

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

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Deal rushed through for 5 more years of mega music events in Finsbury Park

Katie Dawson

Haringey Council has just rushed through the signing of another 5-year deal with Live Nation/Festival Republic to stage massive music events in Finsbury Park from 2028-2032.

Most of the 38 local community groups – including HCA - that are usually consulted about any changes to licensed events in the park knew nothing about this and so were effectively excluded from having any say on the new deal. Some had not been contacted at all, despite Haringey Council’s claims to the contrary. While others subsequently



found emails in Junk folders - these having been sent out from a ‘no-reply’ email address, rather than an official council one, and having a subject line encouraging recipients to click on an unfamiliar app. Such communication (or lack of it) seemed designed to slip under the radar and indeed Haringey Council subsequently confirmed, somewhat gleefully, that they had received ‘no comments or objections from any of the 38 local groups’. Given that there is usually a very high response rate to consultations about major events from among these community groups, this should surely have raised alarm bells with at least some members or officers at Haringey. But they were apparently happy to proceed with the signing.

The Friends of Finsbury Park, who first sounded the alarm over this semi-clandestine deal, were even more astonished to find out that the signing took place just before the start of ‘purdah’ - the period of

about 6 weeks before an election when no major planning decisions can be made to avoid binding the hands of the next administration.

Even though the current contract with Live Nation covers this year’s and next year’s events, this new deal locks the next TWO councils in to permitting huge commercial events in Finsbury Park throughout every summer until 2032. Any new council wanting to amend the terms of this contract will likely face severe financial penalties if they are allowed to change it at all.

Live music in parks, if done properly, can be a very positive thing enjoyed by many, but imposing mega-events on the scale of those organised by Live Nation without any meaningful consultation with local residents is undemocratic and high-handed. And to do so just before an election when the current administration may lose its grip on the borough seems underhand and morally questionable.



STOP PRESS

We recently sent you an email alerting you to June 6th as the date of HCA’s Annual General Meeting. We have since learned that there will be an Emirates Concert on that evening, which means that the Ecology Centre will be closed.

We are planning to defer the AGM till after the summer – and will be back to you with a new date nearer the time.

The Highbury Ward Partnership Meeting held on 17 March 2026, 6.00pm Islington Town Hall

Sarah Potter and Rachel Neeve

Summary The meeting aimed to update residents and stakeholders on ongoing developments, with a focus on the Highbury Fields buildings, climate action, transport issues, and the clocktower refurbishment. It was acknowledged that the meeting had taken place at too little notice and that it would be followed up by a councillor advice surgery on 28 March.

Highbury Fields Buildings Plans involve creating an integrated community space with indoor and outdoor seating, a café, and a servery, with demolition of the bandstand starting on 19 March. The café will have four toilets and include a flexible food offer, with minimal disruption to green space. There will also be a park keeper’s office. The project is aiming for completion by June 2027, with community consultation planned post-election. Funding is secured, and the design has been redefined more modestly.

Climate Action Plan Simon Bishop outlined progress on Islington’s climate goals, including electrification of council vehicles, green skills training, building decarbonization, and community projects like food recycling, green space maintenance, and business resilience. Questions addressed local initiatives supporting climate goals, such as composting schemes, air quality concerns related to Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs), and barriers to solar panel installation, especially in conservation areas. The importance of a community-led climate plan was emphasized. Challenges include securing government funding and technical hurdles in retrofitting buildings.

Liveable Neighbourhoods Cllr Hamdache reported no area-wide

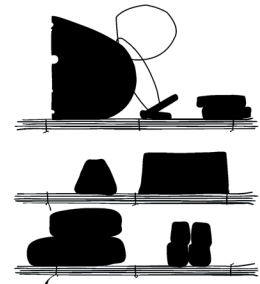
plans yet for Highbury New Park, pending review of the Highbury Grove/St Paul’s Road junction, which involve complex traffic modelling and negotiations with TfL.

