

## Dear readers,

Welcome to the last newsletter before our AGM, where a new Chair will be elected to take the DBA forward into 2019. Who'd have thought it, when this time last year, we feared the DBA was on its last gasp. But people rose to the challenge and one great achievement of 2018's committee was the Party in the Park. It made a fabulous £1950 profit – over £100 more than in 2017.

Now we've got the Christmas Fair to look forward to on 1 December. We'll be donating this year's profits to The Crib Youth Project, which does wonderful work helping local children develop their talents. In 2019, keep your eyes peeled for a children's book event, another ever-popular tabletop sale and next summer's Party in the Park. Now sit back and enjoy another full-to-bursting newsletter.

*Hilary Mandleberg*

## De Beauvoir Primary School

**If you've got a child who'll be starting primary school in September 2019 – and even if you haven't! – you'll be interested in how well De Beauvoir Primary School is doing. Headteacher Rebecca Mackenzie tells us the many reasons she's puffed up with pride about her children and staff.**

We at De Beauvoir Primary School are very proud of our improved assessment results this

year. Provisional DfE figures indicate that Year 6 have exceeded the 2018 national averages for reading, writing, grammar and the combined score for reading, writing and mathematics. Key Stage 1 results are in line with national results for 2017 (2018's are not yet released) and show excellent progress from pupils' Early Years results. Year 1 Phonics results **(continued on p9)**

## Diary dates

**AGM, 9 October 7:30pm, St Peter's Crypt** Join us for our AGM, have a say about who will represent you on your 2018 / 2019 DBA committee and hear a roundup of what the committee has been doing this year. Then stay on to hear renowned local artist Cedric Christie (he of Cedric's Balls in St Peters Church) talk about how he loves watching how things change, including our neighbourhood, how change can have a double meaning: sometimes good, sometimes not so good. You're sure to leave feeling engaged and fired up. We'll be running a bar as usual.

**DBA Christmas Fair, 1 December 11:00am–5:00pm, St Peter's Crypt** A terrific Christmas Fair beckons again. Now a regular De Beauvoir fixture, this is where you can get all your Christmas presents under one (nearby) roof and meet friends and neighbours over a cup of tea, a glass of mulled wine and some tasty nosh. There will be 30 or so stalls selling Christmas cards, housewares, pet treats, garden must-haves, toys and games, 'made in De Beauvoir' specials, and a host of other lovely things. Be sure to keep it local. Do your Christmas shopping in the Crypt.

# Another hostel for the homeless



***Most of us in De Beauvoir are lucky enough to have a place to call home. But that's not true of everyone. Dan Turner brings us up to date with the latest about a proposed new hostel for the homeless.***

In mid-May the news broke, albeit under the radar, that a huge new hostel for homeless people was being proposed for the vacant triangular plot of land sandwiched between Enfield Road, St Peter's Way and Kingsland Road on the edge of De Beauvoir. Fast forward four months and the planning consultants – Nicholas Taylor Associates – have submitted an official application to Hackney Council on behalf of the landowners to get the green light for the project. If it is built out, the development will include 292 rooms for homeless people across a combination of six-, eight- and 11-storey buildings.

The few local residents that already know about the

proposed scheme are conflicted. On the one hand they're cognisant of the serious housing crisis in Hackney and understand that people need places to live. And the statistics indicate that Hackney really is in dire straits. A comprehensive review published at the end of last year by Shelter found Hackney to be the tenth worst borough for homelessness in the UK, and a recent article in the Hackney Gazette revealed that there were 12,600 people on the council's housing waiting list.

On the other hand, those same local residents have serious concerns about the potential impact the hostel will have on the community. They're concerned about the strain it will put on local services, anti-social behaviour problems, living conditions in neighbouring hostels, and the size and density of the proposed development. If it goes ahead the new hostel will house anywhere between 600 and 800 people, making it one of the biggest in London. When you consider that there are already two hostels providing temporary accommodation for the homeless adjacent to the site, it is easy to understand their anxiety.

