

BRENT MUTUAL AID NEWSLETTER



NOVEMBER 2020

The Climate Change Issue



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In this november issue, we consider the importance and impact of

CLIMATE CHANGE

Another lockdown which is yet again affecting various aspects of our lives. Should you or anyone you know need any assistance, please contact the nearest Mutual Aid group in your area. For the new lockdown rules please [see here](#)

In this issue, we take a closer look at how Brent and the wider London communities are evolving and adapting in order to make a difference in slowing down the effects of climate change. The hope for us all is to make our communities more resilient through sustainable solutions.

Many local businesses are leading the way, from Queen's Park Farmers' Market to Patoka Eco Store - both great examples of bringing zero waste shopping to North West London. Waste is a big challenge and embracing recycling as part of our daily lives is a small step that will make a big difference in the future.

We tell the inspiring story of a former refugee turned Beekeeper, Ali Alzein, who is connecting with local communities and at the same time helping to bring back native black bees, an important part of our ecosystem.

Inspiring the younger generation is also the innovative Caper app that encourages children to go outside and explore the outdoors. Our open

spaces are more important than ever. The Sufra Community Gardens is another prime example which provides a therapeutic space investing in the skills, health and wellbeing of local people in St. Raphael's Estate.

The recent challenges of the pandemic have shown how inequality can impact a society's access to healthy food options. Edible London is trying to change this by bringing fresh, healthy and sustainable food to thousands of people in food poverty. BOM is another enterprise that wants to teach people how to introduce plant-based food into their diet, whilst at the same time employing local vulnerable people.

Understanding our carbon footprint is an important part of fighting climate change. In this issue, we asked Brent Council a range of questions that affect us locally.

Lastly, Diwali celebrations this year will see many Hindu residents in Brent lighting candles and clay lamps in their homes to remember that 'light triumphs over dark' - which seems quite apt during today's challenging times.

Wishing you all a safe and healthy year.

Nina Gallagher

Feature: Queen's Park Farmers' Market

by Cosima Shaw



Queens Park Farmers' Market is a model of sustainability for urban communities and is open on Sundays from 10am to 2pm

This is a weekly ritual for many locals and visitors to the area, who want to partake in the friendly hustle and bustle of London's 'Best Farmers Market', as it is often referred to. Many will do their entire shop for the week ahead, some might just buy enough for a special Sunday meal, but some people also just come to mingle, socialise and grab a take away, a coffee or a bunch of freshly cut flowers. Shoppers are easy to spot heading up the adjacent roads armed with empty canvas bags and containers to be filled with unpackaged food, grateful for

the opportunity to avoid unnecessary plastic and cardboard ('Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!') and knowing that the food they will buy will be fresh and won't have travelled far.

Lately access to the market is carefully being managed due to the Covid restrictions of numbers on its site in the grounds of Salusbury Primary School. Visitors queue respectfully at an allocated distance, lining the pavements on both Salusbury and Lonsdale Roads. Inside, shoppers may not linger, but what they cannot

gain in the market ground in terms of social interactions, they make up for during the wait. In times like these this seems vital. Resilient communities rely on strong networks; the market serves both to be a place of communal gathering as well as a link to the rural parts of the country which produce the food we eat.

The aim of the Farmers Market Network, which was established in 1999 with its first market in Islington, is to enable local UK farmers to sell their produce directly to the consumer, which means more income for the farm, which in turn means more can be invested in sustainable farming practises by the farmers.

The sale of rare breeds meat and heritage fruit and veg varieties is promoted and, as stated on the website 'all of our beef, lamb and pork come from high welfare farms, the majority of pork is free range, some is barn raised.' The farm produce on offer is supplemented by a diverse array of artisanal food producers, bakers, brewers and regional nurseries.

This year's 'Favourite Stall Winner' at Queen's Park, Brinkworth Dairy strives for sustainability by balancing 'planetary preservation' through conservation and planting, as well as encouraging wildlife, 'social responsibility' by employing locals and continually working to reduce packaging to make it waste free. On their website they also state '...a fair price for the farmer [...] allows our traditional farm to

continue and allows us to have high animal welfare standards.'

At Queen's Park Farmers' Market, provenance is proudly advertised with most produce being of local origin as much as that is possible. Some produce is organic, some biodynamic, and most importantly all of it is in season. Customers can check on the website or the market's social media handles Instagram and Facebook ahead of their visit to see what seasonal produce will be on offer on the day and which producers will be selling to plan their menu around that. Current listings include pumpkins (obviously), chillies, cob nuts, several apple and pear varieties, sunflowers, Michaelmas daisies, wet walnuts, shellfish and game as well as the last of the soft fruit.

Detailed information about the producers and links to their respective websites and social media pages can also be found on the website. London Farmers Markets are noticeably keen to educate and engage their customers through the market sites, the experience they offer as well as the information they provide, therefore playing an important role in the area's drive towards sustainability.

