident asylum seekers as "objects to be moved around at whim" and described the asylum seekers as "victims of the long term failure to put in place humane and more cost effective housing for asylum seekers".

A Home Office spokesperson said: "We take the welfare of those in our care extremely seriously and at every stage in the process – from initial arrival to any potential relocations – our approach is to ensure that the needs and vulnerabilities of asylum seekers are identified and considered."

"We continue to provide safe accommodation for asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute, as we work to end the use of hotels which are costing UK taxpayers over £8million a day."

The spokesperson added that they do not "routinely" comment on individual cases.

*Names have been changed to protect speakers' anonymity.

Advertisement

Trustees Opportunities!

Would you consider bringing your skills, knowledge, and experience to the Management Committee of Community Transport Waltham Forest?

We are passionate about supporting people with mobility needs. We are the only remaining Community Transport Service in East London, we have real opportunities to explore the growth and impact of our service in East London.

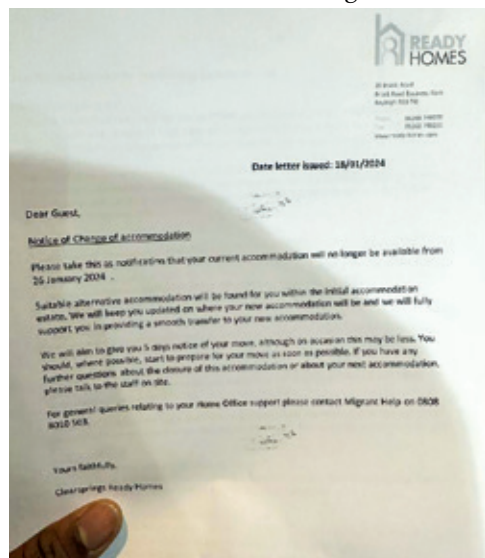
We welcome applications from people with a wide range of skills though we are particularly seeking people with these broad skill sets below.

- Transport: experience and understanding of transport policy and delivery in London
- Health and Social Care experience and understanding of working in the health or care sector
- Community and lived experience of working in or with a range of community organisations with a knowledge and understanding of current impacts of transport provision on preventing active citizenship.

Diversity is critical for the Management Committee to be effective, and representative of our community needs. We encourage applications from people with lived experience from all ethnic, socio-economic, and professional and personal backgrounds. Whether you are an experienced trustee or thinking of taking up a trustee role we want to hear from you.



For application information please contact:
Helen Tredoux, Director, Community Transport Waltham Forest,
Low Hall Business Park, Leyton, E10 7AS.
Email: helen@ctwf.co.uk • Tel: 020 8521 0665



A copy of the eviction letter distributed to hotel residents on 18th January. Photo supplied by hotel resident.

NEWS

Chingford homeowners demand council to reassess speed bumps

Vibrations caused by heavy goods vehicles and buses going over speed tables are causing damage to homes, residents say

by Marco Marcelline

Chingford residents have said that vibrations caused by heavy goods vehicles and buses going over speed bumps are harming their wellbeing and damaging their homes.

Ita O'Neill, who has lived in her home on New Road since 1983, is just one of many Chingford residents who are calling on the council to reassess the use of speed bumps as a traffic calming measure. The speed bumps have been imposed as part of the council's ambitions to put in place 20mph speed limits in the borough's residential streets.

Ita told the *Echo* that she has consistently been woken up at all hours of the night because of the bumps. The 80-year-old emigrated to London from Ireland in the 1960s, and raised her children in the same house. "I have worked very hard in my life to purchase, keep and maintain this house... but [these speed bump vibrations] are ruining it," she said.

The vibrations have led her to contemplate the feasibility of moving in with her children, who live in Hertfordshire. "I was thinking about moving up there but I've been here all these years, and I'm attached to my church and I have all my friends. If I go up there, I won't know anybody. It's a massive move at this age," she said.

Ita said she had battled severe depression and suffered from sudden memory loss caused by disruption to her sleep. "Sometimes I'm trying to talk and I can't complete my sentences because I can't remember what I was going to say. [The vibrations] are damaging my brain, I'm telling you."

About a year ago, Ita hit a low point. "I couldn't cope. I'm the senior vice president at the church and I play darts but I just couldn't cope with different things."



A speed table on Old Church Road, Chingford



Ita O'Neill in her Chingford Mount house

Lee Gilbert, who has lived on Old Church Road for close to a decade, said that numerous cracks have appeared in her home since a speed table was installed outside her home.

Pointing at several hairline cracks in her main bedroom, Lee said: "If the council don't do anything about these speed bumps, we will chase legal avenues and seek insurance claims."

Lee added that she had developed "terrible anxiety" about the damage being caused to her home from the vibrations, and often wonders whether the ceiling will fall or if the front of the house will collapse.

She said: "People might think, 'Oh, you look alright, you're always bubbly', but basically I'm terrified. It's our home. We can't afford to move or get another mortgage at our stage in life and we don't want to move because we've got a really good and supportive group of neighbours."

Lee's neighbour Shanta Prasad says she has similarly struggled to sleep due to the vibrations, and cannot recall the last time she slept through the night.

Shanta, who has played a key role in raising concerns about the impact of the traffic measures, described the council's use of speed-related deaths to "force" speed bumps on residents in Chingford as "outrageous and disrespectful", since "unfortunate road fatality circumstances have no bearing" on the speed bumps.

She also accused the council of having "manipulated" the methodology used in a public consultation on the speed bumps, by combining neutral responses with positive ones to present the case that the speed bumps were unopposed by a majority of respondents.

Meanwhile, Tony Thorne said he and his wife have had to plan their journeys in a bid to avoid the "poorly maintained" speed bumps, which were "hell" for his wife who suffers from spinal arthritis.

And a Waltham Way resident, who preferred not to be named, said that the possibility of getting any sleep in her converted loft was "out of the question".

The "mentally drained" Chingford homeowner has tried many ways of managing such as moving rooms, but none have worked: "My daughter even gave me some CBD oil - that didn't do any good."

Chingford MP Sir Iain Duncan Smith has taken the issue to Parliament. In a speech in December, he called for 20mph zones to be

rolled out on a street-by-street basis rather than a "blanket" one.

He said: "The unintended consequences - the vibrations, damage to property, noise and interruption to sleep, as this is often at night - of vehicles going over these significant speed humps are why I believe that the 20mph zone should be considered road by road, not on a blanket basis."

In October, the council rejected a Conservative-led motion calling for a review into the impact of speed humps on residential properties, with deputy leader Clyde Loakes saying speed humps and tables were the "only option" the council had to slow down vehicles.

In response to the residents' claims, Cllr Loakes said: "We are not permitted by law to use cameras to enforce the speed limit. Last year the government blocked Wandsworth Council's trial scheme of using cameras to issue fines for speeding. This leaves speedbumps as the only enforcement method available to councils. The decision to progress the 20mph zone was ultimately based on the significant road safety benefits."

"Multiple studies have found road humps are unlikely to cause significant damage to buildings. We do know for sure that vehicles travelling at speed cause significant damage to people. We also know our measures are working - the number of people killed and seriously injured on the borough's roads has fallen from 97 in 2018 to 70 in 2022."

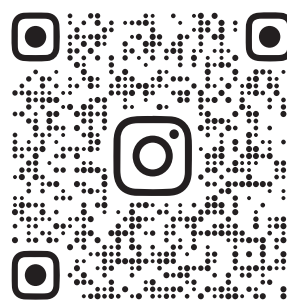
Advertisement

AB.CO

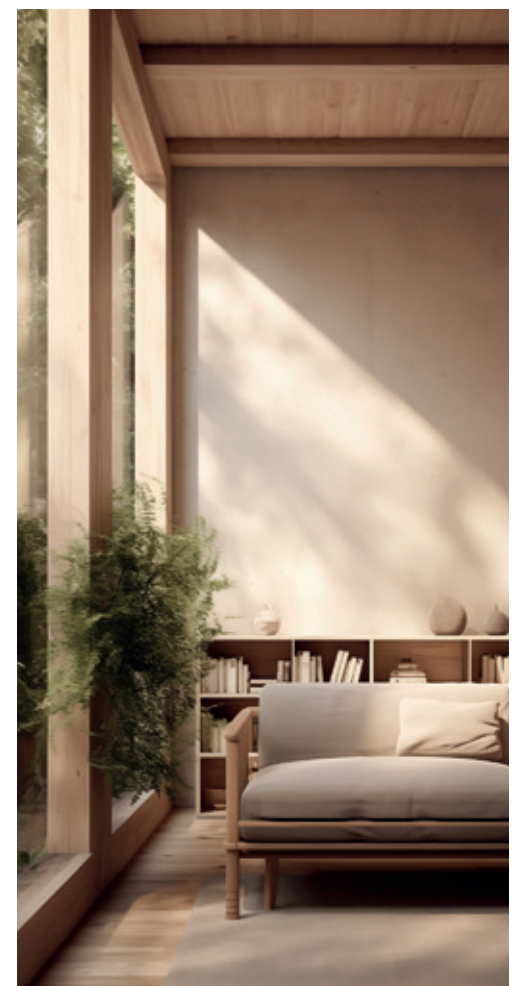
Do you need an Architect?

