



EAST END HOWLER

For
Community
and
Solidarity

— East London's FREE Working Class News Sheet —

BEYOND VOTING



Inside your East End Howler

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Have you had enough of politicians posturing in the run up to the general election? Do you think voting is going to make any real difference to the economic and social crisis that's hitting us? Can anything be done to defend our interests as working class people and fight for a better life for us all?

Regardless of whether Labour or the Conservatives win power at the next election or we end up with a hung parliament and the Liberal Democrats calling the shots, they will all have the same agenda. That will be the imposition of swingeing public expenditure cuts in a desperate bid to preserve the UK's triple A credit rating, thus saving sterling from the attentions of the currency speculators and ultimately, fending off a visit from the International Monetary Fund.

The only issue up for debate is when the cuts that are already underway will be escalated. The stark reality is that external events will dictate when this happens and whoever forms the government will have little choice but to comply. All the contestants privately acknowledge that, should they gain power, they are likely to go down as one of the most unpopular administrations in history as they will have no choice but to swing the axe. The vast majority of the public realise this is the case, hence their response ranging from a distinct lack of enthusiasm to outright cynicism about the election campaign.

Whatever the political permutations after the election, it will be ordinary working class people bearing the brunt as

services are cut and jobs are axed. In addition, there is the elephant in the sitting room in the form of another banking crisis that a growing number of experts are predicting - should this occur, then effectively, all bets are off!

What can we as ordinary working class people do in the face of what looks to be a bleak future? There is a stark choice - we struggle as individuals to deal with the consequences of the crisis or act collectively to defend our interests and our communities. Modern society is becoming ever more fragmented and atomised with an emphasis on consumption as opposed to community. As a result, the response to any crisis becomes more individualised - and that's how the powers that be like it!

This opens the way for divide and rule as different sections of the community are played off against each other. There are those who will divide us from the likes of the British National Party and the English Defence League on the one hand through to religious fundamentalists such as Islam 4 UK, Hizib ut-Tahrir and the Christian Party on the other - they need to be faced off and told they have no place in our communities.

We have to regain a sense of solidarity that will get all of us through what will be difficult and challenging times. Acting collectively opens the way to face off the crisis and to unite our communities. The cuts that will come are going to leave massive holes in terms of provision - it is going to be up to us to step up to the plate to ensure that we take over whatever we can in creative and innovative ways. You may well ask, what can be done on a practical level in this kind of situation - well here are some examples to inspire us...

In a community that has long suffered under provision, the Independent Working Class Association (IWCA) in Blackbird Leys, an estate to the east of Oxford, has a history of stepping up to the plate to fill the void. In their relatively short history, they have organised a Saturday morning Children's Cinema Club, a SATs booster course for school children and numerous community away-days. Last summer, they organised a community football tournament. [1]

There are examples from history of direct resistance to attacks on the working class that we can learn from such as the 1915 Glasgow Rent Strike ...

During the First World War, rent increases across Glasgow provoked massive working class opposition, mainly from women organised in tenants' groups. Starting in Govan that April, strikers paid only their normal rent, refusing the increase. Despite intimidation by rent collectors the strikers succeeded, and by June, the landlords had given in. News of the success spread to other parts of the city, where tenants organised agitation and propaganda against the landlords. The solidarity of the working class women was so strong it could not be broken by the rent collectors, who had to apply to court to evict the tenants. Sheriff officers were

called in to serve the writs and carry out the evictions, but the strikers took action, barring the path of any sheriff officers entering their communities. Large scale demonstrations were held whenever an eviction notice was served.

Currently, there is a wave of resistance to evictions from foreclosed homes across the USA that shows how communities can mobilise to fight the consequences of an economic crisis that impacts on the working class...

In Philadelphia ACORN and other community organizations helped to pressure the city council to order the county sheriff to halt foreclosure auctions. Craig Robbins, who directs ACORN's foreclosure campaign said: "We're looking to throw a wrench in the foreclosure machinery," adding that ACORN are planning to organise "rapid defence teams" ready to turn out crowds on short notice to prevent evictions. [2]

We face a period where the interests of working class people will be brutally sacrificed to appease the interests of capital. However, as we can see from the examples above, it is possible to fight back. The crisis will not go away - we have no choice but to unite and resist if our communities are to survive. Resisting will make us stronger and opens the way for a better future...

