

EGRA Annual Report for 2018

This has been an extremely busy and ultimately very successful year for EGRA. Many thanks to all those who have organised, and participated in, events and campaigns. We would welcome extra support from members who can offer time, enthusiasm or expertise.

Executive Committee Membership

Long-standing Chair, Daniel Hayes, stood down in August, replaced by Patrick Ives. The rest of the Committee are: Kate Joekes, Loïuse Fletcher, Laura Eyres, Monique Tomlinson, Sheila Keeble, Fiona Machan, Ilsa Pole, and Dan Brown. We are currently recruiting and have two new volunteers - Pia Sweet and Jimmy Gaston - any other volunteers would be welcomed.

Financial Report - will be available at the AGM on 7th February 2018

No Toxic Cruise Port Campaign

In March, a group of EGRA members along with residents from the Isle of Dogs, decided to take on the controversial Cruise Ship Terminal planned for Enderby Wharf. Following the unsuccessful legal action against the Council, it was important to find a new angle. Laura Eyres who ran the campaign came up with the winning formula - to tackle the terminal solely on the absence of on-shore power, rather than the myriad planning issues. It was a strategy that paid off brilliantly. The campaign covered all the bases including:

- regular pop-up events in The Greenwich Centre,
- leafleting of local streets and Cutty Sark Gardens,
- regular TV and radio interviews and lots of local and national press coverage,
- social media particularly Twitter,
- lobbying of local councillor candidates during the May council elections.

In November, Morgan Stanley, the site owners, confirmed to campaigners and the Council that they were abandoning the project altogether.

Greening Projects

One of our main interests is putting some green into Greenwich which despite Greenwich Park has some decidedly unloved and neglected public realm and a real dearth of green space in the riverside area. The on-going projects are:

- Christchurch School Community Garden (CSCG) - comprising a flower and vegetable garden, a beehive, greenhouse and Outdoor Classroom/Meeting hub. As well as being successful in the Greenwich Growth Fund application process and attracting a generous donation from local councillors' Ward Budget, the garden has received donations of time, plants and effort from, among others:
 - Mace - building the Greenwich Centre,
 - Maylim - doing the landscape works on the Peninsula riverfront,
 - European Bank for Reconstruction and Development - having a highly competitive volunteering day,
 - Meantime Nursery - donating as many plants as we could take following their closure,
 - Greenwich Good Gym - local runners who stop to do gardening or litter picking during their weekly run.

Current community projects include hosting Youth Offenders on Saturdays and a disabled volunteer through a scheme by the Camden Society. A number of community weekend events are held throughout the year and the garden is open weekly to the public from 10am-1pm on Fridays.

- Woodland Walk trees - watered by a dedicated team with water donated by The Crown pub.
- Trafalgar Road improvements being funded by The Mayor of London as part of the Low Emission Neighbourhood. This has been a difficult process and the results are unclear. The Pocket Parks project seems to have overtaken any enthusiasm for finishing off the works already started. And where have the bike racks gone?
- Barriers on Trafalgar Road - these seem to be surviving despite people's desire to use them as rubbish bins. We would like to see more greening on Trafalgar Road but the Low Emission Neighbourhood project has muddied the waters on this for the moment.
- Thames Path - EGRA members and other local groups have adopted the far end of the path and do a twice yearly clean-up and planting. Some shrubs and small trees have been planted and we may even see some daffodils this year.
- Street trees were finally installed in Bellot Street and Dinsdale Road - after residents petitioned the Council.

