

The Barnet Society

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Whalebones site work begins

Access for contractors' heavy equipment has been established at the site of the former Whalebones smallholding and farmland off Wood Street, Barnet, where Hill Residential is to build 115 new homes, writes Nick Jones.

Site offices have been installed ready for preparatory groundwork and the construction of a new community building to provide a replacement studio for the Barnet Guild of Artists.

Hill Residential of Waltham Abbey recently completed the purchase of the Whalebones land from the Gwyneth Cowing Will Trust following the granting of planning permission.

Demolition of the farm buildings that make up the smallholding – and an adjoining timber-framed artists' studio bequeathed by Miss Cowing – is expected to start once the replacement studio has been completed.

The new community building will be constructed on farmland which faces on to Wellhouse Lane, opposite the bus terminus at Barnet Hospital.

Trustees for Miss Cowing, who died in 1987, and who was the granddaughter of the founder of the Barnet Press, first applied ten years ago for planning permission to build houses on the fields around the now privately owned Whalebones House.

A protracted campaign to prevent the development ended in October last year when the Mayor of London gave the final go-ahead after Barnet Council had voted narrowly in favour.

Objectors to the scheme claimed that the new housing estate would destroy a significant wildlife habitat and result in the loss of the last remaining farmland between Arkley and High Barnet.

Most of the new houses will be built in the largest of the fields which is opposite the Arkley public house, and which is between the new Elmbank development and the woods surrounding Whalebones House.



“Whalebones Park is a site of outstanding beauty, and we are proud to be entrusted with its future” – Andy Hill, The Hill Group

In an interview for Built Environment News, The Hill Group's founder and group chief executive, Andy Hill, confirmed that the purchase of the Whalebones farmland had been completed.

He reiterated previous undertakings that half the 12-acre site will be retained as a publicly accessible open space.

“Whalebones Park is a site of outstanding beauty, and we are proud to be entrusted with its future.

“Our plans respect the heritage of the Grade II listed Whalebones House and the character of Barnet, while delivering a sustainable new neighbourhood.”

Planning approval has been given for 115 houses and apartments in buildings ranging from two to five storeys in height.

“Spacious, modern family homes” would be available for private sale and affordable homes would be provided in partnership with the affordable housing charity Sovereign Network Group.

SNG's regional managing director Matthew Bird told BE News that its partnership in the development of Whalebones Park would demonstrate how affordable homes can be integrated into high quality sustainable development.

“Our 54 homes at Whalebones will provide much-needed opportunities for local people to access affordable rent and shared ownership in Barnet, supported by the wider benefits of new open space and community facilities.”

Farewell to the 'Bones, Page 2

Barnet Society

The late Peter Mason, the former Whalebones tenant farmer, with his flock of geese – a familiar sight a decade ago



Goodbye to 'Bones

Hidden away in woodland and fields around the Whalebones estate there used to be a range of community activities which over the years were nurtured and encouraged through the generosity of the late Gwyneth Cowing, writes Nick Jones.

Her philanthropy reflected her eclectic interests. She built a studio for local artists; provided space and facilities for Barnet's beekeepers and their hives; maintained a meeting room for Girl Guides and Brownies; and gave her unstinting support for an agricultural smallholding the highlight of which was a flock of geese.

Transfer of the ownership of the woods and farmland from the Gwyneth Cowing Will Trust to Hill Residential marks the end of an era – and has already led to some emotional farewells.

Barnet Guild of Artists will have to vacate the timber-framed studio built by Miss Cowing and is expecting to take on the freehold of a replacement studio to be included in a new community building to be constructed on a site facing Wellhouse Lane.

Because their members felt unable to take on additional responsibilities, the Barnet and District Beekeepers' Association have moved their equipment to temporary storage at an apiary on a farm at Arkley.

Space for a new and manageable smallholding – close to the junction of Wood Street and Wellhouse Lane – is to be

Final group photo for long-serving members of the Beekeepers' Association in the stable block at Whalebones in a room which, for them, held so many memories – from left to right, president Geoffrye Hood, apiary manager Wilf Wood, secretary Ann Songhurst, and Shri Kam.

provided for the wife of Miss Cowing's former tenant farmer, Peter Mason.

Mr Mason, who died last year, took on the tenancy of the Whalebones smallholding in 1962.

After rearing cattle and horses for many years, he built up a large flock of chicken, ducks and geese – a familiar sight for passers-by in Wood Street.

Alongside the sale of the farmland, ownership of the former stable block has also changed hands, and the property has been acquired by the owners of Whalebones House.

Moving out of the stable block was a sad moment for long serving members of the beekeepers' association who gathered for a final group photo in what had been the association's base for the previous 60 years

With its much-loved ornate and welcoming interior, the Whalebones stable block had also been a meeting place for groups of Barnet Girl Guides and Brownies whose leaders made an emotional farewell visit.

Unless they can arrange an alternative meeting room, the beekeepers will miss the use of the stable block for lectures, training courses, and storage. Their four hives at Whalebones were moved to a new site earlier this year.

