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NO 12, WINTER 2024
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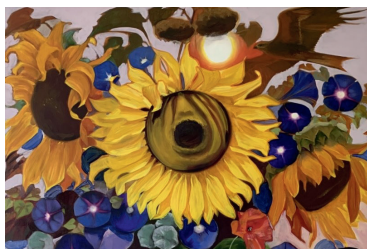
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It's crunch time, as redevelopment looms large



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VISIONARY FUTURE: P6
Writer Jess Furse on where
the neighbourhood is at



PEOPLE OF THE WICK: P8
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Stewart Bywater



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A guided walk through our
colourful streets



PEOPLE'S PAVILION: P14
Reimagining architecture with
the next generation



+ MORE LOCAL HEROES...
ScrubbHub, Swen, Bobby Kasanga
and Laura May-Lewis

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- Suggest editorial ideas and tell us your feedback via this online form and we will consider them for future editions: wick.link/submit

How do you create a cultural quarter?

I've worked in the creative sector for over 20 years in a range of cultural programming roles across arts centres, museums and most recently, higher education. This has given me a fantastic experience and insight into numerous inspiring organisations and individuals; with this I feel especially tuned in to activity across the East Bank institutions, from education to the arts. I'm so excited to have been chosen for the new role of Director of East Bank partnerships.



When people think about cultural quarters, they often think about a place that has a cultural offer; a fountain, food, drink and perhaps a sculpture or piece of public art. Now, this feels like a fair observation, and many successful Business Innovation Districts operate in this way across the world, servicing local businesses with additional resources and reasons to bring visitors to the area to shop, eat, drink, and engage in culture. But is this the most sustainable and embedded way to work?

East Bank, the new cultural quarter on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, is starting to awaken. London College of Fashion, UAL, and UCL East opened their doors to 10,000 staff and students between them late last year. They will be closely followed by Sadler's Wells East opening this autumn, V&A East and the BBC next year. However, the East Bank story begins long before these launches and such big, established names.

East London has always had a reputation for creativity, innovation and industry. You don't have to look too far to encounter hundreds of grassroots organisations doing necessary and extraordinary work across all four of the Olympic boroughs. But back in 2005, when London's bid for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games was submitted, eyes were always firmly on the future. What does an investment in education and culture mean post-Olympics? What does legacy mean and how do we achieve it? Fast forward nearly 20 years and the London 2012 Olympic Legacy is now firmly upon us. It's no coincidence that these big incoming cultural and educational

institutions all chose East London as their new home. The chance to work in partnership with each other has always been the main reason for wanting to be part of East Bank, and this spirit of collaboration has been there right from the beginning. The last decade has been spent building relationships across the four Olympic boroughs, listening and learning from local experts and communities and building programmes together.

East Bank has been developed with the community in mind. All the partners are offering open, public spaces that encourage visitors to step inside and engage with their programmes, bringing their enthusiasm, skills and expertise with them. Sadler's Wells has designed a community dance floor open to local dancers and groups to rehearse, perform and watch others do the same. The outdoor spaces have platforms for performances, festivals and live music, with the ambition of many various communities knowing that there will always be something they can engage with at East Bank.

Each of the East Bank partners brings something different to the Park. The BBC will transport all their Maida Vale content east, meaning that some of the greatest artists in music will be recording and performing right here in our neighbourhood. Sadler's Wells are opening a Hip Hop Academy and choreographic school, giving local young people access to extraordinary talent and skills on their doorstep. UCL East and London College of Fashion, UAL are offering students the opportunity to study in an ever-evolving, creative campus where they can learn from each other and use state-of-the-art technology and equipment to realise their ambitions.

With funding to the arts becoming tighter, the need to work in partnership has never been greater. When V&A East open their doors in 2025, their launch exhibition will celebrate 125 years of British Black Music. All the East Bank partners are responding to this theme, programming content that will give visitors a range of options to engage with when they visit. This way of working will make East Bank stand out from the crowd. The V&A Storehouse in Hackney Wick will give public access to over 250,000 objects, in fully accessible archives. This commitment to sharing ideas and resource, building on each other's programmes and actively working with experts in our communities will showcase East Bank's ambition to be a united cultural destination that shouts 'We're stronger together'. ●

GUEST EDITOR, Tamsin Ace

Recently appointed as East Bank's first ever Director of Partnerships, Tamsin has previously been head of festivals, dance and culture programming for the likes of the Southbank Centre, Museum of the Home and London College of Fashion, UAL.



FIX YOU UP

East Village-based leading physical therapy and wellness clinic, Fix, have opened a second location at Wick Lane's popular fitness training and nutritional coaching hub, Groundwork. Fix bring with them a multi-disciplinary team of therapists and practitioners providing physiotherapy, osteopathy and massages to treat pain, injuries, rehab or simply as some welcome stress-release after a workout. This complements the existing progressive approach to one-to-one and group training, plus coaching on bespoke nutritional strategies that are already on offer at Groundwork, bringing everything handily under the same roof.

@Fixlondonuk



STONEWALL FC SCORE MORE GOLD

Local LGBTQ+ football club, Stonewall FC, have cemented their position as the most successful LGBTQ+ team in the world by winning a historic fifth gold at the recent Guadalajara Gay Games finals in Mexico. Despite their dominance, reaching the final of the football competition was still no mean feat, as it involved a gruelling nine games in five days, all of which were played at an altitude of 1500m – and in 30 degree heat! Like the Olympics, the Gay Games takes place every four years on a different continent, and offers the chance to celebrate equality through the lens of sport and culture, with a progressive approach to gender identity. Football is just one of the many sports disciplines included at the Games. Stonewall FC continues its own mission to make football a powerful force for social change by granting access to the sport to people of all genders, races, ages, religions and sexualities, something that has proven, once again, to be a totally winning approach.

@stonewallfc

STORIES FROM THE WICK

The latest openings, gossip and events to keep you up to speed with what's going on around here. Check thisisthewick.com for more updates



999 YEARS OF CREATIVITY SECURED

After six years of negotiations, locally founded community-led regeneration pioneers, Stour Trust, have announced a groundbreaking victory in the provision of affordable workspace for artists in the area. As part of Fish Island's forthcoming Piano Works student accommodation development, they have been granted a 10,000 sq ft space earmarked for local creatives at a peppercorn rent, on a 999-year lease. "It's taken us years to learn the complexities of various local planning frameworks and politics," says Stour Trust's Juliet Can, "but it's allowed us to come around the table with developers now, and have very frank conversations. To say that if they really care about communities, and want to do something here that's fundamentally different, that means doing more than just the bare minimum. That means taking the community seriously; valuing our experience, our knowledge and our networks, and seeing that, actually, doing all that has real value for them when it comes to getting support for their plans."

Can's success partnering with developer, Southern Grove, on this site already looks like the makings of a blueprint for shifting power into the hands of local communities all over the country. It points towards a future where local people steward their own workspace and housing assets, rather than being displaced by the forces of gentrification and redevelopment, something that would bring environmental, as well as social benefits, too.

"We want to take the pressures of the market away so that our communities start to feel more stable," says Juliet. "If you know that this space will still be here for you in 100 years, you can start to think differently and really commit. It takes away one of the many uncertainties of life. Our model means there will always be a place for those who don't have the financial resources to compete to remain here. There are so many opportunities for economic and creative success in East London today - if you think of the organisations coming to East Bank, for example, - so why shouldn't we be part of that ecosystem? That was the Olympic promise, and that's what legacy is really about." *Stourtrust.com*



LOW COST LIFE THERAPY

White Post Lane's counselling and therapy centre, A Balanced Life, has just taken on three trainee counsellors and is helping them obtain their 100hrs of service, the requirement needed to be completed for them to fully qualify for the profession. If you represent a locally-based organisation who'd like to offer low cost counselling provision to your staff or contacts, the reach out now to Kevin on info@abalancedlifetherapies.com. These special sessions will be available for just £25, which simply covers the cost of the therapy room rental, so it's a great opportunity for individuals and companies alike, particularly with the current cost of living crisis.



