

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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PRIORITISING BUSES: WHAT HAS GONE WRONG AND HOW CAN WE FIX IT?

By GILL SHEPHERD

London’s buses, 2000-2015

Between 2000 and 2008, London’s bus services were transformed. Buses became fully accessible and key improvements included contracts with bus companies encouraging reliability, a London-wide bus lanes programme that speeded up buses, the Congestion Charge, Oyster payment cards, better traffic enforcement and Countdown bus information.

The deterioration of London’s bus services can be traced back to the arrival of Boris Johnson as mayor (2008-2015). During his period in office a further programme of bus lanes was abandoned, as were improvements to traffic enforcement, and reliability contracts with bus companies. The bus lane teams became cycle lane teams, bus journey times became slower, and passenger numbers began to decrease. Bus stop accessibility was compromised by cycle lanes running between bus shelter and bus, and thus many passengers – especially the old, disabled, or blind - were discriminated against [1].

Why buses should be prioritised – traveller volumes

The promotion of cycles over buses has continued under Sadiq Khan the current mayor, though a glance at the volume of travel by each of the main travel modes shows what a very skewed decision this was. Before the pandemic, most trips by London residents were made

by walking (34.6%) public transport (29.3%), car driver trips (21%) and cycling (2.7%). There was a steady decline in car driver trips between 2005 and 2019 [2].

Focusing purely on ‘active travel’ (public transport, walking and cycling) in more detail, pre-and post-pandemic (figure 10 in [2]) the percentage differences shown below emerge.

By 2022 public transport had not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, while walking had increased considerably.



Year	London Underground	London overground	Bus/tram	Walk	Cycle
2019-2020	9.9	6.2	13.2	34.6	2.7
2022-2023	7.7	5.5	11.3	39.2	3.0

Figure 10 in [2]

Bus-use is still by far the most important active travel mode after walking. Cycling has increased slightly from 2.7% to 3% [2].

Why buses should be prioritised – equality issues

Men are more likely to travel by train or car, while women are more likely to walk and use the bus. Cycle rates are low overall and TfL’s own analysis shows that the majority of those travelling by bike are higher

earning men. The income of bus users is generally lower and they are more likely to be women and/or from ethnic minorities [2].

Road use changes have made buses slower

TfL has spent hundreds of millions introducing bike lanes on main roads across the capital in recent years, often at the expense of bus lanes. Bus speeds have fallen by nearly 10% on average since 2020,

Prioritising buses

Continued from page 1...



according to TfL. Yet as TfL say themselves, “quicker journeys are more likely to encourage people back onto our network as we recover from the pandemic” [3,4].

The industry speaks up

Bus drivers in London are considering strike action over the delays caused by the removal of main road bus lanes, and by additional congestion arising from adjacent low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs). The Policy Director of the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK, representing bus operators, (letter to the Times, December 2023), accused local authorities of not working with them closely enough to ensure that LTNs did not affect bus services.

This is a first for the industry: senior executives from London’s biggest bus operators have long had concerns but have been reluctant to speak out as their biggest client is TfL, which supports LTNs. A senior industry source admitted that “LTNs do cause us problems, so in our view they should only be introduced alongside bus priority measures” [3,5].

What solutions might lead to positive change?

Firstly, bus lanes should be replaced where they have been taken out, and options for shared bus and bike lanes explored. Secondly, the creation of a new LTN should be accompanied by bus prioritisation measures on adjacent main roads. This will require close liaison between TfL and local councils. Thirdly, it is a false assumption that cyclists always want to use main roads. Many prefer quieter, less polluted backstreet routes – whose existence explains why bike lanes on main roads often look empty. Promoting more of these routes would not only eliminate conflict with buses, but would provide a safer ride, too: cyclists inhale more air pollutants than motorists in heavy traffic because of their faster, deeper breathing [6].

