

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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Highbury Community Association AGM Saturday 23rd March 2024 at the Ecology Centre Drayton Park, N5

By SARAH POTTER



Welcome and Introduction

Chair Katie Dawson welcomed participants to the AGM at the Ecology Centre, recalling that the Ecology Centre itself was the result of a long and ultimately successful campaign by the local community back in the 1980s.

She summarised HCA’s main activities over the previous 2 years since the last AGM, and noted that the newsletter continued to be published regularly, and that the website had recently been completely overhauled and has just gone live.

After the approval of the association’s accounts and the election of the committee, the audience raised a series of questions. Given the poor state of Highbury Fields, a member asked how the money raised from the Burberry event last summer was to be spent on their improvement. Councillor Caroline Russell, who was present in the

audience, responded on behalf of the head of Environment and Regeneration. A full account of the plans proposed are to be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Speaker

We then greatly enjoyed a talk by our speaker Sheila Dillon, local resident, Presenter of the Food Programme on BBC Radio 4 and Chair of the annual Food and Farming Awards.

She chose to talk about the way in which good food is undervalued in this country. She highlighted the very poor quality of food now provided by commercial catering companies in school meals. She traced this situation back to the 1980s when nutritional standards for school meals were abandoned, and when local authorities introduced competitive tendering for their catering rather than paying cooks to prepare meals on the premises, and were expected to choose the lowest

tender. She noted that the link between food and health is all too rarely discussed by those in power, and that food in general is not an issue that matters sufficiently to people.

She underlined the importance of the work done recently by Henry Dimbleby. His national food strategy proposed ways of replacing junk food and highly processed food with food of decent nutritional value. Depressingly, although the government commissioned the report, it has not implemented any of it.

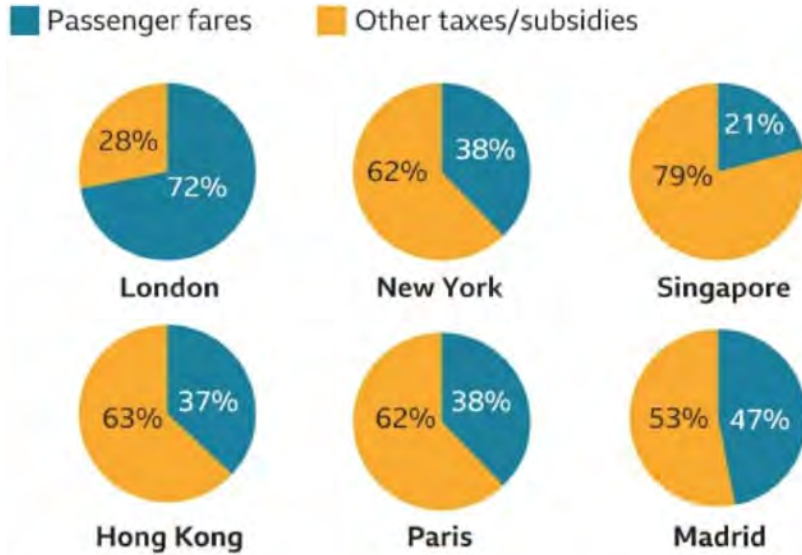
Above all, she argued, free market economics have been to blame. The value of food from the point of view of our culture and history - and the pleasure which it ought to bring - has been erased from the experience of young people. Our speaker answered a host of questions on her talk and was eventually thanked and released. One of our members commented afterwards, ‘I could have listened to her all night’.

The meeting ended with a social evening over wine and food.

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Issues for the Mayoral Election on 2 May

By GILL SHEPHERD



Figures are approximate as funding models vary in their scope

Source: TfL



All Mayoral candidates have a set of difficult issues to address as May 2nd draws near. This is in part because London is so fiscally dependent on Westminster. Devolution of powers may have been talked about but the reality is that the centre has clutched power to itself and ensured that City Hall depends on strings-attached central government grants for over two-thirds of its budget. The figure for New York is 26%, for Paris only 16%. (Adam Bychawski, 'How the Tories drove Britain's local services into bankruptcy.' Open Democracy 3/1/24)

Transport

The government has squeezed London's transport system very hard in recent years, making a series of short-term grants and emergency agreements substitute for the proper funding of the transport of the nation's capital and making it difficult to plan long-term upgrading.