GET LANDSCAPING IN VICTORIA PARK

If you enjoyed last issue's feature from our art director, Daren Ellis, on the joys of learning gardening skills, perhaps you might want to consider volunteering with the Landscape team on Victoria Park, where he finds the benefit in spending time working outside and alongside head gardener, Ryan Randall, and the team. They offer the chance to help out on all things related to planting, trimming and caring for the beloved park for a few hours each week. Coffee, tea and chat provided. "Volunteering for the Victoria Park Landscape team offers a great opportunity to work with others, socialise, learn horticultural skills and improve physical and mental wellbeing," agrees Councillor Iqbal Hossain, Cabinet Member for Culture and Recreation at LB Tower Hamlets. "From rose pruning and seasonal planting, to scything meadows and building a dead hedge - there's lots of different activities for people of all abilities to get involved in." If you are interested in volunteering, email the Head Gardener today:

Ryan.Randall@towerhamlets.gov.uk



PIRATE HUB IS LEGIT

Hole-in-the-wall café/bar and super-intimate live music venue, The Pirate's Hub, has finally been granted its licence for the consumption of alcohol on the premises. Owner, Gigi, who has transformed the unit into an oasis of seriously good quality sandwiches and impromptu DJ sets, said the process was long, but worked out in the end. "Whoever doesn't fight loses right from the start!" he says, of the process. "I never honestly thought we wouldn't get it, because I know that this place can give something more to the community, so I didn't give up. I just had to agree the rules with the police and the noise department, but after that it was easy." Expect more mini events – and plenty more good food, tasty desserts, with the addition of cocktails too, all beginning imminently. [@the_pirates_hub](#)



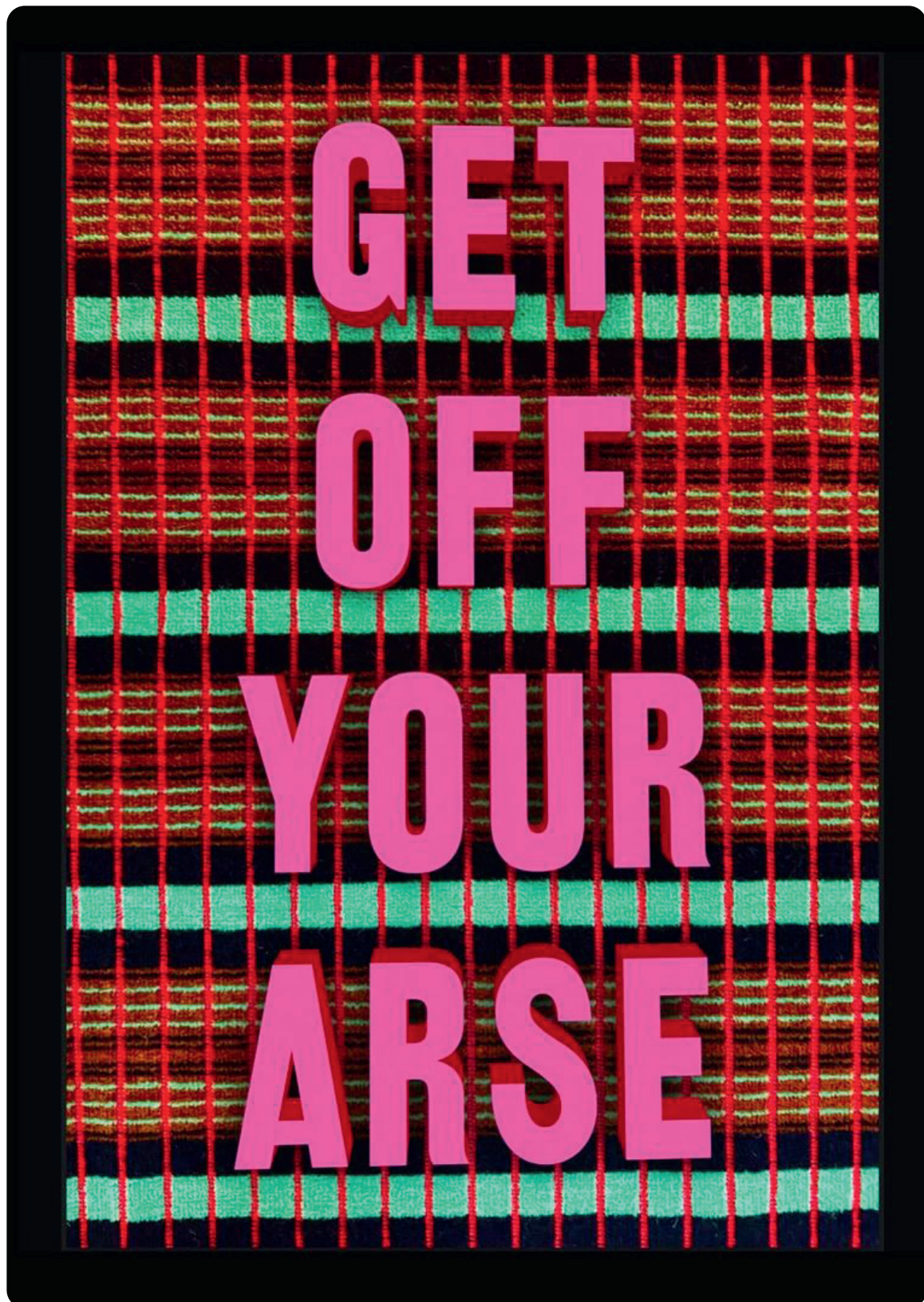
A DIFFERENT ANGLE ON STREET ART

The perimeter of the newly launched park at the centre of Stratford's build-to-rent neighbourhood, Coppermaker Square, now boasts a bright new art commission. It marks the first of what will now be an ongoing series of art installations and pop-ups from local artists and businesses, so is a brand new spot worth keeping an eye on, for artists and art lovers alike. The current pieces on show are the work of six local women, who each bring a variety of very different ideas and inspirations to their visual storytelling. Their styles strike a marked difference to the kind of street art pieces you'll spot just over the park in Hackney Wick, and are purposefully designed to bring a strong community feel for the incoming residents, and for people working or shopping at nearby Westfield to take a relaxing moment outdoors. It all adds to the diversity of public art in the area (see. p8). [@coppermakersquare](#)



BLACK GIRL KNIT CLUB PICK UP THE THREAD

Yarn bombing, the form of street art made by covering public objects with brightly coloured knitted materials, has returned to Stratford Cross for the winter. Local collective, Black Girl Knit Club, have decorated Endeavour Square with pieces they made over a series of weeks, using a needle-free 'arm knitting' technique. They incorporate upcycled industrial scaffolding and a range of textiles from Hackney Wick's reuse hub, Yodomo, to wrap the viewing platform, steps and railings. Additional pieces to cover the trees have been added in January, too, in vivid colours representing the traditions of black women's hair and braiding that takes place in salons throughout the area. Common Threads: Braided Traditions runs until mid-April and is free. [@blackgirlknitclub](#)



ART FOR VOTES

Our cover star from last edition, acclaimed Mainyard-based printmaker Hackney Dave, has put out a call for artists with the aim of engaging everyone to get voting in 2024. It comes ahead of the London Mayoral elections and, who knows, possibly a general one, too, and can include original artwork at A2 size in any medium - from drawings and paintings to etchings and rubbings - as political as possible. You can submit a maximum edition of five, and every piece sells for the same price at his Vote Smote event, that'll be announced for a date in March. All proceeds made will then go towards sending one lucky youngster off to art school. [@realhackneydave](#)



BARGE EAST DOUBLE WIN

Local iconic floating restaurant, Barge East, has been busy winning not one, but two recent awards. First up was the Tower Hamlets in Bloom 2023 gong for Best Restaurant, for their lovely riverside garden's dining areas. And then they kicked off the year by scooping Best Dining Concept at Bar Magazine's 2024 Awards. "This recognition is a testament to the dedication of our team and the passion we pour into delivering an extraordinary dining experience aboard Barge East," said Exec Chef Stefano Camplone upon hearing the news. With ambitious plans afoot to establish a vineyard on the riverside, the team look hell-bent on winning a few more accolades, if all goes well. [@bargeeast](#)



REINVENTING THE RED PATH

Community organisation Hackney Quest are leading an urban design project to improve the local walking and cycling route along the Red Path. Locals have regularly complained that often it has felt like an unsafe, inaccessible and basically neglected spot, despite being an important right of way for getting around the local landscape. The project has recruited four local young people who are now facilitating co-design workshops with other residents. The outcome will be to produce a RIBA Stage 2 design proposal to reimagine and reboot the Red Path for the benefit of the whole community. Look out in the next edition of The Wick (spring 2024, coming out in late April) where we will be looking at the progress of this exciting project through the eyes of 18-year-old youth participant Freddie Beresford.

For more info on the project visit spaceblack.co.uk/projects/red-path. Discover more of the amazing work of Hackney Quest: [@hackney_quest](#)

On a warm September night in 2020, I stood on the floating pontoon of Stour Space (now Two More Years) with friends and neighbours to watch one of the most spectacular sights in Fish Island's recent history unfold. We marvelled as the Monier Road footbridge was picked up by a massive Balfour Beatty crane, dangled in mid-air, and placed carefully over the River Lea, linking Fish Island with the Olympic Park and Stratford beyond.

While joining the area to the new Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Fish Island's bridges have also divided its communities. The tied history of new developments and the loss of community dates back to 2017, when the Stour Road bridge was built, and half of the warehouse I was living in at the time, at Vittoria Wharf, was lost in a compulsory land purchase by the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC).

Live/work warehouses, for better or worse, are unique to our corner of London; something I've described in a previous article for The Wick as "models for how to create healthier cities, people, and communities"; and something that has only come about via a unique convergence of economic and cultural interests. And that's precisely why the next 12 months are essential for ensuring the warehouse community's continued existence.

Brooklyn comes to Bow

On the surface, the idea that a closed, traditional group which all-but-completely rejects modern western society would rent industrial spaces to freewheeling artists sounds like something of a Hollywood film (maybe if this article does well...). When one digs deeper into Stamford Hill's Hasidic Jewish community and Hackney Wick's warehouse community, though, the relationship of mutual convenience which developed sheds light on an unconventional landlord-tenant dynamic between two unconventional groups.

