

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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Meanwhile at the Roundhouse

An update on the renovation of a beloved Highbury space



By TONY MILLER, Secretary of the Highbury Roundhouse Association

My days as a columnist are numbered. For a few years now I have written pieces for HCA News, chronicling our campaign to rebuild Highbury Roundhouse. There have been a lot of twists and turns to the story. But since this time last year all the words, speculations and good intentions have been turning into bricks and mortar.

On 3rd March 2017, after a weeklong 'negotiation' with the council's Highway Department (and a £5000 deposit), our contractor managed to obtain the key to the removable bollards on Arvon Road. This allowed him to gain access to the site, along the route that the council itself had approved. The portacabins went in and work could begin in

earnest.

Since then we have had regular monthly progress meetings on site which have never failed to amaze me. The steel reinforcement for the ground slab has been knitted together. The slab has been cast. The steel framework has been delivered. Drilling for the base bolts has been completed and the steel erection has started. Brick and blockwork has commenced in the hall area. Floor and ceiling joists are going in. Pre-cast concrete planks have been installed. Zinc to the roof is 80% complete.

After each of these reports we donned our hard hats and high-vis vests for a tour of the emerging building and marvelled at the pace of construction. Shortly before Christmas we heard that the windows and doors had been installed; the green

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**Saturday 24 March at 7pm**

# Meanwhile at the Roundhouse

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roof had been completed; leak testing had been successfully completed; the internal partition walls were in place; the plant room, electrics and plumbing were well advanced. We were able to enjoy the Christmas break in the knowledge that the building was secure and weatherproof.

We can't yet relax and smugly contemplate a job well done. We entered into the construction with a contract in three phases. The first phase, A, is for the construction of the basic building. Phases B and C are, essentially, for fixtures and fittings and finishing touches. We had all the funding we needed for phase A. There is still a shortfall in funding for phases B and C. We cannot place orders for things we can't pay for - therefore, there are some items which we have not yet been able to order in - and this will delay our programme.

So we are still in fundraising mode. It is very generous of the HCA to choose the Roundhouse as the charity it would like to sponsor at the AGM. We are most grateful and I hope to meet many of you there.

Notwithstanding this hiccup, I am confident that I shall in due course in HCA News be able to announce the date of our Grand Opening. And then my work as your regular correspondent will be done.

# Public parks as economic assets in Islington

By DIANE BURRIDGE

The days of public parks having intrinsic value in just being parks have disappeared. They are now economic entities with ascribed quantifiable values. This is undeniably sad. But I suppose we need to be grateful for any strategy which promotes the value of parks and helps to protect them from cuts.

We know that London is one of the greenest cities of its size in the world. Vivid Economics, commissioned in 2017 by the Greater London Authority, the National Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund estimated that London's public parks have a gross asset value of more than £91 billion. This equates to a 27:1 benefit: cost ratio.

For Islington, the ratio is 23:1, with the total value of public parks in the borough calculated at £2 billion per year. This equates to £488 per person per year. What about Highbury's precious Gillespie Ecology Park? Camley Street Natural Park, similar in size and activity to Gillespie Park, is estimated to be worth £2.8 million per year to the local economy, due to the ecosystem services it provides to local

schools and others.

The report does not examine the benefit: cost ratio of running events in parks. Nearby Finsbury Park is nearly booked up already for major events in 2018/19, earning income to meet targets set by Haringey but making peace and quiet impossible for local residents.

Public parks are defined as areas free to enter and use, and do not include, for example, private gardens, golf courses, and canals and rivers. The average density of public parks for the whole of Greater London is 20%, with huge variations - from 40% of Richmond's land area to 8% in Newham. Islington has 13%, and is the 31<sup>st</sup> greenest borough of 33 London boroughs. Of Islington's total area of 1,486 hectares, only 155 of these are accessible public parks. (Vivid Economics Report, October 2017)

Unsurprisingly, there is a positive relationship between current local authority spending per hectare of public park and the economic value derived. This is particularly high for Islington and Kensington and Chelsea,

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where there is so little green space. As the report states: 'The high fixed costs of maintaining public parks may mean that boroughs with more parks are able to manage these spaces at lower costs per unit of parkland.'

Physical inactivity increases the likelihood of five major illnesses: cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes, obesity, colon cancer and breast cancer. (Chief Medical Officer, UK, 2011) The total value of avoided health care costs, due to London's public parks, is £950 million per year - £103 per person per year in Islington.

Additionally, children in regular contact with natural green spaces demonstrate enhanced cognitive development - an aspect not covered

by the Vivid Economics Report. Nowadays, less than 10% of children ever play in natural areas, compared to 40% of today's adults who did.

