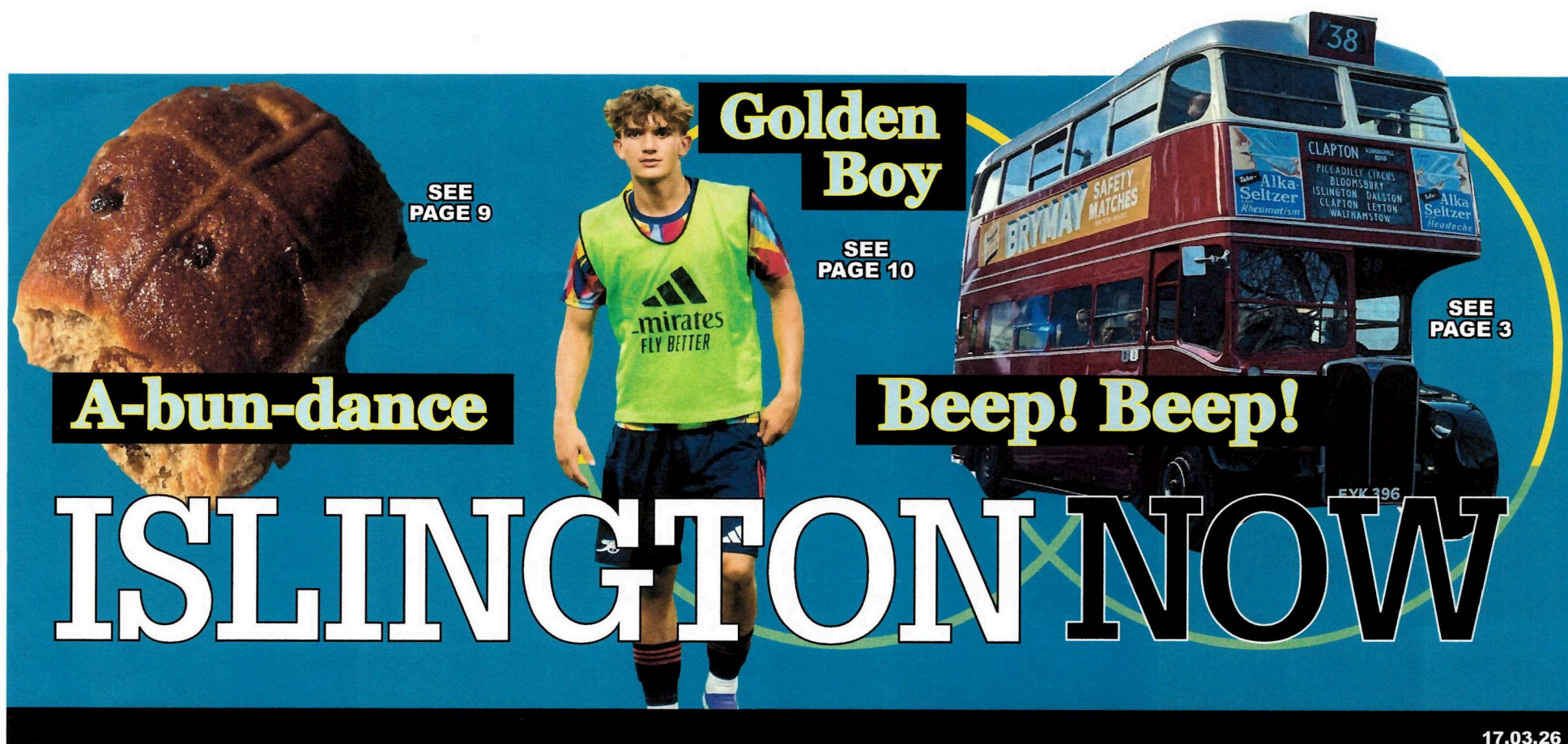




NAPPY FIX FOR ROADS

EXCLUSIVE Soiled nappies could solve the borough's pothole problem

BY IMI DOBBER



Angela Seferi on Dewey Street this week parked next to a pothole which could one day be repaired with recycled nappies. Credit: Chaya Nathan

A pioneering recycling scheme will see local roads patched with repurposed plastic nappies. Disposables collected in a borough-wide trial are being taken to a dedicated recycling facility to be made into material to resurface roads.

NappiCycle's plant in Wales is the first of its kind to open in the UK. This week the firm's operations director, Craig Masters, confirmed: "We are taking waste in from Islington into our plant, and we will reprocess that material into a product that will be put back into local authorities' highways."

The plastic nappies are cleaned and then melted down to make a bitumen modifier for the asphalt used on roads.

More than three billion disposable nappies are thrown away in the UK every year, and none of them have been known to decompose. It is predicted they could last for at least 500 years, long outliving the babies they were once bought for.

Single-use nappies currently make up around 8% of North London's residual waste, say officials.

North London Waste Authority (NLWA) is working with Camden and Islington councils to trial the recycling service.

Residents in test areas will be able to put their nappies out for a separate collection once a week in identifiable pink bags.

NappiCycle claims that as well as the environmental benefits of repurposing nappy waste, their asphalt formula is expected to make the roads quieter and longer-lasting.

But some residents are concerned about

how the borough's families are meant to store used nappies throughout the week.

Aisling McGrath, a mother in Islington, said: "If there was a good handy way to store the bin bag so that it wasn't too gross to keep it for a whole week, I think it would be a really good idea."

"There needs to be a storage component, but I definitely think if that was an option most mums would want to, because they make up such a huge amount of waste."

The nappy bin bags must be put out within one metre of property entrances by 7am on weekly collection days.

But the recycling bags cannot contain any other waste, including tissues and baby wipes.

Households that are eligible have already received leaflets inviting them to take part and order the bags from Veolia.

Parents are also able to apply for a £70 voucher to spend on washable nappies. Switching to reusable nappies can save families up to £1,000 a year, claims the charity Real Nappies for London.

The project manager, Alice Walker said: "Recycling schemes like this, which also highlight reusable options, are a positive step, but the priority should always be given to prevention and reuse."

"Reusable nappies are one of the most effective ways family can cut waste."

Last year, Islington Council spent £125,136 across the borough to repair 1,896 potholes, 4.4 per cent of its road maintenance budget.

You can get more information about the trial and the areas included from Camden or Islington councils.

Gambling harms may be "hidden" in plain sight, says charity

BY ANNA HINDMARSH

GAMBLING addicts in Islington can now get help thanks to a £250,000 grant.

The money will fund a two-year scheme, lasting until December 2027. It takes a holistic approach, targeting linked harms including health and financial inequality.

Matt Smith of charity BetKnowMore, said: "It's really important not to isolate gambling harm as one situation, but to look at it with a holistic approach." The council has teamed up with the good cause and Haringey Mind to

deliver the support services from the 222 Upper Street Office. The scheme aims to help people spot when loved ones might be suffering. Recovering gambler Mr Smith said the biggest challenge with gambling addiction is that it's "hidden".

Changes in behaviour are the most common warning signs of addiction. He said: "When I was gambling, it affected other areas of my life, such as my physical health, my wider mental health, and I lost my job."

