

WAPPING NEWSLETTER

From Cllr Julia Dockerill & your local Conservative team in Tower Hamlets

- Christmas Tree
- Rat Running
- Ornamental Canal Lighting
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- Bike Sheds
- Broadband
- Cinnamon Street planning application
- Tobacco Dock
- Town Hall Stuff – new Town Hall in Whitechapel, Bishopsgate Goodsyrd



Christmas Tree

First things first, I want to thank everybody who came to the Wapping Green Christmas Tree Lights Switch-on this year. It was a great community event, and so reassuring to receive everyone's support. I reckon around 200 people showed up on the night and helped with the countdown (in the absence of any starry Wapping resident to do it for us!) We also had lights for the shops this year, thanks to Simon at the council who promised that while my request was too late last year, we could get them up in 2015. Long may they

continue!

I put the event on with the help of a fantastic band of locals, who I cannot thank enough for their kindness and generosity. I didn't do an Oscars-style roll call on the night so hope you will forgive me for doing one now! The biggest thank you must go to the magnificent Lauren Hill of St Katharine Docks, who gave up her time to help me coordinate everything. She brought a fantastic team of helpers from the marina, led by William Bowman, and made everything go so smoothly in spite of my flapping around!

Listed below are all the other brilliant people who assisted, including the young musicians from the sea cadet band who went straight into their performance in spite of being stuck in bad traffic on the night:-

Mulled wine - **Peter and Sid** from the **Town of Ramsgate**

Donations - **Tim** at the **Sporting Club**, the **St Katharine Docks Berth Holders' Association** and **St George London Dock**. Their money helped provide food (including all those delicious pies) and drinks, as well as a donation to the sea cadets to cover petrol costs.

Savoury pies from **Hush Hush**, mince pies from **Hussey's of Wapping Lane**.

Thanks to **John** of **Instant Marquees**. The **Hurtado Centre** for chairs.

Studio Spaces for providing bubbly and decorations, and to **Dom** and **Yuval** always for being so enthusiastic in their support.

Kiran from **Tesco Express in St Katharine Docks** who managed to get us tasty treats.

Huge thanks to the ever wonderful **Matt Twohig** and his team at the council, and **Simon Baxter** for getting us the tree. Music from the **Sea Cadets**, as arranged by band master, **Ian Turner**. Thank you also to **Commander John Herriman of HMS President** for introducing us to Ian.

I hope everyone enjoys the tree across the rest of the festive season.

To other news...

Rat Running and Traffic/Road Issues

One of the biggest issues that residents are writing to me about at the moment is the use of Wapping as a rat run, particularly in morning rush hour and by commuter coaches and HGVs. I have raised this on numerous occasions with the council, and in person with the Mayor, suggesting higher visibility traffic patrols in the morning. This has not led to visible improvements yet although I think we are beginning to get some action with better signage and promised rush hour enforcement operations. I have also been working for over a year to get action to stop HGVs using Pennington Street to park-up (and sometimes urinate/defecate). These are NOT related to St George's London Dock site and I have been discussing with St George how to get a permanent solution as they are getting reputational damage from these HGVs among residents. I received this from the senior officer for this policy area:

So far as commuter coaches are concerned, they should keep to routes prescribed as part of their licence agreement and I cannot believe that Wapping would have been listed.

TfL's Licensing Commissioners can take enforcement action against these companies, and indeed we worked successfully with them only last year to get coaches to stop using another rat run in the borough so I am hopeful that they will be able to respond constructively to the pleas for assistance which I am sending them today.

Cracking the other coaches and HGV's is more difficult as we can't physically obstruct them given that there is a legitimate need for local access and the bus route. Parking enforcement are however stepping up their enforcement action against HGV's in breach of the weight restriction.

Other works being delivered by LBTH :

- *Delivered 2015/16 –*
- *minor works incl 8 x new dropped kerbs Chandler St / Meeting House Alley; footway works around development sites (66 E Smithfield / 136 Wapping High St / Glamis Rd);*
- *Enforcement of HGV ban stepped up*
- *Bridge painting of one of the 2 red bridges at Shadwell Basin;*
- *Introduction of 20mph limit on all LBTH roads;*
- *Working up plan to physically restrict parking spaces in Pennington St to cars only;*
- *Planned 2016– Legible London wayfinding signage*

Works being delivered by TfL :

- *Yellow box keep clear at The Highway / Wapping Lane*
- *East – West Cycle Superhighway works through Tower Hill incl. closure of Shorter St to general traffic*

- *Review of Tower Hill gyratory traffic / peds / cycles facilities*
- *Move Vaughan Way Cycle Hire Station.*

Ornamental Canal Lighting

There have been a few bulbs out along the Ornamental Canal, something I've raised with the council. They advised, '*We are planning to re-cable the lamp columns onto our network as they are currently electrically fed from Tobacco Dock. This has previously caused us access problems in maintaining these lamp columns. The work will be completed by 11th December 2015.*' I understand they're now up and running.

Anti-social behaviour

I recently attended the Labour Party's 'meet the mayor' event in Raines House to hear what issues Wapping residents wished to raise with Mr Biggs. One of the biggest concerns to be aired was ASB in the Watts Street area. I try to have regular meetings with police and persistent ASB from teenage boys is one of the issues I raise most often. Most recently that's concentrated on Cinnamon St and Hermitage Gardens, but I have now also drawn their attention to Watts Street (I have only received one email from a resident on this otherwise so had not been aware of the extent of the problem). I have also been in touch with the youth club to see what outreach work can be done to deter negative activity. We're getting a new policing team once again and there was a hope that ward panels would return. I haven't yet had a chance to meet the new sergeant (I believe his name is Matt Selby) who is taking on responsibility for our ward but I shall contact him in the New Year to arrange a meeting. Council officers are looking at ways to design-out some of the problems and take a more joined-up police/council/ASB team approach to problem areas.

