

## Summer of Hotel Action

**David Gardner**

The streets of London haven't been the only thing heating up this summer. West London Citizens have been taking the hotel industry by storm with co-ordinated actions at the Hilton Metropole and the Kensington Close.

Our members gave democratic consent for action on 18th May, after hearing testimonies from staff at both hotels. The Hotel Action Team posted further letters to Howard Friedman, UK President of Hilton, and to Bakir Cola, owner of the Kensington Close requesting meetings. Once again, we received no acknowledgement or reply.

This prompted our first Hilton action on 10 July. The Institute of Fundraising was hosting their annual gala awards ceremony at Hilton Metropole on Edgware Road that



Photo: Chris Jepson

**St Francis of Assisi came in full force!**

evening. Our members entered the event, mixing with delegates and guests and informing them about the problems facing low paid staff, particularly agency chambermaids. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Guests gladly raised our concerns with hotel management and left big tips for their maids the following day. The action gained us our best press coverage to date: we were the evening's top item on BBC London's 6.30pm and 10.30pm bulletins.

The impact on staff morale was immediate. Our team received text messages from maids and other staff thanking us for our support. One maid called to say she'd received £80 in tips from guests struck by the facts! A week later, the cleaning contractor Calibre announced they would now pay maids by the hour, rather than by the room. This important first win gets us well on the road to a Living Wage.

Kensington Close hotel was next. On 28 July the team gathered once more for action. Community members stood outside the hotel entrance with "Unofficial Hotel Welcoming Committee" badges. As guests entered and left the building, they were greeted with a friendly smile and a flyer

**The Hotel Action Team meets Wednesday, 30 August at 7pm in the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre, 244 Acklam Road, W10. Westbourne Park tube.**

**To find out more contact David Gardner on 07727 109 258 or [david.gardner@londoncitizens.org.uk](mailto:david.gardner@londoncitizens.org.uk)**



**Daniella Fetuga-Joensuu puts our position. The exchange is filmed by the BBC.**

detailing the many abuses hotel staff are facing. Once again we found guests supportive and willing to help.

Azad Cola, son of the owner, appeared and let slip that Calibre would be losing their contract in October. This is great news. 20 minutes later the hotel sent an email requesting a meeting with West London Citizens. Our team has now met once with the hotel's management and will be meeting them again on 6 September.

Meanwhile, our partners in America, Unite-Here, have just signed an important deal with Hilton to protect low waged workers and raise standards. Our pressure in London helped deliver that agreement, and we're looking forward to their support in getting us a first meeting with Hilton-UK President, Howard Friedman.

WLC members have been invited to give evidence to the Low Pay Commission which sets the Minimum Wage and monitors enforcement. This will happen in November.

## Come & Celebrate our 1st Anniversary on Wed 4th October!

It is coming up for a year since West London Citizens was launched and we plan to celebrate our first birthday in great style. Acton Assembly Hall has been booked on Wednesday 4th October for the purpose (7.15-9pm). It's a fantastic space, and a team of members will be working hard to ensure we make the most of it.



Photo: Chris Jepson

**Members vote at last year's launch**

At mid-September borough meetings, in Ealing (12th), Kensington & Chelsea (13th) and Hammersmith & Fulham (14th), members will plan 4th October's agenda and think through how to get a good crowd of people from each member organisation.

Joining London Citizens is a commitment which each member organisation makes one year at a time. Last summer as organisations across West London were deciding whether or not to pay their membership dues and make a public pledge to work with others for common goals, their decisions were based purely on a vision of what could happen. Whilst holding on to that original vision, this summer, every member organisation also has a year's worth of real experience to draw on.

On 9th September, members from across West, East and South London will meet for an 'Away Day' at the Maria Assumpta Centre, W8. The idea is to look ahead together at the challenges and opportunities which face us as a network, and to evaluate the health of each part of London Citizens. If you'd like to participate in the day, contact the London Citizens office(020 7375 1658).

