

Hackney Unites



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#hackneyspeaks: we choose hope



www.hackneyunites.org.uk



HOPE wins over hatred

THERE IS SOMETHING special about Hackney. The front page of this paper is a response to a provocation against one section of our community.

The response was that every section of the community came together and chose HOPE over the hatred that an obscure individual from Yeovil hoped to import into our borough. Thank you to everyone who participated in the photos, who blogged, tweeted or posted about it.

Meanwhile, it is election time again, possibly the most closely fought election of a generation. Whatever your political views, we know that there are many issues in Hackney that need to be addressed. That is why we asked campaign groups and community leaders to share their thoughts on what needs to change. In the following pages you will find suggestions about change. You may or may not agree with them, but they form the start of a conversation. Hopefully you will join that conversation by sharing your views with us: bit.ly/hackneyspeaks

But it is not enough simply to identify what needs to change, we also need to work together to achieve that change. That is why we are inviting you to participate in our training programme on community organising. If instead of putting up with inappropriate or damaging decisions we were to work together to effect positive change, then many of the issues that concern us would begin to be addressed.

We may not be able to change the world overnight, but we can make real constructive change happen, and in doing so we can rebuild the community links that have been so weakened in recent years.

We are particularly keen to ensure that the next generation of Hackney community leaders are as diverse as the borough is itself. So if you want to know how you can help shape the future of Hackney sign up for our training course.

And finally, please do check urgently that you are registered to vote. The right to vote is a precious thing, people all over the world have died seeking to acquire it. Don't lose your right to vote.

A friend in need, is a friend indeed

IT ALL BEGAN when a very odd individual, Joshua Bonehill, from Yeovil, who professes to admire Adolf Hitler and aims to create 'a new dawn for British Fascism' announced that he would bring his supporters to Stamford Hill to protest at the presence of the Jewish community (and in particular the Charedi Jewish community).

His posts contained vile racist stereotypes of the Jewish community as well as virulently racist imagery. The proposed date for this inflammatory event was 21 March.

Hackney Unites immediately initiated a petition in Stamford Hill called for the march to be banned and the perpetrator investigated for inciting racial or religious hatred.

We also launched a twitter and facebook campaign: 'we choose hope' with pictures of our diverse community speaking out against hatred and bigotry.

Local faith leaders, responded with their own contribution: 'we have faith in the community'.

The proposed protest eventually collapsed (although the perpetrator has threatened to stage another attempt).

In a strange co-incidence a group of drunken youth sought to break their way into a synagogue in Stamford Hill in the early hours of 21 March. All the evidence suggests that this was unrelated to the proposed march, but it is intensely sad that such an incident occurred. Below we reproduce the thoughts of three Charedi community leaders.

Dear All

The UOHC, as the umbrella organisation of the Chareidi Jewish Community in the UK, express our sincere thanks to the Police in Hackney and beyond, and to Hackney Unites and everyone concerned, in upholding the peace of the Realm to ensure the safety of all citizens in the borough whether Christian, Muslim or Jewish, or of no faith, from those who follow an agenda of hatred, division and disruption

With blessings of peace, tranquillity and harmony to all.

Chanoch Kesselman
Executive Coordinator
Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations

Joshua Bonehill, from Yeovil, announced that he would bring his supporters to Stamford Hill to protest at the presence of the Jewish community

A Friend Indeed!

The aphorism 'A friend in need, is a friend indeed' came to mind, when thinking of the reaction by almost all people, from the many diverse backgrounds that makes up the residents of our beloved borough of Hackney, when it seemed that a motley crew of racists led by a certain Bonehill- a rather scary name when one considers his intended mission-- from Yeovil, were about to march into Stamford Hill to 'liberate it from the Jews'.

Our Hackney is a vibrant, colourful and densely populated inner London neighbourhood. This - and it's proximity to the City of London and 'Silicon Roundabout' - has led to an large influx of people wanting to live here, and to savour it's exciting, lively and unique ethnic mix. This has sometimes led to tensions, with different priorities being pursued and championed by individuals and groups, who at times have different needs for themselves and their families, and divergent aspirations for the neighbourhood.

The long established local Jewish community, with its large families and unique lifestyle, have often felt uneasy by the seeming lack of understanding shown by certain people to its requirements. Some have thought that this has led to real fissures and animosity which have sunk deep roots of intolerance and anti-Semitic sentiments.

Thank you Mr Bonehill for demonstrating that despite the seeming differences, common human decency and the ability to appreciate the positives of the 'other' is alive, well and kicking in our borough. I hope and pray that we will all remember this truth long after Mr Bonehill and his mates become a distant memory.

Rabbi Herschel Gluck

I would again like to express our thanks to the whole Hackney community for their wonderful support. It has made me feel very proud to be a British Charedi Cockney.

Rabbi Avrohom Pinter



Further Education – The Chance to Back Social Cohesion and Skills Development in London

IAN ASHMAN, Principal of Hackney Community College and Chair of the Association of Colleges for London, sets out his view about urgent policy priorities to support the development of social cohesion and skills for employers.

London has 52 Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges. They support of 100,000 16-18 year olds and 400,000 adults.

My two key policy priorities would be to give an entitlement to free study up to Level 3 (A level equivalent) for all 19-25's and to restore the funding of Colleges to the levels before this Parliament.