Thames Water Updates Thames Water plans to carry out essential mains replacement on Highbury Grove in the summer of 2026, with a 15-week road closure between Baalbec Road and Kelvin Road. There will be a shuttle bus between Christchurch and Finsbury Park, but it is not yet clear what route the 4 and 19 buses will take. The council highlighted the need for better communication, coordination with TfL on bus diversions, parking, and access, and expressed concern over delays and the impact on residents. Thames Water is expected to attend a future meeting, with the community, to discuss these issues.

Church Path Efforts are underway to improve safety along Church Path through small interventions, including new markings and clearer signage, to be implemented by May. Discussions included concerns about illegal e-bikes, safety at crossings, and the need for better regulation and enforcement, with police involvement anticipated.

Clocktower Refurbishment plans for the clocktower were approved, with restoration scheduled for summer, including a new chime. The structure will be transported to Derby for refurbishment.

Closing Cllr Hamdache thanked participants, encouraged ongoing feedback, and outlined actions, including further engagement on the Highbury Fields café and building project, and addressing community concerns raised during the meeting.



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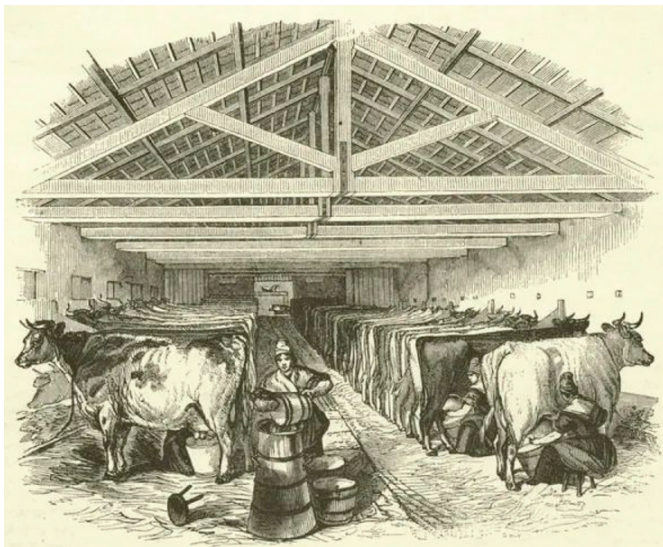
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‘The Largest Dairy in the Kingdom’: Laycock’s Dairy

Gill Shepherd (edited from ‘Historic London Tours’)

Laycock Green, just around the corner from bustling Highbury Corner is today an area of tranquil greenery lying to the north of Laycock Street. This road (known two hundred years ago as Barnsbury Lane) ran through the middle of the Laycock Dairy estate to the north and south of it.

Up until the nineteenth century, Islington was largely farmland and pastures, with only a few small dwellings and dirt-track roads. From the sixteenth century, it had been known as “Cow Town,” “the place where groweth creame.”



Richard Laycock was born in Islington in 1771, the son of goose farmers and Welsh cattle herders. His stepfather’s family - the Sebbon family - owned huge swathes of land in Islington. At the age of just twenty-three Richard took over the running of the enormous estate, which spanned some five-hundred acres in size. Drovers on their way to Smithfield Market, travelling from as far afield as Scotland, would rest their cattle in Laycock’s ‘layers,’ (cattle stables) fattening them up again after their long and arduous journey.



The entrance to Laycock’s Dairy and Cattle Layers

At the same time, Laycock maintained his own large herd of 700 dairy cows, milked at 3.00am and again at noon for the London market, by teams of Welsh milkmaids. The milkmaids had it almost as tough as the cows. They worked in all weathers, and once their milk churns were full, they would carry them on yokes - weighing up to one-hundred pounds - the two or three miles into the City to be sold to retailers.

There were frequently issues with the quality of milk in London. Often retailers would use the ‘Black Cow’ - a nickname for the black water pump in their storeroom - to dilute the milk; others would use water from horse troughs, or open streams near to where the cows had been grazing.