The Underground, for instance, is supposed to generate 72% of its funding from fares, while receiving

only a 28% subsidy from government. This contrasts very poorly with other capital city metro systems which subsidize on average a 63% portion of overall costs and expect to raise only 37% from fares - about half that expected in London. In a period of recovery from COVID where passenger use was so low, this has had immensely negative effects. The Conservative government's determination to blame the Labour Mayor for failing to balance the books, as they put it, shows clearly that transport and politics are hard to separate. (Thomas Mackintosh, 'TFL.' BBC News, 24/6/2022)

There is no way round the fact that continued progress towards fewer cars on London's roads can only be realised with major improvements to public transport.

Crime and policing

More than £1 billion has been eliminated from police budgets due to government funding cuts. To some extent this has been mitigated by what

the Met gets from City Hall, but it has been impossible to replace all the money lost. Londoners' anxiety about crime has unsurprisingly risen over the last five years. (Dave Hill, 'Jewish community hustings 2024: London does democracy'. OnLondon 14/4/24)

Housing and planning

Khan's London Plan may be over-bureaucratic, but there has been some progress on the building of council houses, if not nearly enough. It has not helped that material and labour costs have risen so steeply, that private sector building firms would rather build for wealthier purchasers, and that government cuts to Council budgets have reduced them by up to 50% in some cases (Michael Goodier et al.' How a decade of austerity has squeezed Council budgets in England' Guardian 31/1/24).

In conclusion

it is to be hoped that a more harmonious way forward will become possible when, as seems likely, both the Mayor of London and the government of the day are from the same party. Only then can the overall framework relationship between the two, which needs a complete overhaul, be addressed.



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Making sure your recycling is clean enough to be recycled

North London Waste Authority



In the Islington and across North London, glass, metal, paper and plastics are collected together in a single household recycling bin and compressed in the lorry before making their way to the Materials Recovery Facility. This saves space in densely settled areas and simplifies the recycling process for users.

Many people are unaware that for those materials to be successfully recycled into new products they must be clean enough. This is especially important for paper and cardboard.

North London waste authority processes hundreds of tonnes of recyclable materials every day. We can handle a small amount of contamination, but when there is too much it is not practicable to sort it all out and the potentially recyclable materials lose their value and have to be dumped into general waste.

Contamination in this context means nonrecyclable material finding its way into the recycling bin. This may be a genuine error (for instance the

wrong sort of plastic) but all too often it consists of tins or packaging with remains of food in them, or other kinds of dirt. It is essential to wash plastic food packaging, glass jars and tins before putting them into recycling.

It is especially important not to put into recycling paper and cardboard that have absorbed oil or sources from takeaways. Plastic metal and glass can be washed, but paper and cardboard cannot. Sticky tape is another major culprit. If it is not removed from cardboard or paper packaging before being recycled it lowers the value of the recycled products that can potentially be produced by paper mills.

Used tissues, nappies, single-use coffee cups should all go into general waste.

If you are unsure about whether a particular product can be recycled or not you can check our A-Z list : <https://www.nlwa.gov.uk/a-z>

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The 2021 Census and what it tells us about Islington

By GILL SHEPHERD



The results from the 2021 census have been slowly released over 2022 and into 2023. The results for Islington are illuminating, when compared with those for the last census (2011).

Characterising Islington's population in general

Islington's population rose between 2011 and 2021 by 5.1% (a slightly slower increase than for London, and the country as a whole). The borough is the second most densely populated local authority area in England after Tower Hamlets.

Age profile

Islington is still a relatively 'young' place to live, with a median age now of 33 years (31 in 2011). The London average is 35, the England average, 40. But the age balance has shifted: the number of people aged 50 to 64 years rose by 32.6%, while the number of residents aged between 20 and 24 years fell by nearly 10%.

Ethnic groups in Islington

In 2021, 62.2% of people identified within the White category (down from 68.2% in 2011); 13.3% identified within the Black category (up from 12.8%);

9.9% identified within the Asian category (up from 9.2%). 7% of Islington residents identified their ethnic group within the 'Other' category, the largest subgroup within that being 'Arab'.

Religion

Islington is an increasingly secular place for most of us. Between 2011 and 2021 the percentage of residents stating that they had no religion went up by 8 percentage points from 32.8% to 40.8%. Over the same period those identifying as Christian went down from 43.9% to 34.7%. The third category in the borough is composed of Muslims (11.9%), followed by Jews at 1.3%. Other – mainly Asian – religions stood at 1% or less each.

Characterising Islington's households

Home ownership

Islington has the country's third lowest percentage of households owning their own home in the whole country (26.7%). Only Hackney and Tower Hamlets have lower percentages. Socially rented homes account for 40.2% of households, while privately rented homes account for 31.2%.