Free study for unemployed adults for 1-3 years, whilst on benefit, would have a price, but with more than half the jobs in London now requiring skills and/or qualifications, it would quickly be repaid. The economic benefit would come through higher levels of employment, on higher wages, significantly reducing dependency on benefit and through a more buoyant economy, because employers could get the skilled people they need.

However, my top priority would be to reverse the cuts in this Parliament of £180m off the Adult Skills Budget (ASB) and particularly, the 24% cut being made in the coming academic year. London has the biggest number of adult learners and the biggest share of the ASB. As a result London is getting the biggest hit.

It could result in up to 85,000 people, including many of the most vulnerable learners, failing to get qualifications to progress to jobs, develop in work or go on to higher education. Those at risk include those who can't speak English, mental health service users, lone parents and the unemployed.

For employers there is a high risk of a loss of many of the 130,000 places in Science Technology, Engineering and Maths subjects, with a similar number in construction, business and financial services. This cut will mean many fewer skilled workers in priority areas being available to London employers.

Based on published economic impact assessment data, for every £1 spent in a college, £2.90 is gained in added income and savings to society and £2.80 gained in added tax receipts and avoided costs to taxpayers. The investment impact lost from this cut is likely to be a loss of around £500m from the London economy.

College campuses lie at the heart of many boroughs' infrastructure, providing skills not only for adults, but also for apprentices, 16-18 year olds, and students with learning difficulties and disabilities. With a third of London colleges already in poor financial health, reductions on this scale threaten the viability of many of these locations and this wider range of provision.

We all need to use our influence to get an incoming Government to inject extra funding into colleges, including to support their transition in 2015/16 cuts in the new Parliament. At the current rate of reduction there would be no funding for adult learners by 2020, so we must halt this pattern of decline.

Colleges and their stakeholders are coming together to protest against these cuts. The University and College Union, with the support of AoC have launched an on-line petition at <http://www.ucu.org.uk/fe-funding> - please sign up.

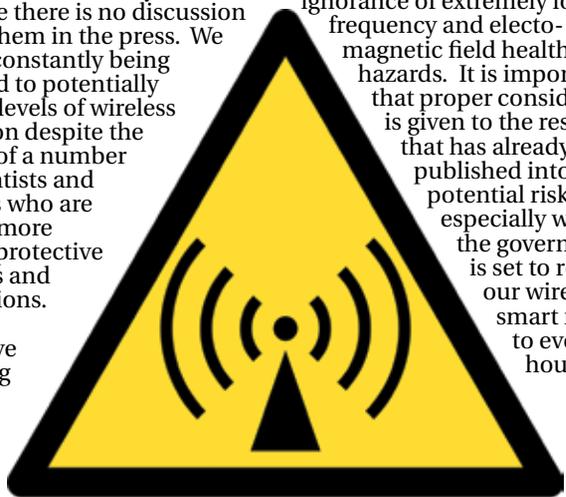


Or maybe not?

THERE IS NO official recording or awareness of the levels of electro magnetic force in the streets, workplaces and homes in Hackney. This force comes from electromagnetic fields of the sort that are produced by mobile phones and Wi-Fi. A second source is from 'extremely low frequencies' radiation of the sort emitted by power lines and appliances,

People assume they are safe because there is no discussion about them in the press. We are all constantly being exposed to potentially unsafe levels of wireless radiation despite the efforts of a number of scientists and doctors who are urging more health protective policies and regulations.

A Bio Initiative Working



Group concluded in 2007 that existing public safety limits were inadequate to protect public health, and agreed that new, safety limits were needed. The report was prepared by more than a dozen world-recognized experts in science and public health policy.

They concluded that the evidence at hand, coupled with the enormous populations placed at potential risk, was sufficient to warrant stronger precautionary measures.

We need some action to challenge the intentional ignorance of extremely low frequency and electromagnetic field health hazards. It is important that proper consideration is given to the research that has already been published into the potential risks, especially when the government is set to roll out our wireless smart meters to every household.

Free Internet for All

Public services are considered essential in the UK. We all enjoy universal services such as a road network, sewage disposal, child benefit, state pensions, support for the National Health Service and free education.

Public services uphold Britain's fundamental values of democracy and freedom. But some people are less free than others. Some families are trapped in poverty and their children need what others take for granted. Now is the time to take universal services into the 21st century.

We are all aware of social class. We know that Hackney's schools educate children from Hackney's most and least wealthy families. Some children have educational toys, books and access to the internet; others, who have almost nothing are disadvantaged at school.

What if we could put children from the poorest families on equal footing with the richest? Should we do it? Well why doesn't the Council provide free internet access throughout Hackney. The internet is essential for success in education and business. It is now an essential public service. Free Fast Broadband would help to reduce the impact of poverty for poorer families; it would support education, employment and self-employment. Free fast broadband could help young people break through the class ceiling to free the next generation from the poverty trap.



HACKNEY PLANNING WATCH

THIS IS THE SCENE when over 100 people attended a meeting organised by Hackney Planning Watch, to hear about the proposed Area Action Plan in Stamford Hill and how the community could engage with the consultation

The meeting itself broke into workshops to discuss what our vision of Stamford Hill is, what needs to change and how we can effect that change. Among the key issues that arose were:

- a lack of affordable housing in the area,
- inconsistency with the Council's approach to enforcement when inappropriate development takes place,
- a failure by the Council to 'zone' areas for the development of infrastructure (i.e. schools)
- issues relating to disabled access to public buildings, and
- the lack of a 'town centre' for Stamford Hill.