The programme will include a campaign led by THRIVE London during the 2026 FIFA World Cup and a best practice toolkit to improve the quality of support services.

The charity's founder, Frankie Graham said: "Growing up in Camden and Islington, I was very familiar with the many licensed betting offices in those areas, and indeed across London. Problematic gambling triggered harms that followed me from the shops to every part of my life."



Mark and Chris from BetKnowMore. Credit: BetKnowMore

Call for new climate action

BY KATELYN FAUBEL

A NEW road map to help tackle climate challenges in the borough has been put in place for the first time since Covid.

The plan will build on the recommendations provided by the community in this year's Climate Action Report.

"After six years, it's about time that we refresh our climate action plan," Councillor Rowena Champion said at the 10 March Islington Council meeting.

Feedback from community members will inform the new plan, which will be implemented later this year after review.

Cllr Champion said: "Everyone's individual experience is different, and we want to get as many people's experiences as possible." The Executive Member for Environment and Air Quality said: "That's how we shape our plan going forward."

Successes from the first year of operating under a Climate Action Report included the creation of an emergency volunteer net-



Islington Park. Credit: Katelyn Faubel

work, developing a cool space map, and upgrading greenspaces to include more areas for prayer for Muslim residents.

One of the largest updates, highlighted in this year's public report, was the creation of

"We need to deliver collectively to tackle climate change"

an Islington Borough Energy Plan. This project aims to decarbonise council buildings and social housing by introducing new low carbon heating upgrades.

The panel also announced that the Islington Community Energy Fund has completed its final round of funding for six projects. This funding will save 34 tonnes of carbon per year. To date, the fund has granted over £760,000 in funding to 59 different energy projects across the borough.

Councillor Una O'Halloran, Leader of Islington Council, told the meeting: "As a council, we cannot do it on our own. [climate action] is everybody's responsibility."

The council encouraged residents to

get involved in the many climate-positive groups such as the Islington Fixers who meet and volunteer to repair anyone's broken items, or one of the Nature Neighbourhoods in the borough that fight to preserve wild areas in Islington.

Tanuja Pandit, chief executive of Power Up North London, said during the meeting that her organization aims to decarbonise community buildings and helps people who are struggling to pay and keep up with their energy bills. She said she hopes that "[the community will] come to us with your challenges so that we can help more of you to deliver the changes we need to deliver, collectively, to tackle climate change".

Cllr O'Halloran commended the Climate Action panel, saying everyone should work together to address climate change, and reiterated that the council is "committed to keep going and to keep working on the climate".

Initiative to use public gardens to feed Islington

BY AMY RUSHTON

RIGHT to Grow, an initiative to turn unused green spaces into gardens that feed the community, has been adopted.

The project, developed by Incredible Edible, a community-driven movement, hopes to address the issue of unequal food access in the borough. It would require local authorities to allow community gardening on public land through free leases.

Katherine Lowe, Islington Campaign



Credit: Alberta Torress from the Cranbrook Community Food Garden

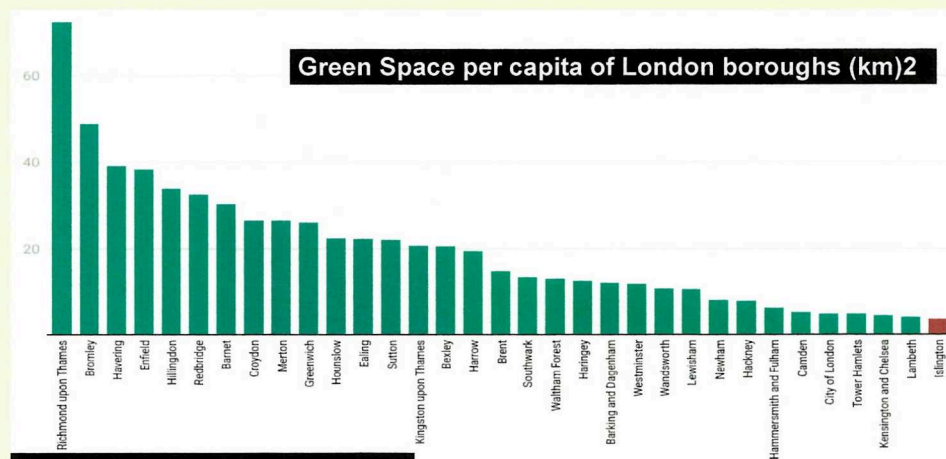
Lead for Right to Grow, said the group sought to increase access to fresh and healthy food, making it less reliant on supply chains of expensive imported food that could be disrupted by climate change, wars and pandemics.

"[The project is] about community engagement and getting people empowered to feed each other," Ms Lowe said.

In January, the Islington Climate Centre along with Octopus Community Network and Islington Food Partnership held a People's Assembly on Food. They discussed several concerns over food insecurity.

Islington has a 43 per cent child poverty rate and has seen an uptick in the number of people using food banks in recent years.

All the food grown through the project will be given to local volunteers, lunch clubs and community kitchens. The group is also planning to grow seedlings to help other



Credit: Amy Rushton

community gardens get up and running.

Right to Grow has already seen success in Tower Hamlets, but the Islington branch face a bigger challenge. With only 3.6 metres of green space per person, Islington is the least green borough in London.

"There is space," said Katherine. "Hospi-

tals, buildings with open roofs – we want to show people that in quite small spaces you can still grow a lot."

In the coming months, the group plans to take walks around the borough to find public land to use for the project. It is developing a new motion to put to the council.

Outrage over plans to host late-night events at art centre

BY ANNA HINDMARSH

MORE than 150 Clerkenwell residents have signed a petition objecting to Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration's recent license application to serve alcohol and host events.

The Quentin Blake Centre is set to open in May, but neighbours fear its application to hold late-night events in the new exhibition space will create noise disturbances and encourage anti-social behaviour in the area.

One resident, Toby Hughes, said: "The community was encouraged to have such a cultural hub in their midst, but it looks like [the centre] wishes to turn it into much more of an entertainment venue. That, coupled with people leaving late at night into such a quiet neighbourhood, would be a bit of a disaster for the area."

"There are a very large group of us who are angry"

Neighbour, Max West, is leading the charge; she has made two petitions since February to object to the license, both of which attracted more than 100 signatures.

Ms West said: "There are a very large group of neighbours who are angry."

She said: "The quiet of this place is exquisite and fundamental to the well-being of everybody in this neighbourhood. It's the quietest area in London and we absolutely adore it."

The centre has applied to host ad hoc events serving alcohol seven days a week from 8 am to 10.30 pm, including on bank holidays.

Ms West said this unrestricted "club li-

cence" would disturb the quiet cul-de-sac on Myddelton Passage. She said: "We're going to hear everything. We know that when people drink, they get louder."

A spokesman for the Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration said: "We value our relationship with the local community and take any concerns seriously".

They said: "We are deeply committed to both minimising negative impact and making the Centre a positive, valued amenity for the local community, as galleries, learning spaces and gardens. We have also reassured residents that there are restrictions in place

on the frequency of commercial events, the timing of activities and the use of music."