The greatest economic benefit of public parks is to those lucky house owners living near them, due to the 3.4% uplift in house prices that occurs by doing so. And the Outdoor Recreation Valuation (ORVal) tool (Day and Smith, 2016) estimates what people are willing to pay to use a particular park for recreational activities, partly based on the cost of travel to visit. This is £120 per year per person in London.

It would be interesting to see whether children were included in this research. Looking locally, some young people living in Drayton Park can rarely use Highbury Fields for

informal football games as the courts are often booked up. Even if they could afford to hire these courts, they are not available.

Whilst the positive impact of public parks is obvious to most people, cuts continue and parks deteriorate. 92% of parks managers across the UK reported, to a study by the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2016, that overall parks' budgets have fallen.

How sad that we cannot just appreciate the value of public parks to our mental and physical well-being. They should be statutory responsibilities with dedicated budgets, not just seen as income generators and economic assets, needing to earn their right to exist.

| Park Benefit                      | Economic value (£bn) | %          | Gross asset value/saving per year           |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Physical health                   | 11                   | 12         | £580m                                       |
| Mental health                     | 7                    | 7          | £370m                                       |
| Residential property              | 56                   | 61         | £930 per household                          |
| Recreation                        | 17                   | 19         | £930m or £120 per person                    |
| Others (carbon & temp regulation) | 1                    | 1          | Carbon saving £18m<br>Temp regulation £594m |
| <b>GROSS ASSET VALUE</b>          | <b>91</b>            | <b>100</b> | <b>~£5 billion</b>                          |

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# An introduction to Roly Keating, guest speaker at the AGM



We are thrilled to announce that the guest speaker for this year’s Highbury Community Association AGM will be Roly Keating, the Chief Executive of the British Library since September 2012.

In his tenure there he has overseen a series of significant developments including the historic move to large-scale digital collecting through legal deposit; the Library’s successful and popular 800th anniversary commemorations of Magna Carta; the launch of the Knowledge Quarter, an innovative partnership of over 70 knowledge-based organisations near the Library’s London HQ; and the launch in 2015 of Living Knowledge, which sets out an ambitious vision and strategy for the Library’s growth and development towards its fiftieth anniversary in 2023.

Roly joined the Library after a long and successful career as a programme-maker and broadcasting executive at the BBC, where he played key roles in the launch of UKTV, as its first Head of Programming, and BBC Four, as its Launch Controller in 2002, before moving on to become Controller of BBC Two and Director of Archive Content, with editorial oversight of the BBC’s online services including BBC iPlayer.

Roly is a member of the board of Channel 4 and a trustee of the Clore Leadership Programme. He chairs the Knowledge Quarter Board and the Conference of European National Librarians. Roly holds Honorary Doctorates from the Universities of Lincoln, Warwick and York.

We are thrilled to have such a distinguished speaker for our AGM and can’t wait to hear his talk. The AGM will take place on Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> March at 7:00pm at Christ Church.

# The new draft London Plan and what it means for Highbury

By SARAH POTTER

The Mayor’s New London Plan, currently at draft stage, provides the spatial planning framework for the development of London until 2041. It is based on a forecast of population growth of 70,000 per annum, leading to a population of 10.5 million in the capital by 2041. In the light of this growth, the aim is to build 66,000 new homes p.a., increasing population density and the intensification of development in London.

The Plan rests on principles of ‘good growth’ to ensure that the city’s communities, economy and environment adjust to future pressures in a sustainable way. ‘Good growth’ is contrasted with ‘growth at any cost’, resulting in congestion, pollution and loss of community cohesion. The six good growth policies which inform the Plan are: building strong communities; making best use of available land; creating a healthy city; delivering the homes needed in London; growing a good economy and, finally, increasing efficient energy use, recycling and resilience to climate change.

Major changes envisaged in the Plan include less commuting and more cycling and walking to improve

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health, the provision of most new housing in small developments near town centres in London's outer ring of boroughs, the location of new jobs and cultural activities across the whole of London, and an increase of green cover to at least half of London.

Nine Opportunity Areas are designated for development, linked to transport developments such as the Elizabeth line, the Bakerloo line extension, a possible Crossrail 2 and better links between Thameslink and Great Northern Services through Finsbury Park. The parts of Islington included in these Opportunity Areas are Tech City in the south of the borough, and the Angel and Sadlers Wells, which are located in London's Central Activities Zone of offices and shops.

The London Plan by law is part of the development plan of all local authorities in the capital, so that local plans such as the Islington Plan should conform to it. This Mayor's plan is designed to be more focused, directive and linked to implementation than its predecessors of 2004 and 2011.