* In recent months there has also been 'Queens Park Lates' with a reduced number of stalls, music and take away food from local businesses.

www.lfm.org.uk/markets/queens-park

Feature: Patoka Eco Store

by Marta Albright A. Dourado



Patoka Eco Store was founded by Chloë in July 2019. The ethos of the business is sustainable shopping that is good to the environment, good to people and vegan friendly

Tell us a little about you and your business

My name is Chloë, and I'm the founder of Patoka Eco Store, dedicated to making sustainability more accessible. We want to shed the dusty old hippy image, to ensure that everybody knows that a sustainable life is for them. We can't affect significant improvements without bringing more people on board. We don't believe that anyone's perfect, but if we all take small steps we can create big waves of change.

Patoka Eco Store has been running since July 2019, bringing zero waste shopping to North West London for the first time. We were based in an indoor market in Wembley, which was a great spot to start off. We found a wonderful

customer base there, some of whom were already dedicated zero-wasters, and some who were discovering the idea for the first time.

Has COVID changed things for you and your business? How?

COVID has changed things for us because it forced Patoka into the world of e-commerce, as people were less willing or able to come out to a shop, and being online-only made our staff safer too. We were delivery-only for around two months, reopening in June. After a month back open in Wembley, we realised that we needed to expand in order to continue serving our customers in this strange new world, so we

sought out new premises, and left our little stall in the market. Sadly, the arrangements we made fell through, and COVID has made the property market uncertain, so we are still an online shop until new premises are available.

Has COVID changed how eco friendly you are? And do you think COVID is hampering any efforts to try and battle climate change?

Personally, COVID has made being eco-friendly more difficult, as I believe many people have found. I am fortunate to have easy access to Patoka's stock, but our household are trying not to travel or visit shops unnecessarily, so without a trip across London sometimes plastic packaging is unavoidable. The upside, however, is that we have all started doing most of our shopping at small local shops after the supermarkets struggled in March. These shops often have eco-friendly surprises, like frozen peas in cardboard boxes instead of plastic bags! It is, of course, also wonderful to support small businesses, which we might never have discovered without COVID.

One way in which the coronavirus crisis may have made Patoka a less sustainable business is our deliveries, which have to be done in the car that is available to us; sadly non-electric. We are not certain, however, that this has resulted in more car journeys, as it may be that some customers would have driven to our shop when it was open anyway. Additionally, we have been using more packaging than we used to, as it is not practical to refill customers' own containers. To limit this, we have been accepting our glass bottles as returns in exchange for a refund, and dried goods have been packed in paper rather than plastic. Additionally, we have been able to

get by without buying any new boxes or string, as we reuse what we already have, and what we get back from customers!

Has your perception of the community changed since the lockdown?

My perception of the community is tricky to quantify, as it seems that some of society is realising that COVID could be a strong force for change, improving our air quality and animal husbandry methods, among other things. Meanwhile, another group among us appear to have turned inwards, rejecting mainstream science and seeking individualistic goals. I think our already-divided nation has become more so, but that it is important to focus on the positive people who push for unity and environmental improvements.

If you could change anything or if someone could ever help your business, what would that look like? Or what would have to happen to ideally get it back where you want it to be?

In an ideal world, Patoka would be open in a lovely big shop, stocking as many products as we could wish to, with all public transport safe to use again, and some bike racks beside the door! We really hope that our vision is not far from coming true, as we can't wait to welcome old faces and new to zero waste shopping. We want this to become the new normal.

Tell us one thing no one knows about you.

Not many people know that I have a tattoo of a silver fern on my collarbone, representing my New Zealand heritage!

www.patoka.co.uk

www.facebook.com/patoka.eco.store

www.instagram.com/patoka.eco.store

www.twitter.com/PatokaEcoStore

Feature: CAPER

by Kieumy Pham Thai



Caper, co-founded by Sara Perkins from Harlesden, is a new interactive play app for 4 year olds that encourages children to go and have an adventure in the park and explore nature.

Ben Geliher, Caper's CEO and co-founder, came up with the idea when he was trying to convince his five-year-old daughter to go out to the park on a beautiful day while she was absorbed in watching TV. He thought, "I bet if Elsa from Frozen called her up right now and asked for her help in the park, she'd be out of

the door before she could find her shoes!" Ben built a prototype of Caper, and his intuition has proved right. Over 6,000 families have downloaded Caper since launch in April, and the team has received financial backing from LEGO Ventures.