[1] IWCA - The type of community engagement that mainstream politics has abandoned

<http://www.iwca.info/?p=10144>

[2] AlterNet - Resistance to Housing Foreclosures Spreads Across the Land

http://www.alternet.org/economy/121844/resistance_to_housing_foreclosures_spread_across_the_land/



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SCREW THE BAILIFF!

In recent years there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of bailiffs operating in Britain, mostly due to the government's war on ordinary workers and local taxation bearing little resemblance to ability to pay. Bailiffs take advantage of the public being uninformed of the statutory fees bailiffs can charge, and thus, get away with systematically and routinely defrauding innocent victims en-masse. Overcharging is theft, so if you've been defrauded (or about to be defrauded) by a bailiff in the last six years then you can do something about it:

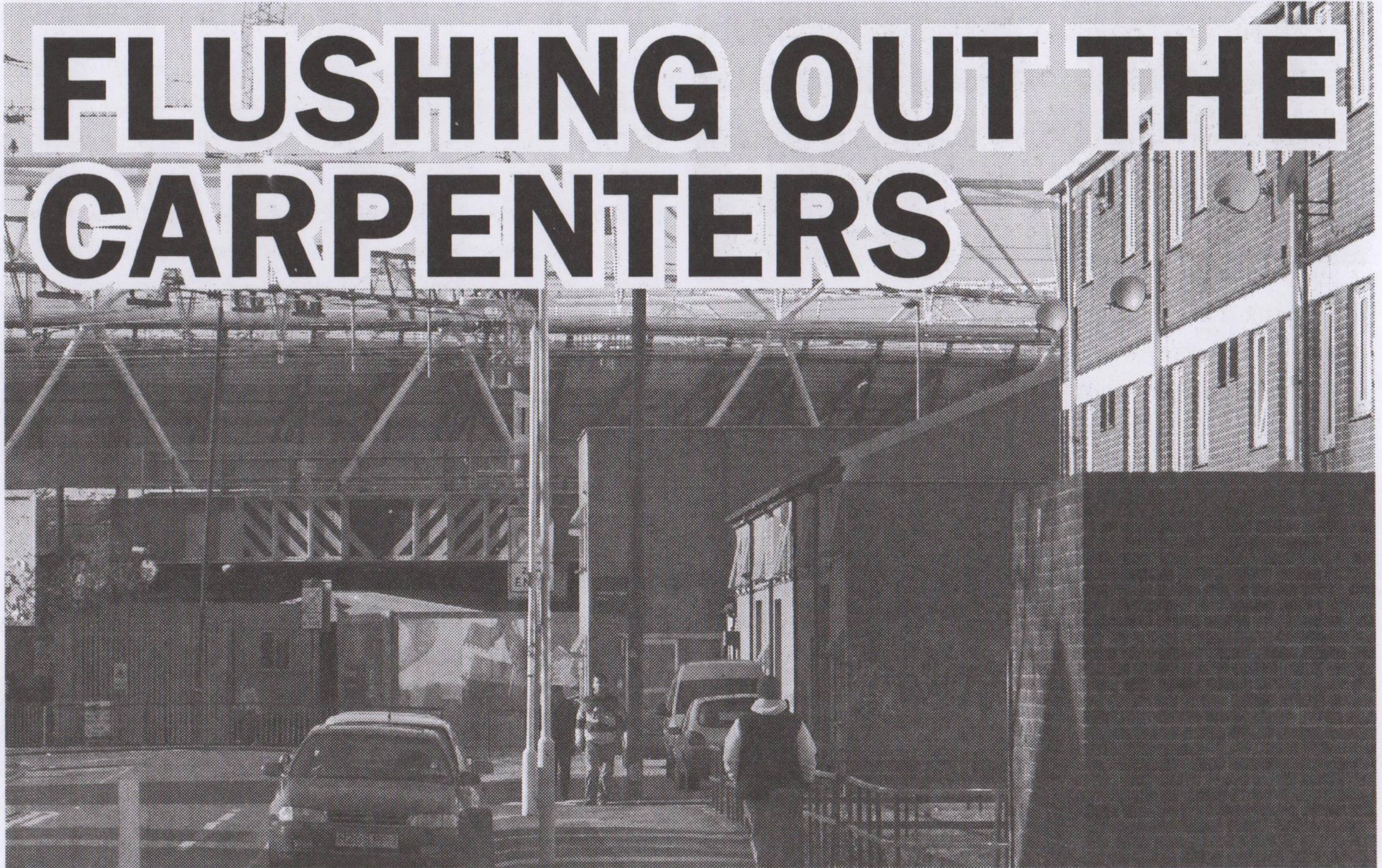
NEVER...

