

# April '23 - March '24

Creating positive spaces and opportunities for resident empowerment and wellbeing.

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# WELCOME

Welcome to Thames Life Community Development Trust's 2023-24 Impact Report. It's been an incredible year for Thames Life in terms of community engagement. Our efforts have been focused on enhancing the quality of life for residents in Barking Riverside and Thames View through our various projects aimed at fostering community cohesion, promoting health and wellbeing, resident voice, and creating sustainable environments.

During the year, highlights included getting residents active via our LMCT sports programme, harnessing arts and culture for a multicultural festival, launching monthly GP drop-in clinics, equipping residents to campaign for the reopening of the Ripple Nature Reserve and resident action to prevent the closure of the 'Warehouse.'

As an organisation, it has also been a challenging year. Due to a wider funding crisis in all sectors, it was necessary to reduce costs. We now have a smaller team, though on a positive note, 3 out of 4 of us are local residents with an abundance of lived experience and insight for the projects we lead on.

This report will provide you with insight into all our work and how we are steadily moving towards our vision of a diverse and vibrant community where residents are driving change. From the Sports and Health programmes, the RiverView, YAG (Young Action Group), Resident Planning Forum, Ripple Effect, to our resilience partnership, there's so much progress to share.

For more information about any of our work, please visit our website or get in contact with us.

#### **Zainab Omokhe**

Communications and Marketing Officer

#### **ABOUT US**

#### VISION

A diverse and vibrant community where residents are driving change.

#### **MISSION**

To create positive spaces and opportunities for resident empowerment and wellbeing.

#### **OUR AIM IS TO:**

- **Develop Leaders:** by offering increased skills development, training and volunteering opportunities for residents.
- **Nurture Relationships:** by creating impactful relationships between residents and partnerships with the local authority, developers, NHS, schools and others.
- **Exert Influence:** by connecting residents with decision makers to seek positive change for their community.
- **Support Enterprise:** by growing a network of community projects and businesses led by residents to address local need.

## OUR TRUSTEES



Amina Hussein
PA, HR, Payroll &
Youth Work
experience



**Delwar Hussain** 



Hafizur Rahman
College lecturer,
Trustee of Thames View
Muslim Association



**Jean Songa** 



Josiah Oyekunle
Co-Chair
International Wedding
& Events DJ, Musician,
Producer and MC



**Lai Ogunsola**Project Officer in the
Health Team at the GLA



Natalie Ogene Civil Servant





Matt Scott



Jamie Kesten
Deputy CEO



**Margarida Lopes**Governance Manager



**Nia Lopez**Administrative Officer



**Alex Anthony**Community Organiser



**Lucy Lee**Health Outreach
Officer



**Vishal Narayan**Health Strategy
Officer



**Zahra Awani**Comms & Outreach
Officer (Mat cover)



Zainab Jalloh
Comms & Outreach
Officer



This past year has been a significant period of transition for our charity, one that has fostered both growth and deeper understanding among our staff and trustees. As we navigated these changes, ensuring the long-term sustainability of our organization became paramount, alongside our commitment to continuing the impactful work we do. Through this journey, I have been continually impressed by the patience and dedication of our staff, to whom I extend my heartfelt appreciation. A special thank you goes out to Jamie, Alex, Margarida, and Nia for their years of service and the tremendous effort they've put into supporting our local community. Their contributions have made a lasting difference.

One of the standout successes of this past year has been our Health Outreach Programme. With each event, this initiative has grown, reaching more residents and making a tangible difference in the community. The positive feedback we've received underscores the programme's impact, and I'm particularly proud of the work done by Lucy and her team. Their unwavering commitment to fostering a healthier community and bringing people together truly exemplifies our mission.

Even as our team has become smaller due to these transitions, the quality of our work has not diminished. Both the trustees and staff are united in our focus on maintaining the high standards that our community expects and deserves. We remain committed to empowering local residents and ensuring that their voices are heard. Our partners have been crucial in supporting this mission, and I want to express our gratitude for their continued collaboration.

Looking ahead, we recognize that there is still much work to be done, but we are more determined than ever to move forward with our vision. Empowering residents will always be at the core of our efforts, and we know that by working together, we can achieve even greater things. As we continue this journey, let's remember that our strength lies in our unity.