Further meetings are proposed and in the meantime Hackney Planning Watch are undertaking an on-line survey. bit.ly/SHAAP into what people locally feel are the priorities.



Young and Old Face the Crisis



ALL OF US are young once and have to deal with growing older – along the way we often care for children and older family members. A civilised society is one in which children and young people and older people alike get the care and support they need.

But the budget squeeze on local councils and government departments that has followed the bankers' crisis is dividing us: the working poor against the unemployed poor, long-established people from migrants - and young against old. None of us are to blame for the economic crisis. So we should stand together. Older people are often passionately concerned about the youth, but our political leaders also need to answer how they are going to deal with older people's needs.

- We need all public services and essential private ones to become 'dementia friendly' and proper support packages for people with long term conditions to 'self-care';
- Only 3% of housing in England is accessible to people with restricted mobility. All new housing should be built to accessible 'lifetime' standards;
- Millions of older people are living in poverty. We need a guarantee that the state pension is increased to the best of inflation, average earnings or 2.5% annual increase;
- Older workers need quality training and support to avoid becoming permanently unemployed when they lose their jobs;
- In health and social care, all the talk is of making services personalised and integrating them. That's good, but when budgets are being cut back year after year, there will be people losing out. Urgent steps are needed to reverse the cuts to social care and give additional funds to the NHS to meet the needs of our ageing population.

Hackney has done a good job of protecting front line services when budgets are shrinking. But the cuts being considered for after the election will cut to the bone and beyond.

● David Holland works for Age UK East London, which can be contacted on 020 7241 5900

Nearly a million need food bank vouchers

ACCORDING TO the Trussell Trust, nearly a million people needed emergency food bank vouchers in 2013-14 up from a little over 40,000 just four years earlier.

A local food poverty campaigner offers her perspective:

The two main reasons cited were benefits delay or low income. More people may be in work but if they don't earn enough to feed their family there is something really wrong. Policies to help tackle food poverty have to include raising the minimum wage to a living wage and stopping the needless delays/penalties to people on benefits. No one in Britain should go to bed hungry. No child should go to school hungry.



The government's experts seem to contradict each other about what comprises a healthy diet. Should we worry about calories or not? Should we limit the amount of salt we eat? Is it animal fats that are the cause of the increase in the number of people with type 2 diabetes or sugar intake? If they're so confused how can the average person know what to feed their family? Add a lack of resources and cooking skills and it's no wonder that the £1 ready meal burger seems an easier option, especially if it tastes good. If food doesn't taste good no one will eat it.

Whatever policies political parties come up with to help alleviate food poverty, people need to know how to make the most of their food budget, no matter how small it is. People should be able to buy food they want to eat. Aside from basic cooking skills, knowing where to shop, what fresh meat, fish and vegetables look like and how to store it so it lasts are skills that most people need to learn. They don't need a kitchen decked out with all the latest equipment to cook well. They shouldn't be made to feel guilty because they can't afford expensive ingredients.

Telling people to grow herbs on their windowsill is fine if they have a sunny enough window but it won't fill their child's empty stomach. If someone wants to be vegetarian that's fine; however most people don't. No one should be made to feel guilty for buying inexpensive types of meat in order to feed their families. They just need to know how to make the most of what they can afford.

BAGS OF TASTE

In the meantime Bags of Taste has developed as a Hackney based not for profit working to alleviate food poverty by teaching home cooking at prices that compete with the cheapest fast food & ready meals. Recognising that many people on a budget find it cheaper to eat ready meals and takeaways than cook for themselves. They first analysed the issues and then developed effective ways of encouraging behaviour change. They help people learn to cook cheap nutritious meals (all recipes cost less than £1 a portion). For more details (and to volunteer, or to find out about courses) visit the 'Bags of Taste' page on Facebook.



Are you listening to the Voluntary Sector?

JAKE FERGUSON of Hackney Council for Voluntary Services shares his thoughts on Hackney at a crossroads

IT FEELS like we are at a real crossroads at the moment in Hackney. So far the Council's spending reductions have not fallen heavily on local services unlike other London boroughs and indeed other areas of the country where there has been scathing cuts and reducing budgets for voluntary and community action, in some cases, without much thought seemingly given to the ramifications. In Hackney we can pride ourselves that the conversations and dialogue with our public sector colleagues is largely positive, respectful and focussed ultimately on the needs of our residents.

That's not to say the future won't be grim – it will be – with the Council needing to save £50m over the next few years and much uncertainty beyond that. What is clear is that whichever government gets in, hung or otherwise, this climate of cuts will prevail.

There is a local commitment to protect frontline services – but for how long can this continue? There is a widely held national and local recognition



that individual public agencies on their own will not be able to meet the needs and expectations of service users and the wider community. Collaboration is therefore essential.

The problem is we often speak very different languages. We the in the voluntary sector need to be better at evidencing our impact and the public sector better at involving us more in

their strategic discussions at the earliest opportunity – my experience is that the community and voluntary sector in Hackney certainly is used to having mature conversations and can talk reductions and strategise without self-interest.