We are a Walthamstow-based architecture studio that designs carefully-crafted contemporary homes.

We work on projects of all sizes and would love to talk about your aspirations.



studio@ab-co.uk
07590257310
www.ab-co.uk
@ab.co__



Advertisement

MORE WAYS TO MOVE

JOIN TODAY

From gym workouts and fitness classes to swimming and more, you'll find many ways to move at:

- Better Gym Walthamstow Stadium
- Chingford Leisure Centre
- Leyton Leisure Centre
- Leytonstone Leisure Centre
- Waltham Forest Feel Good Centre
- Walthamstow Leisure Centre

better.org.uk/waltham-forest



FEATURES

Walthamstow's own Jackie Chan

A teenage champion kung-fu fighter is auctioning off his own paintings to help fund his goal of becoming a stuntman and actor

by Marco Marcelline

Junayde Guven has just got back to London after training with kung-fu acting legend Jackie Chan's stunt-team in China.

Speaking at Lee's Spiritual Healing, a new reiki and meditation centre in Walthamstow town centre where his paintings are being exhibited, the 16-year-old eagerly chats about his kung-fu triumphs, challenges, and gargantuan ambitions.

"It was all one big family", he says, reflecting on his three and a half week stint there, which happened shortly before he won a gold medal in the 16-18 age category at the World Kung-Fu Championship in China.

Junayde explains that his kung-fu journey began after being inspired to take up the martial art when seeing Jackie Chan films as a young child.

"Everything that I've done, the reason that I started training is because of Jackie Chan. I remember watching his films at three years old; I just loved them. There was a kung-fu club that opened up near my house that my brothers joined. When I went to go watch them I fell in love with it. It's pretty much history from then on. I've been training for 13 years now; I started when I was three."

His parents "fully supported" him doing kung-fu because he was a "very hyperactive" child and it was "a good way to get the energy out", he says.

At the age of six, he managed to briefly meet his idol when a schoolteacher organised a trip to the BBC, where Chan was filming a show. It's a memory he says he "will hold onto forever".



Junayde Guven at the World Kung-Fu Championships in Wushu, China last year. Credit Photo provided by family

"When [Chan] finished shooting a scene, I remember running up to him and giving him a hug and saying, 'You're my favourite person of all time' and then my brother came and we got a photo with him," he recalls.

Given the lack of sponsorship opportunities in kung-fu, martial artists are required to pay their own way to attend competitions, which like the World Kung-Fu Championships, are regularly held in places as far-flung as China, the martial art's birthplace.

walls around us, are inspired heavily by Chinese philosophy and Zen Buddhism, in which he is well-read. They were mostly made during the lockdown and reflect the social isolation that it brought.

He says that by selling the paintings, he will be able to come closer to his ambition of becoming a stuntman and then hopefully a kung-fu actor, like his idol Jackie Chan.

One, named *In My Mind*, depicts a lone individual sitting on the edge of an incomplete white circle, called an 'Enso', a symbol from Zen Buddhism. He painted it using martial arts movements, he says, adding: "The little red person represents the meditator, trying to calm and control stray thoughts, emotions, and the many processes that may be going on inside their head."

Another, *Alone*, was created in Chinese ink via a calligraphy brush. It shows a lone figure, who Junayde says "is dealing with their problems and issues" by themselves. The takeaway he wants viewers to get from the painting is; "if you can be anything in this world, be kind."

Beating kung-fu competitors from the United States, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine to come top in the world for his age group is no mean feat and Junayde could easily choose to gloat. He doesn't. "I celebrate my wins for one day and then I move on. I can't think, 'Oh I'm world champion now, I'm the best, I'm going to stop training'. No, I want to be even better."

Junayde's artwork is to go on auction on 28th January. It is currently available to view at Lees Spiritual Healing, 38 High Street Walthamstow E17 7LD



'In My Mind', by Junayde Guven

Junayde's parents have been funding his competition trips so far, and in a bid to ease their financial burden, he is auctioning off artwork he painted during the pandemic. The paintings, which are hanging on the

Silver birch canopy after coppicing Credit Kelly Bowers



Notes from nature

A conservation volunteering session on Chingford Plain leads Kelly Bowers to learn about how the practice of coppicing protects the ancient woods and grasslands of Epping Forest

I started my volunteering session bright and early at the recently renovated Epping Forest Visitor Centre, next to the 16th Century Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge.

The visitor centre, which is home to fascinating exhibitions on the history of the forest, looks out to Chingford Plain. It's also a view that Henry VIII famously appreciated on the morning of Anne Boleyn's execution, as he rode out to hunt.

On arrival I'm greeted by the infectious energy of conservation officer, Robyn, who explained that we would be coppicing a small glade of silver birch trees near Cuckoo Brook.

Coppicing is an ancient method of lopping wood. Historically this was done primarily to harvest wood for fuel and carefully cutting the tree near the base ensures healthy regrowth. Today coppicing is an important part of maintaining the biodiversity of the woodlands and grasslands of this specially protected area.

Removing some of the silver birches would make space in the canopy to let light through and re-establish areas of ancient heathland, ensuring that many species of flora and fauna can continue to thrive and support biodiversity across the wider ecosystem.

Without the light that coppicing provides, the yellow meadow ants, whose homes are often mistaken for grassy tufts or mole-hills, are unable to survive. Without them, birds miss out on important food sources and in turn wildflower seeds are not dis-

persed and pollinated.

We set up 'camp' under a young oak tree, spreading a tarp before getting to work. Safety is paramount and Robyn kitted us out with gloves, hard hats and high-visibility jackets, before explaining how to use the loppers and hand saws. Over a pleasant lunch break she also provided mince pies (controversial in January, I know, but warmly appreciated by all).

We took a small area of the glade each and I enjoyed the sense of being part of a group, whilst also having time to focus on our own tasks and enjoy the landscape; finding rabbit holes, spotting the brilliant red of rose hips, noticing the many shades of green moss, and listening to the raven.

With the logs and branches we coppiced, Robyn showed us how to pile the wood up to create safe habitats to encourage insects and wildlife. Laying the smaller branches down first, with the larger logs on top, facing south, woodlice and invertebrates can find a home in the dark, damp lower levels and newts can perch on the larger logs at the top to warm up in the sun. I very much enjoyed the idea that we might be creating tiny lizard sun loungers through our hard work!

Epping Forest Heritage Trust run various conservation volunteer opportunities, you can find out more here: efht.org.uk/volunteering

Epping Forest Visitor Centre and access to Chingford Plain is a seven minute walk from Chingford Station.

NEWS

Walthamstow Central escalators out of service 43 times in seven months

by Marco Marcelline & Josh Mellor,
Local Democracy Reporter

Escalators at Walthamstow Central Station were out of service more than 40 times between 6th April and 11th November last year, compared to twelve times the year previously.

In response to a Freedom of Information request, Transport for London (TfL), revealed that the station's two escalators had been out of service a total of 20 and 23 times in the 2023/24 financial year up until 11th November. This compares to a total of four and eight times in 2022/23.

A TfL spokesperson said that the escalators have "reliability issues" due to their age.

The spokesperson added: "We have assessed the issues causing them to be out of use and have ordered the parts needed to refurbish both escalators."