1. Sign anything handed to you by a bailiff **X**
2. Phone a bailiff (unless necessary, resolve 0870 & toll-numbers, NEVER call premium rate) **X**
3. Open the door to a bailiff - speak through a window or letterbox instead **X**
4. Admit the debt - contact the creditor **X**
5. Verify your name or date of birth for 'security reasons' **X**

ALWAYS...

1. Take a photo of the bailiff and his vehicle **✓**
if possible
2. Ask for his bailiffs certificate number **✓**
3. Ask which court certificated him **✓**
4. Ask for a full breakdown of his fees **✓**
5. Ask who the creditor is (if you don't know) **✓**
6. Get an appeal or statutory declaration lodged - it stops enforcement **✓**
7. Pay with a credit card, if not use a debit card - avoid cash if possible **✓**

If you feel intimidated or threatened by a bailiff, call some friends or neighbours to come over. The more there are of you the less intimidating the bullies will be.



This is the second half of a two part interview with a tenant at The Carpenters Estate, a run down 1960s council estate which sits surrounded by a plethora of gleaming new buildings right on the edge of the Olympic development in Stratford.

(You can read the first half of this interview for free by going online to actioneastend.blogspot.com)

Action East End: *So what was the aim of the campaign? To get secure alternative housing or was for the demolition not to happen or just to get the very best - basically go back to the refurbishment project.*

Carpenters Tennant: The aims of the campaign were always a little bit, erm, confused, because so many different people want different things. Some of the people, mostly old people, don't wanna move. They've made communities there, they've made friendships, networks, and they don't wanna suddenly be moved somewhere else away from their friends. So they don't want the places demolished and they want to stay there and maybe they want to be moved out, for the flats to be completely refurbished, and moved back in. But the council said that's not gonna happen and I don't think there's a lot of hope of that happening. A lot of people just wanna be moved out and moved somewhere decent. There's a lot of overcrowded families in there. I mean one family I know in the block, has two kids, maybe three, of different sexes and they're all living in a one bedroom place. And I think the oldest boy is about 8 or 9 now. And there's a lot of people like that living in there and obviously they want to move out. And I think

the council have said that the people who need more space will be given it so that's a temptation that they've given to people. These people have been trying to get moved for years anyway so they will have no objection.

So the basics of the campaign I suppose were really about making sure that there was a proper charter in place that protected everyone's rights so that everyone gets what they want - both the people who want to be moved off the estate and the people who want to stay on the estate could maybe come into whatever is built after the flats have been demolished.

AEE: *So that's fairly practical. It sounds like if it was an effective campaign and everyone was able to get to the meetings that it wouldn't be particularly hard to lose. What sounds difficult to defeat is the Council's decision to demolish the flats and build something else but if you can secure a good deal so that a few people can come back to some of the new houses in that new development then that's not asking too much. I mean they definitely do have money because of the Olympics. So what do you think could really help the campaign?*

'If they're making a massive profit on the Olympics when we're the people who have to put up with all the dust...'