Meetings

The Executive Committee meets once a month and we aim to have 4 public meetings a year. We are trying out some new venues for meetings as some members found the Star & Garter pub difficult acoustically and the pub has few free evenings available. In addition, EGRA has:

- Organised Hustings for the local elections in May.
- Organised a public meeting with the Peninsula Police Team in October to discuss anti-social behaviour, on-street drug dealing, visible policing and traffic.
- Met with Sizwe James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration to discuss the Greenwich Growth Fund problems in partnership with The Greenwich Society and Westcombe Society.
- Met with Danny Thorpe, Council Leader, in partnership with Plumstead to Peninsula Alliance of riverside community groups.
- Met with Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Air Quality, Public Realm and Transport and local Ward Councillor, to discuss a range of local issues.
- Met with the Low Emission Neighbourhood team on several occasions about the Trafalgar Road improvements and Pocket Parks.
- Attended meetings with the Port of London Authority (PLA) to highlight air quality issues associated with cruise ships.
- Met with Balfour Beatty and the Environment Agency to discuss their plans for rebuilding the Thames Path at Trinity Hospital following the river wall works. We are currently trying to get the Council to agree to a much simpler redesign which might mitigate the anti-social behaviour problems suffered by residents of Trinity Hospital.
- Met with developers Lanbury London to discuss the pending planning application for the Universal Tyres site on Blackwall Lane.

Planning

Planning matters continue to be a large part of the business of EGRA though in 2018 nearly all the effort was concentrated on Phase 2 of Enderby Wharf which included the cruise ship terminal.

Bellway seem to have abandoned their local liaison meetings and there are problems with the current closure of the end of Banning Street, on-street parking by workers, construction traffic, noise and litter.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (Greenwich Neighbourhood Growth Fund) is a new local tax on developers and with the amount of new building here millions of pounds are scheduled to be paid to the Council. The system the Council has devised to pay out some of the revenue to local projects (as required by law) is cumbersome and difficult to access. EGRA, along with the Westcombe Society and the Greenwich Society, have lobbied Councillors since the scheme was set up to make an easier, fairer system - without success, so far. In the meantime, the Council continues to roll the money forward for this area and no benefit is seen in communities hard hit by years of construction work.

Another planning related issue which impacts on residents is enforcement. Planning decisions are frequently ignored by developers and the Council Planning Enforcement team are overwhelmed with appeals. Currently, among other abuses, we have:

- The Midpoint restaurant attempting to use the land at Anchor Iron Wharf which is designated public space as outdoor restaurant seating.
- Paul Rhodes bakery in Hoskins Street regularly breaching conditions of operation.
- River Gardens/Lovells Wharf failing to adhere to the public realm aspects of their planning permission.

Finally, EGRA members, led by Dan Brown, are working hard to try to make the Vanbrugh Tavern into an Asset of Community Value (ACV) in order to prevent the garden area being redeveloped for housing.

Licensing

Monique has worked tirelessly on the many licensing applications and amendments which have come up:

- The Cutty Sark pub has new licensing hours following complaints from residents.
- The Taproom was turned down for the outside licensing hours it wanted in River Gardens and has withdrawn.
- The new Young's pub at Enderby House has been granted longer hours than any of the existing riverfront pubs and we will see how residents in Enderby Wharf find that.

Traffic and Transport

Traffic and transport has taken a back seat in 2018. The impending opening of Ikea, the full occupation of the new Mary Magdalene School by September 2019, the current consultation on improving Greenwich Town Centre and closing some of the cross routes to Blackheath in West Greenwich and the fate of Silvertown Tunnel mean that this will loom large this year.

There is also likely to be even more pressure on bus services when the 180 is rerouted to accommodate Crossrail and as new riverside developments are occupied. We would like to set up a sub-group to tackle these issues, preferably made up of cyclists, car drivers, public transport users and pedestrians in order to get a broad perspective. All volunteers would be welcomed.

Future Projects

Along with transport, we would like to ensure that cruise ship air pollution is taken seriously at the Greenwich Ship Tier off New Capital Quay. There will still be plenty of scope for greening projects and we would like to assist resident groups in applying for street trees and taking over small areas of derelict or unused land. The Trafalgar Road pocket parks will also incorporate planters for community use which could be a challenge.

We may also need to think about applying for Greenwich Growth Fund money to improve our environment here - where the development is actually taking place. The lack of playspace and open space is a constant complaint and we need to think about how to use the available resources.