



Who should manage the Old Barn when it is rebuilt?

By Janet Maitland

Do you think the Old Barn should be managed by local people? Local resident Will Hudson, one of the founder members of the Old Barn Action Group, which campaigned for years to bring the centre back into community use, wants to set up a new organisation made up of local people to take on the centre's main lease.

Strong views

There was a passionate debate about how the Old Barn should be run at an open meeting at the Green Man on 27 October. The main issue was the council's plan to lease half of the new building to the Somali Bravanese Welfare Association (SBWA), in order to replace the facilities they lost when their centre on Coppetts Road was destroyed in a racist arson attack in 2013.

A resident from Sylvester Road said such segregation was racist and would lead to isolation. Councillor Barry Rawlings said that rebuilding the SBWA centre would be even more isolating, whereas "barriers can be broken down in a shared building".

A resident from the Grange said: "We've got gangsters living here. We need a place where we can all come together." A SBWA representative said all their activities will be "open for everyone, not just for the SBWA". Another resident said public money should not be spent on Islamic studies. Another SBWA representative said their school curriculum included science, maths and language lessons, not just religious instruction.

Taking on the lease

Will Hudson said the new centre couldn't be built without the money allocated by the council after the arson attack and that local people won't lose any space as it will be twice the size of the existing building, adding: "We've got these contentious issues because there's a void where there should be an organisation representing local people."

John Hooton from Barnet Council, who chaired the meeting, said there will be a thorough vetting process to select the organisation to manage the centre because of the significant liabilities involved. He suggested that if a group of local people wanted to take on the lease they should first work alongside the appointed head lessee. Helen Drake from the Big Local said that they'd asked the National Lottery for guidance on the management of community centres which they would give to the council.

"It's clear there are concerns about how the building will work," said Pat Murphy, chair of the Grange Big Local project. "We look forward to helping explore these with everyone involved."

Women's Equality Party launches in Haringey and Barnet

By Deborah Granville

The Women's Equality Party, which was launched earlier this year by the presenter and comedian Sandi Toksvig and the journalist Catherine Meyer, has opened a branch in Haringey and Barnet.

The branch held its inaugural open meeting in mid-September at the Our Lady Of Muswell Tennis Club in Rhodes Avenue, and since then has been active in the community.

Members enjoyed a special screening of the film *Suffragette* at the Phoenix Cinema in East Finchley and held a meeting in the newly refurbished Oscar's terrace at the Clissold Arms, Fortis Green.

Aims and objectives

The party's objectives are that women should be treated equally in all aspects of life, including work, pay, parenting, education and representation in the media, and it campaigns for an end to violence against women.

It is a non-partisan party, which means it welcomes women and men from all political persuasions who share these objectives, and it aims to deliver them by standing at elections and securing significant votes, showing the established parties that these issues matter.

Led by Finchley resident Sophie Walker, a journalist, runner and autism campaigner, the Women's Equality Party now has 65 branches throughout the UK.

To find out more ...

The Haringey and Barnet branch, chaired by Muswell Hill resident Lucy Baxter of Mandrake Films, was formed in the summer, and is now looking to recruit new members. If you would like to find out more about the party, or to join, email



Shoulder to shoulder: Amanda Shribman, left, with broadcaster and journalist Corinne Sweet before the showing at the Phoenix.

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What lies beneath

By Ann Bronkhorst

Steady drizzle, a thick layer of leaves underfoot, below that a thin layer of soil and below that, London clay. And to be sure it's London clay you can squeeze, roll or even taste it. The 20 or so people who were learning about the geology of London, and of Coldfall Wood especially, didn't taste the clay but we certainly gained some knowledge.

This geology walk, led by Diana Clements of the Natural History Museum, was a first for the Friends of Coldfall Wood. The weather on 14 November could have been kinder but few were deterred.

Diana provided informative hand-outs and had a seemingly inexhaustible supply of fossils and stones to pass round. She found flints in the stream bed, washed northwards millennia ago, and showed us how the massive root balls of fallen trees can reveal the geological past.

We grappled with some awe-inspiring facts and figures,

such as the 40 million year hiatus between certain layers and deposits. Around 450,000 years ago the site of Coldfall Wood was at the southern edge of a vast glacier, the Anglian ice sheet. The Thames has followed at least two different routes before finding its present course.

Most of us had little specialised knowledge of geology but Diana was able to stretch our imaginations to glimpse the big picture while revealing the small clues to the past all around us, in soil, pebbles, watercourses and trees: a fascinating experience.



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