Residents are awaiting further action from the council. A licensing sub-committee will meet on 24th March to discuss the outcome of the centre's licence application.



Campaigners Margot Richardson and Max West in their garden next to the Illustration Centre. Credit: Max West



Impression of the new Centre on Myddelton Passage. Credit: Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration.

Kurdish women raise awareness amid Iran war



Sawsan Salim (third from left) protesting for women's rights. Credit: Sawsan Salim, KMEWO

BY SAM TURNER

SAWSAN Salim looked quietly devastated as she told me about her colleague, a women's rights activist who was assassinated in Baghdad on 2 March. She spoke with the fiery passion of a life-long political campaigner. "Slaves are much better than women in Iraq," she said.

"There is even child marriage. Women have rights to child custody," Sawsan, originally from Iraqi Kurdistan, is the director of the Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation (KMEWO), which provides help, advice and financial support to Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) women. Sawsan said: "I was new in this country. When I came here in 1994, I started to be a voice for the Kurdish people, and people en-

couraged me to start an organisation." Many of the MENA women she helps came to the UK on spousal visas and cannot speak English.

"There will be no music and dance this year because of Iran"

"Language and understanding the system are massive issues in the Kurdish community. When you move to this country, you have to understand the system," she said.

Beginning as a campaign organisation, KMEWO now provides holistic services to women. "The best way to communicate with people is to

party. Kurdish people, they like music, and Kurdish dress, and dancing," she said. "We have to build trust between us and society.

We have links with mosques. We do training on domestic violence." On 20 March, KMEWO and Islington Council are hosting a Nawroz event at the Assembly Hall. Mayor.

Nawroz is the Persian New Year, a festival that marks not just the arrival of spring, but also renewal and the promise of new beginnings.

This year, celebrations will be muted, without any music or dancing because of the current war and unrest in the Middle East. "There will be no music and dance this year because of Iran," Sawsan said. "The whole country is on fire."



Iconic number 38 bus. Credit: Martha Cassidy

All aboard!

BY MARTHA CASSIDY

A FLEET of vintage 38 buses drove down parts of Islington on Saturday.

The buses trips were part of the London Bus Museum's Heritage Day on 14 March. Anyone could hop-on for a complimentary ride along the iconic bus route across London, which has been operating since 1912.

The open platform Routemasters dated from the late 1950's to 1970's, featured a real conductor and old-style (free) tickets.

Buses were provided by the museum collection and private owners and ran from 10:00-17:00 between Victoria and Hackney station. Eager travellers were dropped off at popular Islington spots such as Essex Road, Islington Green, Angel station and Sadler's Wells. The museum urged customers to "just turn up at a route 38 bus stop and put out your hand".

The event was the latest in a series of heritage days, which have celebrated other routes such as the number 19 and 418.

Circus welcomes new ringmaster

BY CHAYA NATHAN



Angus MacKechnie at his new post at Jacksons Lane. Credit: Angus MacKechnie

THE new ringmaster at a local circus in north London plans to create more opportunities for young people.

Angus MacKechnie, who has been appointed as the new creative director of Jacksons Lane Art Centre, hopes to attract more youngsters to a career in circus.

Mr MacKechnie said: "Our youth program is very important." He also said that he wants to "take Jacksons Lane globally".

Mr MacKechnie will lead the north London arts venue alongside executive director and his joint CEO Hannah Cox.

The new job follows the departure of long-serving Adrian Berry after 18 years leading the circus.

Jacksons Lane is widely recognised as the UK's home for contemporary circus, hosting performances, workshops and community programmes throughout the year. Founded in 1975, the venue has become a cultural hub for the borough and works with thousands of participants and audiences each week.

"The UK circus scene is underrepresented internationally, and I plan to change that," Mr MacKechnie said.

Islington's running Rabbi raises funds to boost community Passover dinner

BY EVIE SELBY

AN Islington Rabbi ran a half marathon in the Arctic Circle to raise money for a community Passover meal.

Rabbi Mendy Korner described completing the 21km route in Levi, Northern Finland last Wednesday as a "magical" experience.

The money raised will ensure Islington's annual Seder is accessible for everyone and will be used to help fund meal tickets for those from lower income households. Normal tickets for the meal range from £35 for students to £65 for the standard price. As of Monday, Rabbi Mendy has raised £2,354, surpassing his target of £2,100 (£100 per kilometre of the race).

The race route involved running across the frozen Immeljarvia lake and finished with a steep climb up Katkankaturi mountain.

"It was absolutely incredible," Rabbi Mendy said. "The climbing and the views, the twists and turns along the way were so beautiful."

He added: "The motivation along the whole way was so profound."

"It's grown from starting out in the first flat where we lived in Canonbury in 2012 with 10 people around the table, to having 200 people," Rabbi Mendy said.

"It is people from across the borough, different parts of life. It is a real mix of ages, backgrounds, nationalities that come together," he added. "In particular, it is for people who may not have family to join with. It's about creating that space for

them and making it warm and friendly."

Rabbi Mendy and his wife Hadasa founded Islington Chabad in 2011 for the Jewish community in Islington which includes almost 3000 people. Before this, there had not been a synagogue in the borough for around 50 years.

"We came here to give an opportunity and create availability for Jews that live in the borough to have a community space where they can meet, whether socially or religiously," said Rabbi Mendy. In 2024, he ran an 106km ultra-marathon along the River Thames to encourage the



Rabbi Mendy in snowy Finland. Credit Rabbi Mendy

Will Islington go Green?

Greens are projected to take borough by storm in May elections

BY IMI DOBBER

WITH all of Islington's 51 seats up for grabs on 7 May, new data predicts the Green Party could win big.

PollCheck data projects the party will maintain control of Highbury and gain all three seats in Tufnell Park, winning 13 seats across 9 wards.

Jo Dowbor, Green Party candidate for Arsenal ward in Islington told IslingtonNow that the Party's position on Palestine has won them support across the borough. She said locals are hugely disappointed with Labour's stance.

Ms Dowbor added that on a local level: "The number one issue for most people in Islington, regardless of income, ethnicity or gender, is housing."

The Islington Greens want at least 50 percent of new housing developments to be genuinely affordable, also campaigning for the introduction of rent controls.

Ms Dowbor said: "Even if we do not gain the majority and we gain more seats, it will put pressure on Labour councillors."

With the Lib Dems predicted to win two seats from Labour in St Marys St James ward, Labour's stranglehold on Islington is looking fragile.

"I think it will send a strong message to Keir Starmer and his guard that they need to change their behaviour," said Ms Dowbor.

Islington Greens are already the official opposition on the council, alongside four independent candidates who work in coalition with the party.

Ms Dowbor said the party is specifically targeting Highbury, Tufnell Park, Clerkenwell, Mildmay and Holloway as these wards are most likely to turn Green.

In the long-term, the party is also looking to win seats in Arsenal, Barnsbury, Caledonian, and Canonbury.

If Greens win the target wards, they will gain a council majority, with 27/51 seats.

In a Guardian op-ed, London Mayor Sadiq Khan said Labour must stop channelling Reform and unite with progressives "A political strategy of taking liberal, progressive voters for granted is clearly flawed," he wrote.