The association, which currently has 107 members, has apiaries at various

locations in and around High Barnet including Cat Hill, Arkley, and Mill Hill.

One of the greatest disappointments for the association will be the loss of a purpose-built facility for honey extraction which was fitted out with the latest equipment with help of a grant from the Millennium Commission, which distributed funds to mark the turn of the millennium.

Geoffrey Hood said their facilities had been of great importance in the association's education programme. Since 2013 he had helped to train ten to 15 newcomers to beekeeping each summer.

"We tend to start new beekeepers off with a hive at one of our apiaries and then they usually find their own sites."

Documents granting the artists' guild the freehold of a new studio are in the process of being exchanged and it is due to be completed next year.

Helen Leake, guild membership secretary, said they were waiting to hear more from the Gwyneth Cowing Will Trust which had originally proposed a leasehold agreement.

Councillor David Longstaff, a former guild chair, welcomed the offer of a freehold.

"Gaining the freehold will give the guild much greater security and a wider range of options over the future use of the studio such as a chance to develop art classes for local children and arrange community events, initiatives which we know Miss Cowing would have been keen to support."



Save New Barnet campaigner John Dix

Things looking better on the home front

After several ongoing local disputes about the height and density of new blocks of flats residents' groups have welcomed plans to build 80 family homes on the remainder of the gas works site in Albert Road, New Barnet, writes Nick Jones.

Save New Barnet campaigner John Dix said community organisations were delighted that developers Berkeley Homes had reflected local opinion and are seeking planning permission for three- and four-bedroom homes – of two to three storeys in height – instead of opting for a high-rise scheme.

The four-acre site is just to the north of the much larger Victoria Quarter development where City Fairview are constructing a new complex of 420 flats in 11 blocks of up to eight storeys in height.

After years of opposition to schemes offering only high-rise flats, usually of just one- and two-bedrooms, Mr Dix said Berkeley Homes had taken heed of the campaign by community groups for the construction of more family homes.

Under the Barnet local plan, the four-acre brownfield site had been earmarked for as many as 190 homes.

Save New Barnet feared that Berkeley Homes might follow the example of City Fairview and build yet more blocks of flats.

“Berkeley Homes have seemed anxious to engage with the community, and it is a pleasant change when a developer listens to what the community wants,” said Mr Dix.

“Our demand all along has been for more family homes rather than one-bedroom flats and well done to Berkeley Homes for having listened.”

Mr Dix acknowledged that there were some restraints on the site which might add to the sale price of the new houses – the site needed to be decontaminated and there will continue to be some underground pipework.

When asked by the Barnet Society at a consultation evening whether the scheme would include any affordable housing, architects JTP said this was still under consideration.

Berkeley Homes and other developers

have had discussions with the Greater London Authority about reducing the affordable housing target for London.

Housing Secretary Steve Reed announced in late October that the target would be reduced from 35 to 20 per cent to speed up house construction.

Perhaps the biggest change to the area will be the demolition of the 90-year-old cast iron framework of the New Barnet gasometer – a local landmark when seen from the Victoria Recreation Ground and other locations.

Built in 1934, the gas holder was decommissioned in 2009.

Visible from streets all around New Barnet, the massive structure divides opinion – some think it should have been pulled down years ago while others admire its elegance and welcome its presence as a familiar sight on the local skyline.

The 38-metre-high frame has been described by National Grid Property Holdings as having “no particular historic or architectural merit” and “little, if any, heritage value.”



Planning & Environment:

Winter Report, by Robin Bishop

We've submitted a 64-page objection to the planning application for 283 flats on **High Barnet Station car park**. My thanks to the many members who contributed their comments, and especially to Simon Kaufman who put together such a powerful and professional document.

Quite a number of members complained to us about difficulties uploading their comments to the Council's planning portal. Also, most 'supporters' of the application show no knowledge of the site and have been canvassed by an organisation called **Just Build Homes**. We've reported both issues to the highest officer level. Action has been promised, at least on the issues with the portal. As I write, there are 643 objections on the planning portal and only 85 'supports' – unambiguous proof of community opposition, though the Planning Committee can choose to ignore it.

Places for London have since submitted numerous amendments and clarifications to the planning portal, which we'll study and comment on if necessary. Alongside Barnet Residents Association we stand by to speak at the Planning Committee, whenever that happens.

Recently the Council has acted robustly to protect the Green Belt, refusing the new stadium for **Barnet Football Club** on Barnet Playing Fields (though the Club could yet appeal) and itself appealing against the Planning Inspectorate for allowing two **travellers' pitches off Mays Lane**. Since then, it's refused an application to build three new houses at **56 Hendon Wood Lane**. Long-time readers will recall that for ten years the site has been used as a builders' yard, so it's pleasing that the planners do not consider the land to be 'Grey Belt', which would make it eligible for development.

We hope the Council will be equally robust in protecting the woodland and wildlife of **Christchurch Lane spinney**, as promised in its Green Manifesto before the 2022 local election. It stands to gain £430,000 for selling its share of the site, provided that planning consent is given for a new mansion on part of it. We're watching to see how this conflict of interest is managed.