Josiah Oyekunle Chair



### A WORD FROM OUR CEO

Overall, the feedback that we get, and the feeling I have, is that our empowerment and partnership work is frequently exceptional. We are doing great work and the work we are doing makes a real difference to local people. This is not just because our staff work hard but because of how we work, which is to recognise the genius of local people within our local community and provide spaces for that to flourish. It is worth saying that all our trustees and staff, bar myself are local people.

There is plenty we need to consider and improve upon, especially regarding business sustainability, impact, cross sector collaboration and ever more outreach. If you have ideas about what can be done differently, done better and done with yourselves, let us know.

We have successfully dealt with a period of change (Sept 2023 / March 2024) where we acted to ensure the charity was financially sustainable given a reduction of funds (lottery) for core posts. I want to mark up my appreciation for the years of service given by Alex, Jamie, Margarida and Nia, who all moved on. We have consolidated our work around a smaller team who have embraced an agile approach which has delivered high quality work – shout out Lucy, Vishal, Zainab. And a second shout out to Laurelle and Marion who have joined us, as community organisers with an environmental focus.

Our core projects are:

- Barking Food Forest (community gardening)
- River View newspaper (written and produced by residents, quarterly to 6500 households)
- Ripple Nature Reserve (working alongside a resident steering group to re-open the site)
- Young Citizens Action Group (weekly leadership classes which has developed a young person's charter for the area)
- Sports activities (securing funds for local groups to deliver)
- Health outreach (GP drop-ins, outreach and partnership working with Al Madina, DABD, Harmony House and Kingsley Hall)
- Resilience and civil contingency (weekly coordination with British Red Cross)
- Planning forum (residents influencing regeneration decisions)
- Ripple Effect (weekly campaign meetings)
- Community organising (working with BD Citizens and Citizens UK)
- Supporting the work of borough networks including BD Collective, BD Giving and BD CVS.

# KEY SUCCESSES

£404,722 funding raised across all projects 9,797 residents engaged across all projects

**Artivism & Live Music Event** 



MULTI **CULTURAL** FESTIVAL River View

News for residents, by residents

**Sports day celebration** for LMCT activities



hila:

Riverside School first Harry Potter produ





Launched award-winning GP dropin clinics

The Rivergate Centre

**Ongoing BRL funding** secured for The RiverView

# '23/'24 FOCUS

BARKING FOOD FOREST (BFF) RIPPLE
NATURE
RESERVE
GROUP
(RNR)

RIPPLE EFFECT GROUP YOUNG CITIZEN ACTION GROUP (YCAG)

THE

LONDON
MARATHON
CHARITABLE
TRUST



Barking Food Forest (BFF) is a quarter acre site sub-leased since September 2021 to Thames Life by Riverside School, via Barking Riverside Ltd. It is our very own community garden site. Another aspect is the use of the site by the nursery, special needs, primary and secondary school pupils.

Residents, supported by our former trustee and permaculture expert, Nikhil Rathore, have continued to activate the space.

From July 2023, BFF tenants, Wander Wild Forest School were successful in a bid to the LBBD NCIL fund for £10,000. This funding has enabled them to help further activate Barking Food Forest by engaging local children aged 5 and under and their families in a year of Saturday morning sessions learning about the different seasons, local animals and plants. As part of these sessions they participate in a range of activities including whittling, outdoor cooking, tent building, bug hunting, mud kitchen, wild play, nature art and circle time theatre and songs! This has seen over 700+ families use the site over the year.

In August the Green Team from Groundwork London returned (following their earlier work building planters and tree boxes) to help residents install a central pathway through the site, making it more accessible for all and setting the stage for further development plans to be enacted. It was great to have members of the community come along and join the team in digging, laying gravel and topping it off with wood chip donated by local tree surgeon, Kings Cuts Tree Services.

Following the unfortunate closure of the Every One Every Day Warehouse on Thames Road, Thames Life were extremely fortunate to receive a significant number of trees and other gardening equipment on behalf of Barking Food Forest and the local community.

Lastly, our planning application for the site was submitted. This included a proposal for a facilities structure capable of harvesting rainwater and solar energy and including secure tool storage, accessible toilet and baby change facilities, workshop spaces, a polytunnel for year-round growing and a pavilion for socialising and performances.





