



Temporary reprieve over heat meters on Strawberry Vale

By John Lawrence

Residents on the Strawberry Vale estate in East Finchley have been told that changes to their heating and hot water system will not take place until the autumn at the earliest.

We reported in December that estate managers Peabody were planning to introduce heat meters into all 268 houses and flats, switching everyone from the existing controlled pricing system to individual meters.

The Strawberry Vale Residents Association said the vast majority of residents were opposed to the move, fearing that the new meters will make it more difficult for hard-up households to budget, and leave them vulnerable to greater fluctuations in their energy prices.

However, last month Peabody announced that they were postponing the switch until the second half of the year and possibly later. The residents' association described it as a "minor temporary victory".

The decision follows a winter when there have been multiple breakdowns in the estate's heating system, leaving many homes with little or no hot water or heating for days.

Peabody was forced to bring in temporary additional boilers to restore essential services.

Peabody's response

A Peabody spokesperson told *The Archer*: "We are postponing the planned installation of the heat meters at the estate while we work on carrying out the necessary repairs to the heat network."

They denied that the new heat meters, when they are eventually installed, would put residents in the position of people across the country who have been forced to use pre-payment meters, a practice recently criticised by energy regulator Ofgem and government ministers.

"Heat meters do not incur the more expensive standing charges which people face using a prepayment meter to pay for other types of fuel; the costs are the same or lower than credit meters," said the spokesperson.



Healthy and happy: Louis Victor, centre, with fellow walkers in Cherry Tree Wood and, below, his eye-catching logo. Photos Mike Coles.

Louis leads the way on wellbeing

By Lynn Winton

Since moving here just four years ago, Louis Victor has become one of East Finchley's many human community assets, volunteering at Finchley Foodbank, being part of *The Archer* newspaper's magnificent delivery team, and coordinating collections on behalf of local project Driving Aid to Ukraine.

So I was not at all surprised when Louis told me he will lead an inclusive and gentle weekly wellbeing walk, under the umbrella of the Ramblers Association, who have given him training and continuing support.

He is aiming for these one hour walking sessions through Cherry Tree Wood and Highgate Wood to improve activity levels safely for adults of all ages. With the added benefits of spending time in nature and making new local connections, all this combines to build up both physical and mental wellbeing.



Walks are free to all on Wednesdays at 10am, meeting at Bus Stop H opposite East Finchley tube station. Look out for Louis in his green tabard with the logo East Finchley Wellbeing Walk. There will be two loo stops, and a chance to take the weight off your feet at Cherry Tree Café, which will give everyone an opportunity for refreshments and conversation.

"From my own experience, walking has benefits for everyone," said Louis, "and a walk shared is doubly beneficial."

It's fine to just turn up at the meeting place, or Louis can be contacted at efwellbeingwalk@gmail.com or on Instagram at [@efwellbeingwalk](https://www.instagram.com/efwellbeingwalk).

One of the best things about East Finchley is that it has so many self-starters who get initiatives of this kind off the ground. Have any other readers started projects that are of community benefit? If so we would love to hear from you. Let us know at news@the-archer.co.uk

Music stops for Les Aldrich shop

By Daphne Chamberlain

Les Aldrich Music, which claims to be the oldest music shop in north London, is closing on Thursday 6 April. According to its website, its roots in Muswell Hill date back over 100 years, and it has been on its present site in Fortis Green Road for 78 years.

As well as vinyl and CDs, the shop sells sheet music and a wide range of new and second-hand instruments, with accessories and extras. It also repairs woodwind, brass, guitars and bowed string instruments. Perhaps its most famous customer was the then 13-year-old Ray Davis, of The Kinks, who bought his first guitar there.

A long-time customer who became the shop's owner in 2013 was Ian Rosenblatt. Under his ownership the shop was staffed by professional musicians and for many years Les Aldrich sold tickets for the annual East Finchley Festival.



Falling silent: The Les Aldrich Music Shop in Muswell Hill.

Customers respond
Celebrated local poet Fleur Adcock told *The Archer*, "One year when they were selling tickets for us, I used to go along every afternoon before the shop closed to pick them up. But what I remember most is the pleasant, helpful attitude of the staff. I also enjoyed browsing there occasionally, among the CDs. Wonderful shop; it's tragic that they are closing."

Another appreciative customer told us, "This is very sad. I live at Chingford, and there is no other shop around like Les Aldrich. I often come over to browse. Such a pity. First the Muswell Hill Bookshop and now this."

On its website, staff wrote: "We would like to thank our loyal customers who have supported us over the past 78 years and we wish you all the best in your musical endeavours!"

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