# in De Beauvoir?

More and more hostels have sprung up across London in recent years as local authorities struggle to cope with the housing crisis and get people off the streets, and they're spending more and more on them. In 2011 / 2012 Hackney spent £9.5 million on temporary accommodation. By 2017 that figure had risen to £41 million. And the eye-watering figures don't stop there. The average rental price for a hostel room in Hackney is £266 per week, and in most cases the money goes straight into the pockets of the private companies that own them.

While hostels are intended as a stopgap solution for the homeless (the idea being that people stay for a limited time before moving into social housing) it rarely works out this way. Many residents end up staying in small, cramped hostel rooms for many years and there are numerous reasons for this. Firstly, inner London councils have a scarcity of affordable housing stock, and homes and flats rarely become available to new tenants. This means that hostel residents tend to be offered social housing accommodation on the periphery of the city or beyond, which they turn down. And it follows: if you've lived in Hackney your whole life, why would you want to move to a council house in Milton Keynes?

Secondly, there is evidence to suggest that underhand financial tactics employed by hostel proprietors hamstring residents. Upon moving into hostels, residents are told they have to pay a small service charge to contribute to the upkeep of the communal areas. What they're not told is that they're often liable for council tax too, but because they are destitute, they can't pay it and quickly find themselves in arrears. They are not eligible to be re-homed until they've cleared their debts, hence they get stuck in the system. So what of the site for the new hostel, and why has it been left empty for so long? Back in 2009, planning permission was granted to the landowners, Blue Chip Trading Ltd, allowing for construction of a 290-room hotel. Preparatory works started in 2010 but the development was never completed. From a public perspective all was quiet until May of this year, when Nicholas Taylor Associates wrote to a handful of local residents at short notice informing them of the new plans, and inviting them to attend an initial consultation to review early materials. At the consultation, the scheme architects unveiled site drawings and Hackney housing reps were on hand to take questions, but the meeting will be remembered for the vociferous complaints made by neighbours of the St Peter's hostel. They were up in arms at the plans and listed numerous problems caused by the hostel residents that were making their

lives a misery. Blue Chip Trading Ltd, through property agent Finefair, has a longstanding relationship with Hackney Council and they have collaborated on two other hostel projects in De Beauvoir in recent years. The Metropolitan hostel at 359 Kingsland Road is housed in the listed Metropolitan Hospital building and contains 115 rooms, while the St Peter's hostel behind it has 42 rooms. Rooms at both hostels are contracted to Hackney Council via Finefair. It is fair to say that the Metro – as residents call it – and the St Peter's hostel have been beset by problems since they opened. In 2006 a mentally ill man stabbed a young French student to death outside her room on the fourth floor at the Metropolitan. Currently, there is a plethora of serious problems across both sites. Testimonials from Metro residents we spoke to when researching this article spoke of bed bug infestations, filthy mattresses, leaking ceilings, freezing room temperatures, trash and littering in the hallways, dog faeces in stairwells, drunks loitering outside rooms and a lack of building maintenance, to list just a few issues. De Beauvoir Ward Councillors Polly Billington and James Peters have been to see residents and went on the record to say 'we are very concerned with the hostel conditions and are keen to collect more evidence so we can influence the council on this matter'.

Not surprisingly, the local and national media have picked up on the hostel issue and in March this year the Hackney Gazette launched its 'Hidden Homeless' campaign to highlight the borough's growing homelessness crisis. Many of the articles reported on poor conditions in hostels and the series makes for pretty terrifying reading – in one exposé, journalist Emma Youle wrote about 'psychotic residents banging on doors in the middle of the night, drug dealing, prostitution and excrement in corridors'. In another piece she explains how, across a period of six years, Hackney police were called out to three hostels on more than 3000 separate occasions. Around the same time, watchdog Healthwatch Hackney and City & Hackney Mind published an equally damning report after interviewing single homeless people and mental health advocates across the borough. As well as bed bug and cockroach infestations, dead vermin and general squalid conditions, it found that 'pressure cooker' hostel conditions were increasing mental health issues for those that live in them.

When all is considered, it doesn't look very good at all, so where does the council stand on the issue? Mayor Phillip Glanville defends Hackney's strategy to repurpose existing buildings as hostels, or build new

*(continued...)*

ones, but blames the government housing policy in a wider sense. When quizzed by Emma Youle he said 'You are just funnelling money into the hands of private landlords when you could actually be genuinely solving the housing crisis by building high-quality, affordable homes. Costs continue to rise and you have the sense the government isn't listening.'