Early 2023, National Grid and UKPN told the resident steering group and BRL that they would need to dig up an area of the RNR to replace underground cabling. This led to magnetic resonance testing and soil contamination testing (it was previously a dumping ground for pulverised fuel from the coal-fired power station). Some trees needed to be felled in order to carry out the works. This, as well as delays in the architect landscape tendering, resulted in resident activity being limited to small walking groups. Residents were supported by Thames Life in questioning planning permissions for the south-side of the RNR, in which a substation was built by National Grid and another area where works look like they are taking place.

Further, Thames Life supported the Ripple Nature Reserve Committee with the resident- facing community involvement to re-open the reserve. During this period of time, there have been monthly meetings with a number stakeholders, led by the Barking and Dagenham Parks team. Critical input has also been provided by Barking Riverside Limited, (who are funding the majority of the re-opening costs), UK Power Networks, Clancy, National Grid and Borough's resident Ecologist, Denis Vickers. Other groups who have been involved in the RNR included the Young Citizen Action Group, The University of Dublin and other local nature enthusiasts and litter pickers.

The efforts have been placed into appointing a new landscape architect, who will reimagine the RNR ahead of physical constructions works for the sake of accessibility. A n LBBD, resident and stakeholder panel met to go through applications, and Arkwood were eventually appointed to deliver the architecture, and in construction with Thames Life, will be consulting with community groups to reopen the Reserve in the next period in order to further co-design the RNR's opening.





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# YOUNG CITIZENS ACTION GROUP

For the previous year, the Young Citizen Action Group (YCAG) have been working on their versions of campaigning on matters which are important to them. They have been briefed on various ways of campaigning such as letter writing, direct, in person questioning, consultations and contacting relevant stakeholders.

This year, the YCAG worked with the University of Dublin on an environmental activist project to help open the Ripple Nature Reserve. They consulted with the local police community safety team addressing their issues around young people's safety, attended the BRL community dinner to get their voices heard about local planning matters and green spaces and wrote letters to MPs, councillors, and developers to raise funds for Riverside Campus School's Performing Arts Centre.

To top off the year, the YCAG presented to important and significant delegates across civil society in recognition of the work they have been doing campaigning for youth voice with the prestigious Goldsmith's Award. YCAG also created a Young Person's Community Charter. This charter outlines several core tenets of youth voice. The YCAG would like these tenets to be considered by local stakeholders to see the significance of youth voice in shaping civil society, the built environment, and cultural/ sports infrastructure. The Young Person's Community Charter was presented by the YCAG in a local event at the Rivergate Centre. BRL and Thames Life Trustees attended, listening to the YCAG present, to the YCAG live band's performances and for free pizza and a DJ. The YCAG are going to try a Thames Life summer school for the first year running, involving social media and podcasting, raising youth voice and participation across Thames View and Riverside.

# YOUNG CITIZENS ACTION GROUP







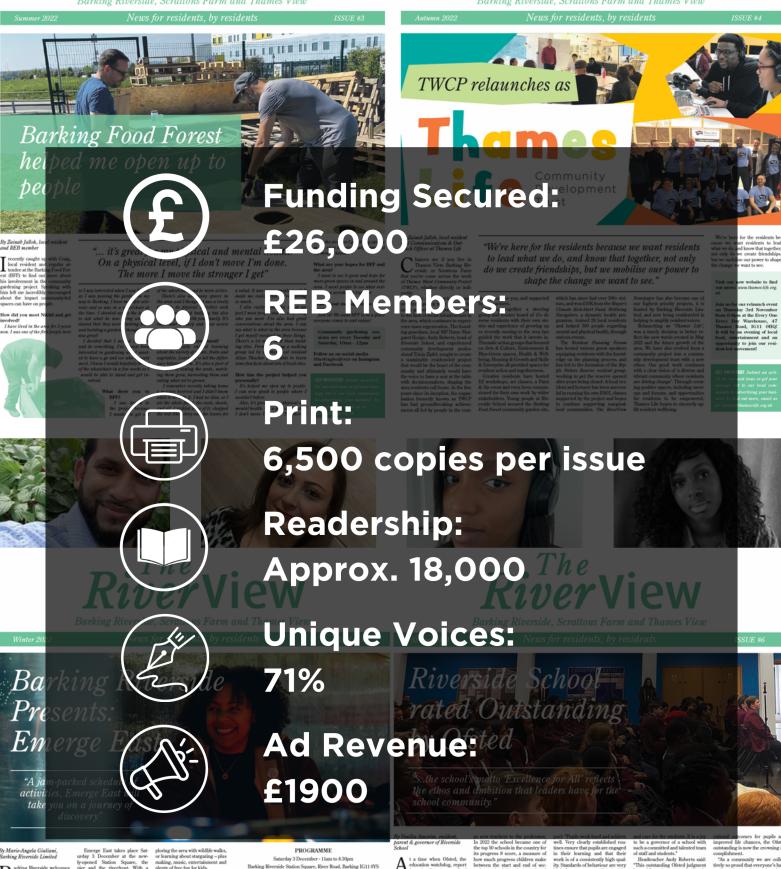
Since the Spring issue of 2023, the REB secured another year of funding from Barking Riverside Limited to continue, which included an increased amount taking into consideration inflation and increased distribution.

