

EGRA Annual Report for 2020

Executive Committee Membership

Chair: Patrick Ives. Deputy Chair: Monique Tomlinson. The rest of the Committee are: Louise Fletcher (Hon. Secretary), Fiona Machen Harrison (Treasurer), Sheila Keeble, Tom Stanworth and Ilsa Pole.

Financial Summary

EGRA Accounts 2020	£	£	£
Balance at 1 Jan 2020	<u>5,509.70</u>		
Income			
Memberships 2020			250.00
Total income 250.00			
Expenditure			
Eden Gardens (Woodland Walk planting upgrade)		2,182.88	
Total expenditure 2,182.88			
Balance at 31 Dec 2020	<u>3,576.82</u>		

Summary of EGRA Activities during 2020

Well that was an interesting year and yet it all started so normally. At the beginning of 2020 we were engaging in a quite useful way with the Port of London Authority, enjoying our new membership of the London Forum which made us all realise that we are not alone in dealing with some very challenging planning issues and organising hustings for the London Assembly and Mayoral elections at Christchurch. And then in March it all stopped. And it stayed stopped until the summer when we began to get used to the idea of Zoom meetings.

- UEFA Fanzone - Does anyone even remember that we were threatened with 30,000 international football fans taking over the whole lower section of Greenwich Park from May to July? Bizarrely, this was given planning permission in March just days before the world came to a full stop and yet it was weeks later that UEFA finally admitted that the tournament was off. The problem for the future is that the principle of taking over a public space for a private event is now well-established and will come back to haunt us.
- Demolition of Sam Manners House - Greenwich Builds, RBG's social housing building arm, ignored the first lockdown and demolished the sheltered housing and cut down trees

while families were cooped up in surrounding properties. Not a very happy introduction to their working practices and ironically the cleared site is still sitting idle.

- Morden Wharf - This mega-build on the riverside tried to slip under the radar by not bothering to post any site notices on any of its boundaries so getting the word out to local residents that the planning application was active was quite tricky. The adjacent site occupied by Sivyer also failed to post any site notices for its intended works. Both of these controversial applications are still in the system but with no immediate signs of appearing at Planning Committee. More objections would be very useful particularly to the four very high blocks at Morden Wharf with minimal public space and to the potential damage to the Thames Path at Sivyer.
- Rose Garden, Blackwall Lane - Another attempt to slip under the radar was the two-week window for objections to the sale of the Rose Garden. Well done to Mary Mills who spotted the small print in that little-read paper *Weekender* and to Tunnel Avenue residents who put up plenty of notices. The mound of snail mail letters to the Council stopped this but despite many EGRA emails this little park is still not on the Parks and Open Spaces Register which would offer some protection from development. The Council have also refused to reveal how much income arises from the electronic advertising hoarding on the site despite a Freedom of Information request. And local councillors promised to organise a Friends' Group but have done nothing so local people have been guerrilla-gardening. If you have any spare plants or shrubs that need a home come and plant them here.

Traffic and Transport

- Silvertown Tunnel - EGRA has been participating in the on-line Community Liaison meetings organised by Riverlinx and TfL since August 2020. So far these have not been productive sessions with the agenda devised and controlled by Riverlinx and concentrating heavily on the details of tunnelling. EGRA and other local groups are much more concerned about the long term infrastructure, the impacts of increased traffic and the lack of permeability of the new road layouts which potentially cut off the Peninsula from Greenwich. The wholesale slaughter of trees around North Greenwich has also alarmed everyone. There is still not enough public awareness about what is happening here and the lockdowns have made putting out information very difficult.
- Low Traffic Neighbourhoods - EGRA promoted road closures for Pelton Road and Walnut Tree Road to cut down rat-running through residential streets and this seems to have worked for those roads. The combined effects of the other road closures are much harder to assess at the moment with the atypical road use caused by the pandemic and we think they should have a chance to bed in before any further changes are made.
- Trafalgar Road/Woolwich Road cycleway - While other boroughs had cycleways installed in days, we watched the slowest and most frustrating cycleway take months to build and still appear half-finished when it was opened. At the only public consultation session it was clear that TfL and Streetscape had a firm plan of what they wanted and had no interest in hearing local opinions. The result is a bodge which endangers cyclists and pedestrians at the many blind turnings and confuses motorists who still regularly drive along the cycleway. Other parts of the cycleway provide parking for pizza mopeds and delivery vehicles. Many cyclists continue to use the year-old cyclelanes put in during the Low Emission Neighbourhood scheme which have not been removed. Worst of all, pedestrians now have fewer safe crossing places with longer waits for lights.

Greening

Gardening has proved to be a popular alternative to being stuck at home and regular volunteers have continued to work on all the EGRA projects including Woodland Walk which had a substantial makeover to install more drought-tolerant plants. Christchurch School Community Garden has seen great improvements and is still open to volunteers or visitors every Friday. EGRA has been working with the Greenwich Society and local residents in a number of sites around the area and would like to encourage more small-scale gardening schemes that would enhance our environment.

Licensing

It has been a strange year for licensing activities with stop/start openings. RBG has, after much lobbying, extended the Cumulative Impact Zone to include the riverfront and part of East Greenwich up to Pelton Road. The lockdown has resulted in a huge increase in anti-social behaviour along the riverfront as people bring their own alcohol and party in an unpoliced area. The volumes of rubbish dumped along the Thames Path and the horrific amount of plastic waste that finds its way into the river have been one of the more depressing aspects of the last year. Meanwhile organising any large-scale clean-up has been impossible.

Focus for the Future

The issues that have been highlighted by members during the last year have been remarkably consistent. With all of us staying at home and having more opportunity to see our surroundings during daylight hours the state of the area has become a big concern.

- **Air Quality** - Committee members would like to renew EGRA's original focus on air quality issues which is a main concern of the majority of local residents. The disappearance of traffic and aeroplanes for a few weeks during the first lockdown showed everyone how pleasant life could be with less noise and cleaner air. This means tackling air pollution arising from traffic, construction, shipping and domestic coal or log fires will be an important focus going forward. EGRA is also fully behind the Council's Zero Carbon Strategy to attempt to mitigate climate change and would like to encourage more work on how to retrofit air or ground source heat pumps to our Victorian housing stock.
- **Rubbish** - There has been a great deal of alarm during the last year at the mountains of rubbish that are dumped by visitors and the really disgusting state of our streets and public spaces covered with abandoned face masks and dog mess. We know that lots of residents have been doing their own clean-ups. Any ideas on how to tackle this problem more strategically would be gratefully received.