While Glanville seems keen to build more social housing, hostels for the homeless do get people off the streets – so in a sense they work for the council. But they also work for the landowners and property agents. Blue Chip Trading Ltd could have built a 290-room hotel on the site but those rooms wouldn't have been filled 365 days of the year. With a hostel they have no such worries. All of the rooms will be filled and Hackney Council will foot the bill, which at £266 per room equates to over £4 million per year. The egregious part is that Finefair is crudely explicit on its website about the profitability of hostels and the returns they can generate for landowners.

As things stand at the time of writing (20 August), we still don't know exactly what type of homeless people the new hostel will be for, and hopefully this information

will come to light in the coming weeks. Just prior to submission of this article, the case file went live on the council's planning portal and a number of documents including floor plans, indicative drawings and feasibility reports became available to view. What we know for sure is that Blue Chip Trading Ltd wants to erect a 292-room hostel at 337–359 Kingsland Road comprising a mixture of double / disabled access rooms, triples and family rooms, and at ground and lower floors, the buildings will provide a number of communal lounges for residents. The hostel will operate as car free and there will be 110 cycle stands on site.

Writing as a local resident, it is difficult to be nonpartisan, particularly when there are clearly so many problems with temporary hostels. But you just can't help thinking the site could be better utilised. Surely we need more social housing, not another hostel?

The case file can be found at [www.hackney.gov.uk/planning](http://www.hackney.gov.uk/planning) (number 2018/2783).

## Hackney's late night licensing

**Changes to local licensing laws don't normally make the national news, but that's exactly what happened in July, when Hackney councillors voted to push through strict new regulations on pubs, clubs and bars in the borough. Dan Turner views the firing line from a safe distance.**

BBC News, The Guardian and NME all carried stories weighing up the pros and cons of Hackney's legislative changes, which will see 'core curfews' of midnight at weekends and 11pm during the week imposed on all new venues. Existing venues, with existing licences, don't have to adhere to the new laws. Unsurprisingly, those opposed to the changes were vociferous, with many – including Street Food impresario Jonathan Downey and food writer Giles Coren – insisting the changes would kill the night-time economy, and that they flew in the face of everything Hackney stands for as a progressive,

diverse and entrepreneurial conurbation. And they seemed to have public opinion on their side. Of the 680 respondents in a consultation, 73 per cent were against.

Downey emerged as the self-appointed figurehead of the opposition on social media, and Hackney Mayor Philip Glanville was pilloried. London Mayor Sadiq Khan was also targeted, as was the Greater London Authority's Night Czar Amy Lamé. Lamé, officially appointed in 2016 as an advocate for London as a 24-hour city, pointed out that local authorities are responsible for licensing restrictions as she tried to distance herself from the debate. It all got a bit ugly.

So why did Hackney Council approve the new laws? Well, Glanville was keen to defend the council's position and he put across a cogent argument in The Guardian on 27 July. He said, 'We're trying to strike a balance between a growing night-time economy, the interests of the residents who live nearby and the impact on our increasingly stretched public services.' In terms of the long-term impact, only time will tell ...

## 10 beer and food combos

**Thanks to Emma Middleton for this great guide to 10 local(ish) beers and food combo ideas. Most of the beers were purchased from the fairly recently opened Beer+Burger on Kingsland Road, which has an excellent selection and seriously delicious burgers.**

**Beer 1: Push Eject (IPA, 6.5%), Hackney Brewery Ltd**  
At 6.5% there's nothing mild about this IPA. It doesn't have the bitter hopiness you might expect in something so strong, but instead benefits from fruity and tropical flavours. This beer is suitable for vegans, but would also be delicious with a Hawaiian pizza, whose carbs will soak up the alcohol.

Available at Beer+Burger (464, Kingsland Road, E8 4AE)

**Beer 2: Work Part 1 (Ale, 5.4%), Forest Road Brewing**  
This beer smells a bit like kale, but has a very delicious, very unique biscuit flavour. It would go really nicely with a spinach and ricotta pie, or combined with a Turkish spinach and feta gozleme, best purchased from the lady on Ridley Road market on a Saturday.

