



Three-year plan to bring visible changes to Big Local area

By John Lawrence

Six years after being awarded £1 million in lottery cash the Grange Big Local team is set to agree a new three-year plan for projects that it hopes will transform the lives of people living in a large area of East Finchley.

The Big Lottery Fund award was originally announced in 2013 to support community ideas in the area bounded by the High Road, Church Lane, East End Road and the North Circular. Money has been released in installments and work will carry on until 2026.



Big Local chair: James Masters

Varied achievements

To date, the Grange Big Local team has funded youth projects such as Art Against Knives and Basketball is Education, and run weekly citizens advice sessions at St Mary's Parish Centre, High Road, N2. In November 2018 it supported residents affected by the fire in Willow House on the Grange, and for several years has run an annual Fun Palace event for the whole community. Other projects include regular lunch clubs and a summer coach trip to Southend.

Complex projects take time

But chairman James Masters acknowledges that they have underestimated the time it will take to get some of their larger projects off the ground. These include ideas like new play areas for youngsters, finding a community hub where local people can meet and improving the underpass between Trinity Road and Manor Park Road.

"We have found that there are many moving parts in these types of projects," he told *The Archer*, "with sometimes five or six service providers like Barnet Council or Transport for London involved. It can take a lot of time to coordinate them all and see changes happen."

"That's why the new three-year plan is so important. I want to work out what's achievable and then spend some of our money on professional project managers who have the time and experience to get the projects done."

On the list?

Ideas put forward by local residents at an open afternoon in November included making more use of the new Barnwood green space in Tarling Road, improving equipment in the Market Place play area and supporting young entrepreneurs in the area. The three-year plan will be announced early next year ready to start in April.

Autumn fair success

By Stroma Leith

Despite dreadful weather on Saturday 2 November, the autumn fair at Holy Trinity Church in Church Lane, N2, was a great success. People flooded in to enjoy the stalls selling children's clothes and toys, books, bric-a-brac, cakes, chutney, jewellery, plants and much more.

There were competitions such as 'Splat the rat' and 'Guess the name of the giant bear' (Baloo, in case you wondered); story telling for the children and a bottle tombola; meal deals for the hungry and the famous raffle

with fabulous prizes.

More than £2,600 was raised providing much needed funds for the church and we are most grateful to all who came to support us. We hope even more people will come next year.

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Easily learned: Renato Corsetti, left, past president of the World Esperanto Association, with Esperanto author Anna Lowenstein. Photo: Mike Coles.

Internacia lingvo en Orienta Finchley (That's Esperanto for 'International language in East Finchley')

By David Gritten

Renato Corsetti writes a short sentence on a piece of paper, then asks for a translation. What he has written looks unfamiliar at first, but, with the exception of the final word, it's not so hard to decipher. It reads: 'Esperanto estas internacia lingvo facile lernebla.'

The meaning of the whole sentence? "Esperanto is an international language, easily learnable."

Renato and his wife Anna Lowenstein live in St Pancras Court, High Road, N2, and are both leading lights in the world of Esperanto, known as the most widely spoken 'constructed international auxiliary language.' It was devised some 130 years ago to help eliminate barriers of misunderstanding between people who speak different languages.

Growing interest

The couple say that enthusiasm for Esperanto is growing, notably among a generation of young people who travel widely and meet people from different countries. Online courses such as Duolingo are encouraging interest and, for the past four years, there has been an exam organised by the London Esperanto Club (founded in 1903). Success rates are gratifyingly high.

Italian-born Renato, a former president of the World Esperanto Association, and Anna run twice-weekly classes in north London, which are enthusiastically attended. He teaches advanced classes, she teaches intermediate. Renato observes: "People come from as far as Scotland, Wales and Ireland."

"New people keep turning up," confirms Anna. "I think they get involved because as soon as they start learning it, they feel they're part of something."

Family language

They met at an Esperanto congress in the late 70s and got to know each other in Lucerne, Switzerland. "We spoke in Esperanto, which was our common language," recalls Renato. "It is now the common language between us." Their sons, now in their 30s, speak Esperanto, English and Italian.

Anna, who was born and raised in north London, has written two novels in Esperanto. Their titles translate as *The Stone City* and *Death of an Artist*. She reflects: "The whole point of Esperanto is that it's an

easy language. When I was 13 I got a book out of the library in Muswell Hill. I knew about it because my great uncle was interested in it. He said it had no irregularities. And it's true. It's easy, especially if you're learning French or Latin, as I was."

After her 33-year spell in Italy, they moved to London some five years ago. They are pleased by the growing popularity of Esperanto; it has recently been estimated that 814,000 people worldwide are currently learning it.

"So many young people travel a lot or go to meetings abroad," Renato reflects. "And wherever they go—China, Thailand—there are esperantists!"

For more details about Esperanto email Renato at: renato.corsetti@gmail.com

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