Marital and/or partnership status

Sixty two percent of Islington residents had never been married or in a registered civil partnership. Those who had came to nearly 38%.

Types of households in Islington

Thirty-six percent of households in the borough are one-person households, and 18% contain a couple with no children (up slightly on 2011): so 54% of households are without children.

As for households with dependent children, nearly 12% of families have two resident parents, while a further 13.5% are single-parent households. In total, then, only around 25% of households contain dependent children. Other types of households make up the remainder.

The census sheds light on fundamental changes underway

Anthony Travers of the London School of Economics has pointed out that the country's overall shrinking working age population is likely to heap heavy tax demands on those already in work. As the median age of the whole country's population rises, the need for migration – to substitute for the children people are not having, and thus to contribute to the tax on which all services depend – grows ever stronger (Daniel Keane, Evening Standard, 28/12/2023).

At the borough level, too, census results point to the changes afoot – and the very tough choices they dictate.

Islington is now a place, the census suggests, to which you move at the start of your career, and where perhaps you start to live with a partner.

The 2021 census Islington Sustainability Network

Continued from page 4...

By GILL SHEPHERD

But once you think about buying a house and having children, you move. While schools are having to close in Islington, there has been a 34% increase in households with children in places like Barking and Dagenham. It has not helped that the Conservative government has held down housing benefit so that it lags far behind London rents (Aditya Chakraborty, Guardian. 'Disappearing schools, families forced out' 14/4/2023).

Finally, inner London's falling birthrate is impacting maternity services. The North Central London Integrated Care Board, which allocates NHS funding between five N. London boroughs is being forced to make a choice between shutting the maternity unit at the Royal Free in Hampstead or the one at the Whittington in Islington. There are too few babies being born to justify both (Charles Wright 'Hard choices loom over London maternity services' OnLondon 13/2/2024).



Islington Sustainability Network (ISN) collaborates with a range of local organisations to promote best environmental practice, increase social value, and encourage one another in their journey towards a Net Zero Carbon Islington.

The network is unique in the borough for bringing together a range of different organisations, both commercial and non-profit, to try to address this. The membership, a diverse collection of over 70 organisations, is led by a 10-member steering committee, with secretarial services provided by Islington Council.

The membership ranges from public sector organisations such as the Council itself, and several local hospitals and universities; to private sector members such as Arsenal Football Club, the Business Design Centre, Bennetts Associates Architects, and the Park Theatre; finally it also includes non-profit organisations including Local Housing Associations and Trusts. Many much smaller bodies ranging from cafés and restaurants to a range of Small and Medium Enterprises have also joined.

ISN organisations share technical guidance and practical assistance, offering a variety of off-the-shelf tools including an Annual Carbon Monitoring Template, a Climate Essentials online tool which helps you to track your organisation's emissions

over time and an annual personal carbon tracking tool which allows individuals to calculate their footprint each year.

As ISN evolves it is broadening its remit to seek to deliver value against social equity and community engagement markers as well.

A Steering Committee member explained, "the main benefit of the network is in finding similar minded local organisations. We are delivery partners for Islington's Climate Action Plan and we also run mentoring sessions to help upscale smaller organisations, as there is a wealth of knowledge in the borough.

I'd say that the main benefits are for organisations who are interested but are not very far along their sustainability journey. And the big anchor institutions who are also members get most out of the volunteering/networking/supporting opportunities ISN provides."

If you would like to know more as an individual (or community group) you can get in touch, or subscribe to the E-newsletter by sending an email to

hello@islington sustainability.network



Investing income from London Fashion Week in Highbury Fields

By BHUPESH THAPA

Back in September 2023, Burberry hired a large portion of Highbury fields for London Fashion Week, renting the space for two weeks and reputedly paying Islington Council a very large sum of money for the privilege.

We report here on improvements to Highbury fields which this money will enable.

1. Black Bow Top Fencing (slightly lower in height than the existing fencing) to prevent desire lines around the three entrances to Highbury fields from Highbury Terrace; eventually to do some planting in them and hopefully to protect the verges further. When it is drier we will also rake and reseed the bald areas to encourage grass back.

2. A bonded rubber accessible path to tennis courts 5,6,7 and 8.

3. Three or four composite (recycled plastic) accessible picnic tables for the lower fenced off field with bonded rubber pads underneath.

4. A new sand table with seats in the playground, to encourage children to take water to the sand pit not vice versa, as the sand gets into the water drain.

We hope this means different users of Highbury Fields will benefit from the income in different ways.