There are some big policy issues which local communities need to reflect on. The new Care Act, for example, is a

journey to more personalised services. The Care Act will help to improve people's independence and wellbeing. It makes clear that local authorities must provide or arrange services that help prevent people developing needs for care and support or delay people deteriorating such that they would need ongoing care and support.

Also big on the agenda is the Social Value Act. An Act which initially promised to radically change the way Councils and public bodies procure services which provide local social value. The Council will soon be reviewing its procurement processes which will provide an opportunity for the Act to be better embedded in Hackney especially with regard to supporting local businesses and charities to play a fuller role in service provision.

Finally if the public sector is serious about engaging the voluntary sector then it needs to remember the importance of grants. Commissioning can be good but it can distract from our basic need for core funding if not properly scoped. The Council is reviewing its main grants and has indicated it will be reducing the grant pot in the near future. So that which is left will need to be effectively targeted.

Legal Aid: the fourth pillar of the welfare state

LEGAL AID, has effectively been removed from people with legal problems related to housing, welfare benefits, immigration, debt, employment and family in particular.

Three areas in particular cry out for a policy change and the reinstatement of legal aid.

The first is welfare benefits. People who need to claim benefits are the most deprived in our society, particularly those claiming Disability Living Allowance (£21.55 - £81.30 a week) or Employment and Support Allowance (£72.40 a week). Yet the new rules mean that unsuccessful applicants are now being forced to find money they simply do not have if they wish to challenge decisions. This is deeply unfair when you consider that almost 4 out of 10 of these decisions are overturned on appeal.

Secondly, the removal of legal aid for family law cases is endangering the lives of domestic violence victims who are now forced to jump through hoops to obtain legal protection. The family courts are now also heaving with legally unrepresented mums and dads attempting to single-handedly fight complicated cases to regain contact with their children or to stop them being taken away.

Thirdly, the quite appalling rise in Employment Tribunal application fees has priced out low income workers from being able

to bring a claim to try and receive pay they're owed or compensation for unfair dismissal or workplace discrimination.

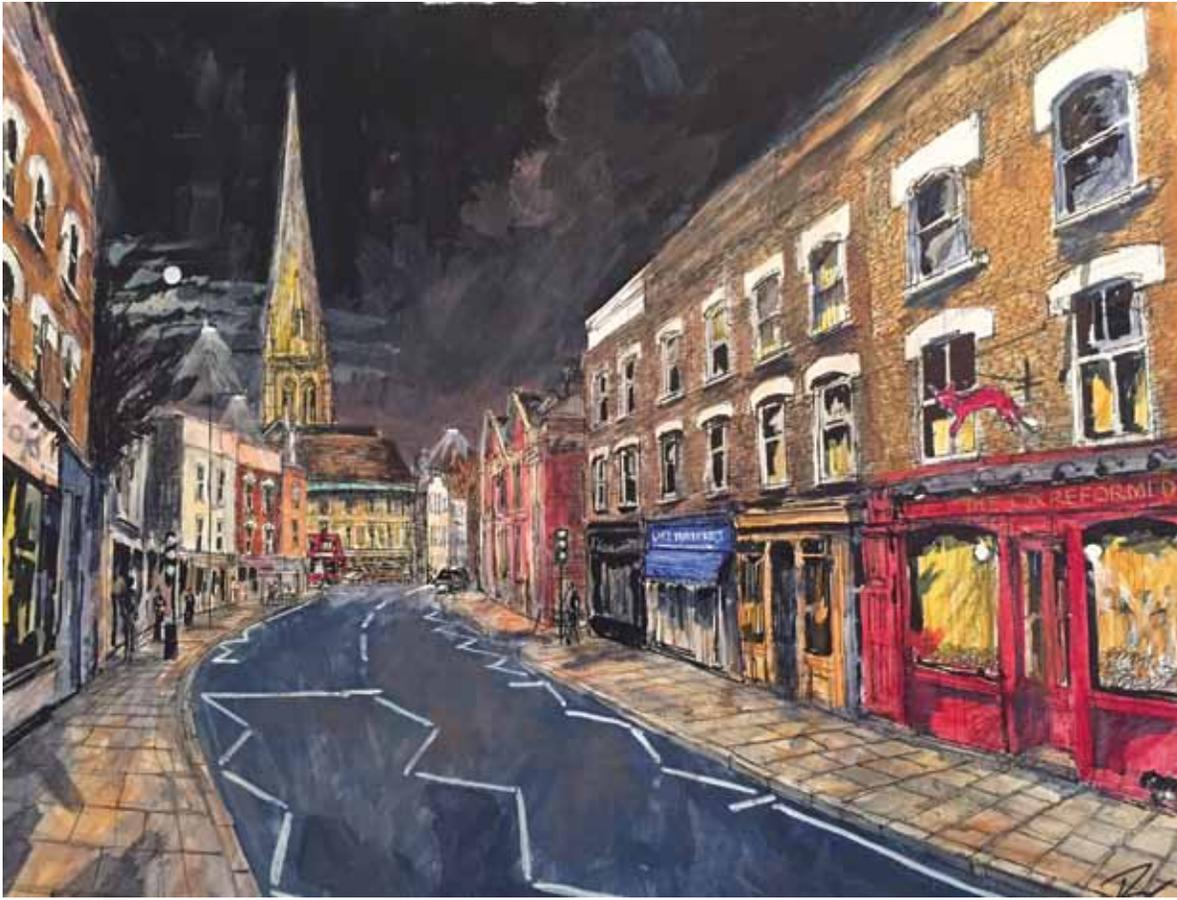
The removal of legal aid from these three areas alone – welfare benefits, family and employment – affects not just the people with

the legal problems but entire local communities because it is families, friends, neighbours and local tax payers who are now having to pick up the pieces. In the end, this all costs more than any of the supposed 'savings' the changes sought to achieve.