Laycock seems to have been a hard employer, and when he died, a very wealthy man in 1834, he left no money for charity or philanthropy. The dairy was auctioned off the year after Laycock’s death and continued operating until 1914, though steadily losing land to the encroachment of the railway and new buildings, and coming into competition with the Caledonian Market’s own milking amenities. Only the names - Laycock Street and Laycock Green - remain to remind us of this earlier Islington.

Road-related emergencies

Occasionally, road emergencies such as burst water pipes, or major road accidents, which make it hard for drivers to get out of the LTNs where they live, have necessitated interaction with the Council out of hours or at the weekend, so that normally closed camera filters can be opened. Until recently the only option was to call councillors for help. However, a new call service has now been set up.

This Street Works call-out number is to cover urgent/emergency issues relating to temporary works that cannot be de-

ferred to the next working day. Residents need to call the main Council number, **020 7527 2000**. They will hear an announcement explaining that the Council is closed, but will then be presented with a range of options, including option 6 for road-related issues. This is the option to choose for help.

Responses related to more general issues regarding the day-to-day function of LTNs, will be responded to during normal working hours by Matthew Bonomi (Mathew.Bonomi@islington.gov.uk) or one of his team.

Extra/Ordinary Women

Sarah Potter

Extra/Ordinary Women is an exhibition at the Charles Dickens Museum in WC1, which explores in depth the relationship between significant women in the life of Dickens and the depiction of women in his novels. It suggests that strong women with careers outside the domestic sphere are rarely given space in Dickens' novels.

Dickens separated from his talented wife Catherine in 1858 after 22 years of marriage, accusing her of failing as a mother and homemaker, alienating many of those who knew him. In his novels, there are examples both of failing homemakers such as Dorah Spenlow in David Copperfield, and of ideal homemakers such as Emma Lirriper in Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings.

In Dickens's novels there are also virtuous women, such as Lucie Manette in A Tale of Two Cities, and fallen women such as Alice Narwood in Dombey and Son, again reflecting contemporary images of women. Nevertheless, it is suggested that Betsey Trotwood in David Copperfield emerges as a strong woman by the standards of the time. Dickens based her on his great aunt

The writer Mrs. Gaskell was the first person to have her novels



serialised along with his own in Dickens' publication Household Words, though all contributions were anonymous. Dickens and his wife sent their daughter Katey to Bedford College to acquire an education in art, and she achieved greater recognition as an artist at the time than many male painters, though her work is now forgotten. She married a fellow artist, becoming known as Katey Perugini. It seems that Dickens considered writing and art the most acceptable careers for women, and

this is reflected in his novels.

The women in Dickens's life shaped the man and influenced his female characters. Yet in his fiction, Dickens has been accused of reinforcing Victorian ideals of womanhood. Often interpreted as weak and powerless, Dickens's female characters were led by what his readers wanted and were not a fair representation of their real-life counterparts. Artists, writers, actors, philanthropists, Dickens knew plenty of extraordinary women, including those in his own family. This exhibition celebrates these women and brings their stories to light.



The exhibition runs until September 6th, and the Charles Dickens Museum is at 48 Doughty Street, WC1N 2LX, opening hours 10 am to 5 pm, Wednesday to Sunday. The Museum is within walking distance of Russell Square Tube Station.

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Are London's High Streets and Town Centres in Crisis?

Sarah Potter

At the meeting of the London Forum on 26th March, this was the question up for discussion. The London Forum brings together local amenity societies such as the Highbury Community Association to address current issues of concern.

