

## **EGRA Annual Report for 2019**

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**

Chair: Patrick Ives. The rest of the Committee are: Louise Fletcher (Hon. Secretary), Fiona Machen Harrison (Treasurer) Monique Tomlinson, Sheila Keeble, Ilsa Pole, and Dan Brown.

Huge thanks to Laura Eyres who ran the No Toxic Cruise Port campaign and Kate Joeekes, former Treasurer and Membership Secretary, who are stepping down for personal reasons.

**Financial Report** - will be available at the AGM on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at 19.30 at the Vanbrugh Tavern, Colomb Street.

### **Greening Projects**

One of our main EGRA enthusiasms is adding some green to Greenwich. The on-going projects are:

- Christchurch School Community Garden (CSCG) - comprises a flower and vegetable garden, beehives, greenhouse and Outdoor Classroom/Meeting hub. A number of community weekend events are held during the year and the garden is open from 10.30 - 15.00 every Friday - volunteers and visitors always welcome.
- Woodland Walk trees - the gabion planters have proved to be challenging to keep watered in the summer so we are in the process of replacing the mature trees with more drought-tolerant species.
- Barriers on Trafalgar Road - these seem to be surviving despite being moved during the Trafalgar Road works and people's desire to use them as rubbish bins. The newly planted area in front of the Church is doing well and has provided a very colourful display.
- Thames Path - EGRA ran out of time to organise a traditional Thames Path clean-up but we have added some new shrubs and bulbs during the year. We were delighted to finally get the fence line at the new Magazine venue moved back to its correct position. The fence had been moved onto the cycleway making it unusable and years of pressure by EGRA and local cyclists to restore the correct boundary finally paid off.
- The new street trees arrived in Bellot Street and Dinsdale Road at the beginning of 2019 and all bar one (replaced by RBG) have thrived. We would like to make the street tree process a lot more straightforward with an expectation that all streets will have trees. The current RBG process requiring a petition and many council meetings is not fit for purpose in many streets with transitory populations and blocks of inaccessible flats.
- Pocket Parks on Trafalgar Road - EGRA members have attended all the consultation sessions through 2019 but the outcomes remain unresolved. At time of writing, there is no planting in any of the areas and there has been considerable loss of original planting in Mell Street. There seems to have been no requirement for RBG to demonstrate how these parklets will improve air quality although this was the basis on which the £5 million was awarded by The Mayor of London's Low Emission Neighbourhood Fund.
- Blackwall Lane Trees - In contrast, a quick, cheap and effective improvement outside Christchurch Primary School provided eight new street trees underplanted with meadow

grass as well as a Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme which provides a water reservoir for the Community Garden. A chance meeting with a Council Officer and a couple of small funding pots resulted in a attractive barrier installed in under three months for around £15,000.

## **Meetings**

The Executive Committee aim to meet once every six weeks and we try to have four public meetings a year. In addition, EGRA members have:

- Attended numerous Council meetings including Planning, Licensing, Scrutiny Committee and asked questions at full Council Meetings.
- Joined The London Forum - an inspiring collection of community groups from across London. Lots of fantastic ideas and practical projects. If you are interested in attending, check their website. Meetings are early evening at Cowcross Street, close to Farringdon Station (Thameslink).
- Attended RBG Consultations on the Pocket Parks and Town Centre improvements.
- Went to all the Port of London Authority (PLA) public meetings and the PLA Conference on Greening Inland Shipping. This conference had contributors from Europe who are actually doing something about shipping emissions.
- Met with Balfour Beatty over the rebuild of the Thames Path at Trinity Hospital but completely failed to persuade the Council to consider a much simpler redesign of the site to deal with anti-social behaviour issues and conflict between pedestrians and cyclists. Maintenance of the rebuilt beds and grass has subsequently been non-existent and the area looks terrible.
- Ran a seminar group session for Tourism Management students at the University of Greenwich about the problems of cruise ships.
- Met officials from the Department of Transport responsible for the Clean Maritime Plan to discuss air quality issues from Thames shipping.

