

The RA AGM – a view from the back

ANDREW BOTTERILL

Showcasing the best of Suburb life, there were some iconic moments at this year's RA AGM, held in person once again at The Henrietta Barnett School.

Mask hanging from one ear, grizzled campaigner Councillor John Marshall who has been getting Barnet to do stuff for us for 23 years gave his retirement valediction. Jonathan Waxman spoke forcefully about his new Environment Committee (REACH): HGS net zero by 2040 and a reminder that Mutton Brook flooding was just another sign of a serious leak in the planet Earth lifeboat floating through space and 11-year-old Olivia White made a cogent pitch for the Heath Extension playground revamp. One wondered when Olivia would graduate from playgrounds to REACH to add a youth dimension – our very own Greta Thunberg – it will be her generation that

may have to deal with situations a lot more serious than a damp Northway Gardens.

We also heard of the successfully revamped 'Suburb News'. Its editors and distribution organiser and her team were rightly congratulated. The best of Suburb life.

The high points aside, there were also some nul points. Where was everybody? Besides the bevy of RA and Barnet Council members, only 15 to 20 households were represented – 1% of RA members, 0.4% of Suburb households. What happened to the packed meetings of yesteryear in The Henrietta Barnett School's main hall, the drinks, the chat, the passion? Had Covid broken us, was there a lack of publicity, were the issues thought too daunting or too boring or was the RA Council so totally spot on that there would be nothing to talk about? How can it all be made a more attractive destination for a March evening?

We were glad to hear of the solid state of the finances but perhaps the Committee's thinking on its objectives for the year ahead would also have been welcome, for example its recommendations on reserves and charity donations as well as the thinking behind continuing the 15-year-old freeze on the subscription now worth £10 less than in 2007.

Ah well. Perhaps comfort could be drawn from the annual mention of the reliable chestnuts, of uneven pavements and street lighting – and all those standing for (re)election got in.

As we filed out at the end the meeting into the chilly Suburb air, there was much to ponder. Would the lonely playground at the southern tip of the Suburb get the outstanding £20,000 funding in just two months? Would Barnet's £70m incinerator go ahead? Only time will tell....

For details of what really went on, go to the AGM Minutes at www.hgsra.uk.



Grizzled campaigner Councillor John Marshall (Photos: Tony Brand)

HGS REACH update

GREN MANUEL,
HGS REACH HONORARY SECRETARY

Energy efficiency is at the top of many residents' minds at the moment, and for good reason. Gas and electricity prices are already high and sure to jump again in October. Next winter may seem a long way off, but when it arrives the heating bills are likely to be unpleasant indeed.

One of the focus areas for HGS REACH, the residents association climate action group, is helping local residents reduce the amount of energy needed to heat their homes.

This not only reduces energy bills. It will also reduce our carbon footprint. Most of us heat our homes using gas, and the amount of CO2 emitted from doing this is startling. I live in a modest Suburb home with three bedrooms and a new gas condensing boiler. Nevertheless, our family emits annually 4.5 tonnes of CO2 heating our home. That's the same as driving a mid-sized petrol car from the Suburb to Los Angeles – and back. Every year.

Better insulation is also essential because draughty homes that leak a lot of heat are not good candidates for heat pumps, which are the most likely way we will heat our homes when the government bans the installation of gas boilers. (This was initially planned for 2035; the government has hinted recently this may come earlier, perhaps to wean us off imported gas more quickly).

A lot of heat is lost through windows. We are trying to find ways of reducing the cost of Trust-approved double glazing and popularising the use of secondary glazing as a cost-effective interim measure. We also aim to set up a scheme whereby RA members can borrow a heat-sensing camera to identify draughts and other sources of heat loss. I did this last winter as a trial and found nearly a dozen ways heat was escaping from my house that were cheap and simple to fix.

More structurally, we are researching ways of better insulating our walls. Unfortunately, most Suburb houses have solid brick walls without an insulating cavity. There are a wide range of commercial solutions for improving the heat-holding ability of solid brick walls, but we need to be sure they are appropriate for our particular homes, ensuring they don't damage the structure through retention of moisture and conforming to Trust guidelines. More data and research are essential.

We're also keen on other aspects of carbon reduction. One is around electric vehicles. Although there are many of these now zooming around our streets, residents who don't have a drive – and therefore can't install their own charging point – may be hesitant. In fact, there are now 14 EV chargers installed on lamp posts across the Suburb. We've produced a factsheet with their locations which is now available on the RA website.

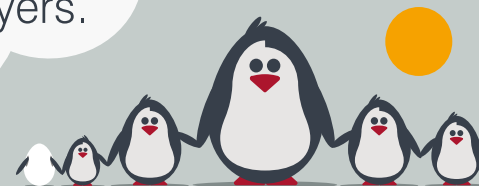
We surveyed the Garden Suburb Ward candidates for Barnet Council on this issue before the May election. All those who replied to our survey said they were in favour of increasing the density of these EV charge points. We hope this will make EV ownership even more convenient for Suburb residents to help reduce our carbon impact still further.



Concealed EV Charging Point (Photo: HGS Trust)

Specialist family lawyers.

RAYDEN SOLICITORS



There might be challenging times in your life when a family law solicitor can help:

- Have you decided your marriage or relationship is over, are you unsure about your family's future?
- Do you need to protect your children, or understand the options to resolve arrangements for your children?
- Do you need a pre nuptial or post nuptial agreement to protect assets?
- Are you moving in with your partner and need a cohabitation agreement?

Choosing the right family lawyer for your circumstances is crucial. Rayden Solicitors are family law specialists with many years' experience; we provide tailored and practical solutions in all areas of family law - divorce, relationship breakdown, child arrangements and financial settlements.

Bespoke advice from Rayden Solicitors in Hampstead.

Contact us, enquiries@raydensolicitors.co.uk

HAMPSTEAD
6a Hampstead High Street
London
NW3 1PR.
Tel: 020 3925 4809.

RAYDEN SOLICITORS
www.raydensolicitors.co.uk

We are available on