The predicted wave of Greens support is part of a wider political shift.

According to a new poll by Bombe for The Guardian Labour is on course to lose 741 seats across the capital, with the Greens to scoop up the most of the losses.

The Greens could end up with the most council seats across London with 548 seats, Tories in second with 481, and Labour trailing behind in third place, with 415.

Bombe's polls suggest that Labour could



Islington greens at big action day, St Luke's Church, West Holloway. Credit: Fin Nichols; Graph - Predicted Islington seats for May elections. Credit: PollCheck



also lose control of Camden council, home to Prime Minister Kier Starmer's own parliamentary seat.

Reflecting on the Greens' rising popularity, Tony Travers, a professor of local government at the London School of Economics, said: "What's interesting looking forward to the elections in May is that there is clearly a threat to Labour in Islington and neighbouring boroughs, Camden and Hackney, that will come as a bit of a shock to the system for Labour, who've seen themselves as really embedded."

Mr Travers echoed the importance of international events to Islington voters. He said: "The election refers to issues well beyond the locality, it refers to pro Palestine activism, and if anything, it's slightly tilted towards the international end of the political spectrum, rather than the hyperlocal one or even the national one."

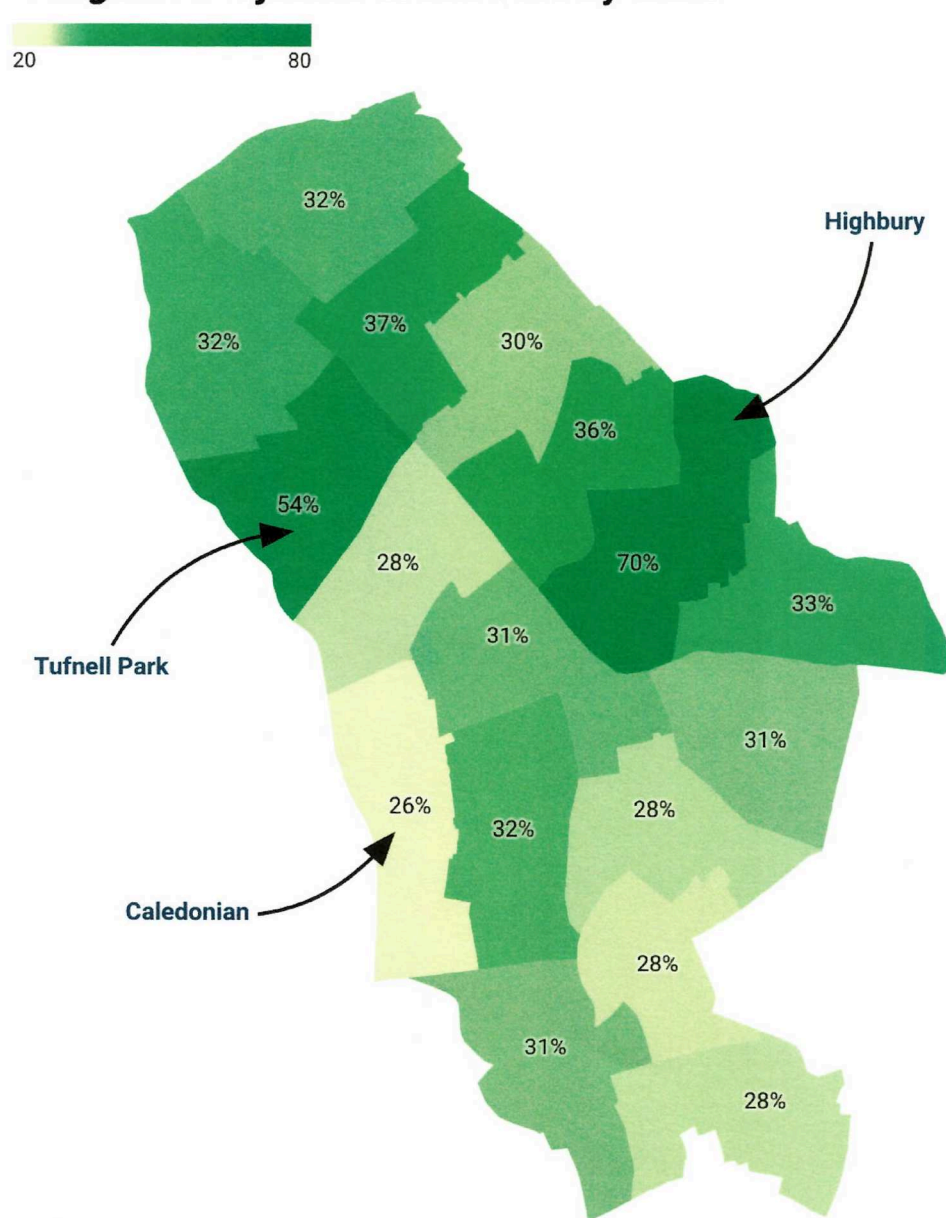
Mr Travers said the local elections in the short term will likely be a protest vote similar to the results seen at the Gorton and Denton, and Runcorn by-elections.

But he added: "There's something in going on in the longer term as well, because the arrival of the Greens on the scene, sitting at 20 percent or more in some opinion polls, is unprecedented."

Mr Travers predicted the potential political shift "is more than a blip" with local elections reflecting a national shift towards "something that looks more like a multi-party, European party system", where the Greens and Reform are making massive gains up and down the country.

You can now register to vote in the local elections until 20 April on the official Government website.

Islington's Projected Green Vote By Ward



Map: Phin Hubbard • Map data: © Crown copyright and database right 2022 • Created with Datawrapper

Violence against girls and women rises 20%

Finsbury Park named as the ward with most offences

BY JOANNE HAMILTON

DOMESTIC abuse has risen by nearly 20 per cent in the past year, according to Metropolitan Police data.

Reports of domestic abuse in the borough rose by 18 percent between February 2025 and February 2026.

PCSO Aketchi, a member of Finsbury Park's Safer Neighbourhood Team, said: "Violence against women and girls is a very important issue for us. We try as much as we can with our resources to be visible and available."

Finsbury Park had the highest number of reported offences in Islington between February 2025 and February 2026, totalling 244.

Tufnell Park recorded the sharpest rise in incidents, with a 48 per cent increase between 2024 and 2026.

The Met says it has given priority status to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in several wards, including Finsbury Park, Arsenal, Laycock and Highbury.

"Survivors still tell us that navigating support can feel fragmented and overwhelming"
- Anna Shewring

Last year, Islington Council won an award for its work housing victims of domestic abuse.

Anna Shewring, the director of Domestic Abuse Development Partners project (DADP),

which works closely with Islington Council and the police, said: "Through the project, we're seeing that the challenges survivors face in Islington stem from deeper systemic issues rather than isolated service gaps."

Ms Shewring acknowledged that a main issue faced by survivors is inconsistent services. She added: "Survivors still tell us that navigating support can feel fragmented and overwhelming."

"By creating space for statutory partners and the voluntary sector to learn alongside survivors, we're beginning to identify structural barriers - from inconsistent processes to cultural assumptions - and build the trust and conditions for more equitable systems to take shape."