The spinney is between Old Fold Manor golf course and Hadley Green, both of which are designated in **London's draft Nature Recovery Strategy**, potentially a valuable new weapon to conserve and enhance local biodiversity. We've submitted favourable comments in response to the recent public consultation, and look forward to seeing how it translates into an actionable Local Plan as well as how we can contribute.

We've also responded to Barnet's consultation on its draft **Sustainable Design and Development Guidance**. We generally approved of it, but regretfully didn't have the resources to complete the lengthy and rigid online questionnaires.

Last summer we objected to the modern replacement of the traditional shopfront of **190 High Street (Wilkinson Chemist)** in the

Monken Hadley Conservation Area, and the Council refused permission. The owner has now gone to appeal.

For **1 Bath Place**, close to the same Conservation Area, the High Barnet Islamic Centre has applied to regularise prayer at their existing community centre. We saw no reason to object subject to appropriate limits on noise and traffic. *See Page 6*

Berkeley Homes recently consulted the New Barnet community about building 80 homes up to three storeys high, most with gardens, on the **Albert Road gasworks site**. They would be a refreshing contrast to the neighbouring Park (fka Victoria) Quarter. *See Page 3*

Just across Barnet's northern border, **Sky Studios** have been granted permission to build ten more sound stages in the Green Belt beside the A1.

Finally, the government is proposing a new town for some 21,000 residents at **Crews Hill & Chase Park**, between Oakwood and Enfield. If well planned and designed, it would be an improvement on most other developments in the Green Belt, but will take years to build.



Planning & Environment:

Elevation view of High Barnet Station development by jtp Architects & Masterplanners



Reply from Dan Tomlinson MP

Extract of email to Dan Tomlinson MP

The Barnet Society

...The timing of this application over the summer holidays, an incorrect deadline date on public posters and numerous difficulties with the Council portal have not encouraged confidence in Barnet's planning process. Approving these proposals could further undermine it, with long-term consequences for the Council as well as our built environment.

I should also mention that many of our members have asked me where you stand on the matter.

Best regards
Robin Bishop,
Planning & Environment Lead,
The Barnet Society



Dear Robin,

Thank you for emailing me about the High Barnet station planning application. I have listened carefully to the concerns that residents have raised with me on this scheme over the past year and have repeatedly brought these to the attention of the developers and council officers, advocating for changes to the scheme. I organised a public meeting in March to ensure that the developers heard directly from people who live in Chipping Barnet as well as for residents to understand what the developers are planning.

There is a housing crisis in London and children and young adults growing up in Barnet today are finding that they just can't afford to stay in our borough into adulthood. That's why I support the mission of this government to build more homes for people and families. The site in question was allocated for development under the Local Plan, and in principle I think it is a sensible place to build new homes.

However, it is clear to me that despite securing some positive changes, there are issues with the development as currently put forward. These include the loss of almost all car parking spaces (which we need in the suburbs) and the height of the tallest building breaching the maximum threshold suggested in the Local Plan (at 11 storeys, compared to 7 storeys as set out in the Plan).

It is for local councillors on planning committees to make a clear-eyed assessment of whether a scheme is in line with local planning policies – that is their formal legal role (see this note from the LGA) – and I do not believe it is right for MPs to put political pressure on Councillors to vote one way or another. That is why I have focused on listening to residents and representing those views to developers and council officers to seek scheme improvements.

Thank you again for your email,

Dan





Islamic Centre reaches out to refugees

High Barnet Islamic Centre has extended its outreach programme of community events with volunteers recently welcoming over 30 asylum seekers and refugees for refreshments.

The group travelled to the centre by coach from a nearby hotel for an afternoon of hospitality organised in conjunction with HAWA, a Hertfordshire-wide multicultural women’s group, which provides a range of care services.

Extra warm clothing was offered to those who needed it including hats and scarves.

Anjim Iqbal (far right), events co-ordinator for the High Barnet centre – seen with volunteers Siham Bedjaoui and Zeenath Auleear – said laying on a high tea was just one of the initiatives which she and her volunteers hope will help strengthen inter-community relations.

Holding a monthly soup kitchen for homeless and needy families is their next project and again the aim is to reach out to the local community. “We have already been promised support from local sponsors. They are helping us to source bread to go with soup of the day,” said Anjim.

The centre recently welcomed councillors led by Barnet Council leader Barry Rawlings and Chipping Barnet MP Dan Tomlinson. Mr Rawlings stressed the importance of the Borough of Barnet in strengthening multi-faith relations. Mr Tomlinson congratulated the centre on opening its door to the community and for proposing an initiative like a monthly soup kitchen where there would be a warm welcome, refreshments and company.

Since the centre, which is in Bath Place, just off Barnet High Street, opened in May last year, it has held a range of multi-cultural events such as bazaars and open days.

Darul Noor charity, which was previously based at the Rainbow Centre on the Dollis Valley estate, raised £1.8 million to purchase the building from the Template Foundation.

