



# East Finchley Altogether Better

By Diana Cormack

East Finchley has been chosen to pioneer a new initiative that aims to involve everyone in the community, helping them share information and discuss what they are doing now and what they would like to improve.

East Finchley Altogether Better (EFAB) was launched with a five-hour conference at Shree Aden Depala Mitra Mantra Mandal Community Centre, Church Lane, in early July. It has the support of a range of organisations, including Community Barnet, Finchley Charities, Barnet Council, Barnet Clinical Commissioning group and Barnet Older People's Assembly.

## Togetherness

Opening the conference, co-chair Peter Cragg said that he wanted to revive the "togetherness" of the past by getting people to communicate in order to promote more and varied involvement in their locality.

The scheme is being launched in East Finchley because of its great sense of community and the number of local organisations. How things develop here will serve as an example when it is introduced into other parts of the borough.

After co-chair Roger Chapman had described his warm feelings for the area, the first activity (called "What's good in East Finchley?") provided plenty of examples from local people. During "What does this tell us?" facilitators were on hand to suggest topics and expand on ideas. Among the many aspects under discussion were health, loneliness and age issues, including the

lack of facilities for teenagers. People continued to talk over lunch, when they could also visit stalls from Barnet Age UK, The Carers' Trust and Central London Community Healthcare.

## Health and well-being

East Finchley's Lesley Chowen opened the afternoon session, getting everyone to join in an enjoyable chair exercise session. Brains were then stimulated by a health and well-being presentation, which included a quiz on health and social factors in N2. During feedback, two interesting initiatives were introduced: the Casserole Club, which is a meal-sharing scheme ([barnet@casseroleclub.com](mailto:barnet@casseroleclub.com)) and time-banking, described as reciprocal voluntary work-sharing ([www.timebanking.org](http://www.timebanking.org))

Long-term resident David Smith, of Abbots Gardens, commented: "We are so lucky to live in a community that comes together so well: this conference added another facet to good old East Finchley."

**Seen and heard**  
A woman with a young child was spotted picking herself a bunch of flowers from the bushes outside Budgens and setting off up the High Road with her free bouquet.



Nick keeps his eyes on the road as he crosses Tower Bridge.

# Crystal Palace and back... by bike!

By Nick Young

At the start of the summer, I took part with several thousand others in London Night-rider 2013, a 100-km charity bike ride from Alexandra Palace to Crystal Palace and back, via central London.

Bikes and cyclists of all ages met at 11.25 pm. On the road down from Ally Pally people were apologising as they cut each other up and came within inches of making several bikes hit the deck. Amazingly, we all emerged unscathed.

A steep climb to Highgate and Hampstead split the peloton, and from there we descended into central London. Familiar landmarks flew by as we rode through Westminster to the river, and then across to our first rest-stop.

## Soldiering on

The second leg to Crystal Palace Park went well until the final climb. Some people got off and walked, but I soldiered on at a snail's pace. At the park, people collapsed before drag-

ging themselves to the queue for tea and snacks. We'd been cycling for over three hours and had another 60km to go.

There followed a series of smooth descents and killer hills. Dawn came at Blackheath. We passed through Bermondsey and stopped at City Hall, the third rest-stop. In the grey dawn, people took a breather before riding across Tower Bridge.

There followed a section through the City and a detour through the Docklands. I was running on autopilot by now. On a cold Sunday morning I was unable to appreciate the scenery - I just got my head down and cycled.

Mile End was the last rest-stop. The coffee stall ran out

of cups, and someone said that there were just ten miles to go.

## Pedalling home

On the last leg, my big landmark was passing from the E postcode area to N. Almost home...

We steadily climbed through back streets. Suddenly, I spotted the TV tower through the trees. One last hill, but the road up to Ally Pally is tough if you've been cycling all night. Someone got off and started to walk, but I'd come too far to give up.

I finished at 8am, very tired but also pleased with myself for completing the ride and thus raising over £200 for a good cause. I collected my medal and joined the queue for the bacon rolls.

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