In addition to securing funding for the print side of things, the REB were also awarded a small pot of £1,000 to create a website for the publication to engage with a younger audience (www.theriverview.org.uk). This coming year, we look forward to reaching more homes as more properties go live on Barking Riverside and more people with a new online presence. The paper still hopes to secure more funding from diverse sources and looks to increase ad spend with the paper.

the local newspaper was rebranded and relaunched as The RiverView. The Resident Editorial Board (REB) always knew that the old name 'Riverside News' would need to change to reflect the fact that it is a newspaper by and for residents of both Riverside and Thames View Wards. This was the first issue the REB had to produce end to end, on their own with the support of Thames Life, having just finished training with Social Spider CIC. The central focus still remains: champion resident voice through the primary content featuring community groups, opinion pieces and local updates.

Originally made up of 4 local residents, Emmanuel Oreyeni, Venilia Amorim, and Zahra Awani, and Zainab Jalloh (TWCP staff), the team lost Emmanuel as he was off to university, but brought on a new local resident from Thames View, Hafizur Rahman. The RiverView is now distributed to 6000 homes across Thames View, Barking Riverside and Scrattons Farm, which is the biggest print distribution in the borough. This year, with the growing population of Barking Riverside, the team managed to secure £2,000 in advertising income, having not had a dedicated salesperson on the team, and the ads coming in organically. The largest advertiser was Tandem, the site managing company for Barking Riverside.

# River View



judgement from Ofsted takes a considerable team effort and Riverside praises all their partners in the community..

# Inspection of Riverside School

## LONDON MARATHON CHARITABLE TRUST

The London Marathon Trust: Consists of eight resident-led sports activities that take place in local spaces, available to all residents of Thames View and Barking Riverside. The activities all took place at different times throughout the week, including:



We provided these activities with the aim to engage residents that might not usually participate in group fitness sessions. The knock-on effect of Covid left many residents and their families feeling isolated, therefore encouraging residents with a fitness background enabled outreach to be more effective. Offering a range of low-to high-intensity activities for all ages and specifically for women, proved highly successful, building relationships between neighbouring families and encouraged consistency in attendance. The aims of the programme were to:

Provide a Improve the To assist with Build general safe space Upskill Tackle health Connect healthier relationships health and for women resident families lifestyle inequalities between well-being of facilitators and girls to changes residents the residents exercise

To celebrate the extension of the programme, families, friends and neighbours of all ages from all around Thames View & Barking Riverside gathered together for a sports day event, filled with fun and fitness activities at The Warehouse on Thames Road. The day kicked off with a taster session of the children's breakdancing, before everyone refuelled with healthy snacks, followed by traditional sports day games. After which there were taster sessions of all the other activities allowing new attendees to sign up for future classes in 2023/2024. Overall, the sports day was a huge success and we so appreciate the amazing support from our incredible residents. Everyone had a great time, and Thame Life looks forward to planning many, many more fun events in the future.



# OTHER PROJECTS

**GP Drop-in Clinics:** Thames Life and Barking Riverside Ltd. (BRL) worked in partnership with Aurora Medcare and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD) to deliver a series of 6 monthly pop-up health services across Thames View and Barking Riverside in Barking and Dagenham in 2023. These popups provided residents with same day access to GPs, other practice staff, and a collection of statutory services and community organisations in a single setting.

Thames Life initially trialled a pop up health service (with support from Aurora Medcare and other community partners) giving residents access to GPs and other wellbeing services. This initial approach was fully voluntary, and ran successfully on a shoestring budget. Following the success of this initial event, LBBD and BRL provided funding to support the programme of 6 pop-up events. The support of Aurora Medcare remained voluntary.

