

YOUR DECISIONS!

Members flocked into a chilly Acton Town Hall on 31st January with much excitement and interest in our first Delegates Assembly. Many were even spotted carrying the first edition of West London Citizens' newsletter! The hall was decorated handsomely in red and purple, with Cardinal Wiseman school's prize-winning banners hoisted up minutes before the start. Twenty-two of our twenty-three member organisations were represented, some with a packed table of ten or more.

London Citizens' whole organising team were there: Catherine Howarth (WLC), Neil Jameson (Lead Organiser), Jordan Estevao (SLC), Andrew Crossley (TELCO) and Matthew Bolton, who works on the Living Wage campaign.

A number of key guests were also present, including Nic Durston, Chief Executive of Westway Development Trust - a major financial backer of West London Citizens. The whole assembly was recorded for BBC Radio 4, who are making a programme called 'Cities without Maps'. We'll alert members when a date for broadcast is announced.

The Delegates' Assembly was chaired very effectively by Luke Bretherton (St Paul's Church, Hammersmith) and Cecilia Finn (Cardinal Wiseman School, Greenford), with timekeeping managed strictly but in good humour by Jagjit Singh Sohal (Ramgarhia Sabha, Southall).

The five campaign proposals put to the membership had all emerged from issues identified through West London Citizens' Listening Campaign in the months since our launch. After some powerful testimonies on failing schools, devious and 'entrepreneurial' rats, the power of the vote and much more, members at each table had to make a decision on campaign priorities. As votes were counted tension in the room rose, only to be deflated by the announcement of results....in reverse order by mistake!

When the vote counters realised their mistake, Luke Bretherton handled the embarrassment brilliantly. Announcement of the new, correct, results led to a huge cheer in the hall. In Luke's words, "the rats of West London are doomed!" Full analysis of results and campaign action teams (pg 2).



Delegates at the Assembly on 31st January 2006

Southall's Rats are 'Doomed': say goodbye to Ole and Frida!

Therese Dressel

London's rats are apparently Norwegian. *Rattus Norvegicus* are also known as brown, house, or sewer rats. If you have to share your flat or garden with them, you might consider giving them nice Norwegian names like Ole, Lars or Henrik, or for females, Frida and Ingrid.



Whatever their names, they damage food, clothing and physical structures through their gnawing, urination, defecation, and nesting activities. Faeces and urine raise the humidity of enclosed spaces, promote wood deterioration, and provide a medium for the proliferation of nasty micro-organisms. Rats also cause fires by chewing through the insulation on electrical wires.

Unless the conditions that attracted rats in the first place are changed, new rats often move into the habitat vacated by the dead ones, and the circle will continue.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY— check www.westlondoncitizens.org.uk to confirm

Time and Date:	Event:	Venues:
7.30-9.15pm Thursday, 16th Feb	West London Citizens Strategy Meeting —open to all and focused first steps in relation to all new campaigns	Al Muntada Al Islami Mosque 7 Bridges Place, Parsons Green, SW6 4HW. Parsons Green Tube
17th/ 18th Feb	London Citizens Two-Day Leadership Training	Transport House, Holborn, WC1X 8TN
10/11/12th March	West London Citizens Voter Registration Blitz	All across West London!! (see website for details of where/what is happening)
7.30-9.15pm, 20th, 21st & 23rd March	Hammersmith, Ealing and Kensington CITIZENS meetings (in date order) to plan Borough Assemblies with party leaders around our agenda.	Venues to be confirmed Check www.westlondoncitizens.org.uk
10am, Monday 1st May 2006; 11.30am, 1st May	Celebration Mass at Westminster Cathedral followed by open-air rally in the Cathedral Square to celebrate and honour London's migrant workers	Westminster Cathedral, Victoria Street, SW1. Victoria Tube station
7.30-9.15pm, Thursday, 18th May	West London Citizens 'Go Public' Assembly	Hammersmith Town Hall, King's Street, W6. Ravenscourt Park or Hammersmith Tube Stations

VOTING RESULTS

Members voted for campaigns in the following order: Top priority: a **Greener, Safer and Cleaner West London**; 2nd: **Accountable Government and Active Citizenship in West London**; Joint 3rd: **Living Wage and Economic Justice in West London** & **Ethical and Sustainable Planning**. The low-

est campaign priority was **Secondary Education in West London**. Each campaign has an action team.