You can find more information on the Solace Women's Aid website.



Domestic Abuse offences in Islington

Reported domestic abuse offences in Islington wards 2024-2025 & 2025-2026

■ 25/26 ■ 24/25

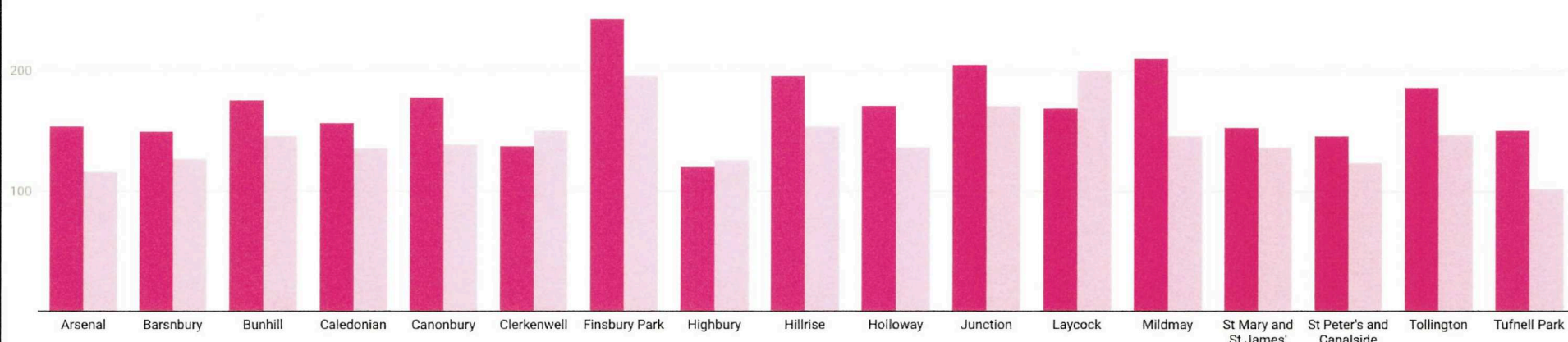


Chart: Joanne Hamilton • Created with Datawrapper

Staff vote 'yes' to strike at London Met University

BY CLAUDIA EFEMINI

STAFF are expected to strike at London Metropolitan University after 120 jobs were put at risk.

It comes after more than 90 percent supported a walkout in a ballot on industrial action at the university.

"I am proud of this result, the demand for action is so strong," said Christina Paine, University and College Union (UCU) branch chair at London Met University.

"Despite postal delays and a devastating situation, our members have delivered a historic result by decisively smashing the trade union ballot thresholds. This vote sends a clear message that staff are united in defending jobs, protecting our university, and demanding a serious alternative to compulsory redundancies."

Should the cuts go ahead, staff and students fear the impact it will have on their careers and education. Beata, a PhD student who is neurodivergent, told IslingtonNow last week that she risks losing both of her supervisors who she has built a solid working relationship with.

Senior lecturer Glyn Robbins said he is at risk of losing his position teaching

Community Development and Leadership which he said would threaten his only source of income.

Staff and students have protested the proposed cuts since then. The ballot had a 51.3 percent turnout, providing the simple majority needed. The window for voting lasted two and a half weeks, and 92 members participated in the vote.

Ms Paine said: "This vote was not easy. Many colleagues voted yes to strike action while facing the threat of losing their jobs. That took real courage. I want to say clearly that I salute the bravery of everyone who stood up and voted to defend their colleagues, our students, and the future of the university."

"The London Met branch will now seek urgent negotiations with management to secure a fair and just way forward that protects colleagues and avoids job losses. At the same time, this strong mandate means we are fully preparing to take industrial action if management refuses to meet our very reasonable demands."

IslingtonNow has asked London Metropolitan University for comment.



University staff picket outside London Metropolitan University. Credit: Christina Paine.

Black book shop marks 60th birthday

BY CLAUDIA EFEMINI

FINSBURY Park's New Beacon Books celebrates its 60th anniversary this year and still stands as the UK's first Black publisher. It comes at a time of hardship as they grapple soaring business rates, the cost-of-living crisis, and nationwide declines in reading.

Since starting in 1966 as an independent publisher from John La Rose and Sarah White's Hornsey flat, the bookshop has weathered a turbulent past decade. In December 2016, it closed due to mounting economic pressures, particularly the rise of online booksellers which infringed on their niche offerings.

But the story did not end there. By early 2017, the New Beacon Development Group, a dedicated volunteer collective, reopened the shop with reduced hours, raising £11,248 through crowdfunding to fund a refurbishment and a website for online orders. Today, the shop is open from Thursday to Sunday, staffed by a passionate

team committed to keeping its literary mission alive.

This anniversary is bittersweet for the bookshop amid soaring business rates. From April 2026 the government plans to introduce two lower multipliers for high-street businesses to calculate business rates bills, which will depend on the value of the property.

Booksellers warn if rental estimates rise when they are reassessed, many independent shops could still end up paying more despite the new lower multipliers.

"Only big businesses are surviving this crisis. New Beacon Books like everyone else is suffering," Michael La Rose, current director and son of John La Rose, said.

According to La Rose, "the dominance of Amazon and Kindle, the [COVID] pandemic shutdown, the cost-of-living crisis, [and] people, young people in



Top: American university students visit the bookshop in May 2025
Left: Visitors browse in New Beacon Books
Credit: Michael La Rose



particular, barely reading books" are also issues that pose risks to the bookshop's survival. Committed customers in the local community are crucial

to the continued existence of New Beacon Books, he urged. For example, "friends like MP Jeremy Corbyn" who Michael said "comes in to buy books from New Beacon instead of Jeff Bezos".

He added: "We are invited to schools by teachers and librarians. We go out to business events and conferences to provide themed bookstalls. We still get book orders

from Islington, Hackney and Haringey libraries." New Beacon Books remains optimistic about the future. "Despite the financial problems we intend to survive and provide the important service of knowledge, education and information to the community," La Rose said.

Yet he acknowledges the heavy task that lies ahead of him leading a bookshop specialising in Black literature from the global diaspora. "We are proud of all that we have achieved but there is more to be done. These are dangerous times with the rise of anti-Black and xenophobic ideas."

Hamnet producer to visit book festival

BY ELLA DAY



Book festival organisers standing outside St Andrews Church
Credit: Ella Day

BARNSBURY book festival has re-leased its star-studded line up of speakers including Liza Marshall, producer of Oscar-winning film Hamnet, and Hollywood actor Robert Delaney.

Between 17 and 19 April, St Andrew's Church in Thornhill Square, Barnsbury will host a range of events celebrating books, fiction and non-fiction alike.

There will be various guest speakers. Liza Marshall, producer of Oscar-winning Hamnet, will discuss how she transformed the historical drama into a screen sensation. Creator of BAFTA-winning show Catastrophe, Robert Delaney will discuss his memoir, A Heart That Works.

Bestselling crime authors, including Lis Howell and Maureen Paton will unpack the popular genre.