An application has been submitted to Barnet Council for retrospective planning permission to regularise its use as a public hall and for public worship and religious instruction.

In 1995 the Template Foundation secured planning approval to use the building for education and training – permission which the centre’s consultants Absolute Town Planning say should be regularised to match the needs of the Islamic Centre.

“Unlike many planning applications nothing is proposed either physically or by way of use. The application simply seeks to regulate what has been happening at the site for some time,” Absolute said.

Objections to the application have been submitted to the council on the grounds that regularising use of the building as an Islamic centre for prayer would “cause harm to residential amenities in the area and increase noise and also increase pedestrian and vehicular traffic.”

Before being used by the Template Foundation, the building had been part of small commercial complex, and it was said to be “unsuited to attracting large numbers of people”.

Supportive comments included praise for the centre’s outreach work. It had established itself as a “well-managed and trusted community asset and reflects values of co-operation and respect shared across the borough.”



Pressing engagement

An abundant crop provided an ideal opportunity for the chance to turn surplus fruit into apple juice organised by the campaign group Incredible Edible.

Each crate of apples produced around a litre of juice – and that required plenty of volunteers to cut up and then prepare the apples ready for pressing.

Wendy Alcock, founder of a Barnet-wide campaign to encourage home cultivation in gardens and on unused land, said apples and other fruit had all benefited from a wet winter and warm spring and summer.

“What better way could there be of using up surplus fruit and windfalls than turning them into apple juice”, said Wendy.

What had been billed as an “Apple and Pear Celebration” was held in the community garden established by Incredible Edible on former spare land beside St John’s United Reformed Church in Mowbray Road.

After cutting the apples into pieces the next task was to crush them in what is known as scrapper, a crusher which was in the capable hands of Dave Ford assisted by Daniella Levene, founder of the group, Community Harvesters.

Daniella and Wendy were both delighted with the abundance of fruit this year, including apples, pears, plums and peaches.

Community Harvesters collected around 800 kilos of apples and pears for distribution to local foodbanks.

All fired up

Youngsters queued up to sit in the cab of a fire engine and try on a firefighter's helmet when Barnet Fire Station held its family open day.

Advances in fire prevention have led to a marked reduction in the number of fires but there is no fall off in rescue callouts to help ambulance crews and paramedics and to assist at other emergencies.

Firefighters of today must be skilled in cutting out injured passengers from crashed cars or gaining entry to houses where the occupants might have collapsed inside.

Barnet's crews often assist at the aftermath of high-speed crashes on roads such as the M25 and A1.

Long-serving Barnet firefighter Nick Russ showed Barnet Vale Councillor Richard Barnes the heavy-duty metal cutter needed to cut through the bodywork of a crashed car, take off the roof and free injured passengers.

"Since I started as a firefighter 25 years ago, the number of callouts to fires has gone way down because fire precaution



procedures are so much better.

"But we now have new challenges at serious road crashes or when people who are injured and who might have collapsed and are locked inside their own homes.

"We have the kit to gain entry to a house or flat and it is a task we do for ambulance crews and paramedics."

Councillor Barnes congratulated the fire station staff for welcoming local families to the station in Station Road, New Barnet, and for allowing children to try on a firefighter's helmet and sit inside the cab of the big pump fire engine.

"Only the other day I was speaking to one of the Barnet firefighters who told

me he visited Barnet fire station with his grandfather – and now he works there!

"That illustrates the importance of us all getting to know why it is so important to have a local fire station that can deal not only with fires but also assist at terrible car crashes and rescue people in emergencies."

Barnet fire station has a complement of 28 firefighters who are split into four watches of seven – so on anyone day there would be seven fighters on duty. Firefighter Nick Russ said he and his colleagues were delighted to have the chance to answer questions about what they did and allow children to climb into the fire engine and try out the equipment.

"The thrill of sitting in a fire engine never dies for some people. Only the other day the Chipping Barnet MP Dan Tomlinson came along to see us and asked if he could climb into the cab.

"He said that as a child he had always wanted to get inside a fire engine but never had the chance."

The family day was in aid of Macmillan cancer charity – one of the charities which the Barnet station supports, together with the charity for injured firefighters.

Hopes over Black Horse

Such is the depth of local concern over the continued closure of the Black Horse public house that a petition has been launched to gather support for its future to be safeguarded by Barnet Council with an order to declare it an asset of community value.

Owners Star Pubs, part of Heineken UK, told the Barnet Society that they are keen to re-open the Black Horse as soon as possible. "The Black Horse is a great pub. We are in the process of recruiting a new operator and we are getting a high level of interest."

Star Pubs operates 2,400 leased and tenanted pubs across the country and the last leaseholder vacated the Black Horse in mid-September, having arrived in 2022 promising a vibrant future for an "iconic pub and eating venue in North London".

