



Charity No: 1043081

## ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

### March 2020 Newsletter

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Office opens from 10.30 am to 2.30 pm Monday & Wednesday (but 'phone first)



Promises ● to retain the over-75s Free TV licence and that ● under his government nobody should have to sell their home to pay for care, were made by Boris Johnson during the general election campaign. So it is right for pensioners to now call on him to keep these promises! But there is no sign yet that he will do so. and this is sending pensioners all over the country, organised in regional groups affiliated to the National Pensioners Convention, to take up the call

**“PRIME MINISTER: A PROMISE IS A PROMISE!”**

*Our picture shows members of Islington Pensioners Forum displaying the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) banner outside Islington Town Hall following our Forum meeting on Thursday 20th February. This was the second outing of the banner, which was first displayed on Monday 17th February at Lambeth Town Hall following the annual seminar of the NPC's Minority Elders' Committee hosted by Lambeth Pensioners Action Group.*

**“Rise up with me against the organisation of misery”**

The above words are from a poem by Pablo Neruda (1904—1973), a Nobel Prize winning Chilean poet-diplomat and politician, who became an advisor to Chile's socialist President Salvador Allende.

Sir Michael Marmot used this quote in a review “Fair Society Healthy Lives” published in 2010. Now, in a publication on the tenth anniversary of that review, Michael Marmot uses it again. He explains that “. . . 2.5 million years of life [are] potentially lost to health inequalities by those dying prematurely each year in England”. In an interview on the BBC's Today programme, Michael Marmot said that the government's austerity measures are most likely to have increased this inequality. (See page 3: “Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On”)

# A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

We were very pleased to welcome Lydia Batchelor, our social events organiser, to our February Forum meeting. There can be no doubt about her enthusiasm and understanding of our age group. She has asked me to announce:

## THE IPF END THE WINTER BLUES PARTY

2.00 to 5.00 pm on Monday 23rd March

The Old Fire Station, 84 Mayton Street, London N7 6QT

free buffet and entertainment

Lydia asked members for ideas on outings, including theatres and concerts etc. and I ask members to support her in this — e.g. you can bring your ideas to our End the Winter Blues Party

ooooOoooo

During the discussion at the meeting, I promised to use this month's column for information on Pension Credit and on TV licence scams. So here goes:

**PENSIONS CREDIT HAS TWO ELEMENTS:** Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit

**WHAT IS GUARANTEE CREDIT?** *It is a top-up on low pensions income for older people — to £167.25 if you are single, or £255.25 for you and a partner.*

● "A partner" is your husband, wife, civil partner (if you live with them) or someone else you live with as if you were married.

*You will continue getting Pension Credit if you were getting it before 15 May 2019, even if your partner is under State Pension age.*

*However, if you reached State Pension age after that date, you will be eligible for Pension Credit only if your partner is also of state pension age.*

**WHAT IS SAVINGS CREDIT?:** *It is extra money for*

*people aged 65 and over who have made a modest provision for their retirement. However it is being phased out.*

*You can only get Savings Credit if you reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016, or you have a partner who reached State Pension age before this date and was already receiving it.*

*But if you become ineligible for any reason and cease to receive it, you will not be able to claim again.*

● For questions or inquiries: 0800 99 1234 or

● Citizens Advice Islington: 0300 330 1197

### **TV LICENCE SCAMS : BE SAFE ON LINE!**

Please be on the lookout for TV licence scams if you are on the internet. Scammers will send bogus emails pretending to be from a respectable organization. This is to trick you into clicking through to a fake website

### **MAKING LONDON MORE AGE-FRIENDLY**

In February Irma Gomez and I attended a City Hall, event to carry out an overview of its age-friendly programme covering eight issues from transport to respect and social Inclusion. If the Mayor can put them in place, then London will be a better city for senior Londoners to live in.

**ALICE KILROY** was only 69 when she died on 17th February. . . a young pensioner who agreed, at our Annual General Meeting in July, to become a member of our Executive Committee. We were overjoyed that this friendly, bubbly, talented, active campaigner had joined us, and we were really pleased for her when she was so looking forward to visiting her sister in New Zealand, saying — "I will be back after Christmas and then I will get 'stuck in' to Islington Pensioners Forum." And so we were shocked and sad to receive the news from her that she had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and was coming home. Many of our members who are active in the Labour Party, the Defend Whittington Hospital Campaign, supporters of the Grenfell Tower families campaign, the anti-war movement and other social justice and international solidarity campaigns knew and loved Alice for many years. We speak on behalf of all our members when we send our condolences to her daughter Stephanie and family and we mourn the loss of a new IPF friend and comrade.



