Threat to local democracy

Labour’s National Executive Committee unanimously called on the party’s councillors in the London Borough of Haringey to halt a controversial housing project involving the developer Lendlease. The project is opposed by many local people, and the pressure group Momentum. In response, the leader of 70 councils from across the country (13 of them in London, including Greenwich and Lewisham) signed a letter of protest at the Labour Party’s NEC (on which Momentum and Corbyn activists now hold a majority) interfering in local government issues. An edited version of the letter appeared in the Sunday Times, under the heading Labour executive wrong to meddle.

It was also signed by numerous other local Labour groups not in power.

The issue is of significance to us all, because some argument could lead to the erosion of local democracy. The full text of the letter appears below.

Culling grey squirrels

A vital and long-standing rule of the Labour Party that individual Labour Groups, consisting of democratically elected local councillors, are sovereign bodies. As such, they have the ability, within available resources, party rules and the law, to determine most appropriate policies to serve their local communities.

Labour Local Government wishes to make it clear to all members of the National Executive Committee (NEC) that they have no right or justification to interfere in or influence the legitimate actions of elected councillors. Such actions are not just outside of the party’s rules, but an affront to the basic principles of democracy.

We are extremely disappointed at the circumstances in which an issue in Haringey was brought forward and discussed by the NEC. Haringey Labour Group was not informed that such a discussion would take place, no advance notice was given, and no papers were produced, meaning the NEC discussion took place based on opinion and speculation rather than facts.

The very dangerous and alarming precedent and we ask the NEC for categorical assurances that such circumstances will not arise again in relation to this or any other Labour Group.

Labour councillors around the country are deeply concerned that, in seeking to mitigate Tory austerity by proposing radical new solutions, we face calls for disciplinary action against councillors who are uncomradely, disrespectful, and willfully ignore the difficult and challenging reality that we play in being elected to protect the most vulnerable in our communities.

Cllr Claire Kober has an outstanding record of improving the lives of residents in Haringey. Claire became the leader of Haringey Council in 2008 at the age of 30, assuming the immense personal responsibility of leading the council in crisis following the appalling public service failures that led to the death of Peter Connelly (‘Baby P’).

Under her inspirational leadership, and despite suffering funding cuts of over 40% since 2010, the Haringey Labour Group has delivered the fastest improving schools in the country and generated billions of pounds of investment. In 2017 the council won the Children’s Services of the Year award.

We believe that the Labour Party owes her a huge debt of gratitude for turning around a failing authority and as a result protecting thousands of the most vulnerable children and adults.

Signed by the Leaders of 71 Councils across England

* * *

Petition about the NatWest bank closure

Campaigners in Blackheath are petitioning NatWest Bank not to go ahead with the planned closure of the NatWest Bank on Old Dover Road. The campaign, being led by the Conservatives, has so far attracted close to 200 signatures with residents wanting to support the businesses and disadvantage those who are not able to use a branch, a move which could harm local economies.

Residents are petitioning the NatWest Bank to reconsider its decision and they are using the comments section to express their disappointment at the decision. Customers are attracted close to 200 signatures with residents wanting to support the businesses and disadvantage those who are not able to use a branch, a move which could harm local economies.

What are the issues?

Momentum claims that the Public Private Partnership scheme called the Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV) in Haringey would lead to “social cleansing.”

But the WN has learnt that opposition was fuelled not merely by left-wing politicians, but by residents in fear of losing their homes: they feared no return ticket for those whose flats were demolished. Opponents of the plan include local LibDems and moderate MPs David Lammy and Catherine West.

As the experience of Northamptonshire and Surrey indicates, many local councils are under huge financial pressure.

The delays in implementing the Controlled Parking Zone are to be hoped by the time you read this, the petitioners will have polled the public and the council will be able to borrow to build houses.

Councillors are trying to improve the local economy as well as meeting their statutory obligations; and are also wrestling with the epic housing problem.

Without enough funds, they seek partnerships with developers: but the latter claim that huge hikes in land prices makes it hard for them to allow for affordable and social housing in new developments – and councils often have limited bargaining powers.

Claire Kober has resigned in the face of “sexism” and “bullying.” She said the NECs move against an independend council was “illegally dubious” and “democratically unsound.”

* * *

Westcombe Society

Easter Egg Hunt

Sat 31st March 1.30-3.30pm

Two hours of fun hunting for eggs in Mycenae Gardens.