TfL said that its replacement wheels for the escalators "are currently on a nine month lead due to material challenges" and that once the stock becomes available it will "fully assess" the escalators again to make any repairs that are required, which will "improve" the escalators' reliability.



This has become a regular sight at Walthamstow Central in recent months

Data on the escalators being taken out of service was based on the escalators being the "root cause" of the problems and did not include other causes that have resulted in them being taken out of service, such as customer vandalism, or power failure, TfL said.

Walthamstow local Jake Weekes told the *Echo* he was actively avoiding the station because of the escalator problems. "I use Walthamstow Central roughly three times a week but...due to the issues, I now choose [to travel from] Blackhorse Road".

He added: "In the last five years, Walthamstow [Central] is not somewhere that I'd use for the Victoria Line, I use other stations. But it's not as easy for other people to do that."

A TfL spokesperson said: "We apologise to customers at Walthamstow Central station for the unreliability of the escalators at the station over the past year. Our engineers have been working hard to keep them running safely. We are waiting on new parts for the machinery and as soon as these arrive the escalators will be repaired as soon as possible."

Routine overcrowding at the station has been worsened by escalators being out of service.

In September, hundreds of rush hour commuters were held up in queues to evacuate the station after a fire alert on the Victoria Line. The alert occurred at the same time as the down escalator was out of service.

At the time a commuter told the *Echo*: "There was a bit of panic around and it was quite stressful, especially for those less able to move and parents with buggies."

"The station is not fit for purpose...it's only a matter of time that something serious happens."

Advertisement



38 High Street
Walthamstow
E17 7LD
0204 501 7032

Reiki Training with Leanne Level One / Shoden

2 day training course
Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th March
Usui Reiki level 1 course is an introduction to Reiki for beginners or those who want to refresh their skills. You will learn how to connect to Reiki energy for both self healing and the healing of others

Price £150

Payment options available
Small classes, so book early to guarantee your place.
To find out more call Leanne on 07525 994109 or book in-store

Spiritual Healing



Every Wednesday is a Discount Day at Spiritual Healing.

Booking Essential

WHAT'S ON FEB 2024

Tuesday
Bollysoul holistic dance class with Soulma

Wednesday
Discount Wednesday

Friday
Harmony Health Hub & Eternal Wellness Circle

Find out more in store

Makers Market Sat 24 & Sun 25 Feb 2024

A vibrant and eclectic market place where you can explore a world of handmade crafts and so much more

Free Entry



NEWS

Locals pay tribute to fallen tree

by Marco Marcelline

Walthamstow residents grieving a much-loved eucalyptus tree in Lloyd Park that fell last month are working with the council to make sure its memory stays alive.

The tree, which stood proudly over the park's ornamental gardens, was fatally wounded by Storm Henk on 2nd January. Tree surgeons have since removed branches that had blocked paths, and all that remains of it is a large chunk of its trunk.

Makeila Estelle, chair of Walthamstow Friends of Lloyd Park, said that she hopes the trunk can be used for a suitable preservation project. "I have to say the council has been really good [at helping]. We're keen to get local artists involved and I've had a couple of artists contact me to say they're interested in doing something. Ideas so far include an exhibition to collate people's memories of it."

Local artist Tony Blackmore said the "beautiful" tree reminded him of 18th Century British landscape paintings. "It provided a focal point when walking into the park and when it was sunny you could really see the texture of the bark. Now it's no longer there I really feel its absence."

Photographer Brigit Collins



The tree was described as a "focal point" in Lloyd Park Credit Brigit Collins

believes she took over 100 photos of the tree in the 20 years she has lived opposite Lloyd Park and felt "incredibly sad" to see it come down on 2nd January. She says she particularly enjoyed the tree on late summer evenings "as the sun dipped behind its branches".

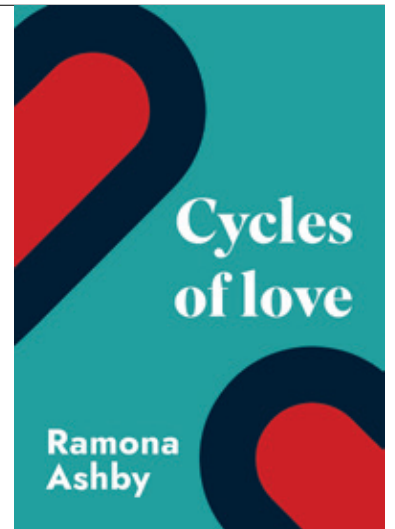
She told the *Echo*: "Its ever-green leaves were a striking feature through the changing seasons, and it was dramatic to watch it in stormy weather. It provided beautiful shade during summer heatwaves. I will miss it."

The council's cabinet member for environment Clyde Loakes said: "We know how much it meant to the community and we share residents' sorrow. Many local people have asked that we use the wood to create something for park users to enjoy – for example, to create new play equipment. We are considering our options and look forward to letting the community know how we will ensure the wood will continue its role in bringing pleasure to park users in the near future."

Anyone looking to pay their respects should note that council contractors will "shortly" move the fallen tree trunk to a safe storage place while future use of the wood is decided.

Walthamstow Friends of Lloyd Park is holding an AGM on Thursday 22nd February at Walthamstow Trades Hall. Email folpe17@gmail.com

POETRY



Reflection

I bought a gold mirror, as tall as me.

I could see every nook, and cranny.

I pouted and posed, dipped low – as far as I could go.

Trailed my hand over my curves, appreciating my beauty.

I caught myself.

I said it aloud, I am proud of me.

The self-love journey, led to me being free.

My mind is unburdened.

My body an expression, of the concept of me.

The above poem is taken from Walthamstow author Ramona Ashby's debut book 'Cycles of Love'. You can follow Ramona on Instagram: @blacpoesia

Continued from Page-1

private security personnel to support staff and installed CCTV cameras, and closed off walk-in access to the main reception.

The furore began when pupils turned up to school sporting Palestinian colours, badges and stickers on a non-school uniform day for Children in Need on 17th November. The school subsequently sent a letter to at least eight families advising them that "overt demonstration of political beliefs" was banned.

The school has been subject to weeks of additional pressure since the parents of an eight-year-old boy alleged that he had been bullied and mistreated by teachers for wearing a Palestinian flag to school despite the ban on political symbols.

The boy's father told the *Echo* that his son was wearing the flag as a symbol of solidarity with members of his extended family who have been killed during Israel's ongoing assault on Gaza.

Shahid Achhala said disciplinary actions taken towards his son by members of the school's senior leadership team constituted "emotional abuse".

These actions included his son being prevented from having lunch with others in his year group and being forced to wear an adult-sized coat in the school playground after his own coat was confiscated. He added that his son was "in tears" when wearing the oversized coat which was so big that its sleeves touched the ground.

Detailing another incident

which he described as "heavy-handed", Shahid said: "[My son] was removed from class without explanation by a senior teacher and [then] marched to the head's office where seven members of the senior leadership team discussed his fate. They then returned him to class leaving him visibly anxious and distressed."

Shahid accused the school of "refusing" to engage in "constructive communication" and said none of his family had been contacted during the school's internal investigation nor during the external review into the mistreatment allegations.

The boy has been off school since 23rd November. This will continue until a "proper" safeguarding review and a meeting with school leadership is held, Shahid said.

In a statement responding to the allegations of bullying and mistreatment, the school said: "No evidence to support any allegations of bullying or misconduct has been found through either an external or internal investigation. This has been formally referred by the school to the relevant external safeguarding authorities who have reviewed the allegation and found it to be false."

"We will never tolerate bullying or intimidation from any source - and have the full support of the Department for Education, Ofsted and the police in this matter. We will take any and all necessary steps to protect our pupils, staff and values."

Leyton and Wanstead MP John Cryer wrote on X/Twitter: "I have seen media reports

alleging threats made to Barclay primary school and protests outside the school. There are myriad claims and counter-claims and I have written to the school and am in contact with the council.

He added: "It is clear to me that however angry some people might be, protests and threats directed at schools are simply not acceptable."

Chief Superintendent for Waltham Forest, Simon Crick said: "We are taking these threats incredibly seriously and would like to reassure pupils, teachers and parents that we are doing everything in our power to keep you safe while our investigation continues."