Knowing both groups well, I see the cultural parallels. "They like to live in community; they help each other out. So do we," explains Israel Gold, Project Manager at Topfling, which owns Algha Works, Vittoria Wharf, the Peanut Factory plus further space in Haringey; a total of 1,500+ rooms in warehouses in London.

In the early 2000s, Topfling Group saw an opportunity to work with the creative community. "It was hard to find tenants for commercial spaces, but we could rent them to artists who want large spaces and are content to build them out themselves," says Gold. He adds that "for them [artists], it's a cheaper form of living and working."

The trend of Hasidim renting warehouses to artists started in Brooklyn in the 1980s, as Nathaniel Deutch and Michael Casper wrote

COULD A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN SAVE FISH ISLAND'S WAREHOUSES?



Hackney Wick's live/work model is the result of an unlikely alliance between artists and the Hassidic Jewish community. 2024 is crunch time, as redevelopment looms large for all

Words: Martin Francisco Saps

Images: Daren Ellis

in the book *A Fortress in Brooklyn*. One intimately intertwined with the story of artists as both victims and agents of gentrification covered in sociologist Sharon Zukin's seminal work *Loft Living*. As artists and the queer community began to squat and occupy declining industrial buildings, many Brooklyn Hasidim along with other community groups living in inner-city neighbourhoods feared that the "artist" would usher in gentrification and price them out. At the same time, a few locals spotted an opportunity.

Typically involved in industrial professions, namely textiles, many Hasidim were familiar with the commercial real estate market. A few developers in the 2000s began to "take advantage of their geographic proximity to gentrifying areas and the distinctive lending practices of their community" to buy up real estate and rent it out to artists at scale. The close-knit nature of the community and large families allowed them to pool large resources and invest for their families' future.

This opportunity came later across the pond, on our doorstep. Miki Elson, founder of ArtSect Gallery in Hackney Wick explains that the hands-off style of property management employed by the landlords "gave artists that freedom early on, which then catalysed the whole area."

While living in the buildings, artists increased their value. The warehouses in the early 2000s had "a lot more squat vibes, which again, was linked with the physical space, and the kind of people and the price of rents was much cheaper as well," says Christina, a Manor House resident.

As residents improved their houses and began to share them on social media, it created a "warehouse living buzz", which raised property values in the surrounding area. This, in turn, allowed landlords and leaseholders (often from within the community) to increase the prices of the spaces.

Rising property values in the surrounding area coupled with the cost of maintaining old declining buildings has recently led some landlords to favour redeveloping the warehouses altogether.

In early 2023, Majorlink, a subsidiary of Topfling Group, submitted an application to redevelop, a lived-in warehouse community of some 170 residents in Manor House, into new build 'warehouse-inspired living' flats at double current rents, with provision for workspace. In response, a collection of residents launched the Save the Warehouses campaign to protest the development plans at Omega Works, which attracted widespread press coverage over concerns that the development would "kill the community." The application managed to attract widespread attention, including from the Greater London

Authority, and is still being reviewed.

Down the road in Hackney Wick, Vittoria Wharf Ltd., registered under the same owner as Topfling Group and Palmlane Estates, also submitted an application to develop Vittoria Wharf, home to Two More Years and The Pirate's Hub into a 10-floor residential development, causing widespread alarm that this might be the beginning of the end of the warehouses.

In July, a group of Hackney Wick locals formed a campaign, Fight for Fish Island, to resist the development of Vittoria Wharf, which has since turned into a community forum; the group managed to garner over 200 oppositions to the planning application, which has yet to be decided despite being five months past the decision date.

Beyond that, the group has blossomed into the robust Fish Island Community Network, which has been organising around locally important issues like dealing with newly-arrived neighbours and fundraising for the 100+ people affected by Storm Henk floods, who, in a legal grey area, do not qualify for commercial or residential

"THEY LIKE TO LIVE IN COMMUNITY; THEY HELP EACH OTHER OUT. SO DO WE"

support from the council.

Already formed, Fish Island Community Network also organised around the Palmlane-owned Algha Works development just down the road at Smeed Rd. The application proposed an extension for one more floor of the building and to officially change the use from commercial to Live/Work, to be delivered at £1,800 per month. But many residents argue that the 'conversion' will just push them out. "The sad thing about the Algha Works development is that on the surface it looks like they're doing the right thing by making it Live/Work, tethered accommodation," explains Jamie G, one of the organisers of the Fish Island Community Network. But "the pricing that the consultancy did was wrong; they claimed that the proposed rent was 60% below market rate. As they intentionally did not include their own 700 local warehouse live/work rooms in the study, with an average price of £725, their figures are widely skewed."

Gold, however, argues that the development is the only way to keep the spaces as they are. "Tenants want cheap rent but then they want us to invest money to fix the buildings." With the high cost of building, he sees redeveloping as the only option.

Maggie, who has campaigned against the Haringey Omega Works development (and asked to have her name changed) tells a different story. "I do feel like their strategy is managed decline. They make these spaces run down to the absolute

FIGHT

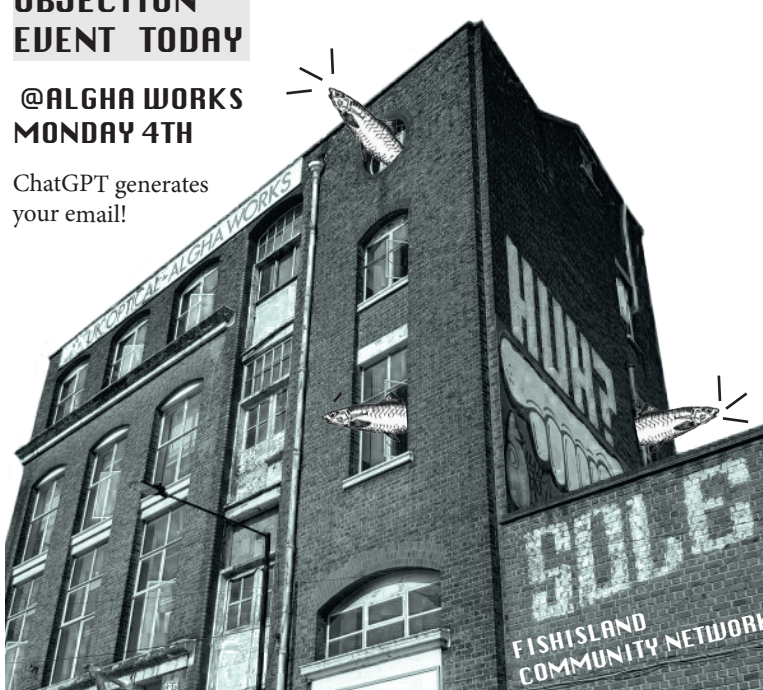
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bare minimum. And then they can say 'There's nothing we can do, the building's falling down. We have to build a new thing.' She also adds that many residents involved in the campaign have been threatened with eviction.

Policy might be one avenue of helping save the warehouses. In Haringey, an official policy (DM39) states that "Warehouse living is

a specific type of land use...and lends particular support to the creative industries sector," classing Warehouses within the Sui Generis use class. As Tower Hamlets prepares to take back planning powers from the LLDC in 2025, they are exploring how to best protect Fish Island's community. Marc Acton-Fillon, a planner at Tower Hamlets Council, explains

that "given that we already have this community existing, we see it as something that we really need to preserve." But better policy can't stop market trends. Acton-Fillon concedes that "if all they're trying to do is raise the rents and push people out, there isn't really anything that planners can do about that."

A New Neighbourhood Plan

Jamie is convinced that the sustainable solution is for the community to leverage relevant stakeholders. They aim to preserve the low-cost, accessible warehouses as they are, whilst allowing those units already renovated to be more expensive. "The proper way to do it is to put together a community-led plan and sit down with the landlords and say 'Do this with your warehouses. You can maintain your profits; you can make the community happy, and it will be a long-term sustainable investment. And it will have the sign-off from the council, the mayor's office, and the Creative Enterprise Zone.'"

The Fish Island Community Network has been consulting residents to quantify their concerns,

which they hope can be used to advocate for the community. The process is gathering valuable data which they hope will then be used to secure Neighbourhood Planning rights.

Neighbourhood Plans, introduced as part of the Localism Act in 2011, is a new policy introduced to help communities shape their own development. The Neighbourhood Plan here could inform the Tower Hamlets Local Plan, which could define what buildings can and cannot be developed in Fish Island. Although Neighbourhood Plans cannot block already-approved development, and have to be reviewed by independent officers and a local referendum, the group are thinking long-term.

Both in Manor House and Fish Island, activism has attracted widespread attention from relevant stakeholders and delayed development plans. As of the time of writing, the battle of warehouse residents to stay in their homes appears to have devolved into somewhat of a stalemate. Advocacy, campaigning, and working with local policymakers has managed to pause development, but what now?