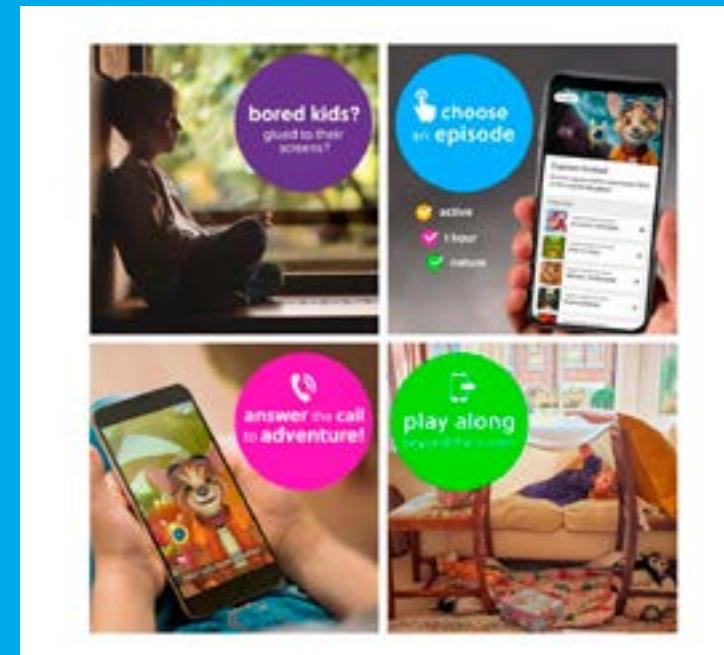
Caper works when parents download the app and start a 'caper' or adventure. At the moment, the App features stories based on a character called Captain Redtail, an intergalactic space explorer, and Holly Goodspell, a friendly witch who stars in Spellville, Caper's Halloween special which is free to play for October. The range of caper content will grow over the coming months.

The aim for the app is to encourage 20% screen time and 80% playtime, and parents are loving this balance of the digital world their kids crave and the play in nature they remember from childhood. Caper is tackling important challenges such as obesity and mental health by encouraging active play in nature.

Sara says, "During lockdown with schools closed, the importance of access to green space and exercise for families came into sharp focus. I spent many hours in Roundwood and Queen's Park over the spring playing capers in my head. We are very lucky to have such great parks in Brent."

The first Captain Redtail and Spellville capers are free, whilst an additional 7 episodes and bonus extras are included in a bundle which costs £4.99. The app is available on IOS and Android at www.caper.co/get-caper

Sara Perkins, a mum of two daughters, has lived in Harlesden for 20 years. She is involved in marketing and partnerships.



FOCUS ON: BEES AND REFUGEES

by Kieumy Pham Thai

Ali Alzein, a Syrian refugee, is dedicated to protecting and expanding the population of native Black bees

Ali Alzein was separated from his Syrian homeland, family, societal connections, and connection to nature when he fled the civil war to live in Egypt and then in London.

From a young age, Ali has spent time around beehives. He returned to beekeeping when he arrived in London and found it helped him overcome depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptoms.

With Bees and Refugees (registered as Community Interest Organisation), Ali is passionate about introducing beekeeping to other refugees, to help them feel a sense of place and purpose in a new community. He is trained in British beekeeping methods, with a focus on organic and natural beekeeping methods.



What has he achieved?

- Therapeutic workshops for Youth Refugee Service at the Red Cross to unaccompanied refugee children and has been partnering with schools and community groups to teach about ethical beekeeping and honey (Hammersmith Academy, Oasis farm in Waterloo, Clitterhouse farm project, and Hammersmith Community Garden).

- Donation and installation of beehives and a frame of honey to local communities who have the space to



get them started. People learn about beekeeping and the importance of bees, while refugees are trained to become beekeepers.

All the hives are maintained by certified managers and the honey and other bee products are offered to local residents.