## ***“Austerity will cast a shadow over the lives of the children born and growing up under its effects”***

### **“Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On”**

A 172-page report published on 25th February, warns that the continuous improvement of life expectancy throughout the 20th century has *slowed dramatically, almost grinding to a halt since 2011.*

The report: **“Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years on”** says that *time spent in ill-health for men and women is increasing and life expectancy actually fell in the most deprived communities out of London; outcomes are even worse for minority ethnic population groups and people with disabilities.*

This report marks the 10th anniversary since publication of “Fair Society Healthy Lives” — the independent Review carried out by Professor Sir Michael Marmot and his team, at the request of Labour’s Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Health in 2008.

This concluded that reducing health inequalities would require action on six policy objectives:

- Give every child the best start in life
- Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- Create fair employment and good work for all
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention numbers, to ignored communities with poor conditions and little reason for hope.

But ten years on, this follow-up report points out that reducing health inequality has not been a priority since 2010 and there has been no national strategy to achieve this. Indeed, Michael Marmot says: *Austerity will cast a shadow over the lives of the children born and growing up under its effects.*

He highlights the devastating impact of factors ranging from *rising child poverty and the closure of children’s centres, to declines in education funding, an increase in precarious work and zero hours contracts, to a housing affordability crisis and a rise in homelessness, to people with insufficient money to lead a healthy life and resorting to foodbanks in large numbers.*

The report calls for *an overhaul of universal credit and an increased national living wage to ensure everyone has an income sufficient for healthy living, for investment in healthy, sustainable communities and a national strategy to reduce health inequality.*

Health Foundation chief executive, Dr Jennifer Dixon said: “The landmark Marmot review in 2010 showed striking differences in health between people living in the wealthiest and most deprived communities. Today’s report shows that things are now worse, especially for women. There has been a decrease in health between people living in the wealthiest and most deprived communities. Levelling up will require the government to go further than investment in infrastructure — building bridges, train lines and new hospitals. It must also invest in the circumstances in which people live that have powerful impacts on their health and wellbeing — such as poverty, employment, housing and education.”

The British Medical Association board of science chair, Professor Dame Parveen Kumar said: “With the health of the population deteriorating, the gap between the health of those in the most deprived and those in more advantaged areas widening, and life expectancy stalling, alarm bells should be ringing for the government. . . to narrow the gap between the experience of the richest and poorest has never been more important”

### **Frail elderly & disabled people in the hands of private equity & hedge fund companies!**

Since 2017, when Four Seasons (the UK’s second largest care home company) failed to meet a £26m debt interest payment, its fate and that of its 16,000 residents have been in the hands of its largest creditor, the Connecticut-based hedge fund H/2 Capital Partners, set up by Spencer Haber, who made his fortune in Lehman Brothers, the now defunct Wall Street bank.

Four Seasons’ troubles have now deepened and more of its 320 homes have been taken over or closed, including the Whitchurch Care Home, which was found by official inspectors to: leave emergency buzzers unanswered, fail to administer some medicines, leave many of its frail elderly residents without a bath, shower or wash for a month and miss hospital appointments.. This information comes from a full-page article in the

Financial Times (10th February) by Gill Plimmer, which raises concerns that frail elderly and disabled people are in the hands of private equity and hedge fund companies, attracted by a guaranteed state income and an ageing population. This can’t be right!

Care homes are paid by local authorities for those on pension credit and by individuals who have £125,000 savings including value in their home. Around 40,000 people a year have to sell their home to pay for care.

Boris Johnson promised a new set of care proposals — surely such proposals must free care from private equity and hedge fund companies and end the system which depends on selling family homes?The cost of Care, like the NHS, should be shared by everybody — paid for through general taxation.