The first speaker, Steve Norris of Lambert Smith Hampton, was asked to describe what has happened covering the last decade and going forward. He stressed that there was not too much retail floor space in our high streets and town centres, due to business rates, occupancy costs, online sales and local authority debt, leading to vacancies to varying degrees. There is a need to replace, reinvent and revitalise our high streets and town centres. More green space and housing are priorities. There is also a need for NHS Community Diagnostic Centres and Markets, as shown by Columbia Road Market. Joint ventures are needed between investors and the public sector. The government's Pride in Place programme is welcome, though more finance is needed. High streets and town centres are vital and valued, but diversity and flexibility are needed.

The second speaker, Alexander Jan, enlarged on the role of Business Improvement Districts, of which there are 76 in London, which can mobilise resources over and above those available to local authorities. They were introduced 22 years ago to improve the environ-

ment in their area, providing additional money which is paid by occupiers, with reductions for charities and arts bodies. Local authority money available to spend locally is now reduced, but BID's work in partnership with local authorities. The challenges are that the working of BID's is complicated and not well understood, but they do improve the attractiveness of local areas in ways that the public appreciates.



The third speakers were Sam Mathys, Senior Policy Officer at the Greater London Assembly and her colleague, speaking on Protecting, Retaining and Growing London's Night Life. 18-24-year-olds participation in night life has been affected by the cost of living, margins are low and there are also

cost pressures, but some areas have returned to their pre-Covid level. Night life is significant in revitalising our high streets, and can replace retail and encourage socialising, leisure and entertainment 6 pm to 6 am. There is a Night Life Future Fund, to encourage cultural entrepreneurs, which could be directed to our High Streets. There are also licensing reforms on the way.

Boarded up shops are a very common and dispiriting feature of our town centres, but it was also noted by participants that there are conflicts when, for example, housing is increased in town centres but night life is also a feature of the area.

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Plastics update

Gill Shepherd

Disposing of plastic

It is depressing to learn that, despite all the talk about the recycling of plastics, very little is actually recycled - even of eminently recyclable plastics such as high-density polyethylene, and polypropylene. It is estimated that only about 9% of plastic is recycled. About 12% is incinerated and the remaining 79% goes at best into landfill but commonly just leaks into the environment.

It is better to landfill plastic than to burn it, especially if the alternative is open burning or incineration without pollution controls. Burning plastic releases toxic pollutants and greenhouse gases, while landfilling generally keeps those emissions out of the air. Plastic is made largely from fossil fuels, so burning it is effectively burning oil and gas, releasing carbon dioxide and also dioxins and other harmful pollutants that affect health and air quality.

But landfill is not ideal either, for many reasons. Landfill sites take up a lot of space, can produce methane from other waste, and still leave a legacy of buried plastic for generations. Nevertheless, for plastic, multiple sources say landfilling is usually a lesser harm than burning.

Impact of plastic

Plastic pollution has significant and far-reaching impacts.

- ★ **Environmental Impacts:** Plastic does not biodegrade easily and can linger for centuries. By 2050, the amount of plastic in the ocean could outweigh fish, highlighting the severity of marine pollution. Fishing nets and equipment account for about half of the plastic in the ocean, posing a major threat to marine life.
- ★ **Human Health Impacts:** Plastics contain chemicals that pose risks to human health. Microplastic pollution has infiltrated human bodies, raising concerns about its long-term health effects.
- ★ **Climate Impacts:** The production and disposal of plastics release greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to global warming. Plastic production is expected to triple by 2050.



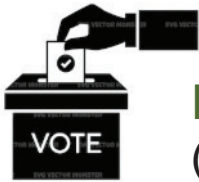
- ★ **Economic and Social Impacts:** Companies and countries often send plastic waste to developing countries, creating environmental and social challenges for them. Some corporations (e.g. Coca-Cola), market single-use plastics as sustainable, misleading consumers and increasing plastic pollution.

Efforts to limit plastic production

What is urgently needed is a mixture of policy interventions increasing recycling to 40%, capping new plastic production at 2020 levels, investing \$50 billion in waste infrastructure, and implementing a high packaging tax. Such interventions would cut plastic pollution to 11 million tons and emissions by one-third, equivalent to removing nearly 300 million vehicles from the road annually. But achieving this requires ambition and determination.