Available at Beer+Burger (464, Kingsland Road, E8 4AE)

**Beer 3: Brick Field Brown (Brown Ale, 5.4%), The Five Points Brewing Co**  
Smells like chocolate with a coffee flavour, maybe to be drunk as a breakfast beer as an alternative to coffee. Would be nice with a chocolatey dessert, but also would work as the beer in a chocolate-and-ale cake.

Available at Beer+Burger (464, Kingsland Road, E8 4AE)

**Beer 4: Posh Lager (Lager, 4.1%), Forest Road Brewing Co**  
Light like a lager but also warm and comforting. A great winter lager to be drunk the moment you walk through the front door after a long day. Goes well with popcorn and a movie. Make popcorn by lightly frying, in a large saucepan, the corn kernels with chilli flakes, sugar, salt and oil, then cover and wait for the popping to start.

Available at Beer+Burger (464, Kingsland Road, E8 4AE)

**Beers 5, 6 & 7: Beyond the Pale (Pale Ale, 5%) / Paxton IPA (IPA, 4.2%) / London Bohemian Lager (Lager, 5.5%), The London Beer Factory**  
Not great. The lager is the most drinkable from this brewery, but all three are a bit soapy. Paxton IPA tastes like paracetamol, so it may or may not ease a headache. These all come in a can, labelled 'take your top off', where the whole top of the can be removed.

Available (if you still want to try after this review) at Tesco

**Beer 8: Quadrant Oatmeal Stout (Oatmeal Stout, 5.8%), East London Brewing Co**  
It tastes creamy and fruity. Would combine well with pork-and-apple sausages and mash. Make your own naked sausages with minced pork meat and whatever filling you like. You can also get the synthetic casing from a butcher and push the sausage meat in with the end of a wooden spoon. Messy but great fun!

Available at Loco (54c Downham Road, N1 5AS)

**Beer 9: Smog Rocket (Smoked Porter, 5.4%), Beavertown Brewery**  
We would be hard pushed to leave out a beer from this brewery whose namesake is inspired by De Beauvoir Town. It's a little different than most porters (in a good way). Dark and chocolatey and not too heavy. Designed for wimpy beer drinkers like myself. Would be delicious with a bacon butty, maybe made with homemade bacon.

Smoke your own bacon with a whole pork belly. Remove the skin, rub with salt and sugar, then put in a sandwich bag and leave in the fridge, turning it each day for five days. Wash off and slice, and there's your bacon.

Available at Beer+Burger (464, Kingsland Road, E8 4AE)

**Beer 10: King of Hearts (Blonde, 4.5%) Wild Card Brewery**  
Hugely refreshing, tastes very fruity. And best of all, made by a Lady Brew Master, so obviously far more sophisticated. Goes brilliantly with passion fruit. Either add purée directly to the blonde or combine with a passion fruit and mango pavlova or Eton mess, depending on the success of your meringue!

Available at Tesco



# Shoreditch 10K

**George Dennison woke one day with a mid-life crisis. Here he reveals how he dealt with it and got from Shoreditch to Dakar in one easy hop.**

About three years ago I realised that if I wanted to keep racing off-road motorbikes, I was going to have to do some exercise. Fifty was looming and I had a big desert race to Dakar coming up at the beginning of 2016.

The mid-life crisis is a wonderful thing, isn't it? This was mine.

I quickly worked out that the most time-efficient exercise for me was running. I hadn't run for years and frankly, I hated it and everyone that did it. I like racing, whether it's on a motorbike, a bike, on foot or in a car. I like the spirit of competition. But doing a sport without any element of competition isn't the same. So how was I going to persuade myself to take to the streets and keep my motorbike racing going for a few years more?

It had to be running so, like many people before me, I started by doing a few races. The first was the Hackney Half Marathon in 2015. Pulling on my running shoes at six o'clock at night after a long day's work was a lot easier when I knew I had to try and beat my mate in a few weeks time. Without that sort of incentive, the sofa and TV would have been very alluring.

Once I'd run the Hackney Half Marathon, I saw the fun in running. I loved the very positive vibe of the spectators and the runners – so much so, that I've run the Hackney Half Marathon every year since.