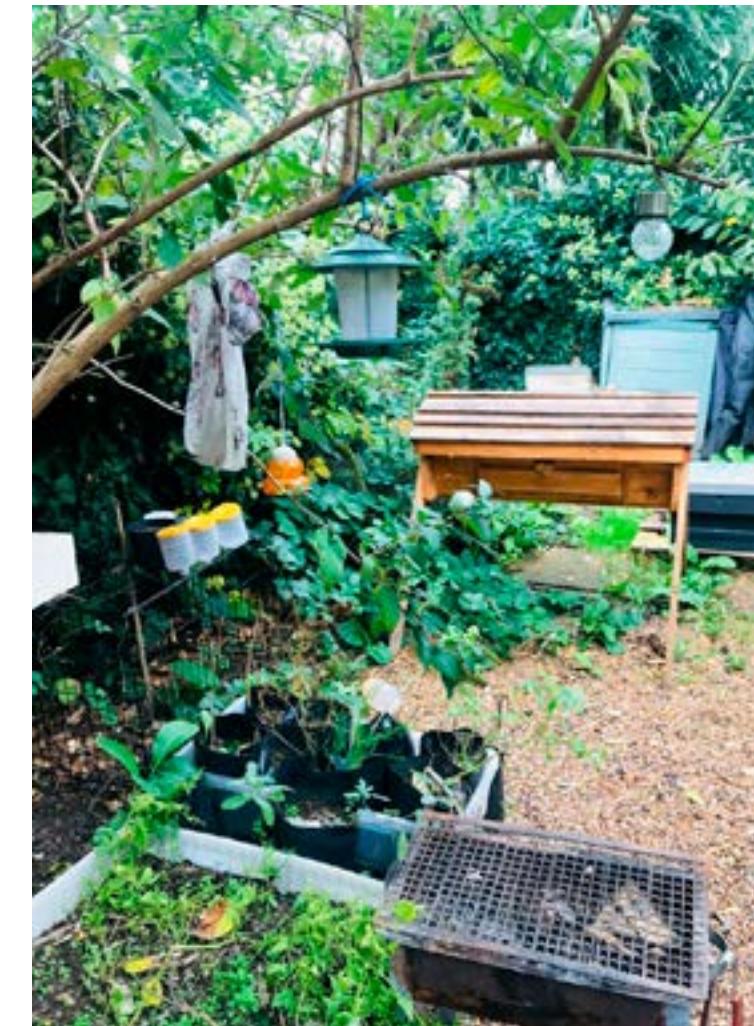
Beehives have been installed at Hammersmith Academy in Cathnor Road, Shepherds Bush, where they'll host four hives on a balcony.

Native black bees

The native British black bee was the dominant honeybee in the UK until about 100 years ago when they were nearly wiped out by parasites and disease brought in by imported bees. The native population crashed and were replaced by imported European bees.

Black honeybees are hardy, resilient bees that can adapt to our changeable and unpredictable climate, and thrive in all kinds of weather. Bees and Refugees want to rebuild our wild populations of native honeybees, as well as encourage new beekeepers to choose native bees for their hives rather than keeping imported bees.

Black honeybees are just as important as our native bumblebees, solitary bees, and other pollinating insects vital to the maintenance of our ecosystems.



Another four will be in Askew Crescent, Hammersmith, with three in Wendell Road and three in Bryony Road, Shepherds Bush. Another four will be located just over the border in Chiswick, with more sites in H&F to be confirmed soon.

- Creation of insect hotels to promote the development of solitary bees and other important insects. They have recently partnered with 245Hammersmith to create an insect hotel on their tenth floor.
- Selling of sustainable and raw honey collected from Bees and Refugees' hives (only 10% is collected)

Why beekeeping?

Beekeeping is an ancient skill with therapeutic and environmental benefits. What are the benefits?

- For refugees:

Beekeeping provides a purpose and meaningful pursuit, a connection to social circles, businesses, and local communities, and improves mental health.

- For bees:

Due to farming practices with pesticides and herbicides many bees are endangered. Without bees, there is no pollination. Ethical beekeeping plays an important role in maintaining their health and ensuring their survival.

- For local communities:

Beekeeping benefits local biodiversity, supports the integration of refugees into local communities, teaches people about the importance of nature and ethical beekeeping brings community cohesion and offers local raw honey (only 10% of produced honey is sold, the rest is kept at the hive for bees to make beeswax).

To support his amazing program, you can donate to Bees and Refugees on Gofundme [HERE](#)

Also, if you think that your school would be interested in workshops or to have a hive, please contact him on his facebook page.

For more info click [HERE](#)

RECYCLING TEXTILES

by Marta Albright A. Dourado

According to an article by Nathalie Raffray featured in the Brent & Kilburn Times, 73 percent of all clothing disposed of in the UK in 2019 ended up in household rubbish bins. One can only picture how much more of this occurred during lockdown!

Veolia and Brent Council launched a scheme, "Wear or Not". The idea of this new initiative is to raise awareness and make people understand why we should not dispose of textiles in household rubbish or recycling bins. It is easy to take part!

- Place your items in a labelled bag.
- Place it next to your blue top bin on your collection day.
- The items in the bag will be donated to the charity TRAID (Textile Recycling for Aid and International Development).



You can also take your textile items to a recycling bank or supermarkets or you can donate to charities, some of which will pick up your items. You can investigate your local charity shop for the consignment of good quality items. There are also many groups that buy, sell and trade used clothing, and a good place to start is by searching on Facebook. Once you are added to local groups, you can ask via chat about WhatsApp groups to narrow down your search even more.

Alternatively, why not be creative and search for some arts and crafts ideas and DIY's? For those with children, think puppets, toys, school projects, outfits for dolls, and much more. For adults, patchwork is an idea. The Guardian has a link for a patchwork quilt for beginners:

[Guardian Patchwork for Beginners](#)

EDIBLE LONDON

by Katie Pascoe

Edible London's philosophy is based on sharing, collaborating and creating structures built on empathy and abundance.