Members voting was influenced by a number of factors including perceptions of how winnable the campaign proposals appeared and the power of personal testimony delivered on the night.

Closing in on Ken Close



London Citizens Summer Academy students helped to raise the profile of employment practices at the Kensington Close

West London Citizens members met on 8th February with Gordon Perry, Chief Executive of the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (TMO). Our members in the borough want a long-term relationship with the TMO, but on this occasion we were asking if, as a regular user of the Kensington Close hotel for TMO events, he would make enquiries about the exploitation of agency chambermaids going on at the hotel.

Two hotel staff who have been regular West London Citizens members went to this meeting with TGWU branch secretary, Hugh O'Shea, and Catherine Howarth. Mr Perry was most sympathetic and agreed to write to the ho-

tel on behalf of the TMO board raising the issues of concern to our members.

The notorious hotel, where agency maids have been paid less than the national minimum wage since October 2005 (when the rate went up), and where trainee maids work for up to three days without pay, has been the target of our attention for some time. We were unsuccessful in our attempt in 2005 to prevent the hotel contracting out the housekeeping department to the Calibre Agency. Housekeeping staff who have been working there for decades are still distraught at what has happened, and one union member has been shouted and sworn at by her manager for union activities.

CAMPAIGN ACTION TEAMS

Every campaign needs an action team, and people were enthusiastic in signing up on the night of the Delegates Assembly. 78 people assigned themselves to a campaign.

Bin the Rats has a whopping 32 people on its campaign team. A core group met within days of the assembly to figure out a strategy and first steps for this popular campaign.

Geraldine McNamara from Hanwell and Rev Michael Bolley from Southall are the campaign co-chairs. Both have attended leadership training with London Citizens. The team is being enthusiastically supported by Casey Stanton, an American student living in London who is willing to get her sleeves rolled up on behalf of the community.

Every campaign action team will give a report to the rest of the membership on plans and emerging strategies on 16th February, when Al Muntada Mosque in Parsons Green host a Strategy Meeting at

7.30pm. All members are encouraged to attend to find out what is happening and join in.

It's not too late to join a team. If you want to, contact West London Citizen's organiser, Catherine Howarth.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Twenty people are signed up for our two-day leadership training on 17th and 18th Feb. This includes five students from St Charles Sixth Form and Cardinal Wiseman who are on half term.

The training has proved an invaluable way of building relationships, skills and community power. Our campaign action teams are packed with people who have attended the training and are poised to put it to good use, particularly the negotiations skills which should come in very handy in the next six months.

Next training is in on 19th and 20th May 2006. Take a place!

Chelsea's New Academy

Despite coming 5th in members' campaign priorities on 31st January, the education campaign attracted the second largest group as Action Team members. On this basis, we will not sit entirely idle on the education front in the period ahead.

On 2nd February, Abdul Hakeem Montague (Al Muntada mosque) and Martin D'Cunha (Our Lady and St Joseph's, Hanwell) went to see Tom Peryer, Director of Education at the London Diocese School Board.

Peryer is responsible for over 150 schools in London, and specifically for the development of new schools using the government's controversial

Academies model.

The new Academy in Chelsea will provide places for 900 11-16 year olds and over 250 in the sixth form. Our members have a very real interest in this, with so many families currently frustrated and demoralised by the application process and the quality of some West London schools.

Tom Peryer has offered to meet with West London Citizens' Education Action Team, in March when we can set out for him our vision of what a new West London School should offer young people and the wider community. The date and venue of this have yet to be determined. It will be open to all WLC members.