Bike Sheds

Ages ago, I worked with some residents to try to get bike hangars by Matilda House as too many bicycles were getting stolen and it was difficult for many residents to take bikes upstairs to store them inside. Tower Hamlets Homes had taken ages to get themselves into gear, in spite of funding having been found from the council's cycling pot. Anyway, after speaking to the right people, I'm glad to say that a planning application has now gone in and these new hangars will eventually be installed. Perhaps this is something residents of the Green Bank blocks might also like – feedback?

Broadband

I know how frustrated Wapping residents are by slow broadband speeds and this is something that I have been campaigning on very heavily in my day job as Chief of Staff to Mark Field. Mark is the MP for neighbouring constituency, Cities of London & Westminster, and he has some of the very worst broadband coverage in the country. We have had many meetings with BT and raised the issues of urban superfast coverage in parliament and directly with Ministers. He has also highlighted the problem in the Evening Standard, and mooted a break-up of Openreach from BT. This has led to BT promising more cash in the last month or so to speed-up the roll out in hard-to-penetrate inner city areas and we now also have good contacts at BT who can advise us on the timetable for particular residential roads in the constituency.

They have recently emailed to say:-

'The good news is that the area is benefiting from significant additional fibre broadband coverage – Tower Hamlets will see an additional 25,000 premises gain access to fibre broadband via the Openreach network over the next 18 months or so, as per our [recent announcement](#). With regards to

Vinegar Street, it should have coverage during Q3 2016/17, so within the next 12 months, although note this is subject to a site survey, permits for any necessary street works etc.

We are in the process of updating the Openreach website (<http://www.superfast-openreach.co.uk/where-and-when/>) to reflect the additional deployment planned for the area. Once this has been completed, which will be in the New Year, your constituents will be able to see whether they are likely to benefit from our additional investment – I'll let you know when this is available.'

Cinnamon Street planning application

This has now gone to a third round of consultation. The latest proposals get rid of the pitched roofs in order to lower heights but that's about it in terms of the extent to which the developer has listened to residents' concerns. I continue to work with the council and local residents on this application to make sure it is sensitive to the heritage area in which it sits.

Tobacco Dock

I am working with residents to mitigate some of the negative impacts from events being held at Tobacco Dock. We are in the process of arranging a date to meet the Dock's management team at which we shall work through the various bones of contention. We have already made good progress in getting some practical changes that we hope will reduce distribution.

Town Hall Stuff

A few bits and bobs from the Town Hall. Ex-mayor Lutfur had given the green light to the purchase of the former Royal London Hospital building to make into a new Town Hall for Tower Hamlets. When new mayor, John Biggs, got in he paused that decision to look again at the finances. Councillors from all parties have been consulted on the proposals and we decided to go ahead with the proposals. Eventually this will see a new civic hub built in the heart of Whitechapel. For Wapping residents, this will ensure we are much closer to the action and can access services far easier than going over to East India, where the current Town Hall is. We shall have to wait a few years though...

Meanwhile it's been a busy time for the Strategic Development and Human Resources Committees on which I sit. Strategic Development has just endorsed the planning officers' opposition to the Bishopsgate Goodyard scheme, which is to be decided shortly by Boris. The goodyard site is just by Shoreditch High Street and committee members got to visit it to see the existing fabric. It was absolutely fascinating as there is a vast tract of land above the railway arches that gives the impression of a big long strip of countryside right in the middle of the city.

I asked the Mayor the following questions and got the following answers:

8.12 Question from Julia Dockerill

To ask the Mayor whether he will be making a decision shortly on the long-term future of St George's Swimming Pools, to enable the council to move forward as soon as possible with a comprehensive leisure strategy for the West of the borough?

Response by Councillor Asma Begum, Cabinet Member for Culture

The Council's current borough-wide Leisure Strategy runs until 2019 and sets out the strategic direction for the council's Leisure facilities. As part of an exercise to refresh this strategy, the Council is in the process of commissioning condition surveys of all the borough's leisure centres.

The outcomes of the condition survey report will then inform the Leisure Facilities Strategy and any subsequent decisions regarding the borough's leisure stock, including St Georges Swimming Pools.

The Leisure Facilities strategy will set the strategic direction for the future network. Any specific changes to individual leisure centres will come forward as separate projects and will be subject to consultation with residents.

8.12 Question from Julia Dockerill: Will the Mayor publish a publicly available list of all unoccupied buildings owned and maintained by the council and all unoccupied and currently unused land in its possession?

Apologies, I can't currently access the answer for this one. FYI, the Mayor promised me a list of all the council assets in our ward back in July which I'm still waiting on. I thought this might prove helpful in ensuring we can make best use of the buildings we have and ensure that they are as accessible as possible to as many residents as possible.

There are many other issues I've been working on which I shall try to communicate when I have a little more time particularly re KEMP, Wapping Green, London Dock s106 and leisure services at John Orwell. In the meantime, merry Christmas to everyone and let's hope 2016 brings joy and happiness to Wapping residents!

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Julia".

Cllr Julia Dockerill

Conservative Councillor for St Katharine's & Wapping, London Borough of Tower Hamlets