## Proposed residential infills for De Beauvoir Estate

**Lawrence Windle of the De Beauvoir Tenants and Residents Association (DBTRA) is not happy about the way things are being conducted to provide extra residential accommodation on De Beauvoir Estate. He explains why.**

Then last year, Adidas were heavily advertising a new series of 10K running races around London. The first was the Shoreditch 10K. It would start in Shoreditch Park and would run through the local area.

But when I looked at the route map, my immediate thought was: Shoreditch 10K my arse. That's the De Beauvoir 10K. It went past my shops and house, and along all the streets I've been tramping round for the past 30 years. How great to be able to walk out your front door in your running gear, stroll down to the start, beat your mate, then wander home while swallowing loads of free goodies.

We all had to wear the free Adidas race day t-shirts with our number printed on, and Olympian Tom Delany gave us the starting signal. Those really nice touches made the race feel pretty special. We zig-zagged along every street in De Beauvoir and round the square. It all goes a bit faster when you're familiar with the surroundings, and especially when the missus is standing by in the square with an energy gel for you. Bless her for getting up that early on a Sunday morning!

This year we're going to do it all again on 14 October and we're hoping that the weather will be as nice as last year.

If you live locally and fancy doing something healthy that makes you feel part of the area, I suggest you try it. You'll be home in time for a Sunday morning fry-up and who knows, the kids might even still be sleeping by the time you get back. At the time of writing, entries are still available. Just Google Shoreditch 10K.

Hackney Council are proposing to build four new residential blocks on De Beauvoir Estate: three on Downham Road and the fourth in between two tower blocks on the canal side of the estate. These plans were made with the minimum consultation. Have the residents on Downham Road been properly consulted? Has there been any discussion with...(continued on p9)

# From Lille to leopard spots



**Have you ever seen a striking figure in De Beauvoir riding her leopard-spotted bicycle and wondered who she is? Well, it's fitness instructor Myriam Oudina, and the leopard-spotted bike is to discourage would-be thieves. Kirsty Norman explains all.**

Myriam grew up in Lille and in 1989, decided to come to London 'for at least a year' to learn English, enjoy London's music scene, night life and open-minded people, and to give herself more opportunities for work and travel. Nearly 30 years later, she's still here, with her Italian partner Emiliano (also a fitness instructor), and has now been teaching fitness in the Crypt of St Peter's Church for the last six years. When Myriam first came to London, she was au pairing. She had always loved sport so she attended fitness classes, which she enjoyed so much that she studied to become an instructor. She took her first Exercise to Music qualification in 1998, which led on to qualifications in Anatomy, Physiology and Body Massage, and in Reflexology. More recently, Myriam has developed a special interest in older people and in those with medical conditions, so she's now also working 18 hours a week as a qualified GP Referral Instructor, doing assessments and running classes for cardiac rehabilitation and exercise after stroke. Myriam's very popular Pilates class in the Crypt is

attended by a very wide mixture of ages (her mellifluous French accent helps us through the hard work), but a while back it struck me that with Myriam's qualifications, we had an opportunity to do something more for De Beauvoir. As Myriam says, 'Exercise isn't only for young people. As we grow older it's actually more important to keep the body moving by doing regular exercise, to keep the mind sharp by perhaps trying to remember an exercise routine, and to improve coordination and balance. We live longer but it's important to live to the best of our capacities.'

So I asked myself, why not have an aerobics class for those of us who loved to move but had fallen behind in fitness, failed to buy any lycra for many a year, and dreaded the idea of classes full of beautiful 20-somethings? And so Myriam's unique-to-De Beauvoir class, Move4Health, was born. No pumping gym-style techno music, decent dance music and at least one Stones track per session. Myriam wants to reach out to anyone of any age who would otherwise be too self-conscious or self-critical, or who feels too uncoordinated: 'The aim in my classes is to give the people of the community the opportunity to exercise. Not everybody feels comfortable going to a gym or attending classes in a sports centre.' Move4Health is an unusual phenomenon and has led to (in my experience) an unusual amount of laughter and camaraderie for an aerobics class. And twice a year, in summer and around Christmas, we have a Pilates and Move4Health get-together, when everyone brings some food, and we eat, drink and are healthily merry.