One answer is in leveraging the infrastructure which is already here. The past ten years have produced an alphabet soup of organisations – the CEZ, CDT, CLT, CIG just to name a few – dedicated to "preserving Hackney Wick's creative future"; but their work has been largely limited to conducting research and working with new businesses and developers to ensure new development reflects the area's culture.

To be fair, warehouse residents have historically been hesitant to work with established institutions; something Jamie and others are working to change, however trust and clarity of stakeholder intent is clearly an issue for the community group. I think it's about time that these organisations, much like the landlords and the council, use their institutional clout to help preserve what's already here.

People from all over the world have moved to Hackney Wick to become a part of its unique creative culture, continuing to thrive in the warehouses. Change presents us with an opportunity to all get involved. It's about time all locals, whether living, or working, warehouse residents and the newly arrived, work together to keep the grassroots creative culture alive. Only by working together can we preserve Fish Island's soul. 🐟

We encourage all Fish Island locals to contribute to the campaign and ensure that the Neighborhood Plan reflects the whole community. Please reach out to the Fish Island Community Network on their Insta: @Fishislandcommunitynetwork or via email at: fishislandcommunitynetwork@gmail.com



"I DO FEEL LIKE THEIR STRATEGY IS MANAGED DECLINE. THEY RUN THESE SPACES DOWN TO THE BARE MINIMUM. THEN THEY SAY 'THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO, THE BUILDING'S FALLING DOWN. WE HAVE TO BUILD A NEW THING.'"

Left main: Vittoria Wharf, Below right: Algha Works, Above top; protest poster, centre: Miki at Algha Works, Right: Save the Warehouses pat Omega Works Manor House

Four years ago, the world stopped on a sixpence. We had a shared ‘near-earth experience.’ We collectively reassessed what was valuable to us as the minutes turned to hours, days turned to weeks, turned to months spent so close to the earth. Looking back, it’s astounding how quickly we have returned to ‘normal.’ Many of the systems that underwrite our existence may be breaking at the seams (healthcare, economy, immigration, and climate) but still, we chart a course headlong, forgetful of what lessons were exhorted upon us during that fateful period.

You may have heard, seen, or felt the growing momentum in Hackney Wick & Fish Island (HWFI) around the circular economy, that has morphed from a once steady stream to a now gushing river. To my mind, this is not fortuitous. We all know HWFI as a powerhouse of creative activity, and now it’s quickly being regarded as one of the brightest spots in the capital for innovative products, services, and programmes which support the climate agenda. In short, we’re having a moment. But it’s incumbent on us, all of us, to work diligently to transmute this moment into a robust long-term paradigm shift.

When it comes to dealing with waste, historically our current system is like a bucket with multiple fissures in it. We continuously pour valuable resources in, but lots of that value leaks out due to our traditional “take-make-waste” model. Negative externalities are not captured in the monetary prices we pay at the till or the living conditions of people across the globe. For example, according to the World Bank, “climate change results in GDP losses of 7.5% in East Asia, the Pacific, and South Asia.”

We must do things differently. One approach growing in global consciousness is the circular economy – a systematic change whereby we take resources that have been consumed by us, recycle and reuse them in new ways. Extending the lifecycle of goods focuses our attention on patching up those leaks in the proverbial bucket. It’s an approach that could be one of our greatest attack vectors against this climate change problem, set at a local level.

HWFI has lived the circular mindset for a long time. There’s been a thriving ethos of mending, making-do, and creative reuse thanks to all the artists and makers repurposing materials for projects since before I can remember. We want to crank the volume on that closed-loop, waste-not, creative spirit. At the Hackney Wick and Fish Island Community Development Trust (CDT) we’ve established something called the ReRoute initiative. ReRoute will bring local people and businesses – alongside public and private partners – together to nurture a circular economy cluster here – one that can be a harbinger of positive change that reaches way beyond our borough boundaries and takes local climate action up a notch.

Looping us together

Former Creative Enterprise Zone manager, Patrick Scally, on why his new role, helping grow the local circular economy, is part of a paradigm shift for the neighbourhood

Words: Patrick Scally / Photos: CDT



I decided to join the HWFI CDT to apply my energy toward nurturing this epoch-defining shift. I’ve had the pleasure of working with the CDT to grow their enterprise which now, alongside ReLondon, has launched a circular, low-waste neighbourhood hub in Hackney Wick, focused on innovative solutions for packaging, food waste, and the wider circular economy, aptly called The Loop. This meanwhile space (10,000 sq ft) on Wallis Road will be the first of, hopefully, many under the ReRoute umbrella that will house our work across the circular economy. This space has been secured through our generous partners Halycon Development Partnership Group, funding from UKSPF through Shift’s Future Industry Demonstrator Programme and the Mayor of London’s High Street for All fund and will be operated by Grow, who will make the pioneering ReRoute project commercially viable.

The Loop is a unique hub that will host a cluster of circular

economy businesses with opportunities for desk space, studio workspace, and light-industrial operational space. Over the past 10+ years, I’ve seen the direct and indirect benefits that hubs like this provide to creative practitioners. I can’t inculcate enough that hubs are the key ingredient in the Creative Enterprise Zone mix that I’ve been a part of shaping. We should all be proud that HWFI will now play home to the first hub of its kind purely focused on the circular economy. By being part of this project focused on creating a closed-loop hyperlocal system for HWFI, tenants will develop relationships with key local stakeholders, and all local people have the chance to become part of a new network of engagement around this global movement; in a truly tangible way.

The Loop on Wallis Road provides a first pitstop on this new leg of HWFI’s journey to reduce waste incrementally, and eventually to very a large degree. This is a long-term play. It’s a launch pad for innovators to cook up and test

drive reusable packaging and food waste solutions before scaling them community-wide. It’s a launch pad for the cohort of existing circular businesses in the area to showcase their products. It’s a launch pad to nurture a circular economy cluster that can, in time, become as globally known as our creative economy cluster. I believe we can make that happen.

There will be challenges along the way. Thankfully, we’re not working alone. Think of The Loop as the scaffolding that helps the HWFI circular economy movement reach escape velocity by harnessing the power of key partners to create local benefits. Branches of that structure include our partners UCL, who will be providing academic support to the businesses at The Loop, LLDC/SHIFT who will bring their Future Industries Demonstrator cohort #1 to the space to test their solutions locally, as well as Central Government and the Greater London Authority who are providing vital funding to deliver our mission.

We will need to continuously harness the power of shared resources to deliver this mission through our community ownership model. For us, it’s not just important we tackle climate change, increase local jobs and revenue for businesses, we need Local Authority and land owner/developer stakeholders to be ‘the other hand clapping.’ This change needs to be equitable, and we believe our model provides the best chance to harness the potential of the circular economy within a ‘community-first’ structure, putting more power in local hands.

Globally, “consumers waste up to US\$ 460bn each year dumping still-wearable clothes in landfills,” according to the Ellen Macarthur Foundation’s Circular Economy in Cities report. This is a wicked problem within the circular economy problem set. We’ve already begun to make strides in developing support infrastructure to meet this challenge, through our Textile Reuse Hub, which opened last year, that’s empowering young fashion entrepreneurs to build sustainable brands. Located at The Trampery Fish Island Village, it

"THIS APPROACH COULD BE ONE OF OUR GREATEST ATTACK VECTORS AGAINST THIS CLIMATE CHANGE PROBLEM, SET AT A LOCAL LEVEL"

provides space for talented locals through the Sustainable Young Makers programme, to prototype products from leftover textile waste under the guidance of our partners and industry experts, Yodomo. The amount of textile waste the hub has already stopped from landfill could fill the studio many times over. It’s early days, but we’re seeing the positive change, and we will be sharing updates on the programme in future issues of The Wick, I’m sure.

As we experienced four years ago, in moments of anxiety and fragility, it’s understandable that we clammer for habitual immediacy and perceived certainty. To build our circular economy movement in HWFI, we need a calm steady approach to capture the true potential of the opportunistic moments that we are presented. I believe the moment is now. I believe the best approach is for us to join hands on this one. I believe we need to grasp a bright future together. 🌱

Patrick Scally is the host of The 'How Might We' Sessions podcast, including the following episodes on the local circular economy:

WNWN Food Labs boss Johnny Drain on how to build a better global food system
Listen at: [wick.link/wnwn](https://www.wnwn.co.uk/wnwn)

Refill Therapy founder Alpesh Patel on creating a sustainable shopping experience
Listen at: [wick.link/refill](https://www.wick.link/refill)

Top: Recent tour of the Wallis Road site, Below: drone shots of The Loop warehouse space

Urban Mobility: East London, the new frontier

Transport is changing, which is proving to be exciting
and frustrating in equal measure

Words: Tom Kihl

With its generously Olympic-sized roads, private land status and growing role as an epicentre of innovation, the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP) has proven to be the ideal testbed for alternative modes of transport, which are key to helping us achieve net zero goals as a society. The QEOP was the first location in the UK to legally permit e-scooters on the roads, in a trial with operator Bird, back in 2018, and you may remember seeing the Capri driverless 'pods' trundling happily around the Park all by themselves the following year, too.