Edible London's goal is to help those in the community suffering from food poverty, showing them how to eat a more nutritious diet and, in turn, learn to feed their community. Through food growing and food redistribution, Edible London brings people together, and closer to the natural world. In the peak of COVID-19 Edible London were providing 50,000 meals per week; and continue to provide over 20,000 meals, which a bigger ambition to reach may more.

Edible London was formed over 2 years ago and has since registered as a community interest company focused on broadening their reach and educating our communities on food growing and nutrition. Their aim is:

To increase their offering to those in the community who suffer from food poverty.

To allow everybody to eat a more nutritious diet, to educate them and allow them to educate others and, in turn, learn to feed their community through food growing and better food education.

To support the local and wider community by providing them with the education and opportunity to support themselves and those

in need by growing and getting involved with the process of growing and producing organic sustainable food.

Over the next few months we hope to bring the learnings from Edible London over to Brent via our mutual aid volunteers, watch this space.

Check out amazing Edible London:
www.ediblelondon.org/





I am the founder of a social enterprise called **BOM Pure Asian Food** that teaches people plant-based Asian oriental cuisines using seasonal local vegetables. The aim is for people to introduce more plants in their diet. I employ local vulnerable people, so they can earn some income.

There is no need to buy Asian oriental vegetables that would have been flown all the way from Chiang Mai to prepare a delicious salad.

I like using the seasonal vegetables that I can find at Queen's Park Farmers' Market. This Sunday, I used swiss chard leaves



and made a variation of the Vietnamese summer roll (see below left).

Another example is a Thai salad with stem broccoli, but you could also use red/white cabbage or beetroot instead. The main thing is to have the right dressing.

Kieumy Pham Thai

.....
THAN HAI IM, NA KHRAP/KHA!

(Enjoy your meal in Thai)



THAI BROCCOLI STEM SALAD
Please use the broccoli stems that are left in your fridge!

TOTAL TIME
Ready in 20min

QUANTITY
Serves 2

INGREDIENTS CURRY

- 3 small red chillies
- 1 garlic clove
- 2 tbs light soy sauce
- 2 tbs lemon juice
- 1 tsp sugar
- 4 young broccoli stems sliced at 1cm
- 1 small carrot sliced in matchsticks
- 30g red cabbage sliced thinly



THAI BROCCOLI STEM SALAD
Please use the broccoli stems that are left in your fridge!

01 In a mortar, pound the chillies and garlic, add the soy sauce, the lemon juice and sugar. Mix well together.

02 Blanch the broccoli stems for 1min, then with cold water and drain.

03 Place all the vegetables into bowl, pour over the dressing. Mix well into a serving dish.

04 Add 1tsp sesame oil top.

SUFRA COMMUNITY GARDENS

Nicholas leads Sufra's Community Garden which is set within the St Raphael's estate.

Since July this year, he looks after this amazing space that sits within the St Raphael's estate. Before, Nicholas worked for Granville community garden in South Kilburn. He is a self learner but passionate about food growing, he strongly recommends watching Charles Dowding videos that you can find [HERE](#). When visiting the garden, we are amazed by the colours with different shades of green and the variety of the plant from different types of kales, root vegetables, salads, herbs to late coming tomatoes and many more vegetables. They also have a beautiful large fig tree that everyone admires.

The garden provides a therapeutic space from where SUFRA can invest in the skills, health and wellbeing of local people whilst improving the appearance of the estate and giving residents an opportunity to come together, have fun and grow food.

They produce a wide range of fresh fruit, vegetables and eggs that can be distributed



at the food bank or used to prepare food for the community meals.

SUFRA usually runs a wide range of classes about food growing in normal times. During COVID, they don't run classes anymore and a very limited number of volunteers can come and help: all those attending the Community Garden will be required to sanitise their hands upon arrival, must have a mask or face covering with them and will be required to socially distance. A maximum of 2 volunteers are permitted to access the garden at one time).

If you want to volunteer at the Community Garden, you can register [HERE](#)



INTERVIEW with BRENT COUNCIL

CLIMATE CHANGE SPECIAL

Wards from Brent Mutual Aid put forward questions to Cllr. Krupa Sheth, Lead Member of Environment at Brent Council, asking her a range of questions on how Brent is tackling climate change from businesses, households, schools and various areas in our community.

by Nina Gallagher

What are the key priorities to tackle climate change in Brent?

We have just published our draft Climate Emergency Strategy, which proposed five main priorities: consumption, resources & waste, transport, homes and buildings, nature & green spaces, and supporting communities. You can read more about the strategy and comment on it at www.brent.gov.uk/climateemergency

How can we partner as a community to make our climate initiatives inclusive?