Myriam plans to stay on in London. Work is extremely busy, and even she is exhausted by the weekend, which for her starts on Saturday afternoons after she's finished her personal training sessions. Brexit isn't spooking her, but she is philosophical about perhaps having to leave the UK. 'We'll wait and see.' She enjoys the sense of achievement in seeing people's fitness improving, and she loves teaching in De Beauvoir: 'Our classes are very friendly. I'd say the difference in De Beauvoir is that there's a sense of caring for everyone and appreciating everyone's effort.' The only effort that is definitely not appreciated is that of any bike thieves, but I'm sure Myriam would give them a run for their money.

**Classes run on Thursday (Pilates) and Friday (Move4Health) mornings: contact Myriam at [myriamreflexology@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:myriamreflexology@hotmail.co.uk)**



***What a waste that the market on Kingsland Road, known as The Waste, has been fully shut down for three years, but it has now re-opened and has a range of stalls selling second-hand, antique and vintage items. Becky Colls goes shopping and explains.***

I took a walk along the market's main drag and, had I not been pushing my bike with my daughter wriggling around on the back seat, there were plenty of items I would have bought that caught my eye.

For a start, there was a little table with two tiny chairs, just the right size for a pint-sized bum and her Pooh Bear to sit at. There was a lovely oil painting of a tree in spring, some art deco tiles, a foot pump, a bread bin, some funky scarves, a honey pot with a bee encased in the lid, a stall full of bright kids' clothes from the 1970s and 1980s (we were so cool then!), and some prints of the canal drawn by a local artist.

Then there were the things that didn't really appeal to me, but through no fault of their own, as they were all lovely in their own way – a bunch of vinyl records, some old, fully functioning tools with beautiful wooden handles, and a walking stick ... or perhaps that wasn't for sale?

The stall holders range from people who you would have found selling their wares at The Waste if you'd been shopping there 40 years ago, to new stall holders, who perhaps represent the most recent wave of residents to rock up on Kingsland Road in the last 10 years – young and hip, and with their own distinctive take on what makes vintage cool.

The market started in the 1880s, when a landowner gave permission to stall holders to trade their goods rent free. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was the place to go if you needed tools, spare parts, or the latest fashions. In its heyday, the market was a couple of stalls deep and there are plans for the current version of the Waste market to grow, but for now, the hope is the footfall will increase steadily as the summer holidays come to an end and normal life resumes in September.

It's nice to have a market that represents value for money, somewhere you can go and pick up a genuine bargain. Also, it feels good to reuse stuff rather than always buy new. It's the kind of place that the more you linger and look, the more you see and the more you buy. Which is ultimately what will make this attempt to bring back a community market a success. Now known as Kingsland Market, it's open every Saturday, 9am to 5pm. So get yourselves down there!!

## ***De Beauvoir Primary School***

**(continued from page 1)**... have exceeded those nationally for 2017 and Early Years data is in line with 2017 national results, showing fantastic progress from starting points at the beginning of Early Years.

This year we have developed the wider curriculum for 2018–19. Dedicated art and music rooms will ensure that a broad, balanced and inspiring curriculum complements our results in English and mathematics.

We have also developed an exciting range of trips and visits so that these support learning in the wider curriculum. The modernised school playground and Reception outdoor areas provide excellent spaces for pupils to learn and play, and interactive whiteboards in all classrooms have been replaced with state-of-the-art interactive panels.

Our Breakfast and After School Clubs enable working parents to access wrap-around care for children from 7:45am until 6:00pm. And this year, the After School Club offer has been developed to provide a wider range of engaging extra-curricular activities for pupils.

Ofsted reported that, pupils 'feel safe and are kept safe', and 'they enjoy coming to school. They enjoy the variety of trips and activities that the school organises for them,' and these are 'welcoming and friendly.' Pupils told inspectors that they 'feel that the school is safe and friendly' and 'free of bullying'.

**We warmly invite you to visit the school at a time that is convenient for you. Appointments can be booked by contacting the school office on 0207 2542517 or [admin@debeauvoir.hackney.sch.uk](mailto:admin@debeauvoir.hackney.sch.uk)**

## ***Proposed residential infills for De Beauvoir Estate***

**(continued from page 6)**... local residents about the impact there will be on the environment, with the noise, dust and lorries up and down Downham Road six days a week?