Fast forward half a decade, and while we may not have sightings of fully autonomous bubbles on the move along every high street just yet, the proliferation of e-scooters and the popularity of dockless hire bikes (London is now Europe's largest market for them) has certainly marked a major shift in urban transportation. With rapid change there always comes a degree of resistance, and the initial gung-ho attitude of earlier bike tech operators, such as Mobike and Ofo, demonstrated the need for careful management of the introduction of anything new at scale. Sadly, much like the ridiculous 'war' between cyclists and drivers, entrenched battle lines seem to have been drawn between those who love the push towards less urban car use – including Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs), 20mph limits and the Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ) – and those who wish to 'fight for motorists', the current Prime Minister strangely included.

Regardless of culture war cannon fodder bumps in the road, the UK has a legal requirement to reinvent its fossil fuel-reliant transportation landscape, and London's 32 councils are pushing ahead regardless, with a patchwork of different trials, schemes and licences. It's imperfect, but it's happening.

Dockless bike hire company, Forest, have come up against this piecemeal arrangement in Hackney, where only their rival, Lime, has been awarded a contract to operate, meaning Forest riders who cross the boundary from Tower Hamlets are suddenly not able to park, leading to a build-up of bikes at the borough borders. "We receive weekly calls and emails from frustrated residents, visitors and commuters in Hackney asking for details on when Forest will be expanding its operation into the borough," says Alex Berwin, the company's Head of Policy.

In areas like Hackney, where cycling has really taken off, residents deserve a broad range of accessible options – the first 10 mins of every Forest ride is free, supported by in-app advertising, for example. "That makes us half the price of Lime over a 20 minute journey," says Alex, highlighting what Hackney residents are currently losing out on.

Councils are doing their best to coordinate better, and on the plus side, the boroughs system does mean



that learnings from one area – such as the introduction of dedicated dockless parking bays – can then be implemented in another, much like the QEOP testbed model.

Smart Mobility Living Lab London is an organisation behind some of the Olympic Park trials, and one which sees the uniquely complex makeup of the capital – along with the prevailing enthusiasm for innovation from its local-level governmental bodies – as a reason for why the city is now a world leader in this field. "London is the ultimate proving ground: its challenging layout and transport systems are representative of most features to be found in other towns and cities: if it works here, it will work anywhere", their website proudly states.

Meanwhile original automobile pioneers, Ford, have their Ford Mobility innovation lab based at Here East, taking advantage of the proximity to universities like Loughborough London and UCL to address urban mobility challenges of the present day, and of the future. And with the formation of SHIFT and its key partners now identifying the Park loudly as an innovation district for the next phase of London 2012 legacy, expect more stories of trials and collaborations in urban mobility, public health and tackling the climate emergency to emerge from this exciting real-world laboratory.

Over by Stratford International, the local Sustainable Transport Hub now supports various zero-carbon options, including the arrival of the new Enterprise All EV Car Club and e-cargo bike hire scheme, joining the existing Brompton lockers, from which you can

hire their iconic folding bicycles via an app. Brompton measured a 70% year-on-year increase in rentals in 2023, so their particular take on urban transportation is clearly adding something different – and attractive – to the map.

For larger loads, e-cargo bike delivery companies now proliferate, especially for so-called 'last mile' jobs, for which traditional vans have long been highly inefficient on London's clogged roads. This copy of The Wick newspaper will have been delivered to you locally by Zhero, the climate/social impact-led startup based out of Hackney Bridge, which is demonstrating the wider impact that these newer operations can bring, too. "We knew we'd be able to provide similar services to other logistics companies out there, but with a much-reduced environmental impact," says co-founder, Joe Sharpe. "We offer a viable, efficient and friendly service for our clients – who are mostly East London SMEs – for all their logistics needs, whilst minimising the emissions associated with their own operations. As an independent SME ourselves, we're big champions of the contribution small businesses make to the real economy."

Beryl is a company that started out supplying the 'laserlights' that project an image of a bicycle in front of Santander hire bikes. Since then, they've gone on to become an innovator in e-cargo bikes for public hire. With pedal-assist vehicles to be found locally at locations in Tower Hamlets and Hackney, they allow people with the occasional heavy load to move things around without the need for owning a car or hiring a petrol or diesel-fuelled van. Tom Massey, who runs a

Hackney-based carpentry business and has been able to ditch his work van, reported saving loads of time as well as improving the roads for everyone else. "Compared to driving in traffic, I think using the cargo bikes takes me 50% less time to get to where I need to be," he says. "It's also good not to have to use a large van to transport a relatively small amount of tools around, which I often find frustrating."

So, plenty of innovation and a few frustrations so far, but with East London continuing to lead the way, what's likely to happen next in this fast-moving sector? Alex from Forest hopes to see lots more parking bays soon: "research has shown that a bay every 150 meters is the optimum density," plus further legislation to encourage less vehicles on – and parked on – London's roads. "Our position is clear: we would like to see second car ownership in London banned or heavily penalised, with exemption for disability badge holders," he says. "There are approximately 300,000 second cars in London which

"REGARDLESS OF CULTURE WAR CANNON FODDER BUMPS IN THE ROAD, THE UK HAS A LEGAL REQUIREMENT TO REINVENT ITS FOSSIL FUEL-RELIANT TRANSPORTATION"

would make carriageway space for approximately 4 million bikes. This would make a huge difference to the parking issues for bikes in London, reduce congestion and improve air quality without needing to find new spaces or disrupt footways."

He also shines a light on the health benefits of more car-free journeys: "if Londoners swapped motorised trips that could reasonably be walked and cycled, 60% of them would meet the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity through active travel alone. The population of London would gain over 60,000 years of healthy life every year as a result and this would deliver an economic health benefit of over £2 billion annually."

Joe from Zhero thinks all the signs are already there. "Hackney has the highest number of journeys made by bike of any borough, so I'd say us East Londoners are leading the way when it comes to active travel," he smiles. "Anecdotally I see a growing number of cargo bikes being used by parents to get their kids to school which is also a great post-pandemic development."

He's excited about the prospect of even more radical changes in future, too: "it would be cool to see more public ownership of the means of transport," he says. "From where I'm sitting (or riding), it seems logical for TFL or local authorities to create alternatives to companies like Uber/Lyft and channel the revenue back into the public purse. We all pay for the infrastructure it relies on, after all." ●

Top: Brompton hire bike on the road, Middle Left: Forest dockless hire bike, Centre: A Capri driverless vehicle trial in the QEOP, Right: Beryl public e-cargo bike

Street art and graffiti have been one of Hackney Wick's most prominent aspects, inherent to its cultural identity and flourishing community ever since the area was first colonised by creatives. The streets and towpaths are an open air gallery of transient art, painted by a diverse array of artists from across the capital and beyond.

One of its most famous canalside walls, located opposite Rockwood Way, is highlighted on Google Maps as a tourist location, but met its demise recently due to the building of the new Wickside apartments on the site that connects to it. For many, this represents a pattern that has become all too familiar with areas like Hackney Wick, where the vibrant art scene responsible for a boost in popularity is then disregarded once big money moves in. In fact, the developers had agreed to fund a proposed graffiti "jam" (where various artists get together for one big painting event) in December, but pulled out at the last minute. Though the jam still went ahead, this recent incident has deepened ill-feeling among the artists and local community members. It's a shame, as that proposed involvement with the jam could have alleviated some concerns artists and locals have about the forthcoming development.

"When I found out this wall was coming down I thought 'This is the last straw' because all the walls the artists paint on are getting torn down to make way for shiny new walls, but they're not compensating for the artists," says Sam Starbrook, a graphic designer and photographer who has been documenting the wall since 2018. Sam launched a petition to save the wall in 2021, but communication with Hackney Council dwindled after he was passed from one person to another, eventually finding he was getting no response, leaving him exasperated.

As Hackney Wick's development continues at a lagged pace, more and more of the wall space available to artists is disappearing. Developers capitalise on the local art, but prohibit any painting on

"ARTISTS COULD FORGET ABOUT LIFE FOR A FEW HOURS AND MAKE SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL FOR PEOPLE TO ENJOY"

their new builds and don't invest in creating new spaces for artists to paint and express themselves. "Just compensate and make an area for the artists to paint on," Sam says, "because, if you don't, they will paint on your shiny new buildings."

The wall at the Wickside development was being painted intermittently, and illegally, for at least a couple of decades, before it started to become more tolerated. In fact, in 2012, two graffiti artists were arrested for painting the wall

ALL IN ALL, IT'S NOT JUST ANOTHER WALL



As the latest of our world-famous local street art locations is flattened by the march of redevelopment, those that have loved it reveal why these sites are so much more than just bricks and mortar

Words: Marcus Barnes

Photos: Carl Franklin, Squarms & Daren Ellis

after a local security guard for the Olympics site spotted them and called the police: "We got bailed for a couple of months but they said they couldn't contact the owner of the building and so the whole thing ended with no further action," one of the artists told The Wick anonymously. "A security guard from the Olympic site had called them and, as the wall wasn't strictly legal, they nicked us. Huge waste of time for everyone".

