

Lewisham, East Southwark and  
District Group Newsletter  
January 2024

## **AGE FRIENDLY LONDON: ACTION PLAN ANNOUNCED BY THE MAYOR**

Age UK London have been campaigning to make London an age friendly city, in line with World Health Organisation guidelines. The CSPA has supported this campaign and the local group has attended a number of events and Conferences. Now the London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, has announced an Age Friendly Action Plan. Age UK London has welcomed this development and will be the caretakers, watching to see that action is taken to make London a city that meets the needs of older people.

The Mayor's plan was published on 30 November 2023. Successful implementation of the plan will rely on co-operation with London boroughs, many of whom have already supported the concept of an age friendly city. In summary the plan addresses each of the WHO's eight factors:

**Housing :** increase older Londoners' access to affordable housing; tackle fuel poverty and reduce the number living in poor conditions; ensure older people's views are heard in decision-making on housing.

**Outdoor spaces and buildings:** create public spaces that are inclusive of older Londoners needs; support the provision of accessible public toilets.

**Transportation:** improve the accessibility and inclusivity of London's transport infrastructure; support older Londoners to move around London in safety and comfort, with the information they need; Offer value for money and fare structures and concessions that are fair, clear and well communicated.

**Civic, cultural and social participation:** engage with older Londoners and support their civic participation; support older Londoners to benefit from cultural and social activities; support volunteering projects.

**Employment and skills:** provide training and employment support to older workers and job seekers; encourage age friendly practices in the workplace.

**Health:** support good health and well being for older Londoners.

**Communication and information:** address digital exclusion amongst older Londoners; promote the use of accessible, positive and user-friendly communication.

**Respect and social inclusion:** make London a city where older people are respected and socially included.

A copy of the plan is available on the London Assembly website [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk) or by post from the GLA, City Hall, Kamal Chunchie Way, E16 1ZE (phone 020 7983 4000).

## PECKHAM RYE STATION REBUILD

The Group has been involved in the consultation about the planned upgrade of Peckham Rye station. This upgrade will cost £40m and is planned to complement Southwark Council's £27m investment in the area between the station and Rye Lane.

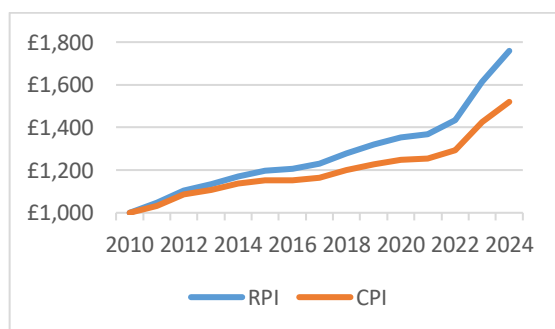
Network Rail have now received formal planning consent for its proposals, which will transform the station. There will be a new concourse at ground level, with new lifts and stair access to all platforms, accessible toilets and wider platforms.

The next step is for Network Rail to submit a business case and funding request for the detailed design stage. This stage should be completed by summer 2025 with work potentially starting by the end of 2025.

Peckham Rye is a major hub and one of the busiest interchange stations outside of central London. In the year April 2022 – March 2023 the station was used by 8.4m people, 3m of whom were changing trains (source: ORR statistics). Some renovation was done last year, and these plans will create a station that is fully accessible and a better passenger experience.

## CIVIL SERVICE PENSION INCREASE 2024: 6.7% (CPI)

In 2010 the Government changed the index used to determine pension increases from RPI to CPI. The chart below shows the effect of this change. Every £1,000 of pension paid in April 2010 would have increased to £1,759 in April 2024 if RPI had been retained, but under CPI will increase to only £1,520.



## LEWISHAM SHOPPING CENTRE

The owners of the shopping centre have been undertaking a further consultation on their re-development plans, with a pop-up shop in the centre at unit number 25 (next to XO Bikes). Detailed models can be viewed of the plans.

The stated aim is to re-invigorate Lewisham town centre with a new shopping centre, creation of an 8 acre Levesham Meadow, a new music and cultural venue, an enhanced market and up to 1,700 homes including affordable housing and shared living accommodation. The meadows are being designed by the same team as the one which designed the award winning Mayfield Park in Manchester and the whole design is described as radical and bold.

The pop-up shop was due to close in January, but more information can be obtained from [www.morethanaplace.com](http://www.morethanaplace.com)

In previous consultations, the CSPA Group has responded positively to the proposals but has emphasised the need to take account of the needs of older people and to make it an age-friendly space. This means plenty of seating, well maintained public toilets, well sited bus stops, and step free access.