Within a few days well over 1,000 people have signed the petition calling for the pub to be listed as an asset of community value. It has been organised in the name of Olly Gough – www.change.org/p/save-the-black-horse-chipping-barnet-list-it-as-an-asset-of-community-value

It says the current closure is a reminder that "times are tougher than ever" for pubs and that Chipping Barnet cannot risk losing one of its most cherished pubs.



Said to have been established in 1720, the Black Horse is described as having "real social importance to the local community" and if it ceased to be a pub it could become a place for social gatherings, recreation or cultural events.

Chipping Barnet MP Dan Tomlinson, says he has already alerted Barnet Council to the continued closure.

"Given the status of the Black horse as a locally listed building within the Wood Street Conservation Area, I sought assurances that the council would retain the building and that any future development would be sensitive to its heritage status – which the council confirmed would be the case."

An application for ACV status would need considerable support from the community.



They're cleanin' it

Staff from nearby McDonald's restaurants joined employees at the High Barnet branch for their annual litter pick targeting areas in and around the town which residents' associations said needed tidying up.

Company policy recommends a daily clean-up of restaurant litter found within 200 metres of each McDonald's branch, but franchisees are urged to work closely with their local communities by staging a more intensive effort whenever possible.

Five teams set off to collect litter along footpaths, alleyways and areas of open ground close to the town centre which seem to miss out on street cleaning by Barnet Council.

Franchisee Hubs Bakshi – whose franchise takes in five local branches including High Barnet, Potters Bar and Borehamwood – welcomed the chance to join the litter pick.

“Each branch organises an annual litter pick which is one of the ways the McDonald's fast-food chain likes to support local initiatives.

“We work with the Chipping Barnet police community action panel which liaises with residents' groups. They suggest the litter hotspots which need attention.”

Mr Bakshi acknowledged that it was an uphill task trying to encourage some customers not to throw away cups and packaging once they had finished eating.

“We do try to nudge our customers to be responsible. We have lots of signs encouraging good behaviour.

“We do talks in schools, and we do try to set an example by ensuring we are making a contribution to the town and hopefully benefiting the community.”

Mr Bakshi insisted that McDonald's was tackling the problem from different angles.

Recently the company had been introducing new recycling systems to separate food waste from cups, packaging and aluminium cans.

Waste oil left over from making chips was now being used as a biofuel to power McDonald's delivery vehicles.

Mr Bakshi joined the team litter picking in the High Street alleyway between Boots and Gail's Bakery.

They had to tackle a vast accumulation of food wrappers, cigarette packets, aluminium cans and other detritus.

Old girl back at QE Girls

An award-winning engineer in the development of offshore wind technologies, visiting professor Emily Spearman – who grew up in High Barnet – returned to Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School to present prizes at the annual celebration of excellence.

Securing an A in GCSE mathematics at QE Girls in 1996 had been the springboard for Emily's career – a career that included her nomination last year as one of “100 women brilliant in renewable energy”.

She was delighted to congratulate Ejona Hasani on winning the school's 2025 trustees' prize for outstanding achievements in maths.

Recalling her five years studying at QE Girls, where she remembered rushing through the corridors from one class to the next, Emily said was a chance to reflect on what school life had taught her – lessons she was keen to pass on to the pupils of today.

She had a strong sense of purpose; she knew what she liked and didn't; she found English and history hard work; but was always curious and she gained an A in maths GCSE which secured her a place at Woodhouse sixth form college and then Nottingham University.

“One of the teachers in the maths department at QE (Mrs Sheena Duncan) recognised my potential. She believed in me and recognised in me what others hadn't. Through her support I have been able to achieve what I have.”

Pupils always had to fight for themselves, find sponsors and advocates, as everything achieved was a springboard to the next achievement.

“QE Girls was my springboard to college and university.”

Emily, who became an environmental officer for her university, found herself at the age of 21 as the only woman on an oil rig off Aberdeen, assisting in research and the collection of deep-sea data.

Other assignments included making environmental assessments on major construction projects across the world and, after eight years, she returned to academic life gaining an MBA in global energy at Warwick University.

Currently she is a senior leader of a BP offshore wind company, where she is working on offshore technologies such as drones and robots, and a visiting professor in energy and power at Loughborough University.

Emily's return for the prize giving was a chance to meet up with Nigel Royden, her history teacher at QE Girls in the early 1990s, who taught at the school for 36 years, and who was presented with a long service award on his retirement.

Members of the Spearman family are no strangers to QE Girls: her father Jeffrey was chair of the school governors when the school hall was rebuilt after being destroyed in an arson attack in 1991.



Visiting professor Emily Spearman congratulated Ejona Hasani (left) on winning QE Girls' 2025 trustees' prize for outstanding achievements in maths



Noah Ark's visit

Stephen Kinnock, Minister of State for Care, called in at the brightly lit sensory playroom at the Noah's Ark Children's Hospice when he met staff and parents.

During his visit he confirmed the financial settlement for the next three years for children and young people's hospices under government funding from NHS England.

Mr Kinnock, who was accompanied by Noah's Ark's chief executive Sophie Andrews, met Rose Charles whose granddaughter Sophie Charles, aged 19, has a life-limiting genetic condition and who attends the hospice.

