



'Stop before you chop' plea for our garden trees

Timber: The back garden tree that was removed

Residents support pioneering trial of 'free money'

East Finchley residents have given their support to the idea of a trial of Basic Income, which would give households regular guaranteed payments and potentially replace the complex system of means-tested benefits.

Residents canvassed on the doorstep and those who attended an Eat Free Pizza, Talk Free Money event at the Tarling Road Community Centre backed the trial, proposed by neighbourhood group Grange Big Local (GBL) and Basic Income campaigners Basic Income Conversation (BIC).

BIC spokesperson Lena Swadlow described a Basic Income as a regular payment given to everyone without conditions, and explained that its supporters see it as a way to give everyone a solid floor of financial security which they can use as a platform on which to build their lives. The claim is that a Basic Income would reduce poverty and inequality and, because of its universal nature, reduce the stigma that surrounds means-tested benefits.

How a local trial would work

GBL volunteer Mike Segal then outlined the idea of the local trial. He explained that, if funding can be found, a number of residents would be selected to receive a Basic Income for one or two years. In return they would agree to take part in regular surveys about their situation: their employment, their physical and mental wellbeing

and other factors.

What the surveys would not do, he added, was inquire into how people spent the Basic Income. This, he said, was a fundamental principle of a Basic Income: it is money that people can spend as they see fit.

GBL and BIC have already found a research partner for the trial in The University of Northumbria. At the end of the trial the researchers will produce a report summarising their findings about the effect a Basic Income can have on individuals and communities.

Organisers said a small trial in the future cannot solve the cost of living crisis, but it will provide evidence for how we might run things in the future. People at the meeting felt that was a legacy they would feel proud of. It would also draw more money into the local economy.

Next steps

GBL is now looking for volunteers from the local community with diverse views to join the taskforce that is taking the next steps in this project. If you are interested in joining, email the project manager at info@grangebiglocal.org. You don't need any previous experience. There will be another public meeting in early February to discuss progress.

Five trees on first-name terms

Here, reader *Charles O'Toole* tells us about a surprising discovery he made while out walking in Church Lane, N2, and, below, local resident *David Broome* reveals the story behind it.

If you walk down Church Lane from East End Road you will see a row of recently planted spindly trees on your right. You may think they are nothing to get excited about. Look at the label, *Chitalpa Tashkentiensis*, and you may be transported to the steppes of Central Asia. So gangly now, next summer the trees will produce lush crowns with large mauve flowers.

Loiter by the trees and you will see they are individually named Eve, Angela, Ted, Pauline and Dominic. Look to the right for a house with a display of smiling ceramic cats, frogs and a ladybird, and on the other side of the road, three silver fishes dangling on a pole. Just a few of the wonders of Church Lane.

Names for the new arrivals



David Broome writes: People living at the East End Road end of Church Lane awoke one morning in November 2021 to the noise of Barnet Council arboriculture contractors planting five Chitalpa trees along our section of road. No warning at all. But nevertheless, a very pleasant surprise for us and our neighbours to have these wonderful additions to our environment.

We decided to personalise our trees by naming them



Personal touch: One of the five new Church Lane trees and, left, one of their name tags

with little wooden plaques: 'Eve' for Eve Bagley, whose family have lived at no 71 for 90 years; 'Angela' for Angela Madden, one of the original occupants of the Cricket Row terrace on Church Lane; 'Ted' for the late Ted Bagley, Eve's husband who was a veteran sailor on the Arctic convoys to Russia during World War Two; 'Pauline' for Lisa at no 81's mother, who always enjoys her visits to Church Lane; and 'Dominic' for the son of Gail and Barry at no 89.

Christmas lights

We thanked Barnet Council

for planting them and I also asked if we could light the trees at our own cost for the Christmas period last year. They were slightly worried at first but after I made them aware that in the 1980s I was foreman in charge of installing the Oxford Street lights for three years they let us go ahead.

Our lights were battery powered and were a great success, which encouraged the neighbours to create their own front garden roadside decorations. So Church Lane became a very nice Christmas feature to all who passed through it.