Hate crime will not be tolerated in London and we will take action against those who commit offences and pose a threat to communities.

NEWS & HISTORY

Aldi plans Leytonstone store following Matalan closure

The supermarket chain is seeking council permission for the creation of two retail units at the former Matalan which shut for good on 7th January

by Marco Marcelline

Aldi is seeking the green light for the creation of “two retail units” at the recently shut Matalan site in Leytonstone, planning permission documents submitted to the council show.

A cover letter that was submitted to the council by consultancy firm Planning Potential, lets slip that proposed “minor works” to the site’s existing service area would allow for “Aldi’s servicing vehicles to connect direct to the building” thus “significantly reducing noise associated with deliveries”.

The letter additionally reveals that Aldi or its representatives participated in “positive pre-application discussions” with council officers early last year.

The documents include reference to a “second operator” or a “food retailer” who is set to occupy the proposed second retail unit at the site. Social media has been awash with claims that clothing and food retailer Marks & Spencer (M&S) will occupy a retail unit. M&S did not respond to the *Echo*’s request for comment.

If approved, the first retail unit would be 1,545 sqm, while the second would cover 2,015 sqm.

The cover letter also states that the proposals would “strengthen the overall vitality and viability of [Leytonstone town] centre” and create “circa 100 new local retail jobs”.



The former Matalan store

Waltham Forest Council deputy leader Ahsan Khan said: “The council has received a planning application for minor works to the former Matalan site to allow for the creation of two retail units. The application will be determined in the next few weeks, having already been subject to full public consultation. We anticipate we will receive further details on the owner’s plans for this key site following the planning decision.”

In its Local Plan regeneration document for Leytonstone, the council earmarked Matalan as a redevelopment spot as having potential for “c.190 homes” as well as “new retail, commercial, cultural space”. The retail store and the nearby McDonald’s are described in the document as having “eroded parts of the historic high street grain”.

The *Echo* asked the council if it had any intention to pursue housing at the site. Cllr Khan responded: “In the longer-term, the Local Plan identifies the site as a potential location for mixed-use town centre development. There are currently no housing development proposals for the site.”

An Aldi spokesperson said: “We are always considering new locations for stores in areas across the UK, including in Leytonstone. If and when we have confirmed a location for a new store we will update the community.”

Matalan shut its Leytonstone site on 7th January, two months after the retailer confirmed its closure plans in November. On the final day of trading, the news was met with sadness from local shoppers who told the *Echo* that Matalan’s closure meant there was now little in the way of clothing shops in Leytonstone.

Michelle, a customer who had been shopping at the Leytonstone Matalan ever since it opened over 21 years ago, was looking for boots before the doors shut for a final time.

She said she was “very disappointed and upset” at its closure. “It’s the only clothing shop left in Leytonstone, at least in this area. We had a Peacocks down near to where Iceland is, that shut down.”

Michelle also complained about the distance of the nearest Matalan store, which is in Beckton: “It’s a hell of a trek to get to by tube; it’s kind of remote.”

Meanwhile, manager Sandy Bhachu who had worked at Matalan for over two decades struggled to contain her emotions as she spoke to the *Echo*. “It’s really sad. We’ve known since November that it was to shut but we didn’t expect it to be so quick. We were expecting to remain open for at least a year.”

The closure comes amid a financially turbulent time for department stores across the UK. From 2019 to 2023/24, department store revenue is expected to have fallen at an average annual rate of 2.7% to £33.6billion, according to research from IbisWorld. This is despite forecasted growth of 0.7% in 2023.

The pandemic particularly hit department stores hard, with Debenhams and House of Fraser being major fatalities. Staple John Lewis shut a total of 16 stores during the pandemic, while M&S has closed dozens of its own stores as it seeks to prioritise more profitable branches.



Aldi's proposed store
Credit Vector DC / The Harris Partnership

The local department store that rivalled Harrods

David Boote delves into the history of Leytonstone’s Bearmans, once nicknamed the ‘Harrods of the East End’

The site of the recently closed Matalan has changed hands many times before. But its most interesting owner was in the first half the 20th Century.

From 1898, it was a shop founded and managed by Frank Bearman. He had trained at a Westminster store, cycling back to spend weekends at the family home in Braintree. The new London suburb of Leytonstone, he decided, had become a promising area for a new retail venture. Starting with cloth for furnishings the business rapidly expanded into a local ‘department store’, remembered still for providing a stylish experience and for treating its customers as special people.

Behind the High Road Bearmans store, a roller skating rink was converted during the 1920s into the Rialto cinema showing films with sound, Hollywood blockbusters and their British rivals. Behind large plate glass windows Bearmans displayed hats and handbags for the temptation of those queuing to see the latest glamour on screen.

Just as cinemas had clubs that children could join, so Bearmans had a ‘Mr Acorn Club’ whose members got a free birthday tea in the store restaurant, where the waitresses wore black dresses and white aprons. Its leadership took pride in having kept up with changing fashions from the trailing skirts and leg-of-mutton sleeves of 1898 to the sleeveless frocks, brief skirts,



A Blue Plaque erected by the Leyton and Leytonstone Historical Society commemorating the Bearmans store Credit Speedgun67/Wikimedia Commons

slacks and sweaters of 50 years later. In 1947 the steam locomotive-hauled line from Stratford was converted into an extension of the electric Central Line underground through Leytonstone to Wanstead, Newbury Park and Hainault, as well as along the existing line to Epping and Ongar. Bearmans could look to the more affluent residents of Woodford and nearby for whom price was not the only consideration.

Frank Bearman died in 1956 and the family sold the business to the London

Co-operative Society in 1962. The change of ownership took a long time to be reflected in how the business was run. Into the 1970s it seemed to be a traditional one, but in 1978 the once popular institution of children meeting Father Christmas in his Grotto stopped being offered.

Its resumption in 1948 had been a sign Britain was starting to recover from the crippling sacrifices of the Second World War.

In the 1960s pedestrians along the northern part of the High Road were prevented by railings from trying to cross through the heavy traffic. The situation suited neither those on foot nor those in a car. People went to Ilford and elsewhere for more expensive purchases. The Co-operative retail organisation closed Bearmans in 1983 and erected a new building for a supermarket, a highly competitive sector from which the Co-op later withdrew and now Matalan which followed has also faced strong competition, notably from website based enterprises.

Visit leytonhistorysociety.org.uk

COMMENT



Credit Optimistic Productions LTD

Let’s turn our streets into solar power stations

Artist and filmmaker Dan Edelstyn says the council and government aren’t doing enough to make our homes energy efficient

During lockdown me and my partner Hilary Powell started ‘Power Station’, a project with the goal of putting solar panels on every house on our Walthamstow street, thus making it a renewable power station of sorts.

The project was born just after we finished making a feature documentary called *Bank Job* where we blew up £1.2million of high interest debt. Due to pandemic restrictions, we couldn’t go to many of the cinemas that wanted to screen the film and so we started to do more of our work online and behind closed doors, like everyone else.

As artists and activists, me and Hilary wondered what we could do. We wanted to design a new project where we could investigate the connection between the financial system and the ecological emergency. This is why we started to print our own money – called Greenbacks – and use the proceeds from selling it to fund ‘Power Station’.

So far we have managed to put solar panels on 16 houses as well as two schools in close collaboration with Solar for Schools. This clearly

isn’t enough and it certainly wouldn’t feel like a great climax to our story. More renewable energy and retrofit and insulation needs to be deployed at great speed which is why we’ve opened a crowdfunder to help achieve our solar panel fitting and insulation goals.

We have two very clear demands of the government. The first is to stop the irresponsible drilling for oil and gas in the North Sea. The second is that it deploys renewables, and retrofits and insulates homes with the speed and urgency necessary to make a positive difference to the crises facing us. I believe the worst of these can still be headed off but the government has been asleep at the wheel. Well, it’s time for our leaders to wake up!

Locally, Waltham Forest Council’s climate team has been very supportive of our project, which we have appreciated. That said, many of their systems for dealing with climate risk actually exacerbate the very pressing dangers of climate change. What do I mean? Due to excessive council bureaucracy it took over a year to get the green light to install solar panels on our local primary school. It seems that the same

systems which are designed to mitigate climate risk are making the council too slow to adapt to said risk.