In total, 601 residents attended the 6 events.

Residents attended: 601 Funding secured: 30,000

**PLANNING FORUM:** The Thames Life Residents Planning Forum has been continuing to meet regularly once a month. New and more interested residents in local planning matters, heritage and issue have been undertaking a serious of engagement sessions with Activist Network, Just Space, The UCL Bartlett School of Planning and other speakers involved with planning and regeneration matters.

Most recent visitor presentations have included Tim Peake who is doing his PhD on regeneration in the Royal Docks area, Tim Cowbury and Mark Maughan who are award winning theatre directors, including videos produced with Yarrow Films on the loss of Granville Kitchen due to regeneration. Micheal Ball from the Waterloo Community Development Group, and LBBD's Be First.

In collaboration with UCL, Thames Life are publishing a community plan for social infrastructure with Dr. Pablo Sendra. The core group of resident participants in the Planning Forum were instrumental in supporting this plan. The plan investigates the heritage of the local area, environmental issues, green spaces, lack of health facilities and other aspects of the built environment.

#### **FEEDBACK**

"So overall my experience has been fantastic; I have learnt a lot from Thames Life and fostered great relationships with their team and I look forward to continue that relationship moving forward."

- Dr. Jagan John, Aurora Medcare

"Thames life has been able to improve and assist in the NHS crisis. Having something like this takes away the pressure of these services and helps people see a doctor. It's like one stop shop. You can see all the providers in roof. It's very inclusive and the times allows working residents to benefit from this service."

- Local resident attendee of GP drop in clinic

"It's helped me open up to people. I can now speak to people where I wouldn't before. Also, it's great for my physical and mental health. The more I move the stronger I get. Being outside in the open has also really improved my mental health."

- Craig, Barking Food Forest volunteer

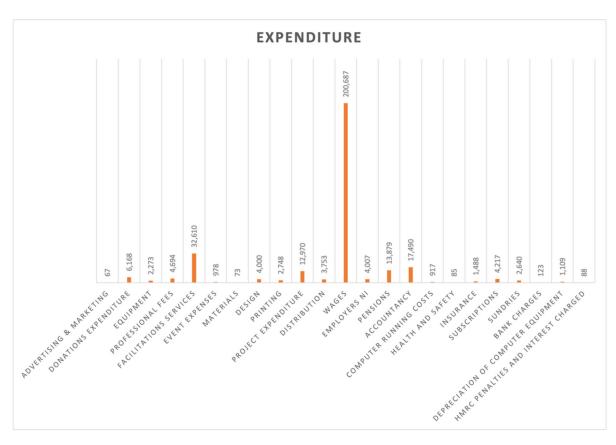
"Thames Life has been a key partner with the British Red Cross working in the community resilience space. We have seen how the important work that Thames Life provides to the community continues to grow across the voluntary and community sector (VCS). Important networks like the CRN, hub open days bringing the community together to get the support that they vitally need. It is great to be able to work alongside Thames Life and have a great partner."

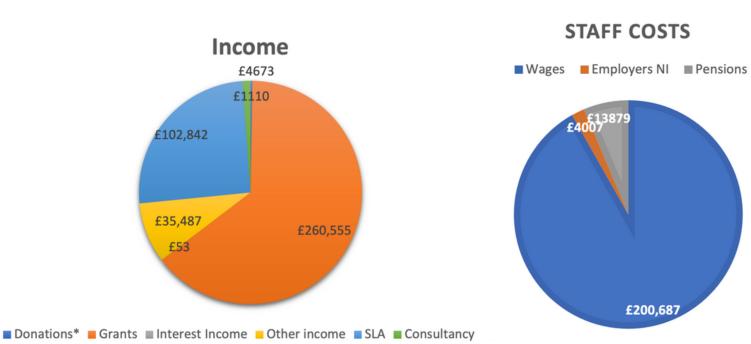
- Carney Bonner, British Red Cross

"It's a full circle of care and social engagement and relating to others."

- Almu Segura, Nice Bunch CIC

### **FINANCES**













#### **FUNDERS & PARTNERS**







































Partnership Learning





#### **Imperial College** London





PLANNING

aid for london









LONDON SPORT

















RODING RUBBISH



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