Rose, of Whetstone, praised Noah's Ark for the support it had given her granddaughter, whose brother Ben died in 2014 from the same condition.

"The difference that having Noah's Ark has made is that Sophie is still experiencing a positive life.

"We have been supported in so many ways by the hospice since 2008. Everything the staff do is tailored to the individual."

Having seen at first hand the work done by Noah's Ark and the "extraordinary impact" it had, Mr Kinnock said he was determined that children needing the support of hospices should receive the "excellent, wraparound care they deserve".

Under the three-year settlement, children and young people's hospices will be provided with £26 million each financial year to 2028-29.

Noah's Ark was allocated £882,000 under the 2025-26 settlement, which represented 13 per cent of its income.

Ms Andrews said Mr Kinnock's confirmation of funding marked "a significant step forward".

"This funding is welcome and will give us a more solid foundation for the next three years."

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Heart of the matter

The Barnet branch of St John Ambulance is keen to do more to increase people's confidence in responding to cardiac arrests and undertaking cardiopulmonary resuscitation and defibrillation treatments.

To help improve survival rates, members staged a *Restart a Heart* event at The Spires shopping centre where St John Ambulance nurse Emma Ball gave a demonstration.

Currently less than one in 12 survive an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest and the aim of the Barnet first aiders is to encourage community support and interest in first aid and to recognise that defibrillation can more than double the chances of survival.

Emergency responder Winnie Bacon of the Barnet St John community engagement team helped to organise the event so that volunteers could train people in key first aid skills.

"We want to familiarise people with defibrillators and so that one day, perhaps, they can save a life by having the confidence to step in if there is an emergency."

She was supported by Ruth McQuillin who insisted that the instructions inside defibrillators – and there is a defibrillator on the wall at the entrance to The Spires – are clear and simple.



"There are diagrams showing where pads should be applied to the chest and a defibrillator gives spoken instructions on what to do."

Alongside the demonstration was an exhibition showing the history of the St John Ambulance branch in Barnet. The display was compiled by archivist Stephen Krause.

The branch dates back to 1903 and, says Mr Krause, is one of the oldest in the borough.

"Alfred Mosley, an entrepreneur, sponsored a hospital in South Africa during the Boer War and he was so impressed by the dedication and skill of the St John volunteers that he decided to pay for a branch to be set up in Barnet.

"At the time there were lots of accidents in workplaces, especially on the railways and in mining, which St John volunteers attended."

MP gets on his bike

Monken Hadley School pupils have been putting their cycling skills to the test as part of national Bikeability Learn to Cycle Week. The Year 6 children took part in Level 2 training, gaining confidence riding safely on local roads around Barnet.

Local cycling instructors Richard Cooke and Andrew Castiglione led the sessions, guiding pupils through practical exercises on signalling, road positioning, and awareness of traffic. The initiative aims to give children the skills they need to cycle independently and responsibly.

Dan Tomlinson, MP for Chipping Barnet, visited the school to see the training in action. He was shown how the pupils were mastering safe cycling techniques on Barnet's streets and got on one of the bikes himself.

Speaking after the session, Mr Tomlinson praised the programme: "It's fantastic to see local children gaining such valuable life skills. Cycling is healthy, sustainable and fun, and Bikeability helps give families the confidence to make it part of everyday life."

Bikeability Week runs nationwide, with thousands of young people taking part to build confidence and encourage more cycling journeys to school and beyond.

To book a free 1:1 cycling session, visit www.cyclinginstructor.com/barnet.



Top lawyer who kept MI5 role a secret

Barnet Parish Church was host for a service of thanksgiving to celebrate the life of former Treasury Solicitor Sir Gerald Hosker who gave Margaret Thatcher critical legal advice at key points during her Premiership, writes Nick Jones.

Sir Gerald, who died last year at the age of 91, was born in Finchley and became a lifelong resident of Barnet.

Renowned for his discretion, he took one secret to the grave.

Only after his death 11 months ago did his wife and family discover that during his National Service, he became a spy for MI5.

Sir Gerald's career-making moment was the day he worked under Mrs Thatcher's watchful eye as he put the final touches to a legal document authorising the seizure of Argentinian assets during the Falklands War. After signing the document in 10 Downing Street, and before heading off for the debate, the Prime Minister expressed her relief: "Oh Gerald, this is the only piece of good news I've got."

Father Sam Rossiter, the Barnet team vicar, conducted the service of thanksgiving which was attended by former Civil Service colleagues including Lord (Robin) Butler, cabinet secretary during Mrs Thatcher's Premiership.

Sir Gerald was born in Finchley in 1933 and after the family were evacuated to Berkhamsted during the Second World War he went to Berkhamsted School and then the Law Society's College of Law.

He became an articled clerk at Derrick Bridges & Co in Wood Street in 1951 and was admitted as a solicitor in 1956.

It was at this point, said his daughter Helen Hosker, that her father's life story became rather "vague".