I'm really grateful to the 50 members of the Brent Climate Assembly for their thoughtful recommendations, which all fed into the draft strategy. The Assembly was such a helpful process to go through, as we got to hear from residents representing the diversity of our borough. As they learnt more about the scale of the challenge, Assembly members stressed that tackling the climate emergency is everyone's responsibility and we must work together. Under the final theme, *Supporting Communities*, we're actually going to be setting up a Brent Environmental Network for residents, businesses, schools and community groups so that we can work together to tackle this emergency, share information and resources.

Might there be opportunities to divert funds from BBOC, which were not utilised due to the pandemic, for environmental schemes?

The London Borough of Culture programme adapted to take account of the COVID-19 restrictions. The funds were redirected towards things like the Brent Biennial and the popular VENT podcasts, which was a collaboration between Vice and young people in the borough. VENT did have a couple of episodes on environmental issues though, so do check it out!

ECO Champions: Could volunteers be trained so they can go into the communities and teach people how to reduce their carbon footprint?

Thank you for the suggestion, that is definitely something we could explore as part of a new environmental network we're looking to create. As part of the 'community' theme, we do want to look to create more training opportunities for residents and businesses.

Now people use public transport less, how can we reduce emissions without incurring extra costs?

We are committed to working with Transport for London to boost cycling and walking infrastructure.



When can we have safe cycle paths to ride all over Brent?

We've been busy installing lots of new cycle parking over the past year and we got rid of an old byelaw to allow cycling through Brent's parks.

Can we encourage cycling e.g. safer cycling routes etc?

As part of our Active Travel programme, we recently introduced a temporary cycle lane on Harrow Road. If you support new active travel measures like the Harrow Road cycle lane, I would really encourage you to tell us so via the open consultation. Your feedback will factor into the decision as to whether or not to make the change permanent after the six-month trial.

How can we stop cars idling at school drop offs/pick-ups?

I'm really passionate about this too. Air pollution is a serious health problem for children all around London and it's something we need to tackle in Brent. Last year, we commissioned air quality audits at two thirds of Brent's primary schools, which was really helpful because it allowed us to collect data about the problem and raise awareness about some of the solutions among teachers and pupils. We've also got an ongoing anti-idling campaign, which is focused on educating motorists about

the dangers of idling through action days around schools.

How to incentivise more people to walk/cycle to school & work?

As of September 2020, we have introduced over 30 'School Streets', which bans cars and other vehicles from the roads around schools at pick-up and drop-off times. Brent actually comes third in London for the most School Streets. The idea is that it incentivises parents and kids to walk or bike to school, and it also helps make the roads around the school safer with less traffic and less air pollution.

Subsidise and/or incentivise electric car ownership?

The first part of incentivising people to switch to electric cars is getting the infrastructure in place.

Can we have more information on electric car charging scheme?

We've installed 115 charging points for e-vehicles across the borough and we have more in the pipeline for the next year. We know that this information hasn't always been readily available on our website so will be working to improve this and provide clear links for people to find their nearest charger.

INTERVIEW with BRENT COUNCIL

Could Brent pilot a one car max per household scheme?

We're also using parking permits to crack down on the most polluting vehicles and encourage motorists to switch to greener forms of transport. We've re-banded our parking permits and introduced a £50 annual diesel surcharge which will be going up to £75 and then £100. Since introducing these measures, we've seen a 16% drop in the most polluting cars.

At a local level we're not able to tell people how many cars they can or cannot have, but what we can do is make walking and cycling easier and safer to do in Brent to encourage more people to make healthier choices!

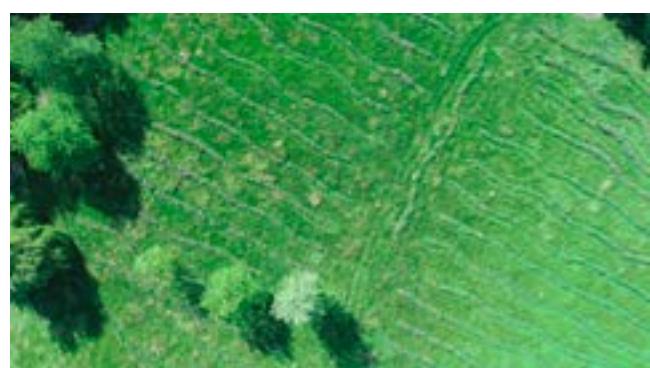
What happens to our recycled rubbish in Brent?

This is a great question! I felt very lucky to go on a tour of Veolia's recycling facility at Southwark a couple of years ago. In normal times, they open it up to the public for London's Open House weekend – it's well worth doing if you can as they show you how they separate materials using all sorts of clever machinery.

How is it recycled?

Basically, after the recycling is collected from your house it is taken to this Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in Southwark. The materials are separated into plastics, different types of metals, paper, and so on. After that, the separated materials are sent to different companies to create new products.

Your food and garden waste goes through a different recycling process in a site at Harefield. It's shredded and put in a controlled environment to break down. Eventually, it breaks down enough that it can be sold on as compost.