We also wanted the council to put solar panels and insulation into its own properties on the street but they turned us down by citing their established process of identifying and prioritising the worst performing properties across the borough for energy efficiency works.

What the council should know though is that by taking a street-by-street approach rather than a house-by-house one, it becomes possible to involve the entire community and this can in turn unleash the momentum that is necessary to fight climate change. We understand that the council is underfunded and that leads to restrictions on what it can do. But since they have launched zero-interest £20,000 loans for home insulation, we ask if the council will consider working with us and adopting our street-by-street approach to energy efficiency.

Find out more about the ‘Power Station’ project and how to support Dan and Hilary in their mission at: power.film

FEATURE

Sustainability for all

Ros Bedlow from Transition Leytonstone explains why she set up the Library for Change

If you live in Leytonstone you may be familiar with Stone Mini Market, the refill and ethical grocery shop, and the craft beer and wine shop next door to it. Most customers are aware that behind the two shops there is a community area run by a community interest company called the Inconvenient Store. One of the rooms, behind the beer shop at 721 High Road, Leytonstone, contains the Library for Change, Transition Leytonstone’s lending library.

Transition Leytonstone, as the name suggests, is all about change. We are one of many communities across the world working to create a future that is better for the earth, and fairer for all people. It is a positive approach, focusing on what we can do locally, and on enjoying ourselves working together.

The library, containing about 470 books and a small collection of DVDs, is a store of information on a wide range of topics connected with sustainability. There are books on practical matters such as gardening with nature, foraging, repair and re-use and natural crafts, as well as more academic books on climate change, ecology and alternative economics. There is an expanding children’s section, and another of eco-poetry, and a small but growing section of books by local authors.

Transition Leytonstone started the library because we feel it’s really important for people to have access to information about sustainable action and change-making so they can incorporate positive changes into their own lives. We started off as small as you can imagine; in our earliest days Library for Change was a bookcase in my living room!

I had a couple of hundred books about sustainability, which has been my passion for a long time, and I wanted to share them with others. Not surprisingly, people were reluctant to visit a library in a stranger’s private house, so when Adrienne and Okan offered us the space in the Inconvenient Store, we jumped at it and in November 2022, Library for Change was born.

At least once a month, the Library for Change runs a series of book related events. So far these have included talks, creative writing

workshops and an eco-poetry open mic evening. In January, for example, we held a book launch for a local poet, and a nature connection workshop.

Kerrie, a regular library user, told me how the library had given her hope in the fight for a sustainable earth. She said: “I have borrowed many books and DVDs from the Library for Change, that have both inspired and educated me. It feels nice to know that you are in a community that shares similar concerns to you about the future of our beautiful planet and its inhabitants.”

Meanwhile, Lily told me how she uses the library “while stocking up on dried goods” at Stone Mini Market. Highlighting the library’s mission of sustainability education as its main pull-factor, she said: “I’ve borrowed lots of books, from ideas for outdoor activities with my son, to cookbooks, to inspiring books on social change. There’s something about it not being too big, being right in front of me (rather than getting lost with choices online), and knowing it has been compiled with sustainability and ethical thinking at its core, that means I really enjoy using it.”

Membership of the library is growing, with over 80 people now signed up.

Once you’ve joined, you can borrow books any time the shop is open. Please spread the word!

You can join by scanning the QR code on the poster in the library, or visit: transitionleytonstone.org.uk



Credit Mirko Bozzato via Pixabay

NEWS

Live music venue launches 'all or nothing' crowdfunder to prevent closure

Leytonstone's Luna is urgently seeking to raise £75,000 to pay off mounting debts and maintenance costs

by Marco Marcelline

A popular live music venue in Leytonstone has launched an "all-or-nothing" crowdfunding campaign to save itself from closure.

Luna's owner Declan Walsh is looking to raise a total of £75,000 by 8th February as it urgently seeks cash for mounting debts, maintenance costs, and funding for a planned transition to a community interest company (CIC).

The "Save Luna" campaign will reportedly return all donations if the target is not reached.

Declan became the music venue's owner in 2021, following the unexpected death of founder and business partner Suja Khaled. Under Suja's ownership, the lounge won *Time Out* awards in 2015, 2016, and in 2018.

Luna's lease is currently still in Suja's name, and it has accrued rent arrears over the years. To secure a new lease, Declan says, the arrears need to be repaid, as well as a year's rent in advance.

If a new lease is secured, Declan says

he will be able to challenge the business rates he pays as the venue is presently still registered as a shoe shop, which is what it was before Suja opened the site in 2004.

In its crowdfunding appeal, the venue wrote: "The tragic loss of our irreplaceable founder has left a young team physically and financially stretched, we haven't had days off and now we're at a critical point. We need a minimum of £75,000 urgently to pay off looming debts threatening closure. This is not mismanagement; it's the cumulative effect of economic recovery post-Covid, a soaring cost of living crisis, and declining spend per head."

Speaking to the *Echo*, Declan said: "Luna isn't just a chain pub. We've had thousands of musicians come through our doors and for some of them we were the first ever gig they did. On top of that, It's a place where people can come in and forget their troubles. Our customers are devastated."

He added: "There is no place like Luna, it's more than just a music venue. Music is of course at its core but Luna is a community.



Luna's owner Declan Walsh Credit Emma Carney

We, like many venues in our sector, are at a critical point, and to save Luna we need to turn to our community for help to preserve this amazing space."

When asked what the donated money

would go towards, Declan specified that £50,000 will go towards paying off outstanding rent arrears, while £20,000 will go towards paying the year's rent in advance with the remaining amount covering legal fees.

The venue's desired transition to becoming a CIC is a move described by the owner as one that will "reduce overheads, facilitate meaningful fundraising" and make Luna "more eligible for grants" while allowing it to "give back" to Leytonstone.

Luna has said it "desperately needs modernisation" including "new equipment, complete rewiring, soundproofing, two new ceilings and accessibility features".

The venue currently employs four full-time staff, and eight part-time staff including sound engineers, bartenders, a social media specialist, and a bar manager.

Its closure would leave Leytonstone with just one remaining live music venue, St John's Music Hall.

You can donate to Luna's appeal here:
crowdfunder.co.uk/p/save-luna

Find out what's on at: lunalivemusic.com

Woman left 'traumatised' after mobility scooter 'hit and run'

Caroline Pearce was visiting family in Walthamstow just before Christmas when she was run over by a woman in a mobility scooter in a 'deliberate' and 'random' attack

by Marco Marcelline

A woman has said she has been left "traumatised" after being run over by a mobility scooter driver on Wood Street shortly before Christmas.

The 'hit and run', which happened at 5pm on Thursday 21st December on Wood Street in Walthamstow, left her with "permanent" damage to her leg and needing a skin graft to replace missing skin on her right calf.

Caroline Pearce, from Hextable, Kent, was in Walthamstow to drop off Christmas presents to family members in the local area and had just walked out of a Wood Street cafe with her sister, sister-in-law and nephew before she was assaulted.

Describing the assault, she told the *Echo*: "I heard a little 'whoosh' sound and wondered if it was one of those e-scooters you see around a lot. She [drove] into

my left leg first and I screamed. Then she rammed into my right leg twice. I remember looking down and seeing blood. It's all a blur."

After a third hit, the driver of the mobility scooter "drove around" Caroline before setting off in the direction of Wood Street Station. After driving around her, the attacker reportedly looked back and made eye contact with Caroline, but did not say anything.

The 66-year-old grandmother described her alleged attacker as being in her "late 30s to early 40s" and "Mediterranean-looking" with "olive skin" and sporting "dark hair" and a dark eye colour. The attacker struck her from behind, Caroline said.

Caroline believes the attack was deliberate. "Accidents happen but if it was an accident, you'd say sorry; you wouldn't drive off into the night."

Caroline's daughter Emily Pearce told the *Echo* that the attack had left her mother "fearful" and "scared to go out", with the

incident massively impacting her mother's usually "very active and outgoing" lifestyle. "She's always out and about with her friends. She [looks after] my niece, her first grandchild, four days a week so it's really [turned] her life upside down at the moment."

Emily added that a planned trip with her mum to New York to celebrate her 30th birthday this month was cancelled because of the assault.