TELCO, the East London part of our organisation, will be 10 years old this Autumn. They are planning a big celebration on 16th November in York Hall, Bethnal

Green, where they were launched in 1996. The leaders and the campaigns in East London have been an inspiration to us in the West, but tales of our first year have also been impressing the veterans that side of town. Long may that last.

**DON'T FORGET  
SEPTEMBER'S  
BOROUGH MEETINGS  
all at 7.30-9.15pm  
Ealing: Tues, 12th Sept  
Ken & Chel : Weds 13th  
Ham & Ful: Thurs 14th  
See page 4 for venues  
and all other key dates**

## Progress at White City

Michael Gutman, Managing Director – UK/Europe, of Westfield, the company which owns White City shopping centre, sent a long response to a letter signed by four WLC leaders: Fr Dermot MacNeice (Servite parish); Amina Osman (Somali Community Consortium); Paul O'Shea (St Charles Sixth Form) and Daniella Fetuga-Joensuu (Chelsea Methodists).

He said, "Westfield supports the objective to make White City the UK's first living wage retail zone. Westfield also commits to pay the current living wage to all its onsite employees as defined by the Mayor's unit within the GLA." This is a very important first step and represents significant recognition of West London Citizens as an organisation. However the great majority of service staff at the site (cleaning, security, car park attendants, etc) will not be employed directly by Westfield. We still need to secure a clear commitment to guarantee a living wage for onsite contractors, and we'll continue to press for that over the coming weeks. We are also talking to the com-

pany about many other aspects of the development which will impact the communities around it.

Westfield has recently taken control of significant parts of the Olympic City development in Stratford. The company's interests in London are expanding fast, and so is our interest in them.

There is real potential for international links with other organisations who have engaged with Westfield as we are doing. In 2003 on 'International Justice for Janitors Day' cleaners united in protest over Westfield's practice of contracting out cleaning services to low-paying companies. Campaigners demanded a 'Clearance Sale: Everything Unjust Must Go'. We are talking to people in Australia and USA about working collaboratively for Living Wage standards in Westfield's centres worldwide.

**White City Action Team meets 4th September, 6.30-8pm, Riverside Centre, Macbeth Street, W6 9LG to determine our next steps. All are welcome!**

## Bin the Rats: 11th Sept kick off at Dominion Centre



Members in Southall are busy gearing up for a big launch night on 11th September when the council's plans to tackle the desperate environmental problems and health hazards in the town will finally be unveiled. Leader of the Council Jason Stacey will be at the launch event. We are hoping to attract strong press coverage, and bring together all the town's key stakeholders. Getting traders on board and ensuring that the council's efforts are effective in tackling trade waste problems is key to turning the situation around.

The election of the new Conservative administration in May did slow things down somewhat this year as all environmental contracts have been reviewed. It should ultimately be helpful since the environment is a high political priority for Cllr Jason Stacey and his cabinet colleagues.

**Bin the Rats** Action team members have been in negotiations all summer with senior environmental officers. We meet with them again on 31st August, as well as with Cllr Will Brooks, Ealing Cabinet member with responsibility for Transport and Environment. Our persistence and the fact that we prepared an Action Plan for them to react to, has paid dividends,

though all members agree that further pressure is likely to be needed to really ensure delivery of sustained improvement.

On Sunday 3rd September a group of our members will deliver flyers and invitations advertising the launch night to faith congregations, traders, community groups and others throughout Southall. Our task is to get the whole town behind this initiative, and to ensuring that the council's plans are well publicised. This will help to keep them on track.

One key issue under discussion with officers is how to ensure that all the town's traders, including those in Southall's various malls, have trade waste agreements. West London Citizens has proposed that copies of Waste Agreements be on public display somewhere on traders' premises as a condition of gaining a licence to trade from the council. That would allow citizens who suspect traders of fly-tipping to ask to see waste agreements.

What is being proposed by Ealing's officers is a phased 'multi-agency' blitz moving through key areas of the town month by month to tackle comprehensively the range of issues that contribute to Southall's infamous 'rats and rubbish'. Watch this space.