In the 12 years since the Olympics took place, Hackney Wick has become a hub for days and nights out, tourism, and those looking to buy, or rent, homes in a vibrant community. But the shift in popularity has also brought it to the attention of developers, leading to a gradual erasure of the art and culture that helped establish Hackney Wick as a cultural hub in the first place. Hackney Wick, Stratford and surrounding areas went through a big change when the Olympics took place. Walls along the Greenway in East London, including a designated spot in Plaistow, were all painted over by the council and artists were warned not to paint on them as part of a widespread campaign to sanitise the district. This was parallel to huge property development, the

"ARTISTS TAKE TIME TO CREATE AN ARTWORK THAT MAY ONLY BE THERE FOR A DAY. IT'S A REALLY UNSELFISH ARTISTIC ACT, THAT'S ONE OF THE WONDERFUL THINGS ABOUT IT"



construction of Westfield shopping centre and an influx of new businesses.

"The Olympics was great for East London, but it did change the views of Stratford and now Hackney Wick is full of million pound flats," Sam says. "I understand growth, but I think they should try to keep its spark as well. Why do people come here? The parties, the lifestyle, the colourful scenery, but now it's starting to lose all that."

Beyond the cultural impact of the art in Hackney Wick, Sam points to the effect it has on people's quality of life. Sam himself credits the art with saving him. Finding himself in a dark place in 2018, it was getting out of the house, walking around the area, taking photos and meeting people that helped pull him out of

a hole: "I found a lot of people who were struggling like I was and they didn't necessarily have a creative background either," he explains. "It was a way of letting out their frustration and tension in their lives and just being creative on a wall, where they could forget about life for a few hours and make something beautiful for people to enjoy".

Passersby, locals and visitors to the area also take great pleasure in the constantly changing artwork. Another local photographer, Carl Franklin, began documenting the wall in 2020, during the pandemic for a project he called Lock Down, Get Up. In a time of extreme difficulty for everyone, artists continued to paint the wall on a regular basis providing a free, ever-changing gallery, while all of the city's art spaces had to remain closed. "All the galleries were shut but the street gallery was still there and that was one of the nice things about it. It was that people still had this urge to get out there and paint and that will further people's enjoyment," says Carl. "This is a key thing about the artists' work: They come along and spend a day probably, with tens, or hundreds, of pounds of material and take the time to create an artwork that may only be there for a day. It's a really unselfish artistic act, that's one of the wonderful things about it".

Carl also notes Sam's work and the awareness it has created, inspiring artists from all over the world to paint the landmark wall: "The work that Sam's done and the work that I've done in raising the profile of the wall has really



Burrito, Sidok, Inagaki, Vane MG and Cnufn, of which some of their work can be seen in this article. The loss of the wall will affect many people, with Carl suggesting the developers, at least, incorporate some street art into the property. "If they've got any sense, they would talk to some of the artists and ask them to do murals in the car park," he says. "I lived in Fish Island Village, which is the development opposite this new one, and the gym there has a huge mural by Xens. I thought that was a nice nod to the area".

As Hackney Wick waves goodbye to another part of its cultural heritage, Sam reflects on the end of an era: "It kind of saved me. I was on a downward spiral and the wall gave me a purpose, so it's very heartbreaking." He concludes: "I'm glad it existed and I was able to help it grow in terms of getting more people to come down and share their creativity. I was happy to be part of its life cycle, of taking photos and showing the world how this crappy area can be so beautiful." ●



helped it. I've met Spanish, Italian, Argentinian, even artists from China, coming along to add their work to it," he says. Despite the lack of support from developers, the jam at Wickside still went ahead in December, with a gathering of artists and locals ensuring the day was a positive (and colourful) affair. The lineup included Avatrom, 3XD, Sawce, Squarms, Reves One, Nelius,



Marcus Barnes is a music journalist, DJ and artist who was once incongruously arrested for encouraging crime via the pages of his graffiti magazine. He was taken to court – and won the case. @mgoldenbarnes

Like many, I've heard throughout my life that being an artist isn't a viable career. But when we are coerced into working for free, how can it be? Our passion for creating and coming together shouldn't be taken advantage of or taken for granted. Hackney Wick is such a hub for exciting, artistic energy, it's a shame when there's a misalignment in trying to connect creativity and corporate business, especially when we are surrounded by vast developments and an influx of new communities. Is it naive to believe artists should feel part of that change and not that their absence is the change that's needed?

Recently, I was asked to deliver a paint jam to be part-funded by local developers – the experience certainly gave me some food for thought. This event would celebrate the history of the space prior to it being demolished and was a chance for the local community, artists and developers to open a dialogue on how we can work together as the area inevitably changes.

I was drawn to delivering the project due to my personal history with the location and space; throughout the years, I have made many happy memories from my painting journey spent in this area, meeting other artists, and local people who have said kind words about how the paintings uplift and inspire them. Community is powerful and something I'm passionate about. I believe the same could be said for a lot of

**"WE SHOULD BE
TRANSPARENT ON HOW
MUCH GOES INTO BEING A
FREELANCE CREATIVE"**



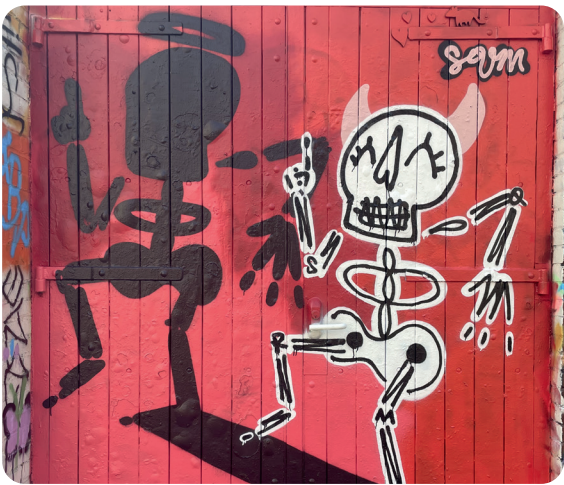
artists and with such a vast range of communities, there is something for everyone to enjoy or feel a part of. In terms of progressive change, I believe discussing with an array of people is key to building the greater community back up together. For that reason, I was disappointed that the developers retracted their funding proposition at the last minute.

Whilst I had been invited to work on the project, the answer to what I would be paid was completely avoided and I felt expected to give 110%. Upon bringing it up, I was requested to focus on delivering

Creative Vitality Meets Commercial Reality

How might we improve the uneasy relationship between local street artists and incoming developers for the benefit of all?

Words & Photos: Squarms



the paint jam, as the deadline was approaching. Not only did I feel powerless, the proposed date of the event was then moved twice with the same urgency and still there was no discussion on my fee or acknowledgment of the hours - and now weeks - I had already dedicated to planning and tuning the logistics. Simultaneously, I was appealing artists to take part in a jam that was to be part-funded by developers.

It was my prerogative to allocate the budget wisely so that the artists and guests could benefit. In this instance, not only was my time wasted, but also that of the artists involved and businesses I had discussed support and discounts with. I felt guilty and foolish to have lost credibility as an organiser over this project. Whilst I care about this wall, I would have preferred to plan something with my friends naturally, rather than at the request of others. The ambiguity and constant change throughout the project was exhausting. It shocked me when the developers requested I still produce the event without funding, and didn't communicate anything with me beyond that.

I cannot thank the artists involved enough for their encouragement and support to still deliver the paint jam - without them the event wouldn't have happened. I'm grateful we were donated some materials and, as a group, we had a great time painting the wall together one last time. Though we didn't complete it to the scale we had originally planned, we did it with what we had and focused on enjoying the day. Our initial plans for outreach with the community had to be stripped; unfortunately, it was hard for us to invite members of the public to come and discuss with us without the additional help we had planned for, but I hope that there will be more opportunities for that in the future.

At the end of the day, I am extremely grateful for the opportunities I've had as an artist and the people I've connected with from it. I aspire for accessible, creative opportunities for local people and for the youth to be encouraged to express themselves through art. But we should be transparent on how much goes into being a freelance creative. There are a variety of roles to fulfil at all times, considerable hours go into preparing jobs and that's often before we get to the paid work. When we are being hired, discussing money or workload shouldn't be an issue and I truly believe the more we talk about it, the better it is for everyone involved.

Squarms is a local artist with interest in dissecting emotions and the mind. Their practice ranges from stop-motion animation to street art. @_squarms

Main image: Hartford Union Canal paint wall, making way for the Wickside development, Left & above: art by Squarms

Creative workshops can be an excellent way for small businesses, artists, craftspeople, not for profits and residents to connect. It's an ideal way get to know each other and even to collaborate.

For the small and not so small independents, running workshops can be a useful revenue stream and one that isn't reliant on cutting costs when that isn't a sustainable option. In a climate where consumers can't always pay more for products and services, an additional or supplementary source of income can help small entities to pay wages, fund speculative work and support environmentally and socially constructive projects.

For local residents, workshops can be a great way to meet new people, discover new venues and unearth talent. Such events always create and cultivate local culture, community, and a support system for each other - a symbiosis, if you like.