In fact, he had been recruited by the security service MI5 and enrolled as a partner in a firm of solicitors which had attracted suspicion because of its links to



Helen and Jonathan Hosker with Father Sam Rossiter at the memorial service at St John The Baptist Church in High Barnet for their father, Sir Gerald Hosker (inset)

the USSR. Only recently she had challenged her father about why he had been in an "exempt profession" during his national service, but it was not until one of Sir Gerald's former colleagues, Geoffrey Claydon, prepared information for use in an obituary for The Times, that the truth was revealed.

Geoffrey, who died this year, had himself been recruited by military intelligence. The two men kept in close contact, never revealing publicly their shared secret.

Helen said her father had apparently been trained in the spying skills of the 1950s - lip reading, reading upside down, reading blotting paper, searching wastepaper bins and steaming open envelopes.

Such was his discretion that his wife, Lady Rachel Hosker had no idea of his double life the day they were married in 1956 at St Mary the Virgin Church, Monken Hadley. "She had no inkling he was ever a spy."

When the Falklands Islands were seized in 1982, he was in the right place at the right time to assist Mrs Thatcher,

Helen recalled that on the Friday evening before the Saturday sitting at the House of Commons, police officers arrived at their home in Barnet telling him to report for work early next morning in 10 Downing Street. Rachel drove her husband to Downing Street where he found Mrs Thatcher sitting in a large chair. In anticipation of her request, he had already prepared draft legal advice on seizing Argentinian assets in the UK.

In his tribute, Jonathan Hosker recalled that his father spent countless hours travelling to and from Whitehall sitting on the Northern Line, regularly falling asleep either going to work or on the way home.

One day he had woken up at High Barnet surprised to find that the only other passenger still in the carriage had died.

For some reason, his father suffered from always feeling the cold - something which proved useful to the civil service before the arrival of mobile phones. One day after Sir Gerald had left an office in Whitehall, his staff wanted to contact him urgently.

"A message was sent to another office to say he was walking towards Victoria Station. How shall we recognise him? It was a lovely sunny evening and apparently the advice was, don't worry, you'll notice him, he will be the only man dressed in an overcoat, waist coat and hat".



Cafe sizzles again

A dozen full English breakfasts served in the first couple of hours at the Corner Cafe – a new business in a popular venue.

After being closed for three months over the summer, the former Dory's Cafe has re-opened as the Corner Cafe at the junction of St Albans Road and Barnet High Street.

It is a new beginning for Kevin Callaghan, proprietor of the former Hole in the Wall Cafe which is about to be demolished during clearance of the Meadow Works site on the Great North Road at Pricklers Hill.

Fortuitously just as Dory's cafe was closing down at the end of July – after 71 years in business – Mr Callaghan was on the lookout for new premises for the Hole in the Wall.

Said to be the town's oldest cafe, the Hole in the Wall was tucked away behind hoardings and was one of the last small firms to vacate the Meadow Works site before work starts on the construction of a new self-storage depot.

Moving up the Great North Road to High Barnet – and re-opening in the former premises of another local institution – has presented Mr Callaghan with the challenge of living up the popularity of Dory's.

He and his staff had the weekend to transfer the business ready for a Monday morning start.

"Everything had been left spick and span by Angela and Guiliano so we started cooking straightaway. We did a dozen full English breakfasts in our first couple of hours, so we know what some of our customers appreciate.

"Everyone has given us a warm welcome.

"It's really nice to be up in High Barnet in the town centre.

"I think it's going to be very lively for us."

The Hole in the Wall's position on the Great North Road on the approach to High Barnet had led it become a well-used pit stop for lorry drivers and motorists heading out of London.

Developers Compound Real Estate have promised Mr Callaghan a new home for the Hole in the Wall as part of what it says will be a development comprising a new state-of-the-art self-storage facility and co-working spaces.

Delicious Deli

Delihouse might be the smallest shop in The Spires – and only opened in the summer – but proprietor Jonathan Beecham is already expanding a delicatessen business which started with a Saturday stall at Barnet Market.

His deli and coffee shop offers freshly prepared bagels and sandwiches with a choice of fillings and has shelves stocked with a wide range of delicatessen products and baked breads.

Jonathan has been so encouraged by the support of a loyal band of customers that with the approach of winter he is proposing to offer a range of hot soups.

To meet demand for specialist cheeses, charcuterie, fish and fresh bakery, he is also planning to start a Friday delivery service for his range of artisan foods.

After building up his experience in deli foods and catering, he took a stall at Barnet Market three years ago and trade was so strong he decided in the summer to take on a small vacant unit in The Spires, directly opposite Waitrose.

"I am so pleased to be welcoming loyal customers who got to know me at the market. Trade has been great.