CT: I think they wanted some more publicity really. One of the guys who was a leaseholder living in a house near the square, he went in that "Your Shout" thing on the TV and did something about it. And apparently the council then got in touch with him. So I think the council don't want publicity over it, I think they want to do this as quickly and as quietly as possible. But I think that for a campaign to work there's got to be some pressure on the council. Now there is a problem; the council said they'd been in regular contact with the Tenants Management Organisation [who run the estate]; that they were working on the charter with them, and that the Tenants Management Organisation were delaying on the finalisation of the charter, even though the council wanted to accede to their wishes. All of which the Tenants Management Association deny and they basically said that the council hasn't spoken to them. So it's hard for us to know who to believe, really. Because the thing about the TMO is that if the estate is demolished or significantly reduced those people'll be out of jobs. Or... they'll either be made redundant or get jobs somewhere else in Newham I suppose (if there are jobs).

AEE: *Yeah. So I guess it's a little bit more complicated.*

I think the real scandal of it is that the council have spent millions on these master plans and consultancies and all this sort of thing - all of which is down the drain. And it's the mayor's unilateral decision just to turn around and say 'no. It's all gonna go.'. So that's the real scandal of it and that's what people should know about. All this money has been spent and nothing has come of it, it's all just been wasted. And it hasn't been transparent either y'know, there's been no transparency to it so people haven't been kept up to date with what's happening. And we haven't been given, apart from 'oh we can't afford it now', that's the only reason we've been given from them for not refurbishing. But they will not say anything about what is going to happen to that space once we're gone; whether they're gonna sell the flats off privately, whether they're gonna demolish them and build new council stuff on there, whether they're going to demolish them, sell the land, and private flats will be built on there (which will probably be what

happens). They just will not be transparent about what they're actually up to.

AEE: *Okay, so the main things are the council's lack of transparency, and the fact that there's a lack of publicity for what's going on round people's corners and that needs to be publicised. Do you think there's currently a mechanism for local people who don't live in the estate but might be able to put pressure on the council?*

CT: There's not currently but there might be. But I think certainly it's a story that more people should know about. Y'know, the truth about how the Olympics has impacted on people, although they say it's nothing to do with the Olympics but y'know...

AEE: *There's a correlation anyway, of events.*

CT: And if it's nothing to do with the Olympics then they need to say what they're going to do with that land there. I mean they're only giving us the usual, they're giving us five thousand pounds resettlement money plus arranging for our moves and for our telephones to be reconnected and all that sort of thing. Which is a lot of money but it's no more than councils usually pay out in those sort of circumstances and if we're going through the pain of having to uproot and move and they're making some kind of massive profit on the Olympics when we're the people who have had to put up with all the noise and dust for the last four years since they've started building it. And we're gonna get nothing out of it.

AEE: *And dispersing you as well?*

CT: Well a lot of the older people who live there have been there since the blocks went up in about 1966 and there's still a fair few of them living there.

They've got a massive housing crisis in Newham, they've got something like 20, 000 people on their waiting list and then they're getting rid of a few hundred flats. And there's no indication that they're buying any more stock to replace that, they're just moving the people there into stock that's becoming empty so though we'll probably get preferential treatment, all that means is that people already on the waiting list aren't gonna get flats for even longer. So they're exacerbating the housing crisis in Newham by doing this.

'They're exacerbating the housing crisis in Newham by doing this.'

AN UPDATE FROM FRIENDS OF QUEENS MARKET



Newham Council are still trying to be friends with Queens Market. New stalls are welcomed into the market: there are new lines including an olive stall and Mauritian snacks! The Council gave contractors £140,000 to repair the market roof. Traders and shoppers report that now it is almost watertight.

So everybody's happy? Not quite. The Friends of Queens Market have always worried that the Council's favourite developer, St Modwen, still have a foothold in the market since the Council gave them the management of the small shops round the market - and St Modwen promptly tried to impose hundred per cent rent increases on shopkeepers! In March this year Newham Council announced to the local press that they are still working with the developer on a luxury-flat-and-private-market plan for the market and they want the work to start before 2014!

What is going on?

Council taxpayers mutter darkly about the money that has already been spent in improving the market, all due to be

lost when the developers' bulldozers move in.

"We have a legal right to know what the Council has agreed with the developer" says Queens Market activist Saif Osmani, "I've spent two months trying to find out what is in that development agreement and the Council is obstructing us at every turn. What are they trying to hide?"