HCLC calls on the next Government to recommit to the full provision of legal aid, which was the original fourth pillar of the 1949 welfare state alongside housing, education and the NHS, and in so doing, give people back their dignity.

● **Hackney Community Law Centre (HCLC) is a charity that provides legal advice and representation to low income people living and working in the London Borough of Hackney.**
<http://www.hclc.org.uk>





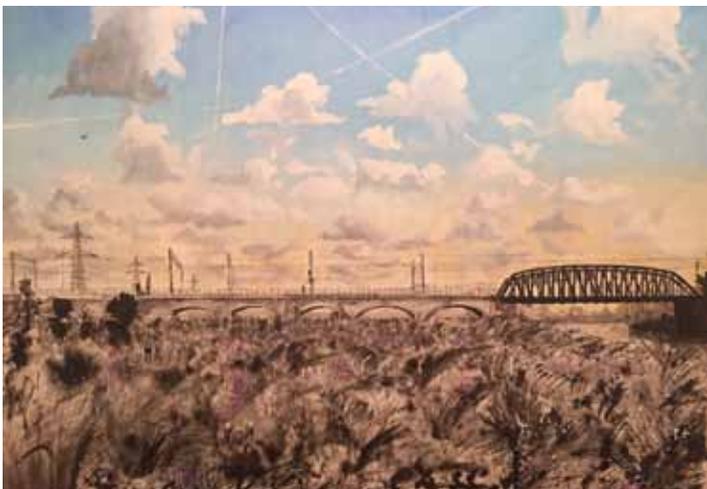
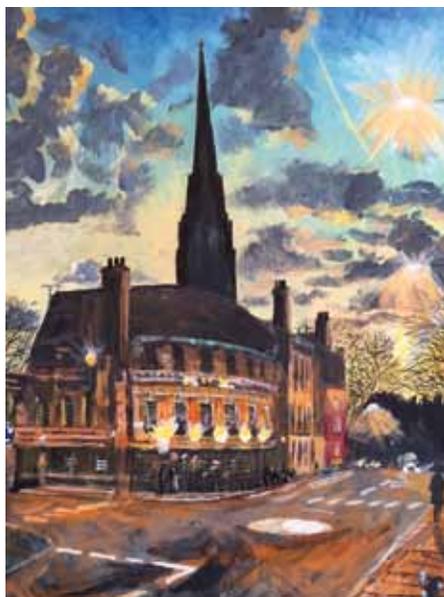
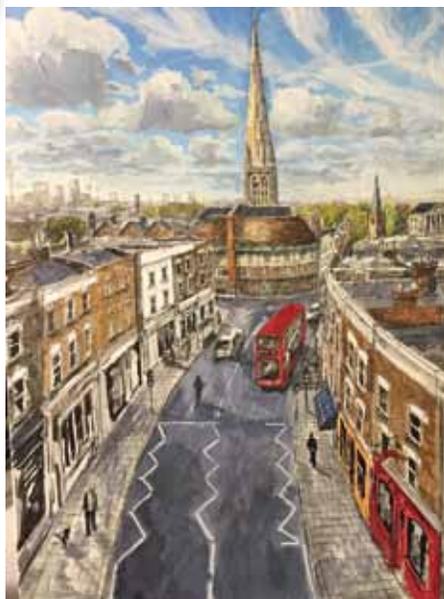
Landscapes of Hackney

A LOCAL ARTIST based in Stoke Newington has just had a month-long pop up exhibition in an empty shop on Stoke Newington Church Street.

David Downes who has been commissioned by the BBC to record its buildings in and around London is a prolific painter of familiar local landscapes. As David says, 'My work focuses on the juxtaposition of history and modernity in London, graveyards lie next to modern offices, aging churches stand in built up areas. I often paint my scenes of London from an aerial position, imagining the way the landscape would look when viewed from that angle. In this way my work is a meeting of realism and imagination. I am very focused and can capture architecture and urban-scapes in vivid detail.'

David's paintings of Stoke Newington, Clissold Park and Abney Park Cemetery have captured the spirit and culture of the area. It was his love for Abney Park that led him to very kindly support the Stokey Local campaign against the proposed Sainsbury's/housing development that would overshadow this wonderful conservation area. While selling his paintings from his pop-up exhibition David has generously donated a percentage of all his sales to the campaign to stop this development going ahead.

● For more information about David's work see www.daviddownes.co.uk



Wilmer Place: the battle continues

LOCAL PEOPLE in Stoke Newington will take a grassroots campaign against unpopular plans for a giant supermarket next to Abney Park cemetery into the final stage later this year.

In November members of Stokey Local — the community group set up to challenge this massive development, which will threaten local shops and businesses — decided unanimously to take the case to the Court of Appeal. It's a last-ditch attempt to halt what has been described as "the most controversial development in Stoke Newington in a generation."