Rebalancing road use for transport justice

Buses have been and must again become the reliable bedrock of London’s public transport system. Both TfL and local councils need to give them much higher priority, as was done so efficiently 20 years ago. Transport justice for all, but especially for poorer travellers, the disabled, women and ethnic minorities demands no less.

[1] ‘The cycling lobby has been allowed to ruin London’s bus service.’ Vincent Stops *OnLondon* Nov 4th 2022

[2] ‘Travel in London 2023’ London Travel Demand Survey 2022-2023 TFL December 2023

[3] ‘The bus took 11 minutes before LTNs - now it takes 45’ Andrew Ellson *Times* 8th Dec 2023

[4] ‘London buses are slowing down, slowing down, slowing down.’ Dave Hill, *OnLondon*, July 12, 2023

[5] ‘Low-traffic zones ‘not taking buses into account.’ Andrew Ellson *Times* 21st Dec 2023

[6] ‘Cyclists inhale high levels of traffic pollution.’ Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) July 2010

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Another Wonderful Evening From Stoke Newington Early Music Festival

By CHARLES PALLISER



On Thursday the 23rd November, a concert entitled "The Pear Tree on the Top of the Mountain" was held in the Old Church, Stoke Newington, as an out-of-season promotion of the Stoke Newington Early Music Festival.

The talented young members of the Consone Quartet returned to the Festival to play Mozart's *String Quartet in G Major* (K. 156) followed by Beethoven's *String Quartet in F Major* (Op. 59, No. 1, the "Razumovsky"). At the end the audience refused to let the consort leave without an encore, and they very graciously performed a little-known movement of a string quartet by Haydn.

It was a fine opportunity to reflect on the three great exponents of the string quartet of that period. Mozart's, written at sixteen, has all the charm and melodiousness one expects from that composer, though without the depth of feeling of his mature work. The Beethoven - huge and famously demanding - was performed with such aplomb that its difficultness was never apparent. While the Mozart plays inventively with the conventions of the period, Beethoven plunges into the

unknown and evokes at times a dark passion that is almost beyond beauty. The piece by Haydn, the inventor of the string quartet, was straightforwardly and satisfyingly beautiful.

In an unusual innovation, the music was framed by a creative adaptation of Virginia Woolf's 1921 short story, *The String Quartet*. Extracts from that text and other works of Virginia Woolf were combined with contemporary material, adding a new perspective to the century-old vision of a musical event. The text was adapted by Festival Director Rachel Stott and superbly read in a recording by local actor Aria Prasad that resonated hauntingly through the ancient building.

The next concert organised by the Stoke Newington Early Music Festival is called *Full of the Highland Humours* and takes place at 6 pm on Sunday 21st January – near enough to Burns Night. The main Stoke Newington Early Music Festival is in late June each year and details are on www.stokenewingtonearlymusic.org.uk/

Help us keep our membership list up to date. Let us know if you have moved, or have updated your email address.

If you think your neighbours would like to receive the newsletter, simply ask them to email us and we'll do the rest...

Please contact us at hcanews@hotmail.com

The Website for Arsenal's neighbours

<https://www.arsenal.com/the-club/local-residents-news>



Don't forget that Arsenal football club has created a website specially for us, its local neighbours.

Because those of us living near the stadium have to pay for RingGo electronic parking permits for our visitors on match days, it is essential that we know when **all** relevant matches are going to be. These days this does not just include the men's matches but the increasingly frequent women's matches and all other fixtures.

Parking limitations and the need for parking permits comes into play as soon as an event is expected to have an audience of 10,000 or more.

We are lucky enough to have an Arsenal employee with the explicit task of keeping this website up-to-date for us, so please do use it!

HIGHBURY
COMMUNITY
ASSOCIATION

HCA's deferred **Annual General Meeting** will be held at the **Ecology Centre, Drayton Park on 23rd March from 7.00pm**. Our speaker is local resident Sheila Dillon, of Radio 4's 'The Food Programme'

'Is London in Crisis?'