The way in which spatial planning policies most affect local communities in London is often through house building, which is planned to expand rapidly under the new Plan. In Highbury, however, house building underwent a rapid expansion during the development of the Emirates Stadium. Relatively few sites now remain for development, though local groups such as Highbury Community Association continue to monitor planning applications for these carefully in the local interest. HCA has also responded to the Mayor's recent draft Transport and Environmental Strategies, which are associated with the New London Plan. The Plan gives spatial effect to these strategies.

There are nevertheless local concerns at present about

**The plan rests on principles of 'good growth' to ensure that the city's communities, economy and environment are sustainable.**

future plans for buildings in Highbury Fields and their impact on local green space and access to Finsbury Park due to the Wireless Festival, both at a time when council budgets are under increasing pressure. The environmental policies of the Draft Plan clearly include the protection of green and open space, and the enhancement of the facilities in public open spaces.

Boroughs are also required to carry out a needs assessment of green and open space, identifying areas of deficiency. It will be important to see how far the consultation process for the Plan, which lasts until 2<sup>nd</sup>

March, and the Examination in Public this autumn reveals the likely impact of these new policies on our communities.

The final version of the plan will be published in Autumn 2019. The Draft New London Plan can be found here:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/draft-new-london-plan/>



The **Highbury Community Association (HCA)** represents local residents and businesses living and working in Highbury, Lower Holloway and Finsbury Park. **Membership is free.** Members receive bi-monthly newsletters like this one. New members will receive the newsletter by email (unless you don't have email). To join or talk to us about anything Highbury-related, visit our website, or email [hcanews@hotmail.com](mailto:hcanews@hotmail.com). The HCA can also be contacted on Facebook and Twitter.

The opinions expressed in Highbury Community News are not necessarily those of the HCA.

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# My experience with cataracts

By DAVID FENTON

Highbury resident and HCA Committee member David Fenton shares his experience of getting his cataracts removed, a process that you shouldn't be afraid of.

Yes, it's me again. Over the past few years I've written about prostate cancer, bladder incontinence and type 2 diabetes as they've affected me. Now I can write about my eyes!

Two years ago my optician told me that cataracts were developing on both eyes. I was aware that my sight was not what it had been and bright lights were becoming a problem. In the months that followed my sight deteriorated somewhat. My optician told me last November that in his opinion I was now ready for treatment and that he would refer me to the Whittington Hospital rather than Moorfields, as he believed they would be more likely to respond quickly. My friend Margot had a cataract removed at the Whittington and she had already told me to try and get referred there as Dr Riaz Asaria was "the best".

My initial appointment was in early December and I reported to level 3 at the Whittington. I was seen by a nurse who took down personal details and put drops in both eyes. I then waited to see the consultant. He checked both eyes and confirmed that cataracts needed removing from both eyes, asking if I wanted them doing on the same day. I said I did and it turned out the doctor was none other than Riaz Asaria!

So on April 24<sup>th</sup> I reported at midday as required. Together with five other people we sat in a waiting area and the nurse went around administering eyedrops. Dr Asaria arrived at one o'clock and after further preparation and more drops I was ready for action. But prior to this one

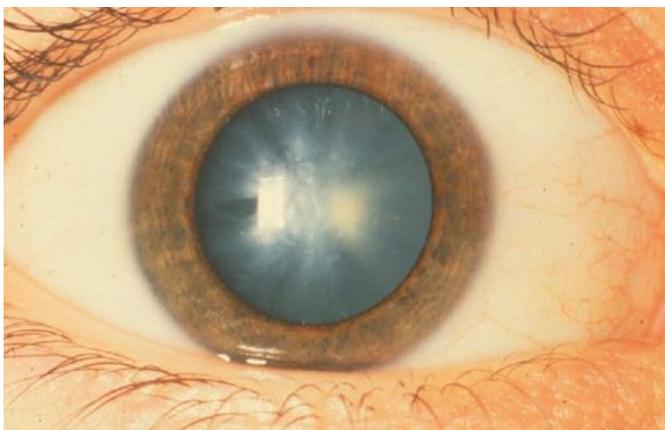
of Dr Asaria's assistants confirmed that I would have both eyes "long sighted" and would therefore still need reading glasses.

At quarter to three Mr Asaria started on the right eye and then moved on to the left. I think my head was covered and all I was aware of was a very bright light close to each eye and a feeling of liquid in the eyes - but no pain whatsoever. Thirty minutes later it was all over and Dr Asaria said "Well I'm pleased with that." I agreed with him, saying that I had been told that he was the best in London. He replied, "Well, I am 98% of the time."