We've taken a look all over the neighbourhood and found workshops ranging in price from Free to £495. So, if you've had an expensive month, they can be a great way to get out there without spending and, on the other hand, can be a way to celebrate something special or spend some money on a pursuit you believe in.

Within the Old Baths, just north of The Eastway, artist Renata Minoldo is sharing her social and sensorial practice through **vegan and natural dyeing workshops**. For very reasonable prices you can make a silk scarf, expand your colour palette, make natural inks and try out the Japanese tie-dyeing process of Shibori using pigments from food waste. *Classes from £25 to £40.* @renrrnren



The lovely people at Hackney Herbal offer **herbal wellbeing masterclasses**, herb walks, grow your own herbs etc., all set against the backdrop of their calming garden oasis at the Trowbridge Centre. They offer free events held in the garden, including a nature club, gardening volunteering and herbal craft. *Classes from Free to £45.* @hackneyherbal

Nearby at 90 Mainyard, one long-time Wicker is sticking two fingers up to fast fashion and mending your forever fresh garms instead. Rocky Rakkle Johnson

Wicked Workshopping

Your guide to the wealth of creative courses available in Hackney Wick right now. Why not try something new?

Words: Lily McCallin



from Threads Mending often runs **sewing classes and workshops** including 'Sew Rude' and 'Stitch and Bitch', where you can hang out and chew fat with other rebel embroiderers and make something new out of clothes you were ready to chuck. Keep an eye on her socials for upcoming workshop dates and message her if you have a larger group to accommodate. @threadsmending

It's also worth keeping an eye next door on **Grow Hackney's events page** for workshops that pop up from time to time as well as evening jam sessions, open decks and other interactive happenings - musical and otherwise - because these guys stand for something important. Community. @growinghackney

Wandering through Wick central and found yourself at Queen's Yard? Maybe you feel like meditating over a pottery wheel this spring? Potters Thumb can help you with that. Alongside their popular wheel throwing intros, they're also introducing specialised classes such as **hand building, lidded pot and handle making, macrame** and other surprises. They're offering a chance to learn kintsugi, the Japanese art of repairing pottery using powdered silver and gold. No promises, but events sometimes include a pizza at Crate, too. Sold? *Classes from £55 to £75.* @pottersthumb

Over the bridge at The Trampery, Women of the Wick founder Sara Kärpänen runs one-off **business storytelling workshops**, consultations and entrepreneurially-focused storytelling programmes. Maybe your latest venture needs a genuine, well-written background story to set it apart from the rest? If so, Sara is the woman to help you make it happen. @womenofthewick



Winding round to Wick Lane, and an opportunity for some cheeky rug making at the new tufting destination: Cheeky Studio, based inside Tradestars. They offer standard, artistic and mirror rug making, as well as pot covers and keys rings. *Classes from £50 to £300.* @cheekystudio_london

Swimming around to the other end of Fish Island, if graphics, type and stationery are your thing, you can try your hand at **letter-pressing, bookbinding, publishing** and associated skills at the London Centre for Book Arts, *Classes £125 to £495.* @londonbookarts

A stones' throw away at Bridget Riley Studios, Wilfred Wood creates satirical plasticine sculptures and portraiture. If you can get together six or more people, you can **create a caricature of yourself - or your least favourite celeb**. Wilfred runs workshops in his studio. Keep your eye on his Insta for updates. @wilfredwoodsculptor

If making tiny shiny things is your bag, register your interest with (ahem) me, or book a group workshop. I'm a bit further East - at the View Tube on the Greenway - but I can compactly travel to a venue near you for a group or work party, and you can learn to use a piercing saw to **create a brass or silver necklace or keyring charm**. @lilymccallin

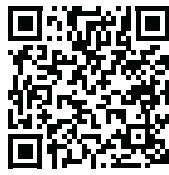
Main image: A Grow social, Left: Cheeky Studio, Centre Left: Potters Thumb, Centre Right: Dominic Cummings by Wilfrid Wood, natural dyeing with Renata Minoldo, Right: Hackney Herbal

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MACKENZIE SCOTT @MACKINS37

Australian-born Mackenzie's quirky, sometimes satirical and often allegorical work draws as much from the history of landscape painting as it does from carnival, protest and propaganda. Through drawing, painting, text, photography and performance he has explored (sub)urban dystopia, repression and body politics, capitalism, consumption - and what these things leave behind. He toys with perspective and finishes as an act of resistance to the hierarchy of image-making endemic in the more commercial London art scene. In 2024, after 14 years in his studio in Hackney Wick, Mackenzie is embarking on a period of making art full-time. He is passionate about more opportunities for young and mid-career artists and believes the plate spinning he and most artists must engage in to survive, is detrimental to focused art practice and creative development. He knows making art is a privilege so is both apprehensive and excited about what this intensive period of creativity may bring...



JUNIOR PHIPPS @INSITUCONCRETEART

Founded in 2004 by visionary furniture designer and concrete artisan, Junior Phipps, Conscious Forms is a design and fabrication studio nestled in the heart of the Wick. Their expertise lies in the intricate realm of furniture design and polished concrete and terrazzo. Each piece narrates a unique story, where polished concrete is not just a material, but a canvas for creativity. Their mission is to harness concrete's distinctive qualities, forging architectural design statements that transcend the confines of homes, workplaces, landscapes, and public spaces. Thriving on close collaborations with private clients, architects, and designers, they craft bespoke cast in-situ concrete and terrazzo furniture and surfaces, integrating statement features such as 'waterfall' end panels and cantilevered seating overhangs. Their commitment is to creating architectural functional concrete forms to live with and love, encapsulating architectural artistry with enduring beauty.

Every issue, we showcase work by a selection of local artists on these pages. Fancy the look of something? Support them with a purchase! Just point your phone at the QR codes...



TATIANA TALSHADE @TALSHADE

Tatiana, who goes by the pseudonym Talshade, was born in eastern Ukraine. Due to her nation's ongoing conflict with Russia, she emigrated to London to fulfil her lifelong dream of painting. Talshade's work is in the style of magical realism; exploring dreams and delving into the deeply personal themes of motherhood and immigration. During her short artistic journey in London so far, she has participated in various projects and art exhibitions, with a particular emphasis on participating in charitable events. In 2023, Talshade participated in Space Studios' Open Studios, in which over 100 artists exhibited their work across six studios. It was an experience that deeply moved her as an artist, believing she received more from the audience than she could give. Talshade believe the English people are incredible. She sits on a world of ideas and numerous creative plans – but only one dream: "I dream of peace. I paint peace."



TRIBAMBUKA / ANASTASIA @TRIBAMBUKA

Tribambuka (aka Anastasia Beltyukova) works predominantly in painting, print-making and large-scale installations. Her visual language is an amalgamation of her background in graphic design, artistic elements found in Russian Avant-garde, French Analytical Cubism, Fauvism, and the spirit of The Swinging Sixties. Born in a city and country that no longer exist (Leningrad, USSR) and after searching for new soil in which to plant her roots, she found herself mesmerised by the complexities of identity, belonging and home. Initially an innocent exploration of what Home is, Tribambuka's themes have taken a darker turn since the pandemic and the tumultuous years that followed, revealing its shadow sides; first, home becoming a confinement, then falling apart altogether. Themes of losing home, broken homes, damaged roots, displacement and losing ground led her to question her identity and belonging even more – who was she when her world had fallen apart? Tribambuka is exploring this in her next show 'Nowhere to Go But Anywhere', opening at Lewisham's Migration Museum, in March.



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How did you come to be in Hackney Wick?
Gigi: I am from Hackney originally, and have lived around here for 26 years - a very long time! Alberto lives right here, above the pizzeria. We opened Natura 11 years ago with the vision of being a local for locals, serving the best sourced food. We directly import key ingredients like the cheeses and cured meats from Italy, where pizzas and pastas are made from the very same recipes, so ours always taste the closest to being in Italy.

What was the inspiration behind Natura?
Alberto: Well, we love the area and the demographic you find around here. We love the artistry and all the creative businesses, but we felt that something was missing. Our mission was to serve the best homemade Italian food, not just to eat, but also to enjoy life around it, which also happens to be our motto at Natura: 'food for life'. We like to call it the neighbourhood gem of Hackney Wick.

Why this spot?
A: We fell in love with this space when we found it, and it's in a great position too - it's close to the Overground station and also the Trowbridge estate. I'm a local, so I would like to think I know the area pretty well. I knew that there were a lot of young people around here - with more moving in all the time - and with other small businesses located here. I thought we would be the perfect addition, and we're definitely a good fit.



It's fair to say there is A LOT of pizza on offer in the area these days - how do you feel about that?
A: When we opened there was no other pizza establishment around here at all, and then Bar 90 opened, a few months after us. We still are the most authentic place, as the others are usually breweries serving food as secondary products - they do not have the classic pizzas we do, and they do not serve pastas either. We are the most authentic and true to the roots of the Italian cuisine and identity.