Unfortunately, the first attempt to get some of these interventions into a legally binding document has failed. UN Plastic Treaty Negotiations took place in Geneva in August 2025, but it had to adjourn. 184 countries could not agree on a final text, a rift occurring between states which sought limits on primary plastic production, and 'petro-states' which wished to focus solely on recycling and waste management. Large numbers of fossil fuel lobbyists attended and weakened negotiations. The result is that, as yet, there is no agreed global roadmap to address plastic pollution at source.

Efforts will continue to be made to stage a second attempt (UNEP - UN Environment Programme; eurotopics.net ; ClientEarth; <http://cdss.berkeley.edu/>).



Prospects for the May Elections in London (Taken from 'The Londoner')

Introduction

Labour is heading for a difficult London local election, with losses likely to come from both the Greens on the left and Reform on the right, in Inner and Outer boroughs respectively. The result could leave London's political map far more fragmented than the current Labour-dominated picture.

London's 32 borough councils are all up for re-election on 7 May, and this will be a major test of Labour's strength in the capital. Labour won 21 boroughs in 2022, but the new contest looks much less stable because national polling is weak for Labour, and the party now faces stronger competition from multiple directions.

Boroughs to watch

The article singles out Hackney and Lewisham as places where the Greens could make notable gains, because both have large pools of younger, left-leaning voters who have traditionally backed Labour. It also says Reform is targeting Outer-borough areas such as Croydon, Bromley, Bexley and Havering, where concerns over driving policy, immigration and national politics may help it compete.

The argument is that London Labour is squeezed by a changing electorate: more graduate voters who may now lean Green, and more diverse communities where Gaza and other issues could reduce

Labour's support. London is not uniformly left-wing: Outer-borough voters are older and more likely to turn out to vote, which could benefit right-of-centre parties.

Historical context

The piece uses the 2022 borough results as a baseline, when Labour won just over 40% of the citywide vote and held 21 councils. It contrasts that with the 2006 local elections, when the Conservatives were much stronger in London, to show that the capital's politics can shift substantially when national and local conditions align.

A new Farmers' Market on Highbury Fields?

Mark Handley



London Farmers' Markets Ltd have been in consultation with Islington Council, Highbury Fields Association and Highbaury Community Association about holding a trial Farmer's Market at the lower end of Highbury Fields outside the Leisure Centre on Highbury Crescent. The bodies consulted have agreed to a trial on condition that certain conditions around cleaning and traffic management are met.

A trial market will be held on Sunday 14th June. A survey will be conducted and if residents enjoy the market and would like it to be there every week, the trial will lead to a regular market. The farms and businesses which supply this and other London Farmers' Markets can be read about on our website and on Instagram. Not all stall-holders attend every week. Bring your own bags!

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Overview of Child Poverty in London