- £2.50 per child (£2.00 for members)
- Prizes for best Easter hat & basket.
- Face Painting!
- Toilets & bar open in Mycenae House.

Queen Elizabeth’s Birthday Tea for Senior Citizens

Sat 14th April 2.00 - 4.00 pm

If you haven’t received an invitation, and would like to come, please ring Caroline on 8853 9948

Congratulations

Competing against Year 11 and 12 students, Miriam Kenedy a Year 10 student from Blackheath High School has won the prestigious national music prize, GDST Young Musician of the Year. Well done!
COMMUNITY

WESTCOMBE NEWS

ALL EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO: Neville Grant, Editor nwes@westcombesociety.org Tel. 020 8853 8489
ALL MATERIAL TO BE SENT TO: nwes@westcombesociety.org Deadline for the April Issue: 16th March
Environment Editor: Maggie Gravelle
Sub-editor: Annie Grey
Reporters: the community – that means you!

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE Emily Norton All queries and comments to: 020 8853 2756 environment@westcombesociety.org

DISTRIBUTION Emily Norton and volunteers.
Volunteer distributors please phone 020 8853 2756 if you need help!

ADVERTISING MANAGER

Marilyn Little, 163 Westcombe Hill, SE3 7DP 020 8853 1312
Advertisement@westcombesociety.org

All adverts payable in advance by cheque to The Westcombe Society.
DISPLAY Advertisement costs £30 per word (a telephone number = one word. An email address is counted as 3 words.) Deadline for all adverts is 10th day of the preceding month.

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Contact the Westcombe Society:
Westcombe@westcombesociety.org
Publisher: The Westcombe Society
Chairman: Marilyn Little Tel. 020 8853 1312

The views expressed in the Westcombe News are not necessarily those of the Westcombe Society or of the Editor.
We take all reasonable precautions to protect the interests of our readers by ensuring as far as possible the bona fides of our advertisers but cannot accept any responsibility for them. Any complaints should be addressed to the advertiser.

To access back-numbers (in colour) go to www.westcombesociety.org/westcombe-news/ Westcombe Society’s Blog.

WESTCOMBE-SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP
Please send this membership form to:
friendly Legs, 49 Mycenae Road,
London, SE3 7EF

Name:__________________________
Address:__________________________
Tel.:____________________________
Email:__________________________

Please enclose payment as appropriate:
Family Membership £12 __________
Individual Membership £8 __________
Senior Citizens/unemployed £4 __________

WANTED! More volunteers to distribute the WFN and to help with Westcombe Society’s community events. Please phone 020 8853 2756 if you would like to help.

WESTCOMBE-SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

FRIENDS OF MYCENAE GARDENS

The Friends of Mycenae Gardens are holding their AGM in the Steiner School (next to Mycenae House) on Thurs. 22nd March at 7.30 pm. The Friends help maintain and highlight issues about the Gardens (behind Mycenae House).

If you are not already a member of the Friends, you can come along and join (for free) on the night. Next volunteer days: Saturdays 3rd March & 12th May between 2.00pm and 5.00pm. No special skills are required. (Don’t be unwilling to help – you can come for any period of time between 2 & 5.00pm that you can manage).

The Spring Newsletter is now out: www.mycenaeagards.org.uk

Our Members’ & Helpers’ Party

The Westcombe Society’s annual party took place in February. It was attended by a record number of people – among them ten new members – and was much enjoyed by all.

Our chair, Marilyn welcomed everyone and thanked all who had contributed to the Westcombe Society’s activities during the year. She applauded the help given by all the volunteers, and said that there was still a need for more people to come forward, particularly with events, and helping to contribute to or deliver the WFN.

Marilyn announced that among the events planned for the rest of 2018 was the forthcoming Easter Egg hunt and the Annual General Meeting of the Westcombe Society in May. She hoped that there would be new people would come forward to serve on the committee, and renew the work of the society with fresh ideas.

Above: Marilyn Little, warmly applauded by all
Below: Cecilia, the harpist, was much appreciated

Fly tipping problems

Some residents in Humber Road are becoming exasperated by the dumping of furniture and detritus along Humber Road almost on a weekly basis. Also the dumping of commercial and building waste and debris, office furniture etc in front of garages on private land off Humber Road.

One resident, David Walton, told the WFN it had come to have at least five full carloads of rubbish in his own garage in the last few months.

The police have been informed, the Friends to the Council were to no avail. They say the area is on private land.