Brent Bee Corridor from the ground and aerial view

Can we have workshops for recycling ideas?

I think workshops are a great idea. West London Waste often runs repair workshops for things like clothes and bikes. It's something we can consider doing as part of the new Brent Environmental Network.

What can residents do to increase recycling?

The best thing all of us can do is to encourage the people around us – friends and family – to recycle. That sort of thing can create a ripple effect. It might be having a chat about how easy it is, or gently reminding them when you see them about to put a milk carton in the wrong bin.

How can we encourage use of green bins?

We did a big campaign earlier this year around food waste recycling but lots of people still chuck food scraps in their grey

bin rather than the green caddy. It's really a really easy step to take but it makes a big difference.

Please click on the following link for further information for households using bins in Brent www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/recycling-and-waste/household-recycling/from-a-house-or-converted-flat/blue-top-recycling-bin/

Could we reward companies who use bikes as opposed to cars to do their delivery?

Another good question! We would really like to do more to support businesses to transition to cargo bikes and other more sustainable means of transport if they can.

How can we encourage local shops to reduce carbon footprint?

We recently submitted a bid for DEFRA funding with the Cross River Partnership to do some work in this area. Austerity and the pandemic has stretched the council's finances, so we do need to make sure new initiatives are sustainable for us financially. Working with communities to bid for funding is one thing we're keen to do with members of the new Brent Environmental Network once it's up and running.

Can supermarkets give us a choice of buying items without packaging?

Plastic in supermarkets is a difficult one at a local level. What we really need is coordinated action from the national government on lots of these issues because supermarkets and other big retailers organise their operations nationally. But as consumers, you can make your voices heard by buying local or buying the loose fruit and vegetables.

Can we run a pilot removing plastic packaging from a range of shops?

In 2019, we ran a very successful initiative called Plastic Free Wembley where we worked with local businesses to help them swap to biodegradable packaging, cutlery and other items usually made from plastic. It saved 150 tonnes of plastic! Before the pandemic, we were looking at how we could work with other areas on similar schemes but that had to be put on hold. At the moment, what we're hearing is that businesses are really struggling and they are focused on surviving this difficult period, but when the time comes we are looking at ways we can support them with a greener recovery.

Can grants be given for insulation & solar panels?

I'm really pleased to say that both these things already exist. The government is currently running a Green Homes Grant where they'll cover two-thirds of the cost of energy improvements like insulation and low carbon heating, up to £5,000. People who are receiving certain benefits can get even more. You can check if you're eligible at www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-the-green-homes-grant-scheme

Is there a solar panel programme /grant in place for households in Brent?

If you are interested in solar panels for your home, we've worked with the Mayor of London on an initiative called Solar Together for a couple of years. It's not open all of the time because they get expressions of interest and then go through an auction process to buy the solar panels in bulk. The idea is to get them for the best possible price. You can sign up for updates at www.solartogether.co.uk/brent/home. Since we started working with them, we've helped install 766 solar panels, saving 49 tonnes of carbon each year!

INTERVIEW with BRENT COUNCIL

INTERVIEW with BRENT COUNCIL

Can we restore River Brent?

We work very closely with organisations such as Thames 21 to undertake projects along the River Brent. We also engage with neighbouring boroughs as there are issues caused by the flow of the river further upstream that also need to be resolved.

Can we deal with the parakeets in the parks as they are destroying the habitats of local birds?

Parakeets are a part of our new ecosystem, but we do seek to identify and monitor the range of biodiversity across all our parks.

Why is Brent council spraying weed killer on our streets?

It is believed to be Glyphosate, which tends to drift onto other plants and is known to be carcinogenic. As a Council, we seek to use non-chemical products where possible and appropriate, where this is not possible we will use chemical products.

Can areas, e.g. Gladstone Park, be given to volunteers on gardening projects? Also can other green spaces be created for the community, e.g. playgrounds, etc?

We're really proud of our work with volunteer 'Friends-of' park groups in Brent. You mention Gladstone in your question. If you do have an interest in that particular park, there is a gardening group already there through Friends of Gladstone Park and they welcome new members. If other groups want to manage an area of a park, we are also open to discussion.

How can we encourage people to grow vegetables, plants and trees to encourage bees?

Any contribution that people can make makes a difference – whether that's using spaces like balconies or a front driveway to grow vegetables or plants. Organisations like Grow Wild have some great practical tips on their website www.growwilduk.com. We also hope

that by talking about initiatives like Brent's Bee Corridor with residents helps engage people when it comes to biodiversity.

How can we partner to ensure we maximise opportunities for growing food for our communities?

We welcome any discussions with groups who may wish to set up food growing areas for the benefit of the local community.

What are Brent's initiatives in cleaning up green spaces?