Immediately following the attack, Caroline went into the nearby Day Lewis Pharmacy where she was given cotton wool for her bleeding leg as she says the pharmacy lacked a first-aid medical kit.

She said: "I was bleeding so much over [the pharmacy's] floor. I thought, 'I can't sit here with all this blood coming out'."

After being told by emergency services that it would take over an hour for an ambulance to arrive, her sister instead drove her to Whipps Cross A&E where Caroline received a tetanus jab and antibiotics.

She was told she would need skin-graft surgery, but because of the busy Christmas period, she was forced to wait at home in "agonising pain" until the surgery date on 29th December.

On her attacker, Caroline said: "I want her caught before she kills someone. Thankfully she didn't hit a child or someone older than me."

The assault left her vowing to never return to Walthamstow because of safety concerns.

A spokesperson for the Metropolitan Police said that the force "received a report of a collision involving a pedestrian and a mobility scooter in Wood Street, E17, on 21st December at 5pm. An investigation is ongoing. There have been no arrests."

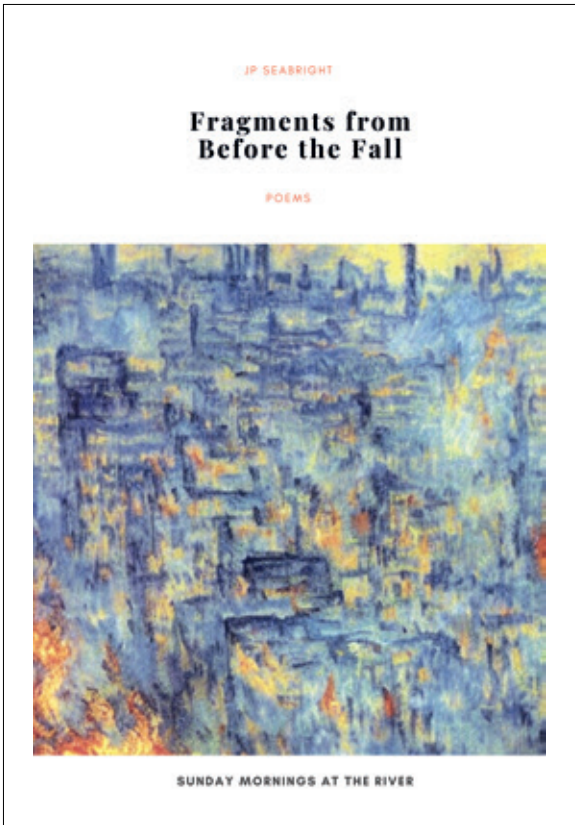
The Met said it could not provide further information on the investigation but confirmed that an investigating officer was leading a response to the incident.

Any witnesses are asked to call police on 101 quoting JC/010001447/23

ARTS & CULTURE

Fragments from Before the Fall

Sarah Fairburn reviews an ‘unflinching’ collection of poetry on the threat posed by climate change



The introduction to JP Seabright’s unflinching collection of works relating to the Covid pandemic and the 2021 IPCC report on the impact of global warming imagines future generations looking back on us from a post-Anthropocene world; that is, an epoch after the impact of human activity has become geologically catastrophic. The poems themselves, spare and interrupted as they are, reflect the voice of an author whose terror at the rapidly escalating consequences of climate change is only equalled by their horror at the scale of our societal indifference to the evidence mounting before us.

The chapbook is ingeniously presented as the work of a future incarnation of Seabright himself. The introduction is written by an editor seriously and painstakingly examining the found pieces of literature extant from before some cataclysmic climate event.

Humanity has been left to piece together the evidence from before ‘the Fall’, unsure how and why such a terrible and apparently foreseen disaster can have been allowed to happen. The poems are fragmented, interrupted and mysterious. As Seabright’s namesake writes: “It is difficult to provide accurate dates for a period commonly known as the New Dark Ages.”

The poems are collected from various projects and commissions and reading them together creates a sense of a world reconstructed. Some pieces, such as *Birds Fly Backwards* document an unfamiliar and frightening reality, describing the smell of ether and burning leather, while others, like *Denouement*, speak with an intensely personal and pained voice.

There’s a sparseness to the verse that simultaneously communicates the urgency of a falling planet and the helplessness of a writer who can only watch as the world burns around them. The collection presents these poems as

‘fragments’, stating “only four of the texts here are considered complete... Where words are missing or indecipherable due to water or fire damage, they have not been added to the text; but presented ‘as found’.”

This device is most effective in the texts included as the purported appendices, where an excerpt from the 2021 United Nations Climate Report is reimagined as a Cassandraic prophecy of the doom about to befall humanity. Reflecting on the dire warnings of ‘irreversible loss’, ‘heavy precipitation’ and ‘frequency of droughts’, Seabright’s editor is bemused. “Despite the clear scientific evidence demonstrated in this report,” they write, “even from the excerpts and fragments available to us now decades later, this suggests an extraordinary lack of awareness and commitment from the general population”.

‘Fragments Before the Fall’ was published in December 2023 by Sunday Mornings at the River and is available for purchase on Amazon.

Traitor talk

A long-time Walthamstow resident who took part in BBC’s *The Traitors* chats about her experience on the show

by Marco Marcelline

Ash Bibi, who participated in the hit TV show *The Traitors*, is at ease with her freshly achieved celebrity status, breezily jumping from one interview to the next on the day we spoke. “I was just on *This Morning*,” she says, as a media handler gives us the thumbs up to begin our interview.

The Walthamstow local was the first ‘traitor’ to be booted off the programme but she tells me she wouldn’t have changed a thing about the “amazing” experience.

The popular reality TV game show sees contestants split into two groups: the majority ‘faithful’ and a handful of ‘traitors’. The traitors are aware of each other’s identities and secretly work together to eliminate the faithful by ‘murdering’ one each night, while the faithful must try to identify the traitors among them. Up for grabs is a six-figure cash prize. If only faithfuls make it to the final, the money is theirs, but if a traitor or two sneak in, the traitors take it all.

Ash, who lived on Hoe Street for ten years before moving to Walthamstow Village during the pandemic, says the thing she loves most about Walthamstow is its active community. “I know people throw that word [community] around but genuinely this is why everyone wants to move to Walthamstow and Waltham Forest. When they need to, people will come together. It’s so multi-cultural, and it is the epitome of who I am and how I want to live my life,” she said.

She found out about the show by word of mouth. Over lockdown she and friends regularly played a game with a similar premise called ‘Werewolves’. “That got us through lockdown”, she says, recalling that a friend nudged and told her: “Oh there’s this show called *Traitors* that you need to know about.”

Ash didn’t apply thinking she would get in, and unlike other contestants, she didn’t have any winning strategy other than being herself. “I just wanted to stay true to myself and be the same person I was from when I walked in to when I left,” she says.

Fans of the show have been hooked by

the drama and ruthless treachery on display each night at the roundtable, which is where Ash sadly met her demise. She was the third contestant to be banished after the other traitors tactically voted for her to go.

Despite being betrayed by her fellow traitors, the events executive was reluctant to do the same back, opting to instead accuse faithful contestant Evie of being a traitor. Reflecting on her thought process, she said: “Even at that point at the fourth roundtable, I just couldn’t [betray other traitors] because in my mind I was thinking, ‘that’s my traitors and I wouldn’t be prepared to throw them under the bus.’”

Ash, who currently rents, had aimed to buy her own house in Walthamstow with the prize money. “I just have to hope I win the EuroMillions jackpot now!”

she cackles.

To celebrate her short but sweet time on the show, Ash arranged a last-minute viewing party at her local Walthamstow Village pub. She put in a quick word to the landlord who set aside the main TV for her and magically got 45 friends to turn up with less than 24 hours notice.

Watching the show back was emotional for her. She comments: “What an adventure that I’ve had the privilege to have. The cast was amazing. I’m just really honoured. I still can’t get over [the fact] that I was chosen to go on the show.”

Would she change anything in her approach if she could go back a second time? Grinning, she says: “I’m happy being a traitor. If I got [the opportunity] to do it again, I would be a traitor - I would just try to be a bit smarter next time.”



REVIEW



Credit Mum Likes Thai Food

Mum Likes Thai Food

Selin Azimkar reviews the popular Thai restaurant’s new Leytonstone offshoot

If you enjoy both a relaxing and intensely flavourful dining experience, Mum Likes Thai Food’s newest Leytonstone restaurant is the place to go.