The Centre for London's Annual Conference

By SARAH POTTER



The thinktank's conference held in November this year, focused on this question, prompted by serious problems such as the high numbers of children in the capital living in temporary accommodation, and the highest rates of child poverty, wealth inequality and air pollution in the country. There are problems with low pay and skills shortages and 37% struggle to cover basic monthly outgoings.

Charles Wright's report on the conference also revealed other

worrying trends which are changing the nature of London. Some inner London boroughs including Islington are losing families with

children to the outer suburbs at such a rate that schools are having to be closed, for instance: a response to high property prices and a lack of affordable rental accommodation in Inner London.

However, while productivity in London, taken as a whole, is flatlining, some boroughs such as Richmond, Croydon, Hackney and Camden have become 'productivity hotspots' in the last decade. London's global economy provides 40% of the UK's

tax revenue, and the Mayor of London emphasized that London has been bouncing back faster than other cities since the pandemic. The City of London is the leading centre for green finance, for instance, and green jobs should also multiply rapidly in London in the next thirty years.

A number of short-term solutions for these problems were identified – more help for councils with homelessness, reduction of Right to Buy discounts, and help for private renting families with housing benefits, in fact announced recently in the Autumn Statement.

It was made clear that the capital needs to speak with one voice to attract government attention, especially as regards a long-term capital funding arrangement with Transport for London. More action is also needed nationally on housing and on devolution.

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Volunteering In Highbury And Islington

BY FRANC DAVID -

(I volunteer at several of the organisations listed here and find it immensely satisfying to do so)

Several people have approached HCA over the last year, via email or at one of the stalls we run at community events, to ask us about volunteering opportunities in the neighbourhood.

We provide here some general information about how to find out about volunteering opportunities in Highbury and Islington and then give some examples, with contact details. We will be posting this information on our updated website in the New Year, and will add to it as further opportunities present themselves.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. The main umbrella group for volunteer action locally is **Voluntary Action Islington** <https://vai.org.uk/volunteering/get-started-volunteering-in-islington/> 020 7832 5801. This group can match you with almost any type of volunteering you would like to do in Islington. See the VAI website..

2. **Islington Council** itself also provides a webpage where you can find out more about places to volunteer in Islington www.islington.gov.uk/advice/voluntary-and-community-sector/get-involved.

3. Finally the council's periodical magazine **Islington Life** (a periodical magazine by the Council, it gives links where you can find out about places to volunteer in Islington) <https://islingtonlife.london/things-to-do/volunteering-in-islington/>. email islingtonlife@islington.gov.uk

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Highbury Community Association itself is always keen to involve more local people in its activities. We need volunteer committee members interested in



discussing local issues and planning action in meetings; or in attending, on our behalf, periodical meetings with local councillors (Ward Partnership Meetings) or with the local police and reporting back to the committee. We also love to work with people who would like to contribute to the newsletter, or people interested in organising social events such as quiz nights, so that local people can meet one another. If you might be interested in any of these types of activity, send us an email at hcanews@hotmail.com. The committee meets 5-6 times a year, in the evening.

Some other concrete suggestions for local volunteering:

LOCAL CHARITY SHOPS

Marie Curie Charity shop
Finsbury Park
272 Seven Sisters Road
London, N4 2HY
finsburypark@mariecurieshops.org.uk
0207 5619715
Manager - Nick Makin
Charity shop - no special skills needed to start

Marie Curie Charity shop

Highbury Corner
318/ 320 St Paul's Road
Highbury, N1 2LF
highbury@mariecurieshops.org.uk
020 7226 0565
Charity shop - no special skills needed to start

RSPCA Shop

6 Blackstock Road,
London N4 2DL
animals@rspccentrallondon.org.uk
(Central London branch)
020 7704 2770
Charity shop - no special skills needed to start

Second Chance Charity shop

161 Blackstock Rd
Finsbury Park, N4 2JS
020 7359 8129
Charity shop - no special skills needed to start

House of Hodge bookshop

174 Blackstock Road
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020 8127 4765
www.houseofhodge.org/
Charity bookshop - you need to like books! Volunteer enquiries to househodge174@gmail.com. They'd love to hear from you.

