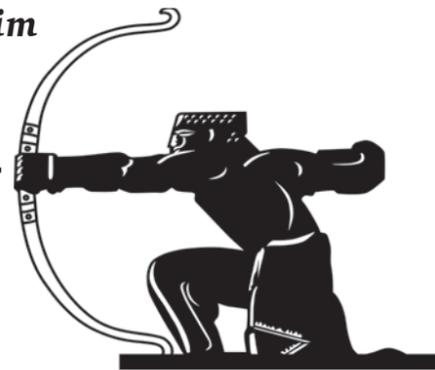




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60 escape Grange fire

Just before midnight on Tuesday 6 November a blaze started in the roof of Willow House on The Grange estate and spread so rapidly it took 100 firefighters more than two hours to put it out. All 60 residents managed to escape unhurt, thanks to neighbours hammering on their doors, but many lost everything except the clothes they fled in. Turn to page 3 for our full report.

Clock is ticking as Phoenix calls off deal with Curzon

By John Lawrence

A massive transformation drive has begun at the beleaguered Phoenix Cinema in an effort to safeguard its independence as staff and trustees warn that it won't survive unless people choose to watch films there more often.

Two emergency groups have been formed to find ways of boosting income after the cinema's ten trustees bowed to public pressure last month and halted the deal that would have seen Curzon Cinemas take over day-to-day operations and potentially invest thousands of pounds in new facilities.

Close to 100 people attended an open meeting after the cinema directly appealed for money-making ideas and practical offers of help. The meeting was told the cinema, a registered charity, needs to find £50,000 in the next three months to avoid the risk of insolvency.

Change is happening

Some initiatives are already under way. A £5 ticket for 15 to 26-year-olds is available at all screenings from Mondays to Fridays, fundraising through donors and grant organisations is being stepped up and operational cost savings are being examined, including replacing the expensive monthly colour programme brochure with a cheaper alternative. The cinema is also accepting donations directly on its website at www.phoenixcinema.co.uk.

How you can help

Practical help with new ideas or fundraising? Contact the Phoenix team on 020 8444 6789 (choose option 6). Willing to give cash support? Donate directly at www.phoenixcinema.co.uk. Thinking of seeing a film? Choose the Phoenix first.

New ideas

Suggestions made at the public meeting included: creating a short Phoenix promotional film to show before every screening; using the cinema to debut the hundreds of music videos produced every year for YouTube and other channels by London's vibrant music makers; bringing back all-nighters for modern audiences who are used to binge-watching; adding a discretionary £1 donation to every ticket sale; tying in with programmes from the British Film Institute and London film schools; hosting regular Q&A screenings with directors and actors every month; and stepping up the cinema's publicity via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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This tree is not just for Christmas

By Hilary Townley
A little bit of Christmas magic has already come to East Finchley, sprinkled by Paul Gardner, who has recently taken over Budgens.

The Christmas tree outside the store is now a permanent, planted tree that will be with us for many years, growing and thriving in the heart of our community. As ever, the lighting up of the East Finchley Christmas Tree heralds the start of seasonal festivities and this year we officially welcomed our tree with carols, lights and festive nutritional treats to celebrate the festive season in N2.

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