On a blisteringly cold Saturday afternoon last month, I made the trip down to the restaurant, which opened only a couple of months ago. An impressive display of exquisite wines and many other drink options from cocktails, beers, and fresh coffee met me at the entrance, while a calm, mellow setting and interior décor guided me to my seat.

Once seated, the restaurant menu offered me traditional and popular dishes of Thai cuisine, with some of the array of tasty starter options including vegetable spring rolls dipped in sweet sauce, papaya salad and dumplings.

Seated under the dimmed, warm lights, the authentic flavour of the main courses transported me to the heart of Thailand. My favourite main dish was a hot and sizzling plate of aromatic Chicken Volcano with grilled poussin chicken served with a sweet and sour sesame sauce. My taste buds delighted in the rich flavours of herbs, spices and sauces marinating the chicken, and I felt

connected with the traditional flavours of Thai cuisine.

The signature Pad Thai River Prawn (on Shell) dish is a seafood extravaganza. Fresh and tender, the prawns are intertwined with noodles immersed in rich sauces and fresh herbs, creating a mix of authentic flavours. Each food option offers a harmonious balance between sweet, sour, salty and spicy flavours. The portions for every Thai delicacy on the menu are plentiful and I was content with every bite.

The restaurant owners, husband-and-wife duo Supap and Tanakrit Pimpa, explained to me that most of their ingredients, like herbs, spices, and noodles, are transported from Thailand.

They also said the new restaurant, which is close to their home, is less fast-paced

than their Bethnal Green location. Supap delightfully added that “restaurant visitors feel like family visiting,” highlighting the cosy, familial vibe dining experience that I palpably felt as a guest.

It also has to be said that Mum Likes Thai Food’s serene and innovative interior did not put me in any rush to leave. The walls are painted in deep and calming shades of blue, mimicking the pattern of waves at sea. Meanwhile, warm shades of flowers also painted on the wall represent the vast and picturesque nature of the south-east Asian nation.

Remarkably, Mum Likes Thai Food’s connection to Thailand’s nature goes beyond their delicious cuisine and vibrant interior design. Part of the restaurant’s earnings go towards growing trees on the Sanam Chai Farm in Thailand. The farm, 40 acres in size, grows mahogany and teak trees. The restaurant’s contribution aims to reduce its carbon footprint, ensuring it gives back to the environment through each tree grown. As the trees grow, the restaurant hopes to grow with them.



Mum Likes Thai Food, 682 High Rd Leytonstone, Bushwood E11 3AA
Visit mumlikethaifood.com/leytonstone
Call 020 3340 0340

Are you enjoying Waltham Forest Echo?



If you want more, you can find new stories every day online at walthamforestecho.co.uk

Sign up to the Echo’s weekly newsletter



Sign up: bit.ly/44uC3oP

LICENSING ACT 2003

Application for the Grant of a Premises Licence

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that **Shahz & K Limited** has applied to the London Borough of Waltham Forest for the grant of a Premises Licence at **Pepe's Piri Piri Leytonstone located at 575 High Road Leytonstone London E11 4PB**. The nature of the application is as follows:

- **To permit the late night refreshments from 23:00–05:00, Monday to Sunday**

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

Representations must be received no later than **15th February 2024**.

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

Premises and Club Premises Certificates Regulations 2005

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN I **Mr Florenc Sadiku** have made an application under Section 17 Part 3 of the Licensing Act 2003 to vary a Premises Licence for the Premises known as **Orient Lounge, at 389 High Road Leyton London E10 5NA**. To make the following variation to the Premises Licence:

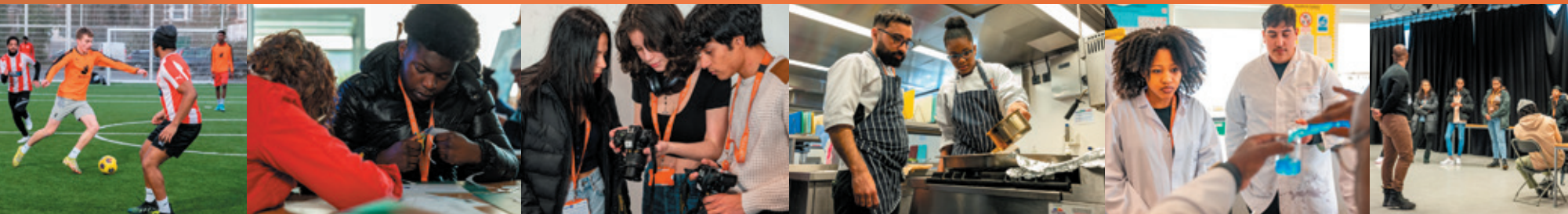
- **Removal of Condition**
The rear enclosed area shall only be open to members of the public between the hours of 07:00–21:30 on Sunday to Thursday and 07:00–22:00 on a Friday and Saturday.
- **To change the sale of alcohol, recorded music and hours the premises is open to the public**
From: Monday to Sunday 07:00 to 23:00
To: Sunday to Thursday 07:00 to 00:00
Friday to Saturday 07:00 to 02:00
- **Provision of late night refreshment**
Sunday to Thursday 23:00 to 00:00
Friday to Saturday 23:00 to 02:00

Any interested party or responsible authority may make representations on this application in writing to the Licensing Section, 3 The Square, Leyton London E10 5NR. Email: licensing@walthamforest.gov.uk, by not later than **9th February 2024**.

For full details and to view a copy of the application please contact the Licensing General Section.

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with this application, the maximum fine on summary conviction is unlimited.

Advertisement



Interviews every Wednesday 3-5pm
Apply by 31st March to receive a
GUARANTEED OFFER



SCAN TO BOOK

Specialist teaching, exceptional support and enrichment opportunities – come and see for yourself!

www.haringey6.ac.uk



#MoreThanACollege

SPORT

Roaring lions

Alastair Cole reports on the successes of the Lea Valley Ice Centre’s hockey team

The Lee Valley Ice Centre is a fantastic new venue, which is bringing a wide range of sport, and leisure activities to the borough. The skating facilities are top notch, and because it’s home to ice hockey team the Lee Valley Lions, there are more advanced types of skates available to hire. The venue hosts disco sessions at weekends, and there’s a gym and fitness class studios, plus a cafe that can be accessed while still wearing your skates. But it’s the highly competitive ice hockey games between the Lions and their rivals that really sets pulses racing. I’ve been twice this season, and both Sunday evenings have been an absolute blast. The first was a thrilling last minute decider (though sadly not in our favour) against Chelmsford, and the second, a goal-fest win over Peterborough. Games are split into three 20-minute periods, which means the play is fast and furious. And when the officials do blow their whistles, the 400-seater stadium is instantly filled with banging tunes. The crowd is family-friendly, highly vocal, and passionately supportive of the Lions. Bringing a hat and gloves is advised, and hot chocolates before the final period are a big hit with my young family. The new double Olympic ring is also

home to the Junior Lions club, which offers playing opportunities for girls and boys aged four to 17. They work with underprivileged children from Waltham Forest, providing equipment, and support to ensure that financial constraints don’t

hinder their participation. Young people who take up the sport find they develop agility, strength, and coordination. Senior team captain James Joseph has taken over coaching duties, following in the esteemed footsteps of his late father, and club legend Eddie Joseph. He told me: “We want as many children to get into ice skating as possible but it can be very expensive. We at Lee Valley Lions offset that by having lots of spare equipment children can get to grips with, without having to buy it – opening up access for all.” Getting there couldn’t be easier. The centre

has a dedicated bus stop right outside, and is well served by the cycle lane on Lea Bridge Road. It also has its own private car park, with EV charging points. The Lee Valley Lions senior team play on Saturdays and Sundays, normally starting at 5.30pm, and entry to spectate is excellent value for money at £7 for adults, and £3 for kids. They’re also planning to slash prices on one or two weekends before the end of the season, so keep your eyes open because it’s a cracking night out for all.

Find out more: better.org.uk/leisure-centre/lee-valley/ice-centre



The Lee Valley Lions play against the Solent Devils
Credit Andrew Moss Photography

Advertisement

Your *local* solicitors

No legal problem is too large or too small.
If it matters to *you*, then it matters to *us*.