Last October, after three days of hearings, a High Court judge rejected a Judicial Review launched by a local resident into Hackney Council's decision to grant planning permission. Stokey Local called the judgment "quite bizarre... The undemocratic planning system with its near-impenetrable quirks has won again."

But since then local people have come together for one more round of the fight to preserve N16's diverse economy. We've had a brilliant benefit gig at the White Hart featuring surf rockers The Bikini Beach Band, and fundraising artworks from local artists David Downes and BeyondThrilled.

And a gala 'Anti-Valentine's Dinner' at St Paul's Church — with a locally-sourced menu plus the unforgettable sight of St Paul's vicar Niall Weir singing Tom Lehrer songs, accompanied by pianist Colin Sell of Radio 4's 'I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue' — helped boost Stokey Local's fighting fund to a spectacular £32,308

In almost four years the campaign has made huge achievements, notable forcing the developers to delay and scale down the development by a third and remove a car-park from their plans. It has given the flora and fauna of Abney Park nature reserve two more seasons with light and warmth and has left the existing businesses and residents on site in their genuinely affordable units a little while longer. Most importantly, Stokey Local has united the residents of N16 and shown that this is a strong community with a spirit that can't be beaten.

This long fight is now entering its final phase. Though Stokey Local's legal team is working for free, the campaign needs a further £4,500-£9,500 to cover the other side's costs in the event of loss. If you haven't donated so far, please do so using the details below or visit www.stokeylocal.org for other ways to donate. You'll be helping to preserve the Stoke Newington that we all love.

**Account: Stokey Local Community Fund
Sort code: 08-60-01 • Account: 20316473**



Do you want to change the world (or at least a little bit of it)?

Over the last 12 months, Hackney Unites has convened a number of sessions in our 'community organising masterclass' series. With guest speakers primarily from a range of American community organising networks.

In the coming months we aim to convene a series of training sessions tailored to the individual needs of local groups.

Hackney Unites can deliver a training programme to your group, or if you would prefer, you can sign up for a short course. We are particularly keen to deliver this course to younger people and we want to contribute to the development of a more diverse group of community leader in the borough.

The training covers topics such as:

● What is your issue?

What people often describe as 'the issue' is merely a symptom of a deeper underlying problem, by identifying the underlying issues, you can begin to decide how to effect change.

● What change do you want to achieve?

By being specific at the very beginning you can begin to strategise how to effect change, as opposed to merely 'opposing' something bad.

● Who are the decision makers?

Who has the power to effect the change you want, how do they get appointed and what are the frameworks within which they make their decisions.

● What do they care about?

If you are trying to change their mind, you need to know what motivates them. An elected councillor may have very different motivations to an appointed council officer, and a landlord or developer may have entirely different concerns.

● Who are your people?

Who shares your concern, and how are you going to engage with them to build your campaign? Very little has ever been

achieved by individuals, most change, great or small, begins with a discussion amongst a growing number of people that they want to see change.

● Relational organising

Too often campaigners simply view others concerned about the issue as a 'resource' but if you want to build sustainable change, you need to build a team that has bonds of friendship and trust. How do you begin this process?

● Where is the power?

If you cannot persuade the decision maker that it is in their interest to change their policy, how can you put bring pressure to bear on them? Where is the room for negotiation? What is it that you have that they want?

● How to build alliances

There may be people with similar but perhaps not entirely the same concerns, how can you work together effectively together so that both groups benefit from the collaboration?

● What is the difference between a strategy and a tactic?

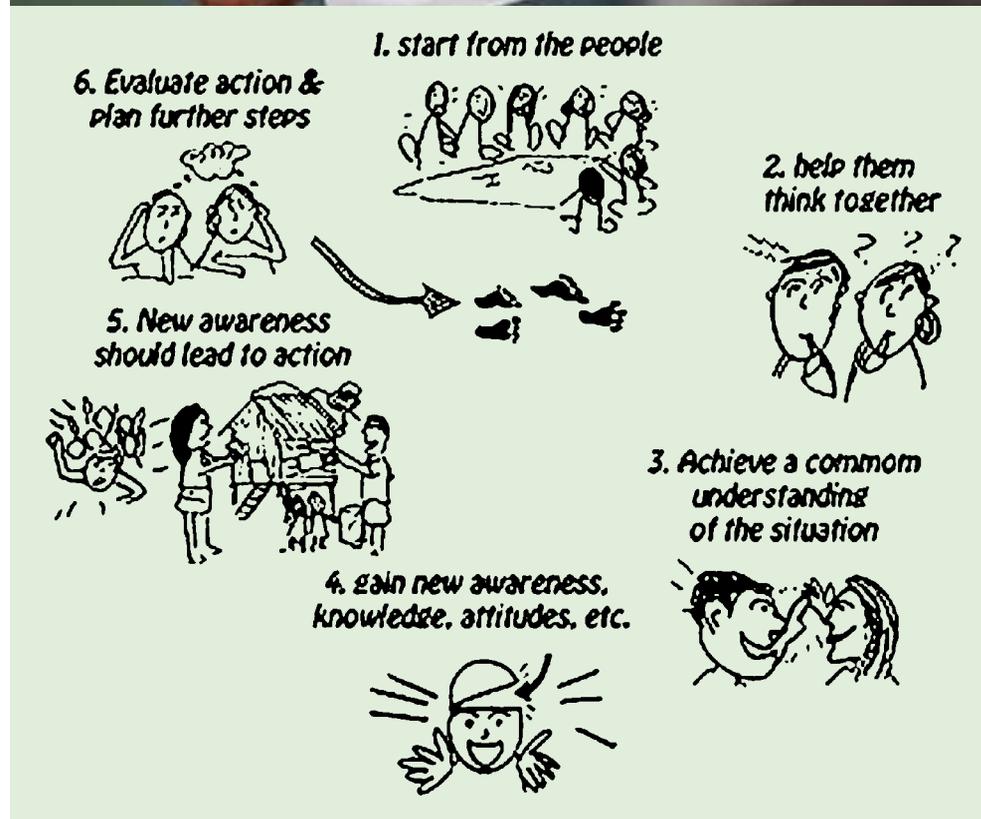
A tactic is something you do in order to move towards your overall goal. A strategy is like a route map of how you get there. Too often people mistake a tactic for a strategy.