Both my eyes were covered with a plastic shield and I could see a little as I was led back to the waiting area. The nurse offered me a cup of tea and before I had finished it she handed me a large envelope containing medication and my instructions for the next four weeks before telling me I could go home. I was home by four o'clock!

The following morning I removed the dressing and shields. A whole new world opened up before me. I hadn't realised how poor my sight had become. Who was that person in the mirror? Was it really me? And what about the dust and cobwebs! That grey sweater turns out to be blue.

I've now been signed off and have just got my new glasses. Don't be worried about having cataracts removed. We all have a little bit of fear about anything to do with our eyes but from my experience it all went well.



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# Friends of Gillespie Park AGM to take place on 2 March

Come to the 2018 AGM of the Friends of Gillespie Park and hear about: Fruits of the Forest: creating an edible woodland garden in Gillespie Park. Helena Farstad and Lynne Friedli, with members of Gillespie Wild Gardeners, will talk about the special nature of woodland gardening and gardening with children. There will also be an update from Sally Oldfield of Islington's Greenspace Team on plans for Gillespie Park and the Britain in Bloom Competition.

The AGM commences at 7pm on Friday, 2 March 2018 at the Islington Ecology Centre (near Arsenal Tube on Drayton Park). Organised by the Friends of Gillespie Park, there will be refreshments and a promised jovial spirit! All are welcome to hear about our lovely park.

The Friends of Gillespie Park are a group of volunteers dedicated to protecting and enhancing the local nature reserve. They are a great point of contact for anyone who wants to get involved with one of Highbury's treasures. You can find out more about them on their website: <http://www.friendsofgillespiepark.co.uk/>



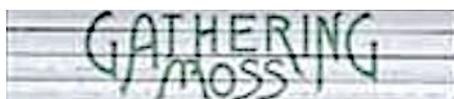
# Over forty members enjoy the HCA's social evening in January

Over 40 members of the Highbury Community Association enjoyed good food and wine and meeting their neighbours at our social evening on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> January. Planned to provide a convivial occasion in the dark days after Christmas and the New Year, the occasion allowed members to catch up with old acquaintances as well as meet new Highbury people, all with an interest in the local area. Among our guests was our local MP Jeremy Corbyn, showing his support yet again for the work of our community group in Highbury. Our thanks go to our hosts for the evening and the friendly and informal atmosphere they provided. We look forward to meeting members again at our AGM and party on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> March. A previous AGM party is pictured below.



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## Highbury Fields renovation continues with new public consultation



By CHARLIE ROBERSON

The next public consultation for the new building works on Highbury Fields will be taking place on Wednesday 28th February and Thursday 1st March. The key question for this stage of the project is how many buildings the scheme will have.

Since appointing architects in October last year, a great deal of work has been done to identify the options and examine how viable each of these options are. The consultation will be an opportunity to look at these options and comment on them. The comments and feedback received at this two-day event will inform a report that will be submitted to the Council in order for it to decide whether the design should focus on one or more buildings.

Levitare, the architects for this project, will be on site from 12.30pm until 8.30pm on both days to explain the material on display and answer any questions. This is an excellent opportunity to be able to discuss the scheme so closely with the architects so anyone interested in the development is encouraged to stop by.

Those who cannot attend will be able to visit the project's webpage at <https://www.islington.gov.uk/sports-parks-and-trees/parks-and-green-space/parks-projects/highbury-fields> from Wednesday 28th March to view the consultation material there. A feedback form will also be available to fill out and return to us.

A member of the HCA will be attending one of the sessions and we will continue to report on the project's progress in future newsletter issues.

## HCA thanks Charlie Roberson, newsletter editor, as he moves on

A note from Charlie Roberson, the departing editor of Highbury Community News

This will be my last issue as editor of the Highbury Community Association newsletter after a little over two years in the role. It has been a pleasure to work with the dedicated and friendly committee to regularly produce the newsletter and I hope you have enjoyed the results.

In my time as editor I've been proud to cover a range of topics as diverse and interesting as Highbury itself, from the dramas of the Blackstock Road Sainsbury's and Wireless Festival at Finsbury Park, to book reviews and fascinating nuggets of local history.

The newsletter will continue with a new editor and the same talented contributors. I look forward to staying in touch with Highbury, one of the very best places in London, through their great work.

Charlie is succeeded by local resident, Louisa Anderson, who will be editing the newsletter from the next edition. The HCA committee would like to record their thanks for Charlie's excellent job in editing the newsletter.