- Avoiding court cost and want to agree legal separation talk to us - we are divorce and children law experts
- Discount for all Wills and Lasting powers of attorney drafting for all NHS workers
- Family Law and children matters, Wills and Probate, Immigration EU applications and Nationality law

5* star google reviews

Will writing service from £200 + VAT

020 8175 5000 www.AronaStJames.co.uk
63 St James St, Walthamstow, London E17 7PJ

Immigration & family law specialists

We are regulated by the Solicitors Regulatory Authority number 619031

ARONA
st JAMES
SOLICITORS

020 8150 1177 • www.coppermills.co.uk
info@coppermills.co.uk
63 St James Street, E17 7PJ

THE COURTLAND
LONDON

Homes of distinction & timeless design

The Courtland proudly introduces carefully considered lateral apartments that have been meticulously designed to provide the best in modern living.

6 apartments and 2 penthouses from *£600,000 off-plan
83-85 Whitehall Road, Chingford, London E4 6DN
*subject to price variation at time of launch

HELP US GROW THE ECHO

Waltham Forest Echo is published by Social Spider Community News, a not-for-profit social enterprise. Our mission is to hold authority to account and provide a platform for the community. But because we have no shareholders or wealthy backers we rely on local people and organisations to support our journalism. The number of supporters making monthly contributions has nearly doubled in a year — helping us to break even and look at how we can grow as a publication.



WITH CONTINUED SUPPORT FROM ECHO READERS WE AIM TO:
Produce more local journalism | Expand the size of the paper | Distribute to more locations

This month, 302 supporters contributed 31% of our monthly costs. While the paper remains free to read in print and online, every penny of income is reinvested in our local journalism. Can you support us with £5 per month to help us do more?

Find out more at: walthamforestech.co.uk/support-us

OUR CURRENT SUPPORTERS

Darrel Hunneybell, David Hamilton, Chris Lemin, David Gardiner, Jean Duggleby, Michael Grimshaw, Dexter Coles, Roland Karthaus, Graham Millington, Renetta Neal, Graham Larkbey, Paul Schneider, Deri Jones, Scott Davies, Madeleine Munday, Ian Cadogan, Lee Mitchell, Pat Stannard, Paul Scaife, Irena Souroup, Jon Dalladay, David McDade, Community Counts UK, Saradadevii Hull-Jurkovic, Claire Weiss, (Alfred) George Clarke, Ben Marlow, Creative Works, Carmen Trachenko, Transition Leytonstone, Clem Cowton, Linda Ridgers-Waite, Stephanie Waterman, Hugh Grant Peterkin, Alke Schmidt, Keith Segal, Daniel Stanley, Sarah Jones, Bob Sullivan, Jo Pinney, Andrew Diamond, James Wragg, Doreen Harding, Miranda Grell, Jawed Akhtar, Jean Anderson, Katherine Green, Shona Mackintosh, Laonikos Psimikakis, Joanna Moncrieff, Steve Cushion, Namir Shabibi, Andrew Boyd, The Digital Story Company, Lora Parkes, Tiffany-Louise Bird, Sarah McCulloch, Amy Rixon, Holly Wilkins, Steve Roffey, Caitlin McKiernan, Ruth Goldsmith, Kate Bohdanowicz, Kizzy Gardiner, Louis Wallinger, Peter Brennan, Anne McKenna, Clare Thomas, Tom Thompson, Barbara Korner, Lucy Birchenough, Sam Brewster, Carolyn Difalco, Jonathan Weymer, Maura Wilding, Steven Scorer, Paul Dart, Allyiah Walcott, Philip Hall, Debra Antwi, Amer Saad, Eduardo Regalado, Andrew Johns, Robert Bell, Claudia Hillaire, Mike Lanchin, Ben Holt, Martin Goodsell, Jo Fletcher, Darren Kneller, Salaheddin AbuEin, George T Goodchild, William Slater, Adam Shone, Jill Hasler, Paul Clements, Alexandra Martinelli, Thomas Ableman, Matt Bennett, Wendy Wood, Gary Anderson, John Hugill, Victoria Crabby, Richard Hughes, Michael Campbell, Bryony Forde, Matthew Rodriguez, Dara Maguire, Alex Wilson, Richard Campbell, Ben Plant, Rossalyn Warren, Saskia Rombach, Gail Courtney, Ruth Kosminsky, Ryan de Ste Croix, Chris Radley, Louisa Ackermann, John Field, Ollie Daw, Justin Tilley, Carl Antbring, Felicity Hall, Tristan Moyle, Mary Seabrook, Joyce Quarrie, Simon Cook, Flora Fyfe-Graham, Elaine Hoctor, Jennifer Crampton, James Mayne, Rob Plant, Ciaran O'Connor, Peter Baker, Tanja Nielsen, Darren Lawrence, Emily Emmott, Roger Huddle, Dan Browne, Sophie Harper, Adrian Stannard, Lily Nelson, Sonia Fletcher, Terence Button-Sands, Ellie Dawes, Derrick Hibbett, Justina Forristal, David Cato, Anne Strudwick, Mark Brown, Nick Dovey, Christina Carè, Jon Parker-Dean, Sophie & John deGraft-Johnson, Rhod Morgan, Steve Bloomfield, Abigail Ross, Ruth Parmessur, Albert Carter-Phillips, Mary Burnett, Simon Thompson, Niklas Friedberg, Angie Tillyer, Helen Porter, Sybil Ritten, Rob Skipwith, James Baines, Graham Norman, Alex Maws, Rosio Cafarelli, John Gilbert, Roy Sutton, Matt Button, Karen Ruddock, Alistair Scott, Jane Tilson, Liam Jones, Sarah Jones, Hilda Varley, Emily Parsonage, Elisa Williams, Lisa Lisker, Jason Halverson, Alex Lee, Lloyd Purnell, Katherine Stokes, Catherine Tildesley Mears, Richard Thompson, Megan Cupid and Ed Torpey, Jonny Davies, Carolyn Axtell, pam williams, Esther Neslen, Cranston Watts, Rachael Castell, Martin Riches, Daniel Garay, Roland Zell, David Boote, Manuel Arroyo-Kalin, Deborah Nash, Steve Lambert, Helen Weighell, Ines Nastali, Lydia Noon, Mark and Laura McCormack, Mary Logan, Claire Lee Shepherd, Thomas Greenhill, Marisa Takom, Annie Constable, Tom Penn, Mette Isaksen, Tony Lawlor, Joseph Clift, Akhtarul Haque, Jane McCormick, Jon Seymour Jr., Scott Rodgers, Linda Green, Claire Hambleton, Clive Power, Lesley Finlayson, Lewis Robinson, David O'Driscoll, Andrew Cole, Paul Gasson, Tom Belger, Irena Chudzio, Angela Shek, John Leeming, Mike Bartlett, Fiona Johnson, Delroy Peters, Anoushka Huntington-Bowles, Natasha McFadzean, Louise Krzan, Daniel Bowman, Diana Wellings, Richard Bagley, Robert Gay, Michael Parker, Caramel Quin, Laurence Palfreyman, Kenneth Driscoll, WILLMA (WILMA TEAM), Abigail Dyer, Roland Rance, Rob Watson, Michael Wiseman, Christopher Brody, Sarah Campbell, George Harris, Matthew Wyatt, Stephen Beckett, Chloe Mead, Janet Trench, Amy Keegan, Jane Leaker, Smaine Hadjadi, Jen Kim, Albert Carter-Phillips, Sarah Fairbairn, Abigail Woodman, Fred Harrison, Peter O'Kane, Tony Lobo, Tiffany-Louise Bird, Andrew Prescott, Louise Sheppey, Nicholas Smith, Carla Grande, Fatima Ifthakir, Nicholas McGrath, Tigerlily Clarke, Sam Humphries, Fatemah Abidi, Linda Williamson, Constance O'Connor, Mathieu de Kruif, Alis Templeton, Andy Simons, Philip Gill, Tiffany-Louise Bird, Pierre Raffin, ros kane, Linda Bean, James Riley, Thomas Rodliffe, Carole Sturdy, James Coen, Jane Connor, Philip Wray.