It's frustrating that a minority's lack of care for their environment can spoil other people's enjoyment of our green spaces. As well as running our own cleaning programme, we also support Community Clean-Ups with litter pickers, bags, and hoops – we'll even pick-up the bags of rubbish afterwards. We have some incredible volunteers and we're very grateful to them. If you are interested in arranging a (socially-distanced!) clean-up, email recyclemore@brent.gov.uk

BRENT COVID-19 TESTING

For further information [click here](#)



OUR COMMUNITY: FEATURE

by Kieumy Pham Thai

CARBON FOOTPRINT



HOW CAN YOU PLAY YOUR PART?

1. Vote for local Councillors who support public transport and will make streets safer for people, not cars.
2. Vote for political parties who don't waste money supporting airlines and don't encourage oil companies.
3. Buy less stuff. Buy secondhand when you can. See something you fancy? Walk away and promise yourself that you'll buy it tomorrow. You'll probably forget all about it by the time you've got home.
4. Use up food leftovers and plan what to buy so that you never need to throw food away.
5. Eat more plant-based meals – cut down on meat and cheese.
6. Give up your car. Walk, cycle, use public transport. use taxis when you have heavy shopping, share lifts, help each other and hire a car if you really need to drive. You'll be healthier and you'll save a lot of money.
7. Don't fly if you can avoid it and never more than once a year. Use the train in the UK and Europe.
8. Switch off everything electrical when you aren't using it.
9. Turn your thermostat down to 19 degrees, or 20 if you're cold, and put on woolly and warm slippers.
10. Buy thick curtains from the charity shops to keep out the cold. Stuff old tights with old jumpers and use them to stop draughts coming under the door.
11. Dry clothes on the balcony or in the bathroom, not in the tumble dryer except in emergencies.

For more information please see
www.winacc.org.uk/take-action/lower-your-carbon-footprint

DIWALI CELEBRATIONS

The weekend of 14th/15th November will see approximately 17.8% of Hindus living in the borough of Brent celebrating the Festival of Lights, Diwali

Brent is the second most culturally diverse borough in the UK ([Source](#)) with a proud history of celebrating different cultures throughout the year. Here I would like to share the story of why Diwali is celebrated together with a recipe.

by Nina Gallagher

THE STORY OF DIWALI

Ramayana is one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India. It narrates the life of Prince Rama from the kingdom of Kosala.

Rama's stepmother, KaiKevi, has a son Bharata who she wanted to be king instead of Rama who was the eldest and favourite son of King Dasharatha. She convinces the King to banish Prince Rama to the forest for 14 years. Rama is the epitome of virtue and agrees to go by himself, however, both his wife, Sita, and brother, Lakshmana, insist on accompanying him. The fearsome demon King of Lanka, Ravana,

kidnaps Sita. Sita leaves a trail of her jewellery for Rama to follow. Together with the help of the King Hanuman, a war ensues to rescue Sita. Rama finds and kills Ravana with a magic arrow.

Rama together with his wife and brother begins his long journey back to the capital city, Ayodhya, where a path to the city and homes are lit by oil clay lamps, divaas and is also greeted by fireworks to become the rightful king.

Ever since, people have lit clay lamps at Diwali to remember that light triumphs over dark and good triumphs over evil.

DIWALI RECIPE

The following is an old family recipe that we always make during Diwali.

The recipe makes approximately 50 samosas. Even though I always make my own pastry, I always recommend beginners to use either samosa pad sheets or spring roll sheets or filo pastry.

Ingredients

1 tablespoon of Vegetable oil
2 teaspoon of Cumin seeds
1 onion diced small
4 large potatoes diced small
1 cup of frozen peas
1 teaspoon of salt or to taste
2 chopped green finger chillies
Fresh coriander
1 teaspoon ground coriander
½ teaspoon of garam masala
½ teaspoon of garam masala

Making the Filling

- Heat the oil.
- Add cumin seeds and fry for 30 seconds.
- Add the onions and cook on a low-medium heat until translucent.
- Add the potatoes and cook for 12 minutes before adding the peas.
- Cook for a further 8-10 minutes or longer if needed. The potatoes and peas should be soft.
- Mix in the ground coriander, grama masala and fresh

coriander and take off the stove to cool.

Compiling the Samosas

- The pastry should be rolled out in a circle.
- Cut in half.
- Fold the cut edge and form into a cone shape.
- Seal the flap with water and add filling up to three quarters of the height.
- Brush with water and seal the bottom edge by pressing firmly.
- Ensure all the pastry is covered with a cloth

Cooking the Samosas

- Heat either vegetable or sunflower oil to 190°C in a wok.
- Fry 2-3 samosas at a time depending on your wok size for approximately 2-3 minutes.
- Using a skimmer, remove the somas and set on a plate to serve immediately.

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Interview with Brent Council – Nina Gallagher
Carbon Footprint – Kieumy Pham Thai
Diwali Celebrations – Nina Gallagher

Thank you ...

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