Considering the enormous developments already in construction surrounding De Beauvoir, plus the proposed Britannia Leisure Centre development, it is vital that there is a full consultation with all affected residents on any future building in the area. This has not happened.

The developments ignore the idea that the De Beauvoir Tenants and Residents Association (DBTRA) have pushed for, namely an estate master plan and a joined-up approach, 'to improve the whole estate for the good of residents and those in the local area'.

We recognise that there is a housing shortage and the DBTRA does not want to block the housing programme, but the proposed infills will only provide 30 per cent social housing. This is unacceptable.

The Council has set up a 'steering group' to liaise with residents and the DBTRA on the proposed plans drawn up by the newly appointed architects Henley Halebrown and Stephen Taylor.

The DBTRA initially joined the steering group to make sure it had a voice but it has decided that it will no longer support it as a group because it will appear that the DBTRA supports the development as it stands.

**If you want to find out more, contact the DBTRA via [debeauvoirstatetra@gmail.com](mailto:debeauvoirstatetra@gmail.com), or get in touch with your local councillors James Peters ([James.Peters@Hackney.gov.uk](mailto:James.Peters@Hackney.gov.uk)) or Polly Billington ([Polly.Billington@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:Polly.Billington@hackney.gov.uk)).**



# Encouraging biodiversity into our



Pond in a pot (photo courtesy of Spencer Viner of North Eleven [northeleven.co.uk])

***About half of London is green space and our private gardens are a quarter of this greenery. Even if not designed to be wildlife-friendly, gardens act as green corridors and ‘stepping stones’ that allow creatures to travel around the city to find food, a place to nest and a mate. Gideon Corby gets out of his deckchair to tell us how to make our gardens as wildlife-friendly as possible.***

The great advantage of making wildlife-friendly changes to a private garden is that there are a limited number of decision-makers involved. Unlike public spaces, which need complex and lengthy consultations before any change can occur, you can Just Do It.

The first thing to remember is not to fight against nature. Rather than clearing everything and starting from scratch, simply relax and repeat to yourself, ‘Don’t just do something, sit there’.

In the short term, about 10 minutes after you sit down in your green patch, the insects and birds that flew off when you approached will begin to return. Longer term, it will become apparent where the sun shines, where it’s shaded, where it’s dry or damp and what plants

thrive where through the seasons. Don’t feel lazy: this is crucial research into what is already thriving and can be enhanced, and it can also help in avoiding mistakes when you are planting or placing new features.

Every so often, to keep warm or stop pins and needles, you are permitted to get out of your deckchair and spread mulch or woodchip over any bare soil you notice. Getting to know the local tree surgeons who work on our street trees and chip the wood they remove can provide a source of free mulch: hard wood and non-diseased is best. Weeding and watering is dramatically reduced with a thick layer of woodchip. Just don’t pile it up next to tree trunks; instead leave a little gap. After the initial relaxation – I mean research! – has been carried out, planting can begin. Choose native vegetation and avoid fancy cultivars with double flowers; go for the ‘vulgar’ and wild types that have more open flowers and whose nectar is easier to drink.

Other plants to go for are those that provide berries and hips for the birds, such as hawthorn, rowan, elder, guelder rose, dog rose, honeysuckle, holly and ivy. Then there are those that provide seeds, such as teasels which are a magnet for goldfinches. Our native plants are also host to invertebrates – nettles are home to half of all the caterpillars in the UK – which in turn are eaten by insectivorous birds. Though sticking to native plants cuts back on your choice of leaf and flower colour, it does mean that more and more colourful wildlife will colonise

# gardens

your garden. Lovely though it is to watch birds come to bird-feeders, leaving them to forage in berry- and insect-rich foliage is better; bird-feeders encourage unnatural densities of bird visitors, which can increase the spread of disease through populations and between species.

As well as woodchip, larger pieces of wood dug deep into the ground, mimicking dead trees, encourage beetles and other detritivores. A loggery is best placed in a damp, shaded, less disturbed area of the garden – the place for species with longer life-cycles. Logs can be arranged artfully and used as features but neatness and tidiness are the enemies of biodiversity. Picking up clumps of dead leaves and wood reveals what rich habitats they are and blackbirds will soon be rummaging through for a meal.

