



Neglected path is a 'danger' to users

By David Melsome

Residents on the Strawberry Vale estate in East Finchley are hoping for action after reporting the poor state of an underpass path that many use to reach local bus routes. Overgrown bushes and broken steps have left it difficult and dangerous to use.



Watch your step: The broken stairway on the path near Strawberry Vale

The path goes from the estate down to the A406 North Circular where people catch buses to Brent Cross, and also under the High Road or A1000 bridge where people can catch the 263 heading north.

"People with buggies, wheelchairs and electric scooters find it difficult to access these bus stops as the path is badly overgrown," said one resident. "It will only be a matter of time before someone will get seriously hurt as many steps are broken."

Maintenance and repair work has not happened because. Barnet Council and Transport for London have not yet agreed who is responsible for the path.

MP involved

Finchley and Golders Green MP Sarah Sackman has taken the issue up on behalf of the estate residents. Her office reports that TfL met with Barnet Council representatives in the summer to discuss the path and that extra information on the boundary lines was requested before action could be taken.

Ms Sackman's office added: "We are arranging a meeting with borough officers to clarify responsibilities in this area. We want to make sure this is fully agreed before finalising next steps. TfL officers and borough officers have promised to visit the site to clarify who holds ownership and responsibility."



Family-run: Emiliano Ventura, second left, and his restaurant team at Taco Bros. Photo Mike Coles

Family food in honour of a Mexican heritage

By Margaret Crockett

Taco Bros is the new restaurant on the High Road, N2, next to Genzo's. I went to talk to Emiliano Ventura, the owner and manager, to find out what inspired his family to come to our patch to serve Mexican food.

It is late afternoon when I arrive and a group of mothers with their pre-school children are sitting around the tables outside.

Inside the décor is simple and it feels like a family living room. Emiliano comes in with his six-year-old son Sammy, who is soon tucking into a bowl of guacamole and two types of hand-made taco chips. This nicely illustrates Emiliano's concept of an independent family-run restaurant serving authentic and traditional Mexican food.

"It's about preserving a legacy and sharing a piece of our heritage with the community," says Emiliano. He explains that his father Francisco would take him to Mexico City every year to visit his late grandmother, who made and sold quesadillas to support her family, both instilled his love of Mexican food and inspired him to found the business. "We wanted to

honour her," Emiliano says simply. Fred, Emiliano's younger brother, is the other half of Taco Bros and he works in the restaurant whenever he can alongside their mother and other family members. The rest of the staff – Kawa Ramos, Emiliano Ventura, Emilia Diaz, Blanca Ruiz and Antonio Angeles – all have Mexican roots. Francisco also came over for several months to support the restaurant opening in July.

Organic growth

The family business has grown organically, starting out selling food at markets at the weekend, also catering for private events using the food truck that they still hire out, and expanding to weekday markets too.

Securing a spot at the Southbank Centre Food Market was a milestone, requiring more fridge space and prompting plans for the next move to a

permanent space.

The family lives in north London and Emiliano wanted to find a restaurant in this area. When buying a fridge from Genzo's, Emiliano got talking to owner Aki Toumazos, who liked Emiliano's plans and they negotiated the lease for the premises.

The sharing plates and mixture of small and larger dishes, as well as the mini tacos and quesadillas, make the restaurant particularly family-friendly, Emilio explains. Having finished his snack, Sammy was keen to draw our attention to the family photos displayed on shelves along one wall near the entrance.

Francisco is there in the boxing ring but there is also a photo of a younger Sammy and his great-grandmother at home in Mexico City. Her legacy is very apparent when visiting Taco Bros restaurant.

Wine from 1,000 vineyards around the world

By Karly Benson

A new wine shop has opened for business on the High Road, N2, after a soft-launch and free wine tasting event on Friday 5 September. Finchley Wine by Wine Designer has been five years in the making and owners Shah, Ricky, and Ekaterina bring over 20 years of combined experience in wine selling.

The shop, previously an off-licence, was filled with locals for over three hours for the tasting event on Friday 5 September. "It's nice to have it open again," one guest said, adding that it's refreshing to have another different type of shop to add to the variety of outlets on the High Road.

The opening of the shop was not without its growing pains as the owners struggled to source builders during the summer months. A ten-day project turned out to take much longer, so the shop was still a work in progress at its opening.



Vineyard connections: Owners Ricky, left, and Shah at Finchley Wine. Photo Mike Coles

Despite not having its full inventory, the shop displayed an international selection with hundreds of types of wine, as well as spirits, beer, and individually mixed drinks. The owners stated that they have over 200

suppliers, sourcing wine from over 1,000 vineyards globally. In addition to selling wine, the shop is applying for a permit to serve it by the glass, with in-store seating where people can gather, work, and learn about different types of wine.

"Community building is the priority," said Shah, stating that it's the long-standing residents of East Finchley they want to cater for. The shop plans to continue hosting tastings and events, inspiring members of the community to shop locally.

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