LONDON  
**CITIZENS**

### OCT 2006 COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP TRAINING

*Your chance to develop skills and build relationships with others in the network in a relaxed setting!*

*This training is free to anyone who belongs to a member organisation of West London Citizens*

**DATES:**

Friday 6th October

9.30am – 6.30pm

Saturday 7th October

9.30am – 4.30pm

**VENUE:**

Sion Centre

34 Chepstow Villas

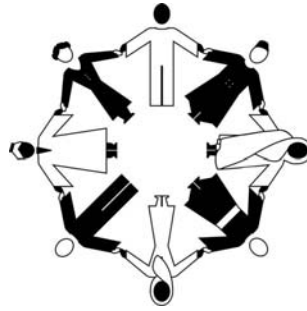
London W11 2QZ

Tube: Notting Hill Gate



**Florence John, Fr Jim Crampsey, Rev Michael Bolley and Angela Greenidge after our meeting with Joe Tavernier, Ealing's Director of Environment, and colleagues at Ealing Town Hall on 14th June**

## Citizens Teams



To strengthen our work in the year ahead, we're aiming to build up and better support the CITIZENS teams in our member organisations. Some of our members already have a tremendous team of people who are active with London Citizens but others have struggled. It's certainly not easy.

On Sunday 24th September, many of our Christian congregations will mark CITIZENS Sunday in their church. The idea is to commission a group of individuals as a Citizens team who will act as a two-way point of communication in the year ahead between their congregation and the rest of the London Citizens network, particularly neighbouring member organisations.

CITIZENS team members could also act as a catalyst for relationship building inside their organisation, especially looking out for new faces and making them feel welcome. Keeping an ear out for issues affecting people in the organisation and local neighbourhood, and feeding those issues

up to the CITIZENS borough meetings would be another key role for the teams.

Ideally, CITIZENS team members will go on the two-day London Citizens training at some point during the year if they haven't already done so over the last two years. A very large number of people have now been on that training, which has proved a great way of building up the strength of our work and of developing relationships between people from different organisations, ethnic backgrounds and faiths.

Rev Angus Ritchie, who has helped London Citizens prepare written materials for some years, has devised notes and pointers to help congregations and their ministers get ready for CITIZENS Sunday. You can access those and other materials about Citizens Teams through the office. Catherine Howarth will be talking with members in early September about how to make this work in your organisation, and about how she can support you in the process.

## Queen Mary

Professor Jane Wills, of the Geography Department at Queen Mary, University of London is offering West London Citizens member organisations the opportunity to have a team of students run a research project from October to December on something you would like to better understand in your neighbourhood or community.

Are there views and attitudes you'd like to understand amongst people who belong to your congregation? Are there local problems which need researching in order for you to plan ways to tackle them?

Professor Wills is running a Research Methods course with her students. She will supervise the students and help you design the right project for them. By working with your organisation on this project they will develop key skills for their degree. This could even be an opportunity to get data which will help you with an application for funding. To find out more or talk through a project contact: [catherine.howarth@londoncitizens.org.uk](mailto:catherine.howarth@londoncitizens.org.uk).

## WLC to get FREE LEGAL ADVICE

West London law firm, Powell, Spencer and Partners have offered us a range of free legal services should we ever need them. Gregg Powell, founding partner, attended a meeting of the London Citizens Workers Association in July when steering committee members were elected for the first time, including members from hotel sites in West London where we have been active this summer. He was impressed by what he saw and has offered the services not only of his own firm but also of other law firms who specialise in other areas.

The areas of advice on offer include **Crime, Welfare Benefits, Housing and Clinical Negligence**. If West London Citizens members are in a demonstration and ever face the possibility of arrest, Mr Powell's firm are offering us an immediate emergency number to call for high quality free legal advice on the spot. We are extremely grateful to Mr Powell.



## Faith and Citizenship

London has a great tradition of giving a home to persecuted people from all over the world and from all faith communities. This tradition is now under threat as bombs, cemetery desecrations and violent arrests divide communities and threaten the lives and liberties of Londoners.