## SOUTHWARK COUNCIL WATERS DOWN LONDON LOOS CAMPAIGN

Local campaigners in Southwark who are seeking more public toilets are dismayed that a motion put to the Council Assembly meeting in November by Cllr. Rachel Bentley was not carried. The motion called for a public toilet strategy with a named Officer responsible for its delivery. This is in line with Age UK's "London Loos" campaign, which the CSPA also supports. An amended motion was carried giving a commitment to improve public toilets but referring only to "exploring" ways of improving access. The campaign continues for a community toilet scheme in Southwark.

## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR THE GROUP TO CONTINUE**

We are sad to report that the future of the Lewisham, East Southwark & District CSPA Group is now in some doubt. Over recent years Officers have moved away or have become too ill to carry on, and attendance at meetings has also declined for the same reasons. The position has now been reached where the Group will no longer be viable unless other members come forward and volunteer to help.

The following posts will need to be filled at the Group's Annual General Meeting on 21 February: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, and Minutes Secretary.

Whilst some of these posts can be combined, for the Group to function effectively at least four people are needed to fulfill the functions of these six posts. Andy Beglin and Mike Sparham are willing to continue as Officers but a further two volunteers at least are needed. The duties are not onerous and can be distributed flexibly between the volunteers to suit particular skills and interests.

If insufficient numbers volunteer to help run the local Group then it will need to close, as neighbouring Groups in Bromley and Bexley have already had to do. That will be a pity, as it will mean there is no local CSPA Group in south east London that can make an input on behalf of civil service pensioners into wider cross-London organisations.

In the past, the Group has sent representatives to, and played an active part in, pensioner organisations such as the National Pensioners Convention London Region, Age UK London, and the London Age Friendly Forum, as well as preparing and submitting responses to public consultations such as the proposed extension of the Bakerloo Line and the re-development of Lewisham Centre. This has all helped to raise the profile of civil service

pensioners and the CSPA in south east London.

Please think carefully about whether you can spare a small amount of time to help the Group continue. For more information about what is involved, please contact either the Secretary, Andy Beglin, or Membership Secretary, Mike Sparham. Contact details are in the box below.

In view of the situation, the Group has decided not to ask for a Group subscription this year.

### **GROUP CONTACTS**

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### **GROUP MEETINGS**

The local Group meets on the third Wednesday of every month in the Jubilee Room at the St Laurence Church Community Centre, 37 Bromley Road, Catford SE6 2TS. Meetings begin at 11.00. Tea and coffee is available. The next meetings are on:

**January 17th**  
**February 21<sup>st</sup> (Annual General Meeting)**

Further meetings will be held on **March 20<sup>th</sup> and April 17<sup>th</sup>** if a sufficient number of Officers are elected at the AGM (see above).

## LOCAL LANDMARKS: THE THAMES TUNNEL

*Not really a landmark, but a local Grade II\* listed historical structure of significant architectural importance. When the London Overground was closed for engineering work last November, the London Transport Museum organised a Hidden London tour of the tunnel and Mike Sparham was on it. Here is his report.*



It was an unusual way to spend part of a Saturday afternoon, walking through a railway tunnel, but this is no ordinary tunnel. It is the first ever tunnel built under a navigable river, which most people at the time thought could not be done. It was achieved by using a revolutionary system of tunnelling called a tunnelling shield, which was invented by Marc Brunel and Thomas Cochrane.

The tunnelling shield was an iron frame divided into 36 compartments, in each of which was a man with a lantern and tools. As earth is cleared away by hand, the frame of the shield acts as a temporary support until the tunnel covering is put in place and the frame moves forward. It took 18 years to tunnel the 400m (0.25 miles) between Rotherhithe and Wapping, and was completed in 1843. There were two floods during the construction, in 1827 and 1828, one of which almost killed Isambard Brunel, who was the Chief Engineer and son of Marc.

At its deepest, the tunnel is 23m (75ft.) below the surface of the river. It was not built as a railway tunnel but as a way for horses and carriages to cross the river below London Bridge. It was never used in this way as the access ramps necessary for the horses were not built as there was no money available. Instead it was used by pedestrians, and there were 63 stalls in the brick arches from which various goods, souvenirs and refreshments could be bought. For a while, there was also an annual fair. To begin with it was very popular, but its popularity waned as it became a haunt of sex workers and thieves. The idea to convert the tunnel to a railway came in 1865, and the East London line opened in 1869.



Highgate and Islington.

Many of the original features remain, including the columns that can still be seen (although not from the train!). It was between these columns that the stalls sold their wares. In 1995 London Underground wanted to seal the tunnel against leaks by “shotcreting” it with concrete. This would have completely covered all the original features. A campaign against this succeeded in getting the tunnel listed, thus preventing the work being done. A compromise was then reached and the tunnel was brought back into use as part of the London Overground between Surrey Quays and

*The Brunel Museum, Railway Avenue, Rotherhithe SE16 4LF, has more information,*