



Benches that will transform into a stage in town square

By Mark Power

The March edition of *The Archer* revealed plans to transform the wide pavement outside Budgens and Amy's on the High Road into a new town square. Now East Finchley Town Team have been successful in their bid for Barnet Community Grant funds to support making a small temporary installation of experimental street furniture to test one aspect of the design during the London Festival of Architecture (LFA) this June.

The temporary 'Stagesettee', made of timber benches that can be put together to form a stage, will prototype some of the street furniture shown in the town square proposals.

Reflecting feedback from last year's LFA, where more than 50% of visitors said they

of the drawn town square proposals will be displayed in the Egg & Bake café on the High Road throughout June, where residents and visitors can also comment.

Scheme refinements will be made following this second round of LFA public consul-



All change: Concept designs of how benches could be turned into stages in the High Road. Sketches courtesy of Mark Power.

wanted improved planting, more trees, better seating and space for community events, the Stagesettee is made from green materials.

Benches will be positioned perpendicular to the road in the open area of pavement under the plane trees and will be enhanced with extra planting. For performances, they can be reconfigured as a small stage.

The installation, a collaboration between East Finchley architects MillsPower, furniture-maker Fruzi Karig, and local volunteers, will provoke different activities and stimulate further thinking on transforming this area into a genuine focus for public life and neighbourhood celebrations.

People will be encouraged to use the Stagesettee installation for games, picnics, storytelling, talks, plays, shows and music, and to record their experiences on social media, or postcards in the bench. Town Team will hold a community consultation event there on Saturday 22 June.

In parallel, an exhibition

tation before submission for planning in the autumn.

You can also find the drawings and details online at www.eastfinchley.london. If you have comments on them, email eftownteam@gmail.com.



Dancefloor days: Disco lovers of a certain age let loose at the Ann Owens Centre. Photo Age UK Barnet

Never too old to boogie all night

By Karen Williamson

Age UK Barnet's first disco for over 55s was a huge success. Everyone enjoyed a fantastic night of dancing and socialising at the Ann Owens Centre in East Finchley, proving that age is no barrier when it comes to having a good time on the dance floor.

The event was staged to celebrate Age Without Limits Action Day and, to make sure there was something for everyone, disco-goers got a chance to add their favourite tunes to the playlist on the way in.

"I love dancing and have been looking for something like this for ages," said 70-year-old Saj. "I absolutely loved the disco and it was just so great to see people having such a good time."

Some were a bit hesitant at first but once things got going, it was hard to keep everyone off

the dance floor. Leo, also 70, said: "To be perfectly honest, I wasn't looking forward to going but thoroughly enjoyed it after the initial 'wallflower' stage."

Raquel added: "I had a wonderful time and I even forgot my body aches and joint stiffness." One man with mobility issues said: "I love music and it's hard for me to go to gigs as I live in sheltered accommodation and find it more difficult to get out but this was brilliant. I had a seat and could still get up for the odd dance."

Age-friendly Barnet coordinator Pippa says: "We came up with the idea because the over-50s we speak to still want to go out, be sociable, listen to music and dance. That part of their life is not over. As we get older, we still want to do the things we used to do which is why Age UK Barnet aims to make this a regular event."

If you'd like to be added to the list for future discos at the centre in Oak Lane, N2, email agefriendly@ageukbarnet.org.uk or phone Pippa on 07379 331807.

Bowls is a young person's game

The youngest-ever champion at Muswell Hill Bowls Club has said the stereotype of the sport as an old person's game needs to be forgotten.

Billy Barker, 19, who joined the club in 2018, triumphed in the Championship Competition last year, making him the youngest ever winner of this internal club competition. Billy also won the handicap competition, making it a club double.

"The stereotype needs to be forgotten. I believe it stops younger people from even thinking of joining a bowls club in the first place," he said. "It's a tactical game and, once you get the hang of it, it's fun to take part in. It needs to become more multi-generational in the UK as it is open to anyone. In Australia it is very much a young person's game."

"I did get made fun of by my mates at the start when I started playing but once they watched me play and learned the game themselves they realised it was enjoyable and they ask to come

and play in the summer."

The club on Kings Eve, N10, is holding an open day on Monday 6 May, from 2pm to 6pm, and members of the public are invited to attend.

Billy, currently a student at Manchester Met University, is hoping to take his game further this year. "Being able to have my name engraved on the club champion board is exciting," he says. "I want hopefully to be able to retain my trophy this year, and have another go representing the county if the opportunity arises again as well as test myself in the Tudor Cup, the competition for club champions."



Numbers game: Billy Barker says bowls is a sport for all ages

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