

SEPTEMBER

NEWSLETTER

September's here, and you can feel it. The air's got that first proper chill, evenings are drawing in, and after a long hot summer it finally feels like we can breathe. But this month's also been a hard reminder that the climate isn't cooling down even when the weather is. The flash floods that tore through Nepal last week, whole villages gone in minutes after a glacier gave way, and the wildfires that keep ripping through communities every summer now, aren't distant disasters. They're what a warming world looks like, and it's landing on people just like us, just somewhere else on the map for now.

It's easy to feel powerless in the face of that. But feeling powerless alone isn't the same as being powerless together. Yes, our choices matter, what we buy, how we travel, how much we waste, but let's be honest: the biggest damage is being done by burning fossil fuels, deforestation, agriculture and industry. Some of the more powerful interests involved might prefer we focus on our recycling rather than their emissions. So this September, let's do both, cut down where we can, and get vocal where it counts.

So as the temperature drops, let's turn the heat up on what matters. Come to something. Ask a question. Bring a friend.

Recent Community Actions

Let's recap all the events, projects, and moments we've been part of over the last month. This month was a green one for us. We celebrated a brilliant community day out at the Barking Food Forest, and reconvened the steering group that'll help shape the future of a community-led Ripple Nature Reserve.

You had to be there for Barking Food Forest Community Day! 🥁🎵

Head over to our YouTube Shorts to catch a glimpse of the day, and keep an eye on our socials for details of the next one.



We had community drumming, singing and plenty of snacks to keep everyone going. The sound of the drums echoed all the way down the lane, drawing in passersby who couldn't resist popping over for a shake! And next time, we're adding painting to the mix too. Come along, get creative, make some noise and be part of the next Community Day on the 26th September.

The Ripple Nature Reserve Steering Group reconvened at the Rivergate Centre, bringing together new residents, long-standing residents who have been part of the space since its inception, and councillors to explore the future of this unique local green space.



Community organiser and Cllr Marion Hull run Hockley Mews project saw singing from a St Patrick's Church band.

The residents also had a fish and chips lunch and a singing workshop.

These initiatives strengthen our health outreach by connecting older residents with activities, services, and ongoing support.



Community organizing is all about building grassroots support. It's about identifying the people around you with whom you can create a common, passionate cause. And it's about ignoring the conventional wisdom of company politics and instead playing the game by very different rules.

Leading Thoughts

by Matt Scott, CEO

Justice for East London: From Carrying the Costs to Repair

Why does Barking & Dagenham have so many serious problems at the same time?

High poverty and unemployment. Poor health. Pollution and flood risk. A shortage of genuinely affordable housing. Many people struggling with the cost of living. These things have different causes. But they are also connected.

Barking & Dagenham has carried too many of London's costs for too long.

That doesn't mean there is a conspiracy against the borough. There are good people in the council, public services, developers and community organisations trying to improve things.

But good intentions don't always produce fair outcomes.

Who carries the costs?

Barking & Dagenham's history tells part of the story. Industry created jobs but left pollution and contaminated land. London needed places for waste, roads and major infrastructure. Now it desperately needs land for housing.

Too often, poorer communities carry more of the costs. Barking Riverside is a striking example. Thousands of homes are being built on former industrial and landfill

land, close to major waste infrastructure. Yet residents have waited years for basic infrastructure such as a permanent health centre.

The wider picture matters too.

Barking & Dagenham has one of London's highest unemployment claimant rates. Around 31,000 residents are estimated to be at high risk of flooding, potentially rising to more than 54,000 as the climate changes. The borough also has London's highest overall rate of premature death in the latest Trust for London comparison.

So here is the question:

If Barking & Dagenham carries more of London's housing, pollution and environmental risk, shouldn't it get more back?

Regeneration – but for whom?

The usual answer is regeneration: build homes, attract investment, create jobs and increase land values.

We need investment and we need homes.

But building more is not the same as making people's lives better.

An area can become much more valuable while the people living there remain poor. Thousands of homes can be built while residents wait for health services. House prices can rise while families struggle with rent. New developments can look successful while residents struggle with service charges.

So we need a tougher test.

Are people healthier? Can they afford their homes? Are there decent local jobs? Are green spaces protected? Are communities safer from flooding, heat and pollution? Do residents have a real say?

If not, regeneration isn't working well enough.

Community organisations must speak up

Community organisations have a part to play too.

We need to work with the council, developers, the NHS and other institutions. But partnership cannot mean always agreeing.

A strong community sector should be able to work with people in power and **challenge them when necessary**.

There are encouraging signs. B&D CVS's Practitioner Forum is bringing community organisations together, and local groups are developing coalitions around housing, environment and resilience; health and sport; youth and community development; and arts, culture and heritage.

That matters because communities need their **own relationships, organisations and ability to act** – not simply another opportunity to be consulted.