● How can you raise funds for your project?

Very little can be achieved without some money. Is your project charitable? Is someone prepared to pay fund you? Will your community pay 'dues' to ensure the campaign continues?

Acknowledgment: much of our training materials rely on the work of Marshal Gantz and the New Organising Institute

● To find out more about the training: email Hackneyunites@btinternet.com



Sunstone Community. Bringing back a women-only gym to Stoke Newington

ON FRIDAY 13 JUNE last year 1,500 received some disappointing news. We were informed that Sunstone, a women-only gym of 22 years standing, had unexpectedly closed its doors and it wouldn't be re-opening. Sunstone was a very special place. Geographically it was, and indeed is uniquely placed.

This women only gym was an important and unique space for a number of reasons. Firstly and most obviously for those women who don't want- or are not able for religious or cultural reasons - to exercise with men. Stamford Hill and Stoke Newington are home to the Chassidic Jewish community and also to many of the religious Muslim community. As one ex-member said: 'in all my many years of membership to the gym I found a sense of tolerance, extending beyond religion, beyond sexual preference. It truly was a place where women of all ages, race, belief and non-belief felt comfortable. In a world that is keen to exaggerate our differences -



Sunstone brought the women together.' Sunstone Women was a profitable business for the last 21 years - only falling

into difficulty in the last year as a result of the financial crisis and a lack of focus on members' needs.

Since Sunstone closed a number of women have come together to see if we can launch a campaign to get a women's only gym back up and running in the area. We applied to the Council to have the building on Northwold Road N16 registered as an 'Asset of Community Value' and we were successful in this endeavor, but there is still lots of work to do to make our dream a reality.

A women-only gym space is more than just a place to exercise. One member expressed what many felt about this place: 'Sunstone was a place where I could be me, but a fitter happier me surrounded by women of all backgrounds, races, experiences, looking to improve ourselves. In the process we not only improved our physical health, but also our emotional and mental well-being. We created a community that meant a lot to us. And the benefits rippled out to our families and the wider community.'

● Are you interested in knowing more about this? Could you help out? If so contact us on sunstonewomen@btopenworld.com.

General Election 2015

So in a few weeks time we choose the next government. Well those of us who are on the electoral register do. Those who are not will not have a voice in what is clearly going to be a tightly fought race.

Changes in legislation mean that many people, particularly first time voters are at risk of losing their right to decide who governs us. If you are not on the register by 20 April, then you will not be able to vote.

To check whether you are on the register, you can visit <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote> alternatively you can download an app for your phone.

Last year with the local council elections we invited candidates to come into the community and speak to groups of residents. In these meetings (known as 'hustings') residents had the opportunity to ask the questions of the candidates that mattered to them.

This year we are doing something different. We are asking the community what they care about. Inside this paper you will read about some of the things that matter to people locally. You may agree, or disagree with them, but the point is it is high time we had a debate about what we need as a community, instead of waiting for politicians to 'sell' us their policies.

Organise your own 'listening project'

As part of #hackneyspeaks we are inviting people to set up their own sessions, either as part of an existing group or community, or by just inviting friends and neighbours round for a discussion. The following are pointers to a successful event, but you may have better ideas about how to get people talking about the issues that matter to them, and identifying those that people collectively feel strongly about.

- Start with a section where people talk to each other about the concerns they have and identify one or more specific shared areas of concern (for example; housing, inter-generational issues, youth)
- Explore how are people being directly affected by these issues?
- How is the borough being affected by these issues?
- Who do they feel has the power in the borough to make change on this issue?
- If they could make a specific change, what would it be?
- What are they prepared to do to persuade those with power to make that change?

When we have collected sufficient views, we will be making a trip to Parliament, after the general election, so that our communities can put their questions to the local MPs after they have been elected.