The Council website reports: ‘The Royal Borough has pro-actively removed 5,691 fly-tips and 1,800 reported fly-tips. We have maintained a zero-tolerance approach to fly-tipping and received recognition by London Councils for being one of the first local authorities to commit to the £400 Fixed Penalty.”

However, the council itself may not be guiltless, says Mr Walton. A large mound of wood chips was dumped, allegedly by a council vehicle, onto the allotments north of Humber Road. The pavement was damaged, as were the railings putting pressure by from a fifteen foot drop into the allotment area.

St George’s, Glenlucie Rd.
Sundays: 11.00 am Children’s Church 11.00 a.m. Holy Communion (All age service 1st Sunday of each month) or Taiye Service — Child Church, Trufalgudi Rd (4th Sunday of each month)
Wednesdays: 8.30 a.m. Morning Prayer 12.30 p.m. Fellowship Lunch

Sceptics Group meets at 99 Westcombe Park Rd. 1st & 3rd Sunday each month
Special Events in March
Wed. March, 7th at St George’s: Spiritual Film Night: Sophia Schlaf (2009) Story of Truth: Buddhism Night Shelter: every Tuesday in March

Contact: Rev’d Tim Young
tyounge@gmail.com Tel. 0870 614 1245

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Letters

From: A. Williams Shuttors Hill Road
In reply to your readers who disrespect the decision of the electorate to leave the Muresiu, democratically bankrupt, and financially corrupt EUSSR, may I point out the following: The biggest lie ever told about the EU was the original lie that we were entering into a free trade only area.

As for economic damage, think of what will happen if the referendum is overturned: mass civil disobedience across the country. Think also of the damage done when everyone apart from the few deluded Guardian readers realises that votes only count when they are in accord with the international bankers.

Those useful idiots who have decided that the British people are not good enough for them, those soldiers of Soros, should keep this over-crowded island with one-way tickets.

My advice: don’t go to the United States, because President Trump would not want his kind in his great again country.

From: David Reed
It seems every time I receive the Westcombe News I see my letters on your pages again. I am bringing back project fear.

As you may remember we had a referendum 20 months ago and project fear was rejected by the voters. It’s time now for your readers to accept the result, calm down, dry your eyes and get behind the government so we can have the best outcome for the UK and the EU going forward.

P.S. Your anti-Trius bus is starting to become tedious.

Letters

From: Bob Allinson Unit of Hong Kong
I refer to your readers comments about Chinese New Year in February: ‘In Hong Kong, the money in the red packets is real all right: HK$100 for Tier 1 (close relatives, security guards and key colleagues), HK$50 for Tier 2 and $20 for Tier 3. And it should be brand new notes from the bank. Mine are on order.

Happy New Year of the Dog! From Bob (a Dog) Ed. Editors are obviously Tier 4 or 1. Used fivers preferred.

From: Anne Robbins Humber Road
During the cold weather, the smell of coal and wood fires has been quite noticeable throughout the area. Please remember that this is a smokeless area.

This means in an open fire, you should only burn smokeless fuel, not wood, and a woodburning stove must be an efficient one that complies with London regulations. Particulates in the air pose a health threat, in the same way that excess carbon does.

From: Gobi Marston Coleraine Road
I admire the Westcombe News very much, but I am sorry that it strikes an occasional note of levity, humour or triviality. I therefore, optimistically, offer the following...

Orlando

In Coleraine Road: He doesn’t want there’s an orange cat Food or shelter I call him ‘Orlando’ Because of that But seems to need A stroke, and a chat
Calling all smokers

W

What’s to be done about this?

Out of care, out of mind

The Westcombe Society supports MumsAid

Is education happening?

Speaks Truth to Power

Local News

Westcombe News March 2018

Speak Truth to Power

S

What to do about this

Out of care, out of mind

child and young people affected by mental health issues, councils are working hard to help those that need care and sup-

port to receive it.

“Government must support this vital work by ensuring that the promised £230 million for mental health and wellbeing services is released in full, with greater transparency in how mental health funding is spent.

“Urgent action is also needed to plug the growing funding gap for wider chil-

ren’s services, projected to reach £2 bil-

lion by 2020. Mental health needs are often associated with other factors in a child’s early years or in their life, and it’s important that councils have the funding available to support families with any other issues that may be impacting upon a child’s wellbeing.”

Yes. But not with the intensity needed today. Schooling is stuck in a rut which seemed to make sense in the 1980s, but now everything is twenty times more complicated, and the system is not responding. Parents need to be the teachers in the classroom – to see the learning that happens in every area of the curriculum. This easily gets lost in the constant pressure to cram for exams. Children need to work, and seek help, to really understand their topics, not simply swallow them to get by.