From regeneration to repair

Perhaps Barking & Dagenham needs something more than regeneration.

It needs repair

Repair means cleaner air and restored nature where there has been pollution. Genuinely affordable homes where housing costs drive poverty. Health centres,

schools, transport and community spaces arriving with new homes. And where development creates new wealth, more of that wealth staying in the community. But repair cannot simply be delivered from above.

Councils, developers and government have responsibilities. They should be held to them. But communities cannot wait for powerful organisations to solve everything.

People organise. They build relationships. They understand problems. They find allies. They speak up. And they act.

That doesn't have to mean shouting at people in authority. It can mean neighbours coming together over a problem, protecting a green space, understanding a planning decision or asking a question nobody else is asking.

Small actions build confidence. Confidence builds organisation. Organised communities have power.

That is central to what Thames Life is trying to do.

Our job isn't to arrive with the answers or speak for people who can speak for themselves. It is to help residents build the relationships, knowledge and confidence to act together.

We see that in housing and planning, protecting green spaces, and community action around health, food and climate resilience.

This is bigger than any single organisation.

Ultimately, the greatest force for change in Barking & Dagenham is the people who live here –

knowing each other, organising together and recognising their own power.

This isn't something done to a community. It is something people build together.

And perhaps that is what justice for East London looks like.

Upcoming events

THAMES LIFE PRESENTS

Monthly
PLANNING FORUM

YOUR VOICE MATTERS. YOUR PRESENCE COUNTS.

We'll share updates on local planning, Thames View - 20mph Proposals and Consultation, heritage and green spaces, and ensure residents' needs are heard.

WEDNESDAY
SEP 02
ONLINE
7.00 ONWARDS

Guest Speakers:

JOSEPH BASHFORD
SIMONE PANAYI
Be First

FREE & OPEN TO ALL TO JOIN

Scan the QR code to join the meeting

Meeting ID: 372 524 537 630 62
Passcode: hD9HY3qZ

COMMUNITY-LED PLANNING

Join our residents planning forum online or in-person, a vital space for residents to discuss issues on housing decisions that affect their community. Regeneration experts from Be First will speak about some upcoming plans while the existing issues of Thames View speed limits will be discussed.



What does housing justice really look like? Join leading experts and local voices to explore the Mayor's new London Plan and community-led design.

From little ones to teens, from SEN-friendly sessions to sports and cooking — there's something here for your child this September

CREATIVE WELLBEING

≡ We're back ≡

AFTER THE HOLIDAYS!

OUR SESSIONS ARE RESUMING THIS SEPTEMBER

NEW TERM. NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR CHILD TO
LEARN • EXPLORE • GROW

AGES 0-3 Mondays 10:30am - 12:00pm Thames Community Hub Early food exploration through play, senses and curiosity.	AGES 3-16 Thursdays 5:00pm - 6:30pm Rivergate Centre Sports, cooking & life skills for healthy habits and confidence.	SEN & NEURODIVERGENT Saturdays 10:30am - 12:30pm Thames Community Hub Sensory-friendly activities to build life skills, confidence and independence.
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Lunch provided | SEN & Neurodivergent programme only

ALL PROGRAMMES STARTING IN SEPTEMBER

LIMITED PLACES! REGISTER NOW! Come along, register and let your child benefit.

07946 899933 | wlsurgery@creativewellbeing.co.uk

Scan to register!

 **THAMES COMMUNITY HUB,**
 Bastable Ave, Barking IG11 0LH
 **16/09/2026,**
 1.30-5 pm

 **Protection Approaches**

Active Bystander Training

Interactive | Practical | Empowering

Help create safer spaces.
 Learn how to reduce harm when you witness prejudice, harassment, or violence

Each **two-hour** session gives you practical tools, knowledge and real-world strategies to act with confidence. Including:

- ☒ What it really means to be an active bystander
- ☒ How to intervene safely
- ☒ Real scenarios & practical techniques
- ☒ The A.C.T. model – **Address. Connect. Tell.**
- ☒ Building a culture of care

Delivered by **Protection Approaches**
 National leaders in preventing identity-based violence.

REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED



SCAN TO REGISTER

Join us for Bystander Intervention Training! Learn simple, practical ways to safely support others and help create safer, more inclusive communities.

A free session that equips you with practical skills you can use in everyday life.

 **16/09/2026, 1.30-5 PM**

Thames Community Hub, IG11 0LH



Looking for an APPRENTICESHIP

JUMPSTART YOUR FUTURE CAREER

with Future M.O.L.D.S Communities and apply for our apprenticeship role this September (see link below)

<https://www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeship/2000049295>

For questions or queries please email
ADMIN@FUTUREMC.ORG.UK

 **COMMUNITY FUND**
 **Future M.O.L.D.S Communities**

Check out this Apprenticeship Opportunity and Aspire Action CIC's Confidence to Opportunity Workshop(not in picture) that helps residents build confidence, recognise skills, and prepare for work, volunteering, or training.