"The timing is crazy!" says shopper Frank Smith "This Council keeps preaching Olympics to us but they don't care if the market is one big heap of rubble when the Olympic visitors come to Upton Park."

Whatever is going on, the Friends of Queens Market are preparing for another fight for their market.

"We learned a lot with our last campaign against the developers: we'll be more than ready for them this time!" says Sasha Laurel, "the market is flourishing: it has to stay!"

See the website - www.friendsofqueensmarket.org.uk

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

Contact 0208-472-4730 or 07903374009

LOCAL GROUPS AND CAMPAIGNS - GET INVOLVED!

FRIENDS OF QUEENS MARKET

Campaigning to celebrate London's most ethnically diverse market and save it from a property developer.
www.friendsofqueensmarket.org.uk

NEWHAM CLAIMANTS UNION

Union of those claiming benefits or pension credits.
www.newhamclaimants.org.uk

NEWHAM MONITORING PROJECT

An independent community-based anti-racist organisation
www.nmp.org.uk

LONDON COALITION AGAINST POVERTY

An organisation based on the idea that through solidarity and direct action, ordinary people have the power to change our own lives.
www.lcap.org.uk

BAJUNI WOMEN ADVOCACY GROUP

A group for Bajuni women.
170 Harold Road, Harold Road Centre,
London E13 0SE

LONDON CITY AIRPORT FIGHT THE FLIGHTS

Saying no to expansion at City Airport.
www.fighttheflights.com

SAVE BANCROFT LIBRARY

Save Tower Hamlets local history library & archives at Bancroft Road.
www.savebancroftlibrary.org.uk

GAMES MONITOR

Debunking Olympics myths.
www.gamesmonitor.org.uk

ROMA SUPPORT GROUP

A community organisation working with East European Roma refugees and migrants since 1998.
www.romasupportgroup.org.uk

EAST LONDON AGAINST ARMS FAIRS

Opposing the Arms Fair since it came to ExCeL in 2001 and will continue to do so until it is cancelled.
www.elaaf.org

BACK TO THE BOW BACK RIVERS



In issue No.4 of the Howler we documented what was going on with the Bow Back Rivers (“Up the Creek”). We then said that plans to use the rivers to give access to boat transport including the transportation of building materials to the Olympic site had run aground.

Our suspicions about the failure of this scheme appear to have come true. Delays were partly put down to the late opening of the Prescott Channel lock. However this has now been finished and there is still no increase in boat transport on the Back Rivers. A recent piece on ITN News - see here: <http://bit.ly/9MtqtZ> - showed that the lock was opening to one (yes, one) boat a week.

A special wharf was constructed with money from the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) at Tilbury Docks to harbour boats and barges built for transportation to the Olympic site. This wharf is still lying idle. Interviewed by ITN, Roger Mutton, who heads up the Green Barge Company there, described his disappointment and “cold” anger about the failure to implement the plan.

In Howler No. 4 we asked the question “If it was so easy to bring the material in by rail, why was nothing

said about British Waterways delay in finishing the works at Prescott Channel Lock with an expensive and what seems now totally unnecessary £21 million scheme? Why did all this expense and disruption to the waterways take place in the first place? The Olympics site is right next to a major railhead at Stratford, something glaringly obvious to most people”.

Well now the lock is finished and there is still no delivery of the boat transport scheme. The ODA is saying that it has met its green targets as regards rail transport. That is true but that is hardly the point.

As we said at the time: “Could it be that really any barge deliveries weren’t really going to take place and that the real aim is to create marina style moorings for the rich City workers as the ‘Water City’ development?”. £21 million down the drain just to prepare for the yuppification of the Bow waterways? In addition with the construction of the lock what was formerly a tidal water course for thousands of years now risks the growth of floating pennywort, a plant which would seriously affect the life of the rivers.



JOWELL HAMMERS HAMMERS

Tessa Jowell, the Minister in charge of the Olympics hammered the hopes of West Ham when she insisted that the Olympic Stadium would be used for grand prix athletics rather than a new venue for the football club. The £537m site is planned to be reduced from 80,000 seats to 25,000 after 2012. Seb Coe chair of London 2012 as well as former London Mayor Ken Livingstone have also defended the decision to keep the stadium for athletics.