OTHER TOPICS RAISED

Puddling at various points in the park. Unfortunately, a lot of our park drains are broken by tree roots, or are blocked, and it would cost us too much money to get a new system in place in Highbury Fields. We will look to see whether anything can be done at the worst sites.

Rusty ancient bins. The bins around Highbury fields and on church path are the responsibility of Street Environmental Services. We have asked them to investigate this and to act.

The section of Highbury Crescent that traverses the Fields will need to include a pathway for cyclists, with the proviso that the rest is kept clear for pedestrians, seating, planters, play and exercise.


Bhupesh Thapa is the Central Assistant Parks Manager, Environment & Regeneration, Islington Council. Tel: 07825 098458 Bhupesh.Thapa@islington.gov.uk



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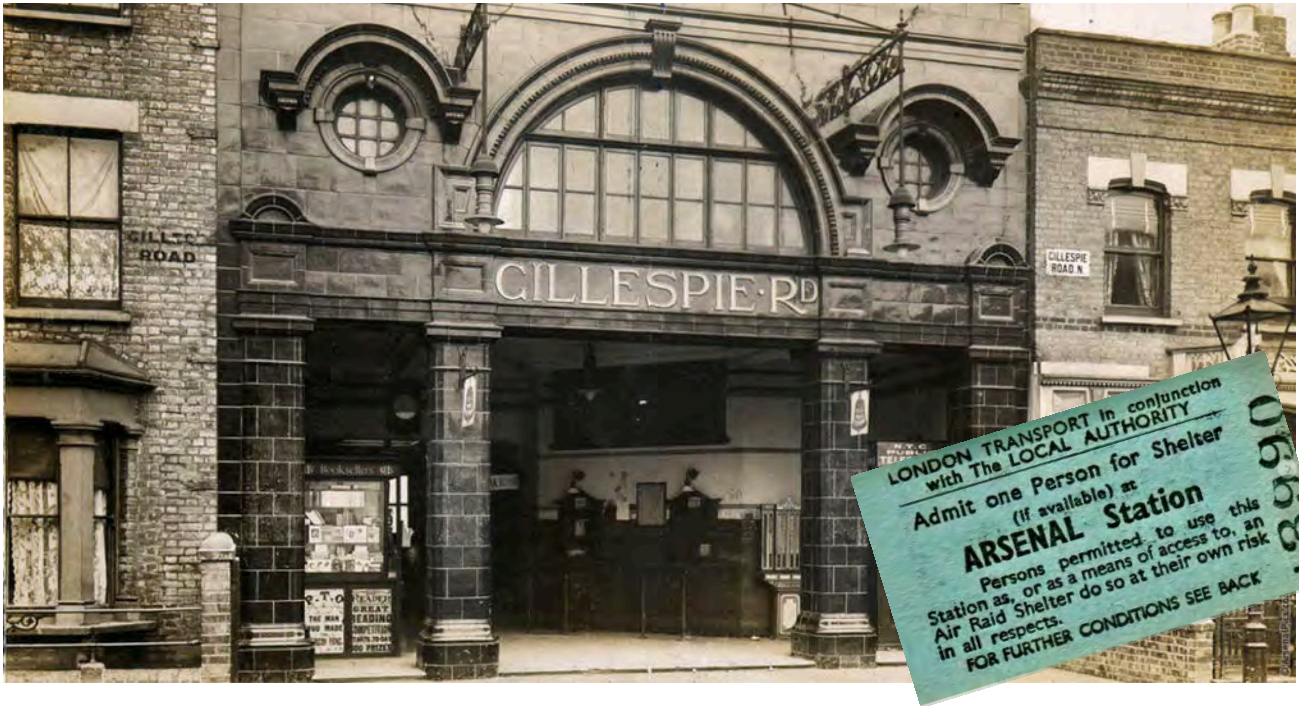
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Some Arsenal station memorabilia

By GILL SHEPHERD



The first photo is of the station as it was in 1932 when it was still called Gillespie Road, interesting to see that there was a telephone booth on the right and a small shop on the left – probably a newspaper kiosk.

The ticket booths are where the automatic machines are now and it looks as if there is cigarette or chocolate machine to the right of them. The handsome maroon façade shows that it was the twin of Holloway Road station today.

The second picture shows that Arsenal was one of the stations that people could sleep in at night during bombing raids in the Second World War. I had had no idea that it was used in this way, and even less idea that it was necessary to purchase a ticket to make use of that facility.

Clarissa Hulse

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