The P E R Group’s website: www.perprospero.co.uk

Recent Barnardo’s study reveals that one in 10 all children and young people are able to

with support from Greenwich’s Stop Temperatures are rising, with dire effects startlingly in the Arctic, as sea levels rise.

The P E R Group’s website: www.perprospero.co.uk

Calling all smokers

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**Talk about Art**

New show about Art and Social Change

John Bartram

How it promoted an ideal that spread across the world, and still has an influence on contemporary art and design. TAA aims to promote the visual arts across the Borough of Lewisham, particularly amongst children and teenagers, by involving local schools closely in its work.

The exhibition is free and is open week-days from 8.00am to 10.00pm, on Saturdays 9.00am to 5.00pm and Sundays 10.00am to 5.00pm. Visitors can explore augmented reality footage and access additional information through QR codes.

Nine fun workshops for schools, led by TAA artists, will be offered free of charge under the title ‘Hands Make Crafty Work’. They will explore the concept of handmade and ‘leaderless revolution’ running in part –

"Don’t throw it away, bring it to the Repairs Café and still has an influence on the countless mundane tasks that those wicked institutions he contemns provide."

"nine principles” for action is: “… what institutions”. Individuals, powered by the internet, can do the job better. One of his "nine principles” for action is: “… what makes you angry?... That may be the thing you should take up arms against. If it’s wrong for me, and anger puts fuel in your tank.”

His solution – lots of grassroots activity: the people organising themselves, fuelled by anger – but without leaders. Or at least only community leaders. Here the waters were getting muddied. Anger is indeed fueling a number of populist movements round the world, notably in the UK and the US, leading, in George Monbiot’s words to “the abundant supply of simplistic solutions to complex problems, […] with the dismantling of the protective state.” So, populism rules, right? But the leaderless revolution actually exists in parts of Mexico (for example) – and murderous drug cartels have moved in.

It is very difficult to see how localised, fuelled by anger, can solve global issues. Ross’s solutions, no doubt well-intentioned, make exactly the same error he accuses governments of making: that is, of making promises that cannot be kept.

"Anger is no substitute for rationality. Yet the formation of local-co-operatives, sharing ownership with the workers and encouraging grassroots decision-making – all these things can and do have a role. But they also depend on the rule of law, and all the countless mundane tasks that those wicked institutions he contemns provide."

The solution has to be to reform them. Politics like nature abhors a vacuum. The Leaderless Revolution is available at Waterton Books Shop, Blackheath.
Blackheath Halls improvement programme

The Halls are due for an overhaul – and they need our support, writes NEVILLE GRANT

Blackheath Halls is your Halls. They were founded in 1895 by William Webster, and this beautiful building has been an important part of the cultural scene for over 120 years, bringing our community together across all ages and abilities.

Many of our readers have witnessed the challenges the Halls has faced over the decades and will have gone the extra mile to support the building and the programmes run here. “For this we are sincerely grateful,” says Gemma Okell, director of the Halls.

An historic and much-loved Grade II-listed building, the Halls is part of the oldest-surviving, purpose-built cultural complex in the city, and an important cultural hub in South-East London.

The Halls can also claim to be home to the stars of the future, in the shape of music students from Trinity Laban. Meeting future needs

Special buildings like the Halls require care and attention, so that they can meet the needs of 21st-century artists and audiences.

Gemma Okell told the WN: “We recognise that many people have supported our efforts over the years as we upgrade, most recently as part of the Elevate and Renovate campaign to improve access to the first floor of the building.”

“We also thank Trinity Laban, Viridor Credits and the Friends of Blackheath Halls for their recent donations, which have enabled us to repair the roof.

Elevate and Renovate campaign to upgrade, most recently as part of the Halls into a more flexible performing arts centre, attracting the best of both international and home-grown talent, professionals, students and community performers.

The dividing wall between two of the existing rooms will be removed to allow for a single Larger Dressing Room, which can be divided by a curtain as needed. A separate Artists’ Dressing Room will be created in order to give the conductor or principal artists a more private preparation space.

The carpet, ceiling and lighting will be upgraded, new sinks installed and the existing WCs refurbished.

Mindful of its unique heritage, the renovations planned will sensitively transform the Great Hall into a high-quality, flexible space that will further increase the diversity of the events offered, for example, by attracting new theatre and dance companies.