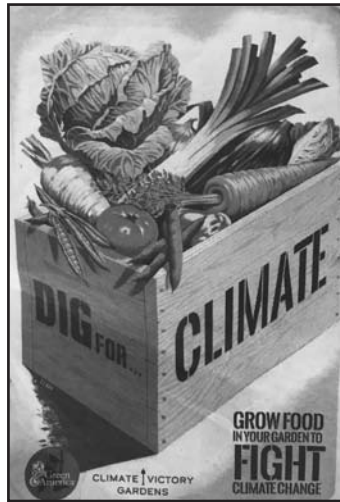
# Frances Bradley reports on Extinction Rebellion

This piece is based two items in the September 2019 issue of Extinction Rebellion's (ER's) free newspaper, *The Hourglass*, which highlight why we need to aim to keep the global temperature rise within 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial levels.

A new report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC — the UN's body for assessing the science related to climate change) suggests that, due to flooding, it is anticipated that more than a quarter of a billion people will be displaced if current greenhouse gas emissions are not drastically reduced. This is because flooding is set to increase 100 to 1000-fold this century, affecting vast numbers of people living in coastal megacities such as Shanghai, Mumbai, Miami and New York, who will experience annual "extreme sea level events".

Another effect of increasing global temperatures will be rising food insecurity. This will particularly affect tropical countries, where problems will result from a reduction in nutrient quality, supply chain interruption and increased prices.

The UN demands that countries respond now by "substantially increasing their pledges on emission reductions" and to this end, "the whole of society needs to be putting pressure on governments to understand they need to run faster because we are losing the race." At their 2019 Climate Summit the UN Secretary General shamed member countries "which continue to support their coal industry and lack ambition in their climate planning" by not allowing them to speak. This meant USA, Australia, Japan, South Korea, South Africa,



Brazil and Saudi Arabia were excluded.

ER have shown that nonviolent direct action works, and in 2019 gained widespread attention through mass mobilisations. The effectiveness of this tactic is set to increase via a "Rebel Alliance", where allied groups such as The Social Justice Movement, Buddhists and nursing mothers are joining forces in a broad, peaceful movement. ER's fundamental ambition is that our current system — which fosters overconsumption, massive inequality, rampant degradation of the environment — must be replaced "with something massively fairer and more intrinsically caring of humans and our planetary ecosystem", beginning with getting "the Government to tell the whole truth about the gravity of the climate and ecological emergency."

At the time of writing Islington ER are attending the annual Islington Council budget planning meeting to learn what steps our council is going to take to address the climate crisis, in order for Islington ER to see how they can reasonably encourage local policymakers to do more.

They have written an open letter to the council demanding greater action, which they have invited the Islington Pensioners to sign.

It seems a good idea in 2020 for Islington Pensioners Forum to dust down our skeleton outfits and wear them in support of an Extinction Rebellion demonstration.

● **During WWII there were posters saying: "Dig for Victory" — our picture shows that today ER suggests we use garden space to DIG FOR CLIMATE CHANGE!**

See page five for short piece on "Looking for Eric" (shown on 26th February). Next film show is Wednesday 25th March 1 p.m. buffet, 2 p.m. film

Next film: "Kathy Come Home" (1966) directed by Ken Loach — a family is caught up in the housing crisis — see INFORMATION on back page. . . . .

## PENSIONERS CONVENTION 1-5 JUNE 2020 — SOUTHPORT

Dear Friends,

We have already filled the 30 places we have booked in the hotel for the 2020 National Pensioners Convention (NPC) in Southport from Monday 1st to Friday 5th June at a cost of £250 (can be paid in instalments) for bed, breakfast and evening meal plus the return coach journey. However, I have contacted the hotel and am hoping to be able to offer more places. So please let me know if you are interested so that I can contact the hotel again.

Best wishes, Dot Gibson (IPF office: 020 7226 7687 address on front of this newsletter)

**Please give name, address and telephone number and indicate whether you want a single room or a double room (single beds or double bed) with a partner or friend**

## MAKING LONDON MORE AGE-FRIENDLY

*The Mayor 's older Londoners networking event*

*Notes by Irma Gomez*



Those who took part in this event on 10th February were asked to consider the Mayor's actions and proposed future actions to make London a more age-friendly city. These were discussed under seven headings:

- Civic, cultural and social participation;
- Respect and social inclusion;
- Communication and information;
- Outdoor spaces and buildings;
- Housing;
- Employment and skills;
- Transportation.