COMMUNITY CENTRES

Elizabeth House Community Centre
2 Hurlock Street, London N5 1ED
info@elizabeth-house.org.uk
020 7690 1300
Person to contact - Roshni

Monday Meals – help with food prep – every other Monday 9.30am – 1pm (term time only)

Mondays 12-1pm (term time only)
Women's Group – help with facilitating activities

Wednesdays 10.30 – 1.30pm (term

Volunteering

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time only) Blue House Club (over 50s lunch and social club) – help with hosting, facilitating activities or food prep
Mondays 10.30am – 12.30pm and
Fridays 1-2.30pm (term time only)
 Food Hub – help with sorting food deliveries.

Highbury Roundhouse

71 Ronalds Road London N5 1XB
www.highbury-roundhouse.org.uk
eneidac@highbury-roundhouse.org.uk
 020 7359 5916

This recently revamped and reopened centre needs volunteers in the following areas:

- Holiday Playscheme (**DBS needed** ↗)
- Holiday activities including food prep (several hundred meals prepared each day, to go out from the cafe)
- Food Bank (runs independently, but contact The Roundhouse for information)
- Stay and Play (in term time – (**DBS needed** ↗)
- Youth Club -10 to 21 year old (**DBS needed** ↗)
- Over 55's Yoga and Pilates 9 Old People Services)
- Occasional Events such as concerts, receptions and so on, also needs volunteers

Sotheby Mews Community Centre

2 Sotheby Mews, Sotheby Road, N5 2UP
over55@highbury-roundhouse.org.uk
 020 7226 1421

This centre is run by staff from the Highbury Roundhouse. The facilities are primarily for daytime use by over-55's as a lunch club. The centre also does day trips, keep-fit, musical afternoons, and more. Other activities for different groups are held at other times of the day. Contact for more information.

WORK IN PARKS AND GARDENS

The Olden Garden

Opposite 22 Whistler Street, Islington N5 1NH.

<https://oldengarden.org/contact.html>
theoldengarden@yahoo.co.uk

Gardening volunteer days once a month on the third Saturday of every month from 10am to 4pm

Gillespie Ecology Park

191 Drayton Park London N5 1PH

EcologyCentre@islington.gov.uk

020 7527 4374

Volunteer group meets every **Thursday** from 10am to 3:30pm and carries out work on our three nature reserves.

Activities include cutting meadows, weeding the wildlife garden, coppicing trees, cutting back brambles and pond maintenance, litter-picking. You don't need any experience and all tools are provided.

The **Friends of Gillespie Park** are a group of local people with an interest in the park. Members organise events, such as the annual Gillespie Festival and Apple day.

MORE SPECIALISED TYPES OF VOLUNTEERING

Islington Bereavement Service

needs volunteers to befriend bereaved people. Contact St Josephs Hospice on 020 8525 6000 and www.stjh.org.uk/volunteer/volunteer-opportunities/

Mencap

works with people with learning disabilities; contact them on www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering (**DBS needed** ↗)

Grandmentors

is a volunteer mentoring programme which trains and supervises volunteers who are over the age of 50 to provide support, guidance and advice to young people leaving the care system 020 7527 7837 or 07889 556730 or <https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/project/grandmentors/> (**DBS needed** ↗)

↗ For volunteering work with children and/or with vulnerable people or older people, DBS checks are required. The initials stand for Disclosure and Barring Service and ensure that volunteers do not have any kind of previous criminal record. These used to be referred to as CRB checks and you still sometimes hear this term.



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Clarissa Hulse

Hitting recycling targets

By GILL SHEPHERD



London’s household recycling rates rose significantly between 2001 and 2011 but over the last decade they have been flatlining at around 33% well below the mayor’s target of 45% recycling by 2025. What needs to be done to get rates back on track?

