



**A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.**

## ‘Sleeping Beauty’ wood wakes up

By John Lawrence

**A badly overgrown pocket of green space is being reclaimed by people who live nearby and could soon be opened up as a venue for nature studies and community events.**

Dozens of volunteers turned out for an Explorers’ Picnic on Sunday 7 August to help hack away at the brambles and thorns that have swamped the roughly 80m x 80m woodland between Tarling Road and Brownswell Road, N2, close to the Grange Estate.

### Closed for 20 years

Once open land with a few trees, it was used for camps and summer play schemes by the Old Barn Youth and Community Association, which it borders. It was fenced and locked around 20 years ago and its native trees became

overrun by brambles and nettles which spilled out onto the pavement in Tarling Road. The clearance organisers compared it to Sleeping Beauty’s forest.

But many pairs of hands and just a few hours’ work made a huge difference. By the end of the day the whole front of the wood had been opened up to the light and a wide winding path had been forged deep into the undergrowth.

### Usable but still wild

Co-ordinator Leo Smith, who has lived next door to the land for 40 years, says it will be returned for community

use after more work is done. “We’ll keep it as wild as possible to encourage wildlife but we want to make it accessible for forest school lessons and maybe a community orchard or beekeeping,” he said.

The woodland is owned by Barnet Council and at one time had planning permission for a floodlit basketball court, which many neighbours are now glad did not come to pass. There was added impetus to clean it up because the smart new Tarling Road Community Centre, next door on the former site of the Old Barn, is nearing completion.

### Backing the explorers

The volunteers’ picnic included food and information on the nearby Brownswell Green. It was organised by



Wild wood: Volunteers help with clearing. Photo Mike Coles

local people with the backing of regeneration projects Grange Big Local, ICIC and COMMUNITY Barnet, along

with Barnet Council, the Faiths Forum for London and the Somali Bravanese Welfare Association.

## Community centre opening soon

By Janet Maitland

**The Mayor of Barnet has praised the “fantastic benefits” that the new Tarling Road Community Centre will bring to East Finchley. “It’s great to now be at a stage where we can fully see the outside of this building and appreciate its scale,” said Councillor Reuben Thompstone.**

The inside of the centre is still to be kitted out and the outdoor space landscaped. It is due to open its doors later this year. It will include a large meeting hall, a cafe, an accessible lift and 980 square metres of functional space. Rooms will be available for hire on a per-hour or longer basis.

“It’s going to be a really positive addition to the community,” said East Finchley Councillor Alison Moore. “Now I’ve looked round it, I can see it’s going to be a fantastic facility.”

The council is in the process of finalising the terms of the lease they have offered to City YMCA under which they would manage the premises on a day-to-day basis, including the allocation of space and time to community groups and members of the



The Mayor, centre, joined ward councillors Alison Moore and Arjun Mittra at the topping out of Tarling Road Community Centre

public. An important issue for local people is that the centre will be open for low-cost and free activities.

If you would like to hear about how the building will operate and what it will cost to hire, or if you would like to contribute your

ideas of what other services need to be at the hub, you can attend an open meeting on Tuesday 11 September at 10.30am at Barnet House in Whetstone, N20. Spaces are limited. To book contact Octavia.findlay@cityymca.org by Friday 7 September.

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