There was an impressive list of the Mayor's partners (local councils, charities, tenants and residents, action groups etc) showing that policies dealing with the needs of older people are being taken forward in the communities — a very important safety net for isolated lonely people and people suffering dementia.

### ***Dot Gibson on: "Looking for Eric" the IPF audience had a big smile on their faces***

Our February film show was "Looking for Eric" directed by Ken Loach. A comedy or a social comment? I reckon, both.

The central character is "down in the dumps" Eric Bishop, a twice-divorced postman, looking after a house and two wayward teenage stepsons. His workmates try their best to help him return to happiness and self-worth, but it is an uphill task made worse by him using his stepson's weed supply.

Eventually it is falling in love again with his first wife, when they team up to look after their daughter's baby while she prepares for her university exams, that throws his life into stark relief.

Also, the inclusion of particular training, to cater for older people, for those who deliver services (e.g. bus drivers) was very welcome.

It is impossible here to deal with all the issues, but I should say that things like accessibility to decent public toilets, safe spaces with seats, better road crossings, adult education, safe and warm homes were just some of the things presented and discussed.

I propose that IPF becomes one of the organisations kept in touch with developments, after all (see our Newsletter heading) we organise to be the voice of older people in Islington, and that means holding the politicians to account.

The depth and breadth of the issues before us at this event were impressive.

If Sadiq Khan gets re-elected as Mayor of London in May, we must support him to act on these policies.

He becomes determined to turn things round, and the story takes off when he is assisted by his idol, Eric Cantona — star footballer for Manchester United — who appears (in reality or in his mind's eye, it doesn't matter) and advises him on how to deal with his worries and woes.

The teenagers find themselves in trouble with some small-time gangsters. and Cantona points Eric to his workmates and Man United fans for help. The result is a hilarious confrontation and a happy ending.

Some of our members found use of the f..k word rather over the top, but at the end the IPF audience came out with a big smile on their faces.

# INFORMATION

BINGO	This is suspended for the time being. We will keep you informed.
Lunch and a chat on Wednesdays	1 pm in IPF Hall, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place N1 0RN
IT and Smart Phones on Wednesdays	3.30 pm in the IPF Hall, address above
Thursday 19th March 2020	10.30 a.m. Forum Meeting in Islington Town Hall Speaker: Councillor Richard Watts, leader of Islington Council and Peter Crockett on Islington's Community Centres and activities
Monday 23rd March	END THE WINTER BLUES PARTY (see page 2 advert)
Wednesday 25th March	FILM SHOW — buffet from 1 p.m. film at 2 p.m. (see below)

## Islington Pensioners Forum officers and committee 2019-2020

Chair: **Bob Collins,**

Secretary/Treasurer: **Eric Hill,**

Assistant Secretary, **Annette Thomas,**

Committee: **Frances Bradley, Luke Daniels, Dot Gibson, Irma Gomez, Eula Harrison, Joyce Herron, David Milner, Eddie Zissler, Pam Zinkin**

## OUR NEXT FILM — *KATHY COME HOME*

Our next film, showing on Wednesday 25th March is "Kathy Come Home" directed by Ken Loach in 1966. It is about a young couple living in a nice studio flat, suddenly finding themselves homeless — the man has lost his job following an accident, and they are expecting their first baby.

The film was first shown to millions on BBC TV's The Wednesday Play. It was followed by thousands of 'phone calls and letters etc. protesting at the plight of homeless people. But here we are, 54 years later with a raging housing crisis; shamefully it is almost taken for granted that thousands of young people will never get a council house, always be unable to pay the high rents to private landlords and never raise enough money for a deposit to buy their own home let alone to pay the mortgage.

Many young people in their 30s are still living with their parents, and are making decisions not to have their own family. At the same time there is a big increase in the number of rough sleepers. It is a huge social crisis, and this film is a reminder of the on-going problems of ordinary decent young people who simply want a home and a family.

**We are missing Pam Zinkin's NHS column in this issue. She has recently had major surgery. We send our very best wishes to you, Pam, for your speedy recovery.**

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Or hand in at Forum meeting (see above)	