Other Citizens News

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The Ground of Justice

David Gardner

On 1 May, 2006, London Citizens will launch a major new initiative to support immigrant workers in the city. The Catholic Church in London has a long history of defending and supporting workers and their families, and to honour and continue this, the Cardinal will celebrate a Mass for people in all three London Dioceses followed by an interfaith rally outside the Cathedral. Both events will highlight the need today for better working and living conditions for London's immigrants. The mass starts at 10:00am in the Cathedral. All London Citizens' members are invited regardless of faith or denomination.

The Mass will be followed by a spectacular rally at 11:30am in front of the Cathedral with leaders from all London's faith traditions and from the unions. The morning will also see the launch of London Citizens Workers' Association.

Please save this important date—it's a bank holiday. Look out for more details in the next West London Citizens newsletter! For more information, or to get involved, contact David Gardner david.gardner@londoncitizens.org.uk.



Westminster Cathedral Square where a spectacular rally on 1st May bringing all faiths and traditions together will take place.

CONTACT US

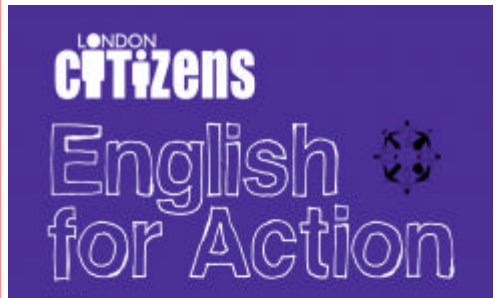
We are always keen to have feedback from YOU, our members, either about the current issue or with suggestions for inclusion in future issues.

West London Citizens can be contacted through the London citizens Office at 112 Cavell Street, London E1 2JA, or by telephone on 020 7375 1658. Catherine Howarth is West London Citizens organiser. Her e-mail address is catherine.howarth@londoncitizens.org.uk

Camille Makunganya, who has worked with London Citizens as a volunteer, summer academy student and organiser, is setting up an exciting new project running English classes with a twist.

Classes in South London could be followed in West London course if the demand is felt. **English for Action** is all about learning language skills and community leadership skills at the same time, bringing people whose second (third or fourth) language is English into full participation in London Citizens' campaigns, and giving people the chance to start their own. Classes start in South London and will spread if demand grows.

For information on **English for Action** contact Camille on 07752 880 963 or e-mail timvere@hotmail.com. This project is funded by UnLtd



Have your Say on 4th May! Local Elections

London Citizens members right across the city are gearing up to put the elections in May to good use for the community, particularly for those whose interests are often overlooked by political parties.

Accountable Governance and Active Citizenship in West London was voted second highest priority by our members. The campaign proposal agreed on 31st January included voter registration in the period leading up to 13th March which is the deadline for if you want to use your vote on 4th May. During February and the first half of March, London Citizens members are going out on the streets

to sign people up, and putting stalls in the back of church, mosque and school to give people information and encourage them to register. London has the lowest levels of voter registration in the UK.

Turnout in local elections has been falling for many years, leaving a dire 'democratic deficit' in most London boroughs. And don't we feel it! Lack of accountability from councillors was a concern raised by many people in the West London Citizens listening campaign.

In each of our three West London boroughs (as well as in many more in East and South London) members will

host 'Accountability Assemblies' inviting the leaders of the local parties to come and hear about our Citizens Agenda for West London, agreed on 31st January. We want those standing for office to back our campaigns 100%. If they get behind our agenda, they will surely deserve our votes, and we'll do everything we can to get people out on 4th May.

London Citizens is non-partisan; we don't back any party, just the candidates who sign up and commit to deliver on our agenda.

There's much work to be done finding venues, meeting candidates before to brief them, and making sure

we pack venues to give the candidates a clear impression of our community power. To get on the local elections Action Team in your borough get in touch with Catherine Howarth (details above).

Register to vote



It's easy peasy