David Gold and David Sullivan recently took over West Ham and put forward plans to move from Upton Park to the 80,000 capacity Olympic Stadium in Stratford. Jowell reprimanded the new owners by implying they were being too premature and should apply to the Olympic Park Legacy Company (OPLC) like everyone else before decisions could be made. However the OPLC has only a short period to decide what to do with the Olympic buildings and facilities after the 2012 Games and faces a high risk of them becoming white elephants. A committee set up by the London Assembly said that the OPLC should set targets for the number of local people employed at the Olympic Park following the games and called for all of the venues there to be made available for community use. Dee Doocey, chair of the Committee said that "Time is running out and we are in real danger of missing a historic opportunity to transform some of Britain's most deprived communities." She expressed doubts about the OPLC being given enough government funding to make this come about and questioning the benefits to the local community, saying that too few jobs had gone to local people with no guarantee that the housing built or to be built for 2012 would go to local people rather than to rich people moving in.

David Sullivan responded to Jowell's intention to keep the stadium as a venue for grand prix athletics as an "appalling waste of public money". Sullivan said that to build a stadium for 80,000 and then reduce its capacity to 25,000 made "no sense". He said that West Ham could take over the stadium with a capacity for 60,000, saying that the



£537 million cost of the stadium was public money "appallingly badly spent" and should never have cost that much. The Emirates [Arsenal's ground] was built for half the price." Sullivan suggested that West Ham be allowed to rent from the OPLC and share half the gate proceeds above an agreed level.

Many fear that the stadium could not sustain a 25,000 seat venue for athletics alone. Robin Wales, the Mayor of Newham also expressed fears about the stadium becoming a white elephant and suggested that the West Ham option was the only credible one. Now the OPLC appear to be backing down over the idea of scaling the stadium down. It would cost £176 million to maintain the stadium at Olympic standard until 2018 and this would come out of public money, that is with us as taxpayers footing the bill.

Meanwhile other facilities promised to the local community after 2012 have been put in doubt. Changing rooms are promised in the new Olympic Park for local sports groups but as Johnny Walker chair of Hackney and Leyton Football League pointed out there would not be enough of these dressing rooms to go round and local football leagues would have to stagger their kick off times. One team would have to wait until another team vacated the changing room. Although pitches would be put back on Hackney Marshes where they used to be, no changing rooms or car parks would be provided despite previous promises to do so.



MORE CORRESPONDENCE FROM OUR FAN...

Dear The East End Howler,

The doctors say she's only got a couple of weeks to live and I'm wondering what to do with the small inheritance Mum's leaving me.

I'd like to take this opportunity to announce my candidacy. I'm standing to be Member of Parliament for East Ham at the forthcoming elections. It costs £500 to stand as a candidate and it's best not to let that much money sit in the bank for too long what with the housing benefit and that. It's as good a use for her money as any I suppose.

I'm really quite busy with my job and my chewing gum collection, and my chewing gum collectors' meetings, and posting on the chewing gum collectors' forums so I can promise the people of East Ham that, should I get in, I won't bother you much. I'll pretty much stay out of the way. I won't try and knock down your homes, or build over your markets, or have police knocking on your doors or your heads or anything like that. You won't even notice I'm here.

*Vote Gunter,
Henry Gunter*

LETTERS


We really want to hear from you. We want to hear from as many of you as possible about East London issues and East London life. What will you be doing around election time? Will you be getting together to do something about the coming cuts? Will you be voting? We want to know what you're doing and what you're thinking about the election. We also want to know what you think about the Howler. So please, drop us a line at - actioneastend@gmail.com

ABOUT ACTION EAST END



We at Action East End want to see an alternative, one based on a genuine sense of community and solidarity. Action East End is a local group based in East London that wants to contribute to resistance, both defending ourselves in our communities and workplaces, and ultimately helping co-ordinate activities to improve our quality of life. This we believe can only be done through our own initiatives, outside the agenda of the local authorities or political groups, and by taking collective action for ourselves. This is no flight of fancy but the basis from which radical change springs, and we would urge others to join us or get in touch - actioneastend@googlemail.com

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