Next to your loggery, have a compost heap providing forage and shelter to yet more species. Two compost heaps are even better: one being filled up, while the other is left to rot down. If you have space, or if a wall or fence needs replacing, then consider planting a hedge. Make one from native species and ideally, with a mixture of species for varied interest. This will recreate a woodland edge habitat, which, having both sunlight and trees around, will encourage a particularly high density of species including butterflies and birds.

Perhaps the most important habitat you can introduce to your garden is water, in the shape of a pond. Even a bucket pond or old sink will do the trick. (Look online where you’ll find plenty of advice about making these.) Crucially, there shouldn’t be any fish! Midges will appear first but other invertebrates, like dragonfly and damselfly larvae, will colonise once they notice this food source. Then frogs, toads and newts will arrive to feed off your slugs and snails. If you have, or make, CD-sized holes



A mint moth; pretty and attractive to bats (photo courtesy of Esther Adelman)



A toad in the garden (photo courtesy of Esther Adelman)

in your fence, then hedgehogs can find their way in to feast on your pesky molluscs, too. Swifts and bats are other potential visitors that will eat an astonishing number of midges, moths and other insects. Encourage them by putting up roosts, being sure to check online for the correct aspect and height. In time, a balance will be established in your garden as the complexity of species and their interactions increases, and no single species will run amok. Each year different species may be favoured due to a multitude of variables. Once you’ve encouraged all these wildlife visitors, you won’t need any herbicides, fungicides or pesticides in your garden. But you will need something to protect the wildlife from cats and the RSPB recommend a CatWatch device. Though we may love our cats, they aren’t native to the UK. It seems crazy now, but blackbirds and other species evolved to fledge on the ground, since, at the time, their biggest threats were other birds. Now they’ve got cats to contend with, too. Another point to consider is that honey bees are not ‘wildlife’: emerging evidence indicates that the 50,000 bees in each hive can compete with our native bumble and solitary bees for forage, especially in London where we have the highest density of hives in the country.

Finally, children are more likely to be lured away from their screens by a garden that is rich in wildlife than by a formal garden. That’s as good a reason as any to encourage biodiversity in your garden, isn’t it?

**Please support our project to create a green corridor bringing wildlife from the Lea Valley along the Regent’s Canal and into De Beauvoir. Just search online for ‘Regents Canal Living Waterway’ to find out more.**



## refill, reuse, return

Weino BIB taproom and deli specialises in refill and reuse of packaging for an eclectic range of produce. Our main focus is 30 wines on tap to take home or enjoy in-house, and to buy in bulk or refill. Our other taps include unhomogenised milk, Cretan co-operative olive oil, local craft beer and even gin. The deli has a range of farm and artisanal goods, including a large selection of cheese, charcuterie and pantry items.

Our next step is working towards a range of goods made in-house as we try to lower our carbon footprint and therefore yours. From butter and ferments through to cured meats and a range of soft drinks, we will be continually growing our offerings as we grow our business.



advertisement

**Bag-in-box, or BIB can lower the carbon footprint of wine by up to 80%, while lowering the cost by up to 30%. This format allows smaller organic farmers to compete on price with larger producers.**



BIB Taproom, a pop up bag-in-box wine bar, opened in Dalston in November 2015. The idea was to showcase sustainably packaged wine and allow everyone access to organic and natural wines for everyday drinking. Three pop-ups later, the concept was expanded to encompass retail, allowing the wines to be enjoyed at home. Two years on, Weiner BIB has opened on the site of the old Polish deli on Balls Pond Road.

*'It is our mission to do all we can to challenge the landscape of commodities, showcasing how we can effectively change the way we consume, while never compromising on quality. Produce on tap allows us to create a direct form of recycling. I'm very excited about our future development plans to produce goods in-house. We will be learning and growing our offering so we can make sustainable choices even easier.'*

Kirsty Tinkler (owner)

Weino BIB taproom & deli  
39 Balls Pond Road, N1 4BW

[www.weinobib.co.uk](http://www.weinobib.co.uk)