To share your views/concerns visit: bit.ly/hackneyspeaks

In the meantime, if you are on twitter, please look out for and contribute to the hashtag: #hackneyspeaks

Question Time'- style general election hustings

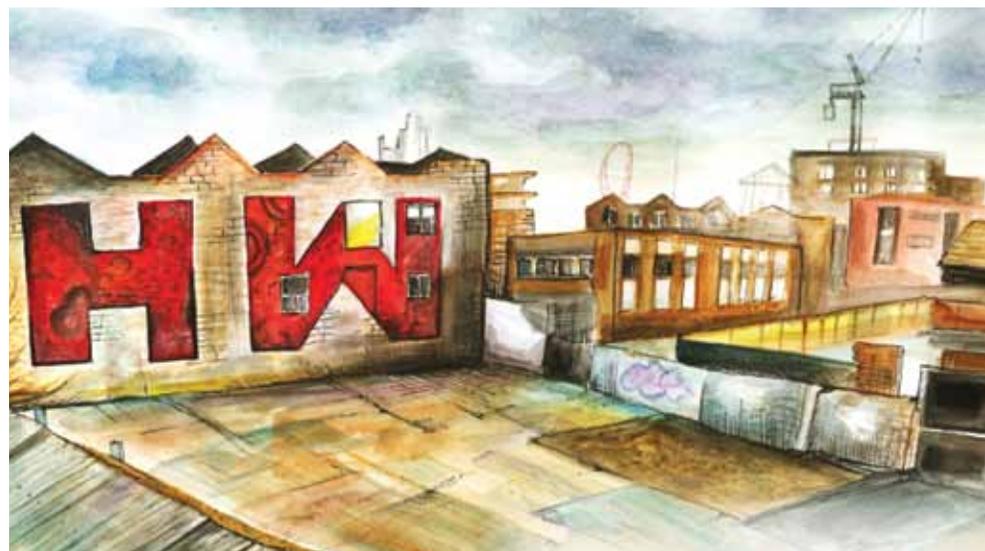
THE ARCOLA THEATRE in association with Hackney Citizen are hosting a General Election hustings meeting on Sunday 26 April. Between 2pm and 4pm Studios 1 & 2 Arcola Theatre 38 Ashwin Street Dalston E8 3DL

Residents will get the chance to quiz Hackney's parliamentary candidates ahead of the General Election. There will be two separate sessions, one for each of the constituencies of Hackney North and Stoke Newington, and Hackney South and Shoreditch.

The event will be a chance for residents to question representatives from all parties fielding candidates in the General Election.

Readers can submit questions for the candidates to answer in advance. Simply email your name and question to office@hackneycitizen.co.uk or tweet @hackneycitizen on the hashtag #hackneyhustings

Hackney Unites research network



MANY OF THE ISSUE of concern to our community are complex and in some case have multiple causes.

When negotiating over solutions, given the technical or legal context of some debates, it is not always easy for the community to engage on an equal footing with decision makers such as elected councillors or professional officers. That is why Hackney Unites launched our research network.

We recognise the value to organised communities of a solid 'evidence base' when seeking to advance a solution to a particular problem. We are consequently very keen to expand our engagement with academic researchers at whatever level, whether they are interested in 'action orientated research', or simply happy to 'give back' to the community that is the subject of their research.

Amongst our areas of interest are:

- democracy and participation
- demographic change
- health and health policy
- equalities (and in particular the public sector equality duty)
- how communities can effect positive change though engagement with decision makers

We would like to thank the research team lead by Dr Johanna Wadsley and Dr Melissa Butcher of the Open University for their report: Young people's participation in Tech City: Barriers and Opportunities, which is a timely and insightful exploration of the chasm between the potential opportunities created in the south of the Borough by the technology hub around Old Street, and the lack of participation by local people. It is a must read for the local community, policy makers and the tech industry.

At the same time we would like to thank the MSc. Urban Development Planning students of The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, University College London who have produced a remarkably incisive report HACKNEY WICK A Strategy Proposal Towards Strengthening Community-Led Engagement with Local Planning. Again, a must read for policy makers, as well as those members of the community who are wrestling with planning and regeneration matters.

Both of these reports illustrate the value of joint working between academics and the community. If you would like to download a copy of either report you can visit: bit.ly/HUresearch

#younghoxtonspeaks

#younghoxtonspeaks is a project funded by the Community Development Foundation, which seeks to

- bring young people together to talk about their future and explore how they can effect positive change in their lives
 - organize our communities and create bridges between those who live in Hoxton and those who work in Hoxton, particularly the 'Tech City' workers.
- Hackney Unites will be holding a community engagement event targeted at 18-23 year olds at the Community Hall, St Anne's Church, Hemsworth Street, Hoxton on Thursday 23 April 2015 from 6.30-8.30 pm

The aims of the project are supported by the findings of the pilot study of 'Young People's Participation in Tech City' run by the Geography Department at The Open University in collaboration with Hackney Unites and the Shoreditch Trust.

Tech City is a cluster of 1472 digital technology businesses around Old Street Roundabout and home to many jobs of the future. The dichotomy is that Tech City is struggling to recruit workers with the skills

it needs, and Hackney has higher than average levels of unemployment, at 8%.

The study found that the young Hackney people interviewed had little to no knowledge of what 'Tech city' is and what happens within it. The perception was of 'blokes in skinny jeans and beards' and 'mainly White university graduates'.

Hackney Unites believes that only contact between Tech City workers and young Hackney people will begin to break down some of the barriers and misconceptions that exist and create the conditions in which young people from Hackney can aspire to obtain the skilled jobs in this emerging sector.

This means that the voices of Hackney's young people need to be heard.

● For more information regarding this project or, if you are aged 18-23 and would like to speak out on the issues that affect you, your friends, family and communities, and wish to attend the #younghoxtonspeaks event on Thursday 23 April, please contact hackneyunites@btinternet.com