St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation is running a unique joint training programme for leaders, both lay and clerical, in Christian, Jewish and Muslim congregations. It will explore practical ways in which communities can work together more effectively in London. The three elements of the training are: **Talking Together** (Scriptural Reasoning), **Living Together**, and **Working Together**. London Citizens will deliver the last element, and trainees will attend TELCO's 10th Anniversary Assembly in Bethnal Green on 16th Nov.

The course runs from mid September to December. It may be replicated in West London next year if this first course goes well. For more info: [www.stethelburgas.org](http://www.stethelburgas.org) or e-mail: [fact@stethelburgas.org](mailto:fact@stethelburgas.org)

## SUMMER ACADEMY

*Linas Danielius*

Nine talented young people, mostly students, from London, USA, Colombia, Lithuania and Russia were trained on the job as organisers during June and July on our 2006 Summer Academy. With mentoring and support from London Citizens staff, the students went into hotels and universities to identify and organize low paid workers for our migrant Workers Association. The students had language skills which helped break down barriers with these workers for the first time.

Students were placed in five Hiltons, in Kensington Close Hotel, at LSE and at the TATE Museum. It was not easy work and some found the workers' stories and experiences quite upsetting. It took time to develop trust and relationships. The climax of the Summer Academy's was the Workers Association meeting to elect a steering committee on August 1<sup>st</sup>. Over 30 workers from different sites came together to tell stories, elect committee members, and express solidarity. It was followed by a party to celebrate this milestone in the evolution of the Workers Association.

## Summer Party at Assumpta

As promised, strawberries and cream were served at our summer party on 28th July, and they disappeared at an alarming rate! A trip to Marks and Spencer was made in the middle of the evening to replenish supplies, and keep the punters happy.

The party followed an afternoon of action round the corner at Kensington Close - a bonding experience for those who took part, and something to tell tales about to the later arrivals. Aicha Manakova and Intlak Al-Saigh from the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre brought a big crowd of Moroccan ladies who have become some of our most loyal members. The party proved a good opportunity for people who have begun to recognise each other at our meetings this year to get a proper introduction. Let us know if you want another.



### Getting copies of our Newsletter

We do a limited number of printed copies which we post to member organisations. We can send any number by e-mail. If you want extras contact the London Citizens office on 0207 375 1658 or e-mail Catherine: [catherine.howarth@londoncitizens.org.uk](mailto:catherine.howarth@londoncitizens.org.uk)



## 2006 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY (all CITIZENS meetings are 7.30-9.15pm unless stated)

Time and Date:	Event:	Venue:
Sat 9th Sept (10am-4.30pm)	London Citizens Annual 'Away Day'	Maria Assumpta Centre, 23 Kensington Square, London W8.
Mon 11th Sept	<b>'Bin the Rats' Action Plan PUBLIC LAUNCH</b> West London Citizens and Ealing Council	Dominion Centre, The Green, Southall, UB2
Tues 12th Sept	<b>Ealing CITIZENS</b> meeting for all members in the borough	Parish Hall, St Peter & St Paul Church, Leyborne Avenue, Northfields, W13
Wed 13th Sept	<b>Kensington &amp; Chelsea CITIZENS</b> meeting for all members in the borough	Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre, 244 Acklam Road, W10
Thurs 14th Sept	<b>Hammersmith and Fulham CITIZENS</b> for all members in the borough	Bishop Creighton House, 378 Lillie Road, Fulham, SW6 7PH
Sunday 24th Sept	<b>CITIZENS SUNDAY</b> in WLC member churches	At your church
Wed 4th October	<b>Our 1st ANNIVERSARY ASSEMBLY</b>	Acton Town Hall, High Street, W3
Fri 6th/Sat 7th Oct	London Citizens Two-Day Leadership Training	Sion Centre, 24 Chepstow Villas, W11
Tues 7th November	<b>Full Strategy Meeting</b> of WLC members	Venue to be confirmed.
Thurs 16th Nov	<b>TELCO's 10th Anniversary Assembly</b> (West London members welcome at this big night)	York Hall, Old Ford Road, Bethnal Green, E2
Wed 6th December	<b>London Citizens AGM</b>	Notre Dame Uni, 1 Suffolk St, SW1Y