Free sessions include communication practice, interview skills, opportunity planning, and a personal 30-day action plan. To participate Email: info@aspireaction.co.uk

In other news

Barking and Dagenham Council is consulting residents on its draft Corporate Plan. Residents are encouraged to share their views on 20 key goals for the borough's future. The plan covers priorities including housing, safety, and improving local services.



Residents invited to help shape borough's future

Barking and Dagenham Council is consulting residents on 20 goals in draft Corporate Plan, covering housing, safety, www.barkinganddagenhampost.co.uk



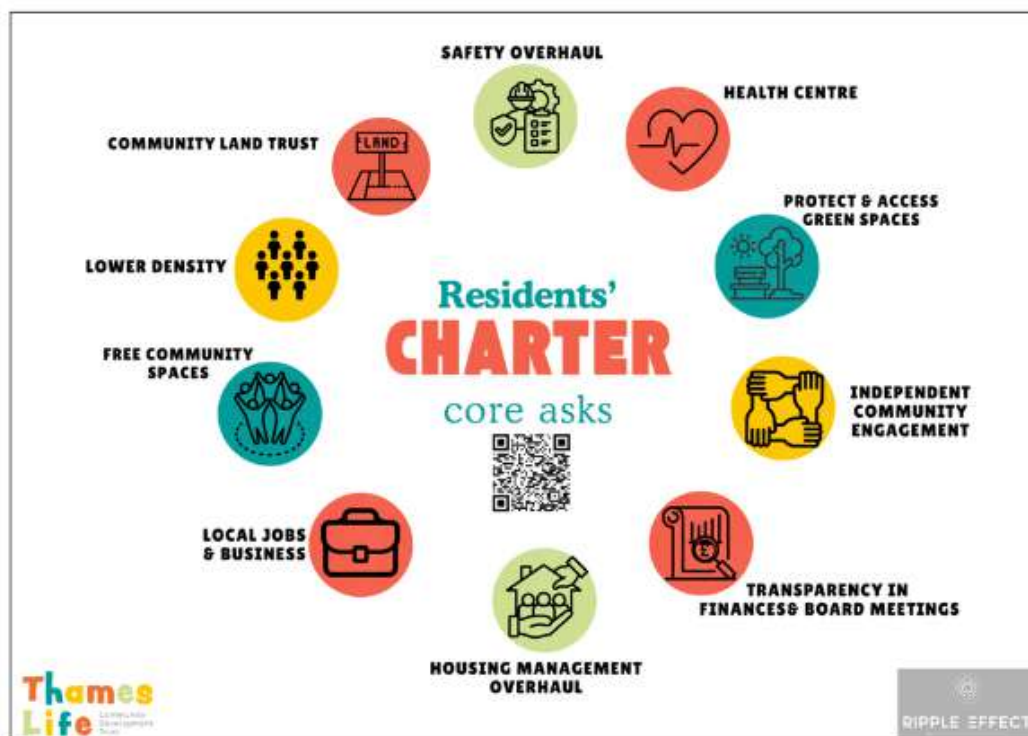
Two years in limbo: the residents still paying mortgages on flats destroyed in east London fire

Spectrum Building leaseholders awaiting payouts after freeholder, Arinium, went bankrupt shortly after 2024
[share.google](#)

Leaseholders in the Spectrum Building in east London, destroyed by fire, are still paying mortgages on flats they can no longer live in, two years on.

They're stuck waiting for insurance payouts after the building's freeholder, Arinium, went bankrupt not long after the 2024 fire.

The Guardian piece highlights the financial and emotional toll of being left in limbo with no resolution in sight.



Residents' Charter: A voice for fair regeneration

Over the past few years, Thames Life has held more than 3,000 conversations with local residents. One message has come through consistently: regeneration must improve everyday life for the people who already live here.

The Residents' Charter sets out ten practical priorities, from a health centre and affordable homes to protected green spaces, greater transparency and genuine resident influence.

As Barking Riverside continues to grow, the Charter asks a simple question:

Is regeneration making life better for local people?

Thames Life will continue working with residents, community groups and partners to turn these priorities into lasting change.

Nothing changes without honest, independent and unbiased insight, which is why we do things differently. Everything we do is shaped by the Thames Life Resident Charter, meaning our research stands apart from developers, is clear about its intentions, and welcomes all perspectives, including challenge and disagreement. These are not PR exercises. They are genuine conversations, driven by residents, for residents.

Our latest round of engagement has now wrapped up, and we will be sharing findings over the coming months.

If you want to have your say in a safe, independent space, we would love to hear from you. Reach out to us directly at info@thames-life.org.

Because real change begins with truly listening.

That's it from us!

Hasta la vista till next month.

Until then, keep being the change that you want to see in society.



**Thames
Life**