All proceeds will be donated towards the refurbishment of St Andrew's Church's spire. The building is not only a working church but a community hub. These repairs will ensure it can carry on this role.

Beyond the guest speakers, li-

brary inductions for children, film nights, book writing surgeries, and a disco are on offer to visitors. Events will extend to local venues including the Jean Stokes Community Centre, Islington West Library and Rival Boxing Gym.

The initiative has been organised by local book enthusiasts Anna Flongman and Phyllis

Richardson.

"I really enjoy the atmosphere and the excitement of ideas you get from book festivals so I thought it would be fantastic to have

in Barnsbury," said Ms Flongman.

The organisers hope to cater to a range of readers. "We did a bit of consultation with people from different backgrounds, trying to accommodate things that they were interested in," said Ms Flongman. In particular, she described how lots of people are interested in crime and history books.

She added: "I hope the event will encourage people to think about reading more books and that it's fun to do so. It's a great way of socialising as well."

Photo club developing

How an online photo challenge has made locals 'friends for life'

BY EVIE SELBY

Highbury Photography Club is a safe space where local connection and creative discussions can thrive.

Five years on since its founding in February 2021, the group has grown into an vibrant online community with currently over 2,000 members.

Each week it hosts a competition where core members take photos which focus on a specific theme. The ten best entries are posted on the Nextdoor website for locals to vote their favourite.

"People say it's the one thing that they look forward to"

JC Hermier, founder of the photography club

The group was founded in February 2021 by professional photographer and Highbury local JC Hermier during the COVID-19 lockdown.

"It was a way for people to take photos and come together while we were all very bored and scared," Hermier said. "A lot of people who are isolated see the competition and then they get to see art in their homes."

Describing himself as the "guardian" of the club, Hermier said the group aims to create discussion about the art, encouraging conversations and friendly debates between family and friends about their favourite photos from the week.



Highbury Photography Club enjoying a shared meal. Credit: Maria Gerardo

"It's not always about having the best photos, but it's about creating a community," he said.

Hermier explained, "we're not doing this for fame or fortune, we're actually doing it for free."

"We have young and old members, we are very different in a way, but we have become a family."

He added: "People voting on next door say it is the one thing they look forward to in the week, while there is all the misery in the world."

He has facilitated a "very positive" online community that rarely receives negative comments in their competitions. This shared eagerness for creativity has evidently bonded members, who Hermier says have become friends for life. "If somebody has been having a rough time, someone will come and help them," he said.

Connections have lasted beyond the online space too with real-life meetups, as photographers

have hosted events every few months including "photo walks". On the clubs last one, they "took cameras and phones and went by Hackney Wick, walked around and had a drink".

Due to high demand, this year, Hermier is hoping to organise a photography exhibition in Islington with some winners from previous competitions to showcase his best images.



Mark Burgess, record shop owner. Credit: Aiesha Akenzua

"There's a ritual involved in playing vinyl records"

BY AIESHA AKENZUA

As Record Shop Day 2026 nears, Mark Burgess, owner of Flashback Records, reflects on the history of vinyl records and its ever-standing prominence within the music landscape. "A ritual involved with playing. It's an active, conscious choice," he said.

Digital downloads dominated the early 2000s, with global digital music sales doubling to around £1.5 billion in 2006.

But by 2007, vinyl records made a miraculous comeback and increased since.

A record-breaking boom was seen during the pandemic. In the midst of business closures, vinyl sales soared. The British Phonographic Industry (BPI) recorded by 2022, vinyl records were the most popular format of physical recorded music since 1987, overtaking rival, the CD.

"I think people like to have a collection, and to see what they have. Similar to having a whole lot of books on a Kindle compared to having physical copies on your shelf," Mark Burgess says.

Perhaps, that is why in 2026, record shops continue to take over London. Mark Burgess opened the first Flashback Records store on Essex Road in 1997 after working in various record shops across the city. With almost 30 years in the making, the independent chain has become renowned across North London for its vast collection of records and CDs, as well as their many events supporting the local music community. This Record Shop Day sees a number of performances from the likes of the bands Godzooki and Middleman.

"I set up Flashback with the intention of making an accessible place for all," he said.

I feel that record shops could be very intimidating places, and I wanted it to be the anti-thesis of the high-fidelity thing of people being chucked out of the shop if they didn't like the music they offered," Mark explained.

"Get yourself a decent record player and follow your ears"

Mark Burgess, Flashback Records owner

Record Shop Day is one of the store's most exciting days of the year. The event was established in California in 2008 as an effort towards championing independent record shops, and is celebrating with special releases.

The day isn't just about fans and after-party gigs - logistics play a massive part in the success of the event. Using online surveys, customers can signal what records they would be interested in purchasing. With over 500 options ranging from 'Then' by The Charlatans to Ethel Cain's 'Inbred,' the vast array of record options reflects the trans-generational demographic of Flashback Records. "We always have a diversity of people coming in and whatever it is you like, it's fine, we'll help you find it," he said.

Burgess stresses that while many people come in for Record Shop Day with a specific record in mind, the element of discovery is the real reason the shop is so successful. For people looking to get into record collecting he has two pieces of advice: "Get yourself a decent record player and follow your ears," he said.

This year's Record Shop Day is on April 18.



Inside the store. Credit: Flashback Records

Cutting-edge crochet

BY AIESHA AKENZUA



Tiana Esparon (left) pictured with her crochet bags. Credit: Flabbergast TV

TIANA Esparon has taken the crochet world by storm. After studying visual art and design at The Brit School and then pursuing a BA in fashion design from Kingston University, Tiana has been running her self-named business for the last five years. The 'Tiana Esparon' collection features a colourful array of crochet bags and accessories; made from upcycled t-shirt yarn.

"My business has grown and changed with me," she tells Islington Now. "I first learnt to knit at 11, but my main medium is crochet as it's quite free and forgiving."

The trailblazer will host a workshop this month at the Islington Stitch Festival,



Model pictures. Credit: Anita Schonhofer

which will take over the Business Design Centre from March 19 to March 22. The festival endorses and puts a spotlight on independent pattern brands and hosts a variety of small businesses.

One word to describe Tiana's art? Colourful. Her portfolio consists of bags in differing neon shades and she appears on the video call wearing clear cats-eyeglasses and a vibrant deep blue top. It's clear that Esparon's brand isn't just a marketing tactic but a deep part of her. "My brand is who I am," she says. "As women I think we all should be loud and take up space - there's enough room for everyone."

Sustainability in fashion is something Esparon

feels deeply about, and she believes that fashion brands should be doing more to prioritise ethical practices. "There is a way to be more sustainable, brands just need to choose an angle and expand on it." Esparon believes that focusing on specific practices such as using up-cycled material could make all the difference.

Esparon also argues that women-owned businesses are inherently more sustainable. "If people want to invest in ethical fashion they can start by supporting women-owned businesses," she says. "We're simply more ethical - it's in our DNA."

Women have always been her role models, and her greatest influence has been her mother, who Esparon believes gave her the confidence to be the woman she is today.

"My mother was a teen mum, and the world put boundaries on her, so she poured into me. My inner voice is my mum; I hear her when I want to go against the negative," Esparon says.