Improvements include retractable raked seating, which will improve sight lines for new curvilinear and screens, and new lighting and stage equipment.

The Foyer and Nar

A redesign of the foyer and bar is also planned, to enhance the public areas and create a welcome space for visitors. The bar and foyer will get a facelift to create a larger and more flexible space with stylish seating areas and an exhibition space.

The walls will be redecorated taking into account the heritage of the building, and prominence will be given to the treasured stained glass windows. The floor will feature bespoke, music-themed tiles throughout, and the corridor and the WCs will be renovated.

Backstage

The hitherto neglected backstage area at the Halls will undergo an upgrade to offer improved spaces and facilities to the stars who walk through our doors – whether they be professionals, students or community performers.

To date, the Halls have raised, or received grants, amounting to £2, 470, 000, but a further million pounds is needed, so that future generations – whether they be professionals, students or community performers – can enjoy events at the Halls. To be part of this next stage in its history, and to join the ever-increasing Blackheath Halls family, please get in touch.

Gemma Okell, Director of Blackheath Halls at G. Okell@blackheathhalls.com or Isabel Turner, Development Manager T: I.turner@trinitylaban.ac.uk

PS: For more information on how you can support the Halls, please find out more: 020 8318 9758.

More on the story

The exhibition

The exhibition will take place in the Great Hall from May 16 to 19 and will feature an exhibition of photographs and artefacts related to the suffragettes, as well as talks by local historians and artists.

Some women, that is: only women over 30 and with property, got the vote in 1918. The rest had to wait until 1928.

The weekend included talks by prominent women in their fields, including Harriet Harman, and music and theatre performances and film screenings.

On Sunday 4th, Blackheath Society member and local Blue Badge Guide Maureen Corcoran led a 90 minute walk around the sites where suffragettes and others walked, talked and protested.

Greenwich, and in particular Blackheath, played an important role in the campaign. John Stuart Mill, who lived in Blackheath, presented a petition signed by over 1400 women to Parliament in 1867. Emily Wilding Davison, arguably the most famous suffragette, who died at the Epsom Derby when she stepped into the path of the King’s horse, was born in Blackheath. Millicent Fawcett, who went to Miss Browning’s School in Blackheath, was the suffragist leader who never gave up, and her statue is to be unveiled in Parliament Square in April. She was recently voted “Woman of the Century” by Radio 4 listeners, and is the subject of a book by local author Jane Grant.

Meet the leaders

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Greenwich, and in particular Blackheath, played an important role in the campaign. John Stuart Mill, who lived in Blackheath, presented a petition signed by over 1400 women to Parliament in 1867. Emily Wilding Davison, arguably the most famous suffragette, who died at the Epsom Derby when she stepped into the path of the King’s horse, was born in Blackheath. Millicent Fawcett, who went to Miss Browning’s School in Blackheath, was the suffragist leader who never gave up, and her statue is to be unveiled in Parliament Square in April. She was recently voted “Woman of the Century” by Radio 4 listeners, and is the subject of a book by local author Jane Grant.
Is there a need for more bus routes?

The Westcombe Society has been told that one option for a new TfL bus route from Kidbrooke to North Greenwich would see buses travelling via Blackheath Standard, Charlton Church Lane and the retail parks on Bugsby Way. This sounds like a good idea: if it goes ahead it would provide a very useful bus link from the Standard to Sainsbury’s, Asda and Aldi. Many residents have asked for such a link since Sainsburys relocated a few years ago.

Some residents have also been asking for even longer for a bus link from Westcombe Park Road to North Greenwich and Bugsby Way via Vanbrugh Hill. Residents in the western part of our area who don’t have cars, especially those who have difficulties with walking or hills find accessing the peninsula extremely difficult as it involves using the 386 and then changing bus in locations where the relevant stops are far apart on different sides of busy roads.

Now that new routes are being talked about we wonder how residents feel about this, what bus routes would you like to see? We also wonder if more choice of bus routes to the peninsula in particular would mean that car users would use their cars less. Please let us know your views by calling 020 8853 2756 or emailing environment@westcombesociety.org.

Meanwhile, Chartist, a new privately-run rush-hour only commuter service has been launched by the car giant Ford. The new service links Shooters Hill and Kidbrooke with North Greenwich station. Seats are booked using an app - similar to booking an Uber. Similar bus-like mini-vans already run in some cities in the US such as New York. Some residents have also been asking for something similar in our area.