It's clear that local people love Natura, why do you think that is?
G: Good atmosphere, good food and good company is the key. We look after everyone that comes

The Wicked Ones: Gigi + Alberto, Natura

There's certainly plenty of pizza to be found in the Wick, but these guys were the pioneers, over a decade ago

Interview: Abbie Hedaux / Photos: Daren Ellis



through our doors and that's why we are always busy. It's humbling to learn that people have travelled far just to eat with us. We know all the locals, too - I can't make it to the station without stopping and speaking with at least 10 people!
A: People love to support local businesses, just like we love to serve them. It's all about keeping local people happy, because then they will keep coming back. We definitely have something good going on here.

" IT'S ALL ABOUT KEEPING LOCAL PEOPLE HAPPY, BECAUSE THEN THEY WILL KEEP COMING BACK "

What do you love about the area the most?
A: The creativity. We used to be happier before the gentrification started, and it has definitely changed things significantly. But like many others, we have adapted because we want to remain here. We don't do mass advertising, a lot of our customers find out about us through word of mouth - that's how most people discover us, which is fantastic.
G: The hospitality scene in Hackney Wick today is incredible. We admire our neighbour, chef Tom Brown from Cornerstone; having a Michelin Star restaurant in Hackney Wick is incredible. He is one of our most loyal customers too.
A: He's a great chef, and although we are very different restaurants, we help each other out. We send business to him and he sends business to us. It feels like more of a collaboration between restaurants rather than being in competition, which is better for everyone.

What's your favourite thing about owning the business?
G: I love my job. I put my heart into this and am happiest when I'm in the kitchen cooking for others. Being a small local business means you get to know your regulars. It also puts a smile on my face to see them coming back.
A: That spirit of collaboration; people need to support local businesses, now more than ever. We always try to get our produce locally and buy all our vegetables from our local greengrocer.

What would you like the future to hold for HWFI?
G: The area is rapidly changing and that cannot be stopped, but we would love to see the creative spirit of the area remain. It would be a shame to lose that.
A: Absolutely, there is a balance that needs to be found between making space for new people coming in but also preserving the creativity that is already here. If that can happen then living here would be perfect. I am hopeful, and I already see it starting to happen. 🍕

Main: Gigi at work in the kitchen, below: the team at Natura

A new wellbeing venue in Hackney Wick is always a cause for excitement. Squished between Bad Coffee and Cornerstone restaurant, a new home for sound baths, breathwork, movement, yoga and community circles has recently emerged. It's called Akasa, a Sanskrit word translating as 'ether, sky, open space', which certainly stands out against the rowdy scenes regularly found taking place all around it; crowds of people drinking, chatting, and playing loud music.

I've heard amazing things about owner Sunita's gong circles, so I head down there to give it a try. We queue in a long line to get into the space whilst Sunita stands at the doorway with a feather and a smoking bowl of resin, smudging us upon entry and asking us to leave our shoes at the door as we make our way upstairs.

The contrast between the busy street scene and such a serene space is stark. I instantly feel deeply calm. There's a low red light on as Sunita sits calmly by the gong. Outside there is further commotion; a man with a can of Stella is playing with his dog, who is getting increasingly excited and barking loudly. Amidst the buzz of the city, Sunita holds a penetrative and deeply calm space: "I don't control what happens out there," she says to us, pointing at the large window overlooking Prince Edward Road, "I control what



"I CAN'T COUNT MANY TIMES IN MY LIFE I'VE FELT SO TRULY PEACEFUL, WITH NO THOUGHTS, NO WORRIES, NO STRESS"

happens in here." Her grace and rootedness are very apparent.

Now, I've been to quite a few gong circles in my life, and much like cups of coffee, they are all a bit different. This one, however, proves to be insane. Good insane, though. Really good insane. Gong baths work by stimulating your vagus nerve and can either slow down the heart rate and help you to feel relaxed or they can bring buried emotions up to the surface. On this occasion, I've never felt quite so good after a gong bath. As if resting for lifetimes, I'm so deeply at peace. I can't count many times in my life I've felt so truly peaceful, with no thoughts, no worries, no stress. The Stella-drinking, dog-barking anthem outside drifts swiftly away against the smooth, oceanic melodies of Sunita's gongs, as if in a dream. Afterwards I arise feeling a sense of

Wellness in the Wick

A Space to Journey Within

Open House Hackney has been transformed into Akasa, an events studio that resonates to the sounds of the gong

Words & Illustration: Lucy Porter



deep self-affirming connection to myself, that 'it's all gonna be OK.'

Sunita's decade-long journey in personal growth and healing brought her to Hackney Wick during Covid: "I never planned to be here," she says, "I gravitated this way because of the energy that I found in the community base. People here have this potential of expression, so it felt like the right place to have gong baths – and the perfect place for Akasa."

Her work spans diverse modalities, from playing the

gong to working with private clients, large venues and NHS professionals. She also offers monthly women's circles. Her work as a space-holder stems from her dedication as a practitioner, and after many years, she felt ready to expand and extend into creating the venue; and so Akasa was born. "Events are not easy things to do," she says. "I could only say yes to this once I'd gained personal skills with facilitating, because I wanted to create a venue with authenticity and realness."

Sunita believes inner work is important, as "so many

people are lost and in desperate need of guidance. There are lots of healers, but not many 'proper' healers, as most people haven't truly looked within."

I think of the famous Gandhi quote 'be the change you want to see.' Sunita clearly lives and breathes her service in the world, meaning it was only natural at some point she'd cultivate a venue in which the community can gather. You can feel the intentionality emanating from her. This dedication to community work stems from devotion to her own healing journey. Born in Malaysia and with Indian heritage, she left the country at 18, came here to work in finance and was diagnosed with bipolar at 32. Taking extremely strong prescribed medication "left me unable to function. I didn't work for three years after that, and was deeply unhappy. It was the hardest

" EVERYTHING CHANGED FROM THAT MOMENT... NOW I EAT, SLEEP, GONG, REPEAT "



time in my life, which forced me to deepdive into my psyche and unresolved trauma," she says. After years of healing work, she was introduced to the gong and says everything changed from that moment. "I eat, sleep, gong, repeat" she smiles.

Clearly immensely passionate about helping others, Sunita's desire to open Akasa was as an extension of her mission to "raise the frequency of the planet. It sounds so hippy, I know! But I feel Hackney Wick needs it at this time, because it used to be a party place; the old school people are struggling with the changes, the new kind of energy being brought into the area. Its identity is uncertain. Akasa is a space of community where everyone is welcome – something I felt was lacking in area – with gong, art, yoga, expression. Lots of people who are new to these kinds of healing practices simply might not have access to them unless space is opened to educate people and give them a venue to look within."

Sunita believes that there is no better time than now for Akasa to come to the Wick: "the themes of separation, integration, old versus new, new builds and old builds... there is resistance from old Hackney Wick, and unsettled, unprocessed emotions. We hold a space that facilitates an overall wholesomeness for everybody to reconnect to their hearts, as a community." 🌱

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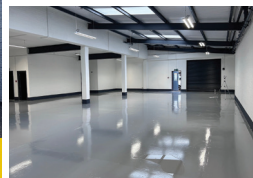


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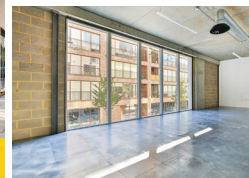


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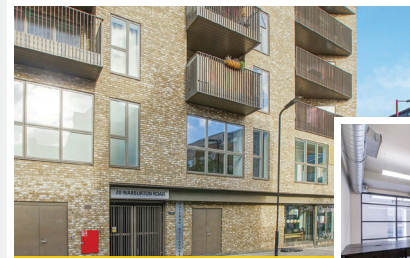


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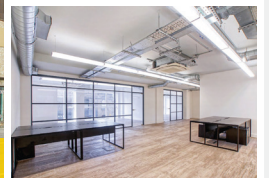


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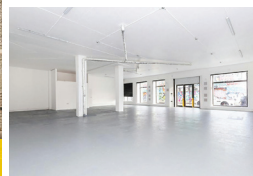
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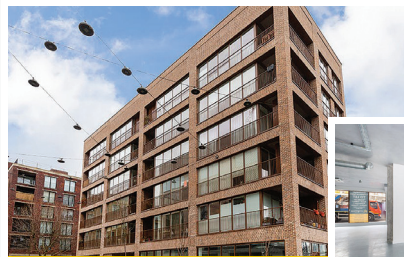


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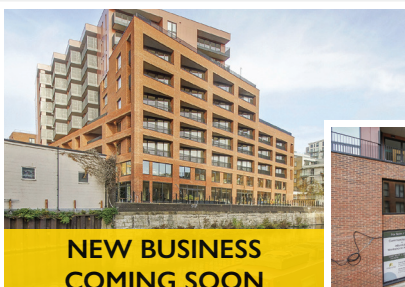


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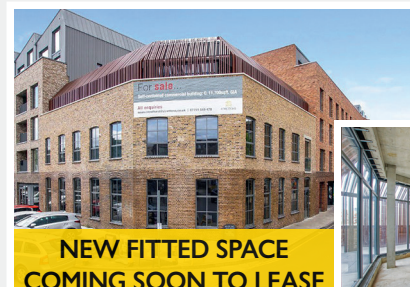


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