She shows off one of her own crochet hot-pink crescent bags, adorned with pride flag pin and Free Palestine pins.

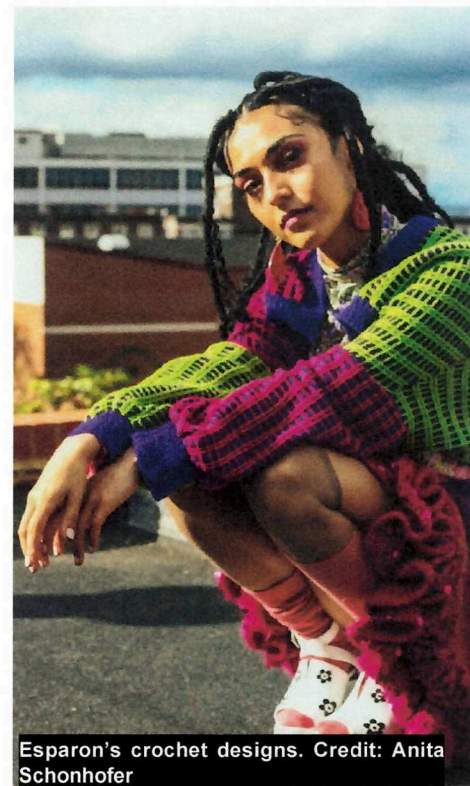
"People want to be involved in the process of their clothing; they want to show personality which is why I think bag charms are so popular now." This could explain why her workshops do so well. She hosts monthly queer-craft socials at House of Denna, a cafe in Woolwich.

The ever-optimism of Tiana is contagious as she shares with Islington Now her hopes for the coming year. "Somewhere down the line, I want to start my own t-shirt yarn brand," she says, "I hope by 2027 to open up my own community

cafe to host more workshops and support other small businesses."

"As women I think we should all be loud and take up space"
- Tiana Esparon

Esparon often refers to herself as delusional and prides herself and her business for self-admittedly going against the grain. She said: "if you have a thought, it means it exists somewhere - be delusional enough to think that you can make it and you will."



Esparon's crochet designs. Credit: Anita Schonhofer

Furious at Whole Foods

BY MARTHA CASSIDY

LOCALS are concerned that a new Whole Foods could exacerbate wealth inequality in Islington.

The supermarket branch, due to open on 2 April, has frustrated residents who feel they do not have enough affordable shops in the area.

"I think Islington is a great example of people mixing together, but if every shop becomes unaffordable for lower-income people, we risk losing that social cohesion," said Richard John.

He continued: "There needs to be a mix of shops, so people aren't priced out the area."

Parminder Chadha, who uses a wheelchair which limits her access to the large Sainsbury's on Liverpool Road, praised the accessibility of the new Whole Foods' site and the fact it "stocks not everyday cooking items". But worried the opening could "socially continue the polarisation of people in Islington".

She said: "People simply cannot afford to shop there.

It feeds the class divide that exists in Islington, it's just catering to one class or group of people, they're privileged by wealth".

"If there's going to be better and healthier food, that's a plus, but the big question for the market is how do you make it available and accessible for everyone?

"It upsets me because I know more people are having to make choices about where they shop...

things are quite tough" Andrew Latto said he "hoped" to get "an Aldi or Lidl" and noted the grocery prices in Islington had risen.

Mr Latto also said: "We need one to open nearer to us because Whole Foods is all quite expensive and they're meant to be really good for price and quality."

He added that the budget retailers were expanding in London and that he would welcome them in the local area.

"Chapel Market is where you have lower prices, but even that's not cheap anymore.

"There used to be lots of independent shops near Angel, now it's all become chains, and it's a bit depressing," he said.

Mr Latto explained that the area already has a lot to offer. He said: "In that area there's a lot of choice. You've got Waitrose, M&S, Planet Organic and Sainsburys. Do we need another high-end supermarket? Probably not. I can't see what it's going to

add. It seems so small a place for a supermarket and it's near everything else."

"A lot of shops in the area are kind of just catering towards on sort of crowd," he added.

Whole Foods "coming soon" signs have been installed at 359 Upper Street.

This is one of the six new branches opening across London, which includes Soho, Chelsea, Kensington, Camden and Stoke Newington.

"There needs to be a mix of shops, so people aren't priced out of the area."
- Richard John



Whole Foods, Angel. Credit: Martha Cassidy

Review: Kanazawa

Martha Cassidy visits Islington Green's newest bakery



Curry breads are fried in breadcrumbs
Credit: Martha Cassidy



Kanazawa's curry bread is "warm and crispy". Credit: Martha Cassidy



Kanazawa's bakery in Islington Green. Credit: Martha Cassidy

ISLINGTON Green has just welcomed its next viral hotspot in Kanazawa, a niche, inventive bakery flaunting Japan's iconic curry bread.

Tucked between the sparkling trinkets and clothing rarities of Camden Passage, and familiar chain establishments of Essex Road, this gem is easy to miss – but doing so would be a crying shame. Since opening on 1 March, the bakery has enlightened the public, taking them on a journey through a street staple of Japanese fare.

Staff are knowledgeable and boastful about the authenticity of their specialised recipe – according to them, other Japanese bakeries in London have been doing it wrong.

They've been baking curry bread, but here at Kanazawa, they are changing the game; wrapping moist, curried fillings in dough, before coating them in breadcrumbs, sesame seeds and tossing them in the deep fryer.

The business first appeared as a pop-up truck in 2022 in Kings Cross' Coals Drop Yard. They have now dug their heels into the foodie hotspot of Islington at their first ever store. Arriving at its opening time at 10am, the take-away bakery greets you with pleasant notes

of fryer (not the cheap fairground kind), and a nostalgic smell of freshly baked goods. There are slow, calming elevator-like melodies playing in the background, and a minimal menu of five varied curry bread flavours, chicken teriyaki specials and Earl Grey cream-filled doughnut.

Sure, choices are slim, and so is the space, but meticulous craft is fed into these vibrant breads. There is no need for much more. It was a bit early to indulge in their best-selling bread filled with Japanese beef curry.

So, I went for the vegetarian one, a spiced mix of carrots, onion and potato, which was warm, crispy, and resembled a large golden nugget.

Royta, the opening shift worker, was warm, helpful, and a clear expert, explaining the flavours of each ball and emphasising the importance in their tactic in deep frying this street food.

The Japanese staple held a crispy exterior, a moist, doughy interior and a fragrant, lively curry – the only issue being it was gone too soon.

Kanazawa provides a fresh education on the art of Japanese cooking, introducing customers to one of their most iconic street foods, and leaving them with a desperate longing to return.



Fink's hot cross bun. Credit: Martha Cassidy

Five best hot cross bun buys to find in Islington

BY MARTHA CASSIDY

EASTER is near, which means chocolate eggs are hatching, Lindt bunnies are lacing their golden bells and hot cross buns are all the rage.

Traditionally spiced with raisin, cinnamon, cloves and dried fruits, or alternatively enjoyed baked with chocolate chips, blueberries or even cheese – these doughs are best treasured toasted and lathered in salted butter to create a savoury-sweet contrast.