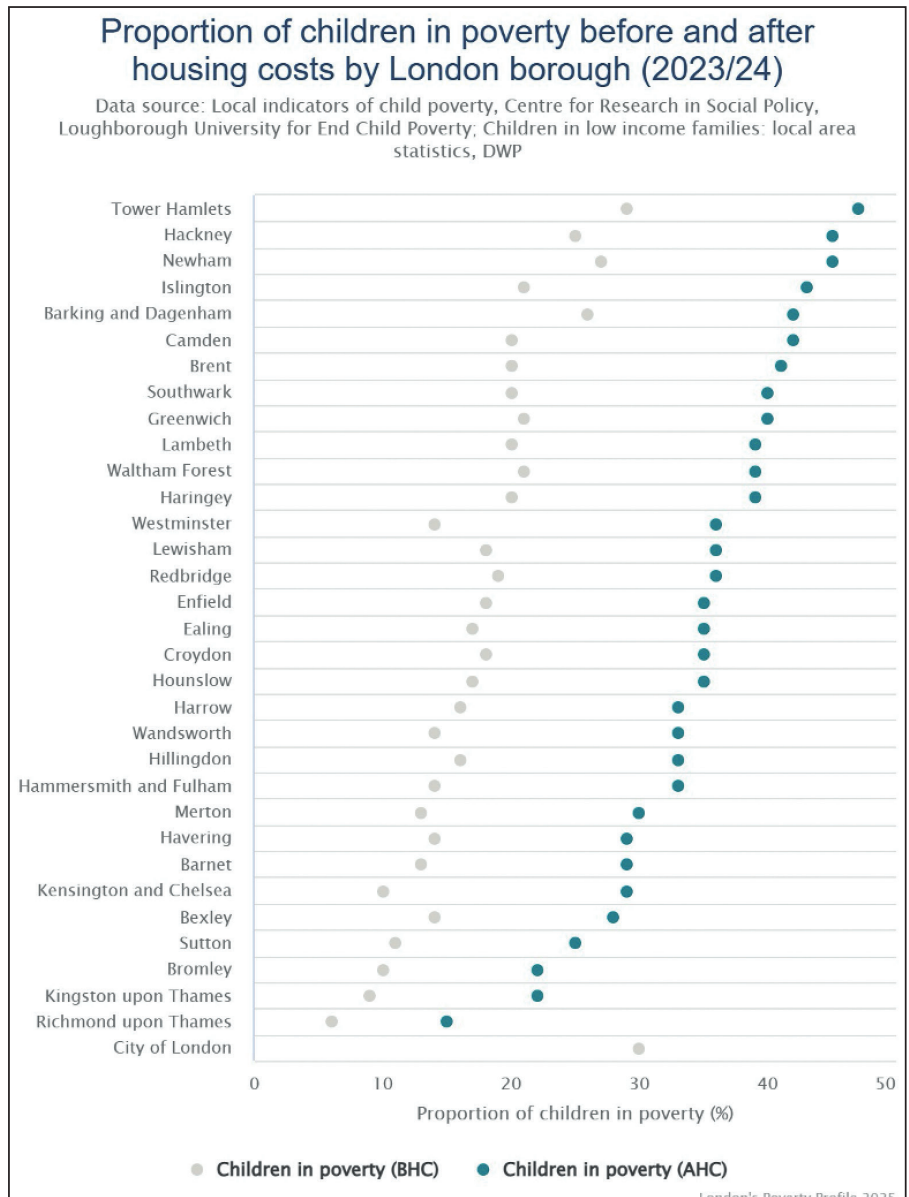
Gill Shepherd

London has the highest child poverty rates in England, with about 38% of children living in relative poverty, especially concentrated in inner-city boroughs like Tower Hamlets, Hackney, and Newham, where rates exceed 44%. Factors driving London’s high poverty include a housing crisis with high rents, leading to material deprivation and inability to afford essentials. Most children in poverty live in working households, with significant proportions of disabled individuals affected.

The table shows how dramatically children in London are pushed into further poverty by the high rents their parents have to pay, especially in Inner London boroughs such as Islington, Hackney and Camden. Typically, in London, poor households are spending up to 60% of their income on rent, while it is closer to 30% or less in other parts of the country.

Government Measures and Challenges

The government plans to reduce child poverty for 550,000 children by 2029 include scrapping the two-child benefit limit, expanding free school meals, and increasing the national minimum wage. Campaigners acknowledge progress but emphasize ongoing struggles, with many families still relying on food banks and experiencing hardship (Trust for London, January 2026; Guardian 26/3/26).



Old Barclay’s Bank Building at the bottom of Highbury Fields

Jon Winn

The planning application for nine bed sitters under HMO arrangements, originally submitted to cover the upper floors of this building, has been withdrawn. The building is currently under wraps and the Islington borough website does not reveal what alternative plans for the building are being considered.

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