



The Archer

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Citizen scientists discover evidence of water pollution

By Margaret Crockett



Evidence: Scum floats on the surface of Mutton Brook and citizen scientists take samples of the water quality

Retired chemists Agnes and Mike Segal have been measuring the quality of water in Mutton Brook in Hampstead Garden Suburb since about 2021. They apply for a testing kit each to test the water in two places: where the brook flows along Lyttelton Playing Fields and further up, near the North Circular.

The key scientific data is the level of nitrates and phosphates. This spring, the pH (acid/alkaline) level was also tested. Data is entered via an app onto a site updated with fresh incoming data every 30 minutes during the four-day WaterBlitz project.

Agnes and Mike use an old detergent measuring cup on a string to scoop up the water. The kit contains three sealed soft plastic tubes containing reagent and a measure together with a colour chart.

The tubes allow measured samples of water to be sucked up and left for the requisite amount of time for the reactant to work and the water to change colour and be matched to the chart. Results for the site closer to the North Circular indicate a 'poor' ecological status; unsurprising since it had foam and algae on

the surface and is directly below a drain. Where the brook runs by the playing fields it has a 'very good' ecological status.

Nutrient pollution from nitrates and phosphates is caused by agricultural fertiliser, intensive livestock farming, sewage discharge and fossil fuel emissions. It causes algae blooms harmful to native aquatic plants and changes to the habitat and food resources of aquatic animals. The release of toxins into water supplies, particularly high levels of nitrogen, is hazardous to humans. The Great UK WaterBlitz is run by Earthwatch Europe. Harnessing citizen scientists, this initiative produces results from thousands of locations at the same time, creating a powerful snapshot of water quality

across the country.

Last year's Autumn WaterBlitz indicated 60% of sites across the UK have poor water quality and unacceptable levels of nutrients. England is the worst, with London the second-to-worst county after Cambridgeshire. Looking at river drainage areas, our own Thames river basin district scores particularly badly, with London returning over 85% poor quality water.

What can we do about the poor quality of water in our local streams? You can express interest in joining the upcoming autumn WaterBlitz here: <https://earthwatch.org.uk/greatukwaterblitz/>.

The Archer will continue to monitor and report on developments.

BE PART OF IT Volunteers wanted

Compiled by Lynn Winton

Join the team at the new **Finchley Free Legal Advice Centre**. This new community-led initiative is providing free legal advice to residents who are most in need. If you have a legal background, and can spare two hours a month, your experience could make a profound impact on someone's life. They are particularly looking for lawyers with experience in immigration, housing, benefits, crime and family. The new Advice Centre will rotate to different venues in the constituency every other weekend. Find out more by emailing sarah.sackman.mp@parliament.uk.

Dovetail DaCapo is a friendly place where asylum-seekers and refugees meet to make music together on **Saturdays from 2pm to 3.30pm at Wren Academy, N12 9HB**. The music is followed by a shared vegetarian meal. If you are interested in joining its rota of volunteers who prepare the meal (heating up soup, putting out bread, hummus, fruit, etc), they'd love to hear from you. They are also interested to hear from volunteers who would like to help in other ways. Email: jam@dacapoco.co.uk

224 North London Air Scouts (N6) are looking for adult volunteers to help run fun weekly sessions for young people. No experience needed, full training provided. Flexible roles to suit your availability. Even a couple of hours a week makes a real difference. Interested? Get in touch at del@224.org.uk.

Finchley Foodbank is looking for a new kind of volunteer to help people with all things digital, such as searching the internet, sending emails and booking appointments. You will signpost people to help with the cost of living, employment, housing etc. You will need to be available for food bank sessions on Tuesdays and/or Saturdays between 11.30am and 2pm twice a month. To find out more about becoming a digital champion volunteer email: hello@finchleyfoodbank.org.uk

Youth communications charity **Exposure**, based in Muswell Hill, is looking for two new trustees, people who share a genuine commitment to young people and can bring expertise in fundraising, digital media, finance, charity governance or equality and inclusion. The role will entail four or five trustee meetings a year, with hybrid options available. To find out more contact: info@exposure.org.uk

Do you enjoy swimming? **WeSwim** is a London-based charity that creates safe, welcoming spaces where disabled adults can swim with the support of volunteers 1:1 in the water. They are looking for volunteers who are keen to make a difference by working with the disability community in Crouch End, giving just a few hours a month. No swim teaching/coaching qualifications required, although being comfortable in the water is a must. Contact harriet@weswim.club for more information.

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If you'd like your organisation to be included in this column please email news@the-archer.co.uk

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Barnet

31 Leopold Road, N2

Single-storey rear extension with pitched roof. Ref. No: 26/1870/192

43 Leopold Road, N2

Two-storey rear extension. New front refuse/recycling and cycle storage. Ref. No: 26/1795/HSE

17 New Trinity Road N2,

Roof extension with rear dormer with Juliette balcony, outrigger dormer, and three front facing rooflights. Ref. No: 26/1851/192

30 Summerlee Avenue, N2

Single-storey rear extension with a maximum proposed depth of 4.05m, maximum height of 3.33m and an eaves height of 3.33m (height of lowered section 3.08m). Ref. No: 26/1799/PNH

55 Summerlee Avenue, N2

Single-storey rear extension with two roof lanterns. Alterations to the existing patio area. Replacement of existing side store and insertion of one roof light. Ref. No: 26/1649/HSE

26 Abbots Gardens, N2

Submission of details of condition 8 (Front Landscaping) pursuant to planning permission 24/5627/HSE dated 14/04/2025. Ref No: 26/1788/CON

20 Leicester Road, N2

Roof extension involving hip to gable, rear dormer window following removal of the existing. Ref. No: 26/1751/192

330 High Road, N2

Implementation of planning permission 18/6392/FUL dated 19/12/18 for 'Demolition of rear storage/retail unit and construction of a retail unit with basement level and 2no self-contained flats over first and second floors, with side balconies and privacy screens. Associated refuse/recycling store, cycle store, parking and amenity space.' Ref. No: 26/1679/191

14 Viceroy Close, N2

Change of use of the property from a single family dwelling (Class C3) to a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) (Class C4) (Retrospective Application). Ref. No: 26/1581/RCU

12-18 High Road, N2

Variation of condition 1 (Approved Plans) and removal of condition 31 (Oriel Windows - first floor east elevation) of appeal reference APP/N5090/W/23/3326949 dated 27/09/2024 (planning ref. 22/3419/S73 variation of 18/5822/FUL) for 'Demolition of existing buildings and construction of two four-storey buildings (plus basement) providing 24 self-contained flats and (Class B1a) office space with associated refuse and recycling storage, cycle storage, two off-street parking spaces and amenity space.' Variation to include removal of oriel windows and updated planting. Ref. No: 26/1457/S73

Haringey

6A Denmark Terrace, Fortis Green, N2

Demolition of existing building and structures on site and the erection of a three storey plus basement building, comprising four residential units and 50 sqm of commercial floorspace on the ground floor, with landscaping, cycle storage and bin storage. Ref: HGY/2026/1355