As these are staple treats of Easter, traditionally Good Friday (3 April), and there are masses of fantastic bakeries throughout this borough – we want you to be well prepared for where to get the best hot cross buns in Islington. So, we've picked the three best spots for you to get your seasonal fix.

Fink's Highbury

Fink's buns are infused with earl grey-soaked currants, blood orange candied citrus peel, and an Amalfi lemon and vanilla marmalade glaze.

The Dusty Knuckle Highbury Fields

With extra soft texture and "packed with just the right amount of zest", these beauties always go down a treat and they're fully vegan.

Popham's St Peter's and Canalside

Shaped with their laminated croissant dough, Popham's seasonal buns are completed with a citrus gloss and a maple and cardamom syrup.

Jolene Newington Green

Every North London hipster adores Jolene. What's even more fashionable this year are their seasonal buns, drizzled with Earl Grey syrup.

Tarn Highgate

At Tarn, their doughs are especially enriched with cultured butter, brimming with original candied fruit peel and a unique spice blend.

'Beloved' cafe has been demolished due to park renovations in Highbury Fields

BY ELLA DAY

A POPULAR cafe in Highbury Fields has been destroyed as part of an ongoing park improvement project.

The project, run by Islington Council, is planning on putting accessible public toilets, a new park keeper's office, and an area for mobile food and drink vendors in place instead. Oasis in the Park cafe was a small business run by Yehia El-Nemer for 22 years on a council tenancy. In 2024, he was told by the council that his cafe was going to be torn down. Many Highbury residents are saddened by the loss.

One resident described the cafe and owner as "beloved", and that it was such a massive part of the community.

Residents will miss the cafe's accessibility. "The brilliant thing about the Oasis was that it was an a far more accessible place [than most] for everyone to be able to get a hot drink and some hot food," said one.

Though the council initially told Mr El-Nemer it would rebuild a new cafe in its place, last July they changed its mind and decided not to. On its website, it said that "the cafe building is not affordable in today's challenging economic climate."

Many residents are disappointed by this

change of plan and feel like council money has been wasted. Highbury Fields is one of Islington Council's locations for its park improvement projects which seek to revamp green spaces across the borough.

The project began in August 2025 and is expected to be completed this year.

"It was a far more accessible place [than most]"
- Islington resident



Oasis in the Park cafe was demolished following Islington Council renovations. Credit: Highbury Fields Facebook

ISLINGTON SPORT

A knockout plan: boxing club fights for a new home



Reggie Hagland, Islington Boxing Club. Credit: Chaya Nathan

BY CHAYA NATHAN

A CAMPAIGN to raise money for Islington Boxing Club has been launched to replace its ramshackle building. The club, located on Hazellville Road, has served local residents for decades and currently operates from portable cabins that were built in the 70's and were only meant to be temporary.

These distinctive red portable cabins have become a familiar landmark in the area, but club leaders say that the buildings are no longer fit for purpose as they are structurally unsound.

Club manager Reggie Hagland said: "The site was never intended to be permanent. It was used for workers who were building the Elthorne Estate across the road back in the 1970s. They offered the site to us, and ever since then it's been our home."

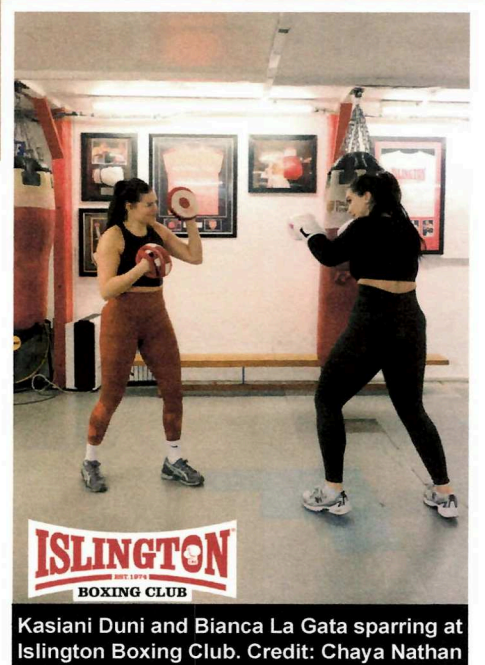
The club has built a strong reputation within the borough, providing training opportunities for amateur boxers and people looking to improve their fitness and confidence.

"It's not just about people who want to become champions," said Hagland. "Someone might come in to lose a bit of weight, gain self-confidence or improve their wellbeing."

The proposed redevelopment would allow the club to expand its community work. "We want it to be a multi-purpose building. Somewhere that can serve the community in other aspects as well."

To help make the project a reality, the club has launched a public fundraising campaign, encouraging supporters and residents to contribute towards the cost of the new building and help secure the future of one of Islington's longest-running grassroots sports clubs.

To donate go to: www.justgiving.com/campaign/newbuildislington



Kasiani Duni and Bianca La Gata sparring at Islington Boxing Club. Credit: Chaya Nathan

Gunner Max Dowman becomes youngest scorer in Premier League

BY ODHRAN GALLAGHER



Max Dowman, 16 becomes youngest goal scorer. Credit: Chensiyuan via Wikimedia

WAYNE Rooney has praised a budding football star named the youngest goalscorer in Premier League's history after a thrilling last-minute goal for Arsenal last Saturday.

At 16-years-old, Max Dowman secured a 2-0 win for his Islington club in a moment which will be written into the team's history books.

Rooney, who also made his Premier League debut at 16, said: "Max could be a Premier League winner when he's still finishing school. He's got an aura and a belief about him."

At 16 years and 73 days old, the young winger beat the record set by James Vaughn in 2005, who scored during his debut against Crystal Palace aged 16 years and 270 days old.

Dowman, who is due to sit his GCSEs this summer, was already the youngest player

to appear in the Champions League and the youngest goalscorer for England's under-19s.

He is currently rumoured to become the Three Lions' youngest player to be capped.

Born in Chelmsford, Dowman began his career at Billericay Town, the club both his father and grandfather had played for, before making the move to Arsenal aged 8.

Speaking on his podcast, Rooney cautioned against the demands of professional football at such a young age.

He said: "If it's education first, I don't think we'll see much of him over the next few weeks."

"He won't be in as much as he'd probably like, but you've got many years ahead of you."

"It's different now, to when I was coming through. There was no social media at that time, so it was all about newspapers. I think the scrutiny's not on you as much these days."

Rooney also praised his playing style, saying: "He seems, from the games I've watched, to not let that pressure affect him because he gets the ball, he holds on to it, he commits defenders, he goes to take them on, and so he definitely looks like he's got a confidence about him."

Dowman has avoided the media spotlight following Saturday. Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said: "For him, everything is natural. It's the way he plays and that's the secret, that he doesn't make a big fuss of it."

"Sometimes people think that enjoying success is arrogant and I just think they do it in the [USA]. They enjoy it and celebrate it."

"When we've got a young lad coming through as a 16-year-old, he's clearly got ability, and you just hope he can go and fulfil that potential," he said.

"Let him enjoy it and express himself."