Predictably the picture is mixed across the city. The leafier suburban boroughs do better while densely populated inner-city boroughs cluster around or below the average. (Islington recycles 30%). It is especially challenging to collect from all the flats on estates and above shops, which were designed and built when recycling was not thought about. And councils have no powers to require householders to recycle.

Islington Council has been trying to retrofit for different waste streams in estates, but the task is challenging. It is been especially hard to engage younger Londoners, surprisingly: they recycle far less than their older neighbours.

However, Wayne Hubbard, chief executive of ReLondon (formerly known as the London Waste and Recycling Board) believes that, “citizens will engage with recycling if they have the knowledge and the motivation and if it is easy to do. People do want to recycle - if you provide them with the opportunity, they generally will do it.”

Long-awaited government plans for the recycling of food waste will be brought in by 2026. Weekly collection of food waste will be mandatory for all

councils. Timetables are tight however since in many boroughs they demand new vehicles and equipment, and the delivery of kitchen food caddies and outdoor food bins.

Plans for food waste recycling are linked to the provision of more anaerobic digestion plants for producing biogas from food and organic waste. There are currently only four in the city one of which is in Islington.

Islington Council waste strategy manager Matthew Homer stresses the point that recycling should not be regarded as an end in itself, but as a staging post on the way towards net zero carbon emissions. “For net zero carbon targets, the higher objective in all of this, we just do need to reduce waste.” (Based on an article by Charles Wright in OnLondon, 16th November 2023).

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Plans for new council homes at Aubert Court and Drakeley Court

By Souad Akbur

Unfortunately, because construction costs have risen so significantly in recent years, the council is currently facing intense financial pressure as far as housebuilding is concerned. The cost of borrowing to fund new council houses has also increased as interest rates have more than doubled.

As a result, the original plans to demolish the one-bedroom block at the rear of Drakeley Court, together with the Aubert Court Community Centre and to replace both with a purpose-built block combining both functions and linking the two adjacent sites, have had to be put on hold indefinitely.

The council are especially disappointed that productive discussions with residents in recent years, to improve the original proposal, can also now no longer be put into practice.

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'Saltine': a new restaurant at Highbury Barn

By David Fenton and Derek Whitehead



Saltine has an excellent, very efficient booking system, useful for customers but also ensuring – as far as possible – that you do not stand them up at the last minute.

We arrived on time and were immediately asked what we would like to drink. We looked at the menu and then chose a French Rose from Languedoc-Roussillon. Our starters were Gubbeen (an Irish cheese) and Onion Tart, and Maldon Rock Oysters in a Chilli Sauce. The tart was delicious but the oysters were lost in the chilli sauce and came with a slice of lemon on the side that still had the pips in it.

For the main course Derek chose langoustines, queen scallops and citrus beurre blanc which he enjoyed but found the langoustine difficult to handle. David's main course was peppered venison, beetroot and quince which was absolutely delicious.

Service was patchy: as we were eating our starters our main courses arrived. David said, 'We are not in a fast-food restaurant please take them back to the kitchen.' We paused to enjoy our wine, observing that the restaurant was growing busy. At every stage we had to ask for bread. There was salt on all the tables but no pepper. We were brought a pepper mill but when we asked for it to be left with us, we were told that that was the restaurant's only one, and belonged in the kitchen. We were given a saucer of ground pepper instead.

Finally, we had our desserts which we shared: Sticky Toffee Apple Cake and Chocolate Torte with Madeira Custard & Chestnuts – both OK but not a lot of custard!

The restaurant is attractive with a small bar as you enter, and a long restaurant area with a glass roof and brick walls. The restaurant probably caters for up to forty covers, and is busy both at lunchtime and in the evenings. It only opened on the 25th October and there are still some rough edges to be sorted out.

The meal cost us just under £125. We both felt that the food was of good quality but was not good value. There was no shortage of staff, and Matthew, the restaurant manager, was open to our constructive comments.

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