## **Partnerships with other Groups**

- Attended Planning Appeal to the Mayor of London in support of Charlton Together over the Rockwell Development.
- Attended part of the Planning Inquiry on the Meyer Homes tower in Woolwich.
- 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 Group to discuss development issues along the riverside.
- Went to Hull to meet residents and businesses campaigning against a proposed Cruise Liner Terminal there.

## **Planning**

- UEFA FanZone in Greenwich Park - made substantial objections to this proposal.

- Morden Wharf - Sivyer - This is another potentially precedent setting application requiring a wharf 'flip' and removal of willow trees along the Thames Path. There have been lots of objections and it has yet to go to Planning Committee.
- Morden Wharf - U+I development - This major development has had a couple of public consultations and EGRA has additionally met the developers along with other local groups. This has yet to go to planning and no firm timeline is in place.
- 87 Blackwall Lane - This 27 unit block beside Rothbury Hall got planning permission in one of the worst examples of lack of local knowledge at a planning meeting. Officers did not know how far the site was from public transport. Councillors were only concerned about parking (none) and changed the brick colour on a whim during the meeting.
- Silvertown Tunnel - and associated work sites at North Greenwich. EGRA is very concerned that this will also necessitate the removal of trees - 19 mature trees from the carpark and along Millennium Way.
- Gasometer - this is currently being demolished despite attempts to get it listed. Once it has gone, there will be no visible reminder that the Peninsula was once the largest gasworks in Europe.
- Knight Dragon Masterplan - Each new iteration of the Knight Dragon plan has denser, taller buildings and less open space. However, there are currently no new buildings planned for construction once the Design District is finished this year.
- Ecology Park - neighbouring application causing overshadowing.

### **Asset of Community Value**

Finally, EGRA members Dan Brown and Tom Stanworth worked incredibly hard to submit a successful nomination to the Council for The Vanbrugh public house to be added to it's list of Assets of Community Value (ACV). This is part of wider efforts to help ensure the pub remains part of local life in light of development proposals from the pub's freeholder Hamna Wakaf Ltd. to build a house on the pub's outdoor space. ACV status is a marker that the uses of a property further the social wellbeing of the local community and allows additional time (six months) for the local community to arrange a bid to acquire the property should the owner put it on the market. Although the ACV listing was initially granted in August, it was immediately challenged by the pub's freeholder and subsequently overturned in December by a Council officer who wasn't involved in the original decision.

On the plus side, the third planning application to build a house on the pub's outdoor space was rejected by Planning in January. Dan and Tom played a key role in galvanising local opposition to the application which received 379 objections.

You can read a more detailed write up on our website [here](#)

### **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**

- Silvertown Tunnel - The big news, of course, was the signing of the Silvertown Tunnel contract by Sadiq Khan in December 2019. The impact of the construction phase, let alone the tunnel itself, will have serious implications for this area. There is no news yet on the construction timetable. EGRA has been working with StopSilvertownTnl cross party coalition to try to raise awareness of the Tunnel, particularly on the Peninsula where few residents seem to have any idea of what is to come.
- Crossrail - now seems to be some two years away and the Jubilee Line will have to take up most of the proposed growth. The bus route alterations are temporarily in abeyance.
- Greenwich Town Centre gyratory removal project and the Hills and Vales scheme to close some of the West Greenwich cross routes to Blackheath both seem to have disappeared for now.
- Park Vista has been closed at the junction with Maze Hill following lobbying from EGRA and local residents concerned at the amount of illegal and dangerous turning during busy times.

### **Future Projects**

- Renewed campaign to stop cruise ships mooring at New Capital Quay
- More greening projects - especially quick and cheap fixes as on Blackwall Lane
- Better playspace - especially for older children who currently have nothing
- Improved public realm on the Thames Path
- Ways to use Greenwich Neighbourhood Growth Fund in this area