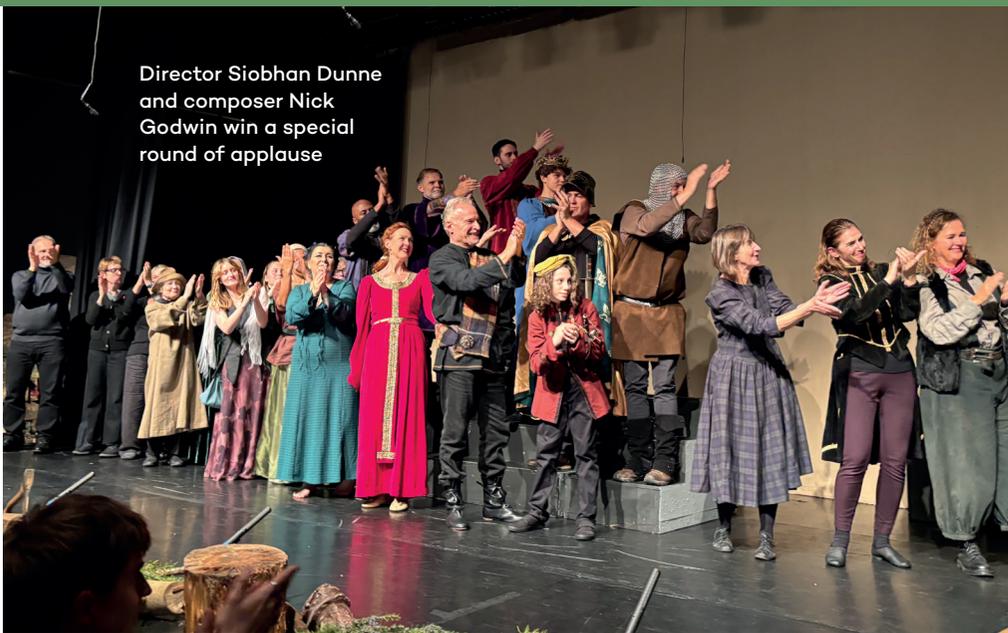
"I'm definitely the smallest shop in the shopping centre and certainly the smallest deli and coffee shop I know, but customers say Delihouse is just what the Spires needs."

Delihouse is open seven days a week from 9.30am, opening at 8am on Saturdays.

Platters of bagels and charcuterie board for parties and business events – and the Delihouse range of products – can be ordered online. www.delihouseuk.com



Jonathan Beecham



Director Siobhan Dunne and composer Nick Godwin win a special round of applause

After Macbeth, it's Dickens

Artistic director Siobhan Dunne took the applause after the final performance of Macbeth at The Bull Theatre...and already she is planning the next production by the Blue Door Theatre Company, High Barnet's highly acclaimed drama group.

Charles Dickens Comes to Barnet is to be the story line for another of Blue Door's locally inspired plays which build on the town's rich history and literary connections.

Writing and scripting for the new play is due to start in November ready for a premier performance at The Bull Theatre in April next year.

Packed audiences at The Bull Theatre for the group's imaginative and daring production of Macbeth demonstrated the strength and versatility of High Barnet's community theatre company which brings together total beginners alongside members with decades of experience, backed up by local professional artists.

On the closing night, Francesco Giacon, who played Macbeth, led the thanks to Ms Dunne for her inspirational leadership and declared:

"We encounter ye with our hearts' thanks" – based on the line from the play when Macbeth greets his guests at the banquet and says to the first murderer, "See, they encounter thee with their hearts' thanks."

In response, Ms Dunne reflected the pride of the Blue Door Theatre Company in having pulled off their own original presentation of a Shakespeare classic.

"We recognise it has been a real privilege to perform Macbeth here in Barnet. We manage two shows a year and we have so many people to thank for helping us to keep community theatre alive in the town."

Ms Dunne appealed to the audience – and the residents of Barnet and beyond – to recognise the challenge they faced in keeping the lights on at a venue which was

40 years' old, but which was in need of an upgrade.

A GoFundMe campaign has been launched to raise a minimum of £10,000 towards the cost of updating theatrical equipment and protecting the future of The Bull Theatre.

www.gofundme.com/f/support-the-bull-theatre

Blue Door's production was the first time Ms Dunne had led a full theatrical company in staging Shakespeare's play about the destructive consequences of unchecked ambition and power.

With the help of their production team, Blue Door delivered a stunning performance which conjured up a supernatural atmosphere full of music, sound and eye-catching projections.

Composer Nick Godwin created an original musical score and there was a round of applause for the chorus and musicians – Helen Brown (violin), Nick Godwin (guitar, bouzouki, bodhran, mandolin) and Ned Wilkins (bass ukelele).

The next drama will explore Dickens' connections with Finchley and Barnet and bring to life local links to characters such as Oliver Twist and Mrs Gamp.

Work on writing the script will start in November – a joint task for Claire Fisher, who played Lady Macbeth, and whose play Mary Livingstone, I Presume was staged earlier this year, and Sarah Munford, who was one of the three witches in Macbeth and who has been a regular cast member in productions by Blue Door and its sister company The Bull Players.

Dickens paid many visits to Finchley and Barnet and the time he spent in the locality proved a great inspiration when writing his novels.

Join the Barnet Society and help carry on its work

Annual subscriptions for new joiners are £10 for an individual or £15 for a family.

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