



NORTHCOTE ROAD ACTION GROUP *Newsletter*

DECEMBER 2006 ISSUE

Northcote Road Campaign - Our Impact So Far

There's been a steady flow of local press coverage with almost a story each week in the Wandsworth Borough News and other local papers. This is now making an impact on our visits to the Town Hall where everyone is aware of our group and what we are striving to do.

If you haven't heard, Northcote Ward Councillor and local resident Peter Dawson presented a 6,682 name petition to the full Wandsworth Borough Council (WBC) meeting on 25 October - by far the largest petition of the night! It now goes to the Planning & Transportation Committee and will help raise the profile of Northcote Road among opinion formers and influencers. It was exceedingly well received at the Town Hall.

We are aware that many of the issues are not just local but national too, and to solve them requires national legislation. As a result of our actions our MP, Martin Linton has joined the All-Party Parliamentary Small Shops Group where he will be able to table issues and concerns on our behalf.

Both local and national newspapers have picked up on our petition and campaign, and inventive collaboration with Prunella Scales. (See synopsis of coverage on the last page)

The Petition

Thank you to everyone who signed the petition. Almost 7,000 signatures were collected on the street and the shops during two weekends of canvassing. It was great to see such a broad spectrum of people queuing up to sign and express support. Many said they came from areas outside SW11 specifically to shop on Northcote Road.

Just to remind you, the petition's aims were:

To preserve the unique character of Northcote Road;

To encourage the continuing mix of small individually run shops;

To prevent the road being overwhelmed by large chain stores, numerous bars, estate agents and supermarkets.

To stress we are not against having multiples - they contribute towards the

footfall that provides customers for individually run independent shops.

What we want is a healthy blend!

The group's plan is to unite shop owners, landlords and Wandsworth Council in agreeing a single strategy for Northcote Road to guarantee the protection of the area in a way that retains its unique character.

What's Next?

Local Development Framework (LDF)

This is a complex process to that has been underway for some time now and will go on into 2007 and 2008.

Wandsworth Council is drawing up a borough planning framework called the Local Development Framework (LDF) that will eventually replace the existing development plans. There will be a number of consultation periods involved in the process of designing the LDF and so a number of opportunities for us to contribute and influence Council-led policies that will protect the Northcote area in a way that retains its distinctive character.

The current consultation closes on 15 December and we will submit a response by early December.

If you want to contribute to this submission and subsequent proposals, please contact Harvey Heath at harvey.heath@virgin.net

What We Plan to Say?

The petition was part and parcel of the current public consultation on the LDF. If we can get some of our ideas on shopping centres into the Core Strategy Document they will have the force of law. They could be making some impact by next summer although the formal plan may not be adopted until 2009.

We will propose:

The whole of Northcote and Webbs Road is regarded as one unit. This would mean that any financial grants and loans available for town centres would be available to the whole of each road.

Northcote Road is designated a Local Shopping Conservation Area. By this we mean that any new development must be able to demonstrate that it will sustain and add to the vibrancy, vitality and diversity of the road. This is a new idea but we claim that it is commensurate with government guidelines. If Wandsworth Council wishes to match their words with deeds then they should adopt this strategy.

The Council includes a strategy for the street

market. At the moment there is no mention of street markets in the council's draft document. We will be seeking ways of promoting a more active market than now.

Excellent News for the Sustainable Communities Bill Campaign

On 23 November Nick Hurd, MP for Ruislip-Northwood (son of Douglas), came top of the ballot for private members' bills in the House of Commons and has agreed to champion the Sustainable Communities Bill and take it through Parliament. Let's hope that we can contribute and see the bill being made law in the not too distant future.

It just goes to show that the issue of preserving our shopping streets is not just a local issue but a national one too.

Northcote Road Post Office

There is a danger that without a sustained campaign they will assume local residents and businesses are coping by using the other post offices in the area.

In July the Post Office wrote to our Northcote Councillors saying that the closure of our post office on Northcote Road was temporary and "the provision of a post office service to our customers in this community is of paramount importance and we will continue to work hard to restore normal services in the Northcote Road vicinity as soon as possible".

Please, please support the campaign for a replacement post office in Northcote Road by writing to:

Julia Marwood
National Consultation
Manager
Post Office Ltd
National Consultation Team
PO Box 2060
Watford WD18 8ZW

Or email:
consultation@royalmail.com

And copy:

Postwatch
28 Grosvenor Gardens
London SW1W 0TT

Or email:
info@postwatch.co.uk

Planning Applications

One way we can be involved in the meantime is to keep our eyes open for planning applications in Northcote Road.

Small businesses are being lost as continual rises in rents become unsustainable and some landlords refuse to renew leases on grounds of re-development. If we become aware of any that threaten the independent businesses in the street, we will call upon everyone to submit views individually to the Council's website.

What Can You Do?

Shop local. Remember to use Northcote and Webbs Road shops and street market to buy food, drink and presents for Christmas.

Spread the word among your neighbours and friends. If they want to be kept informed of progress and development, ask them to get in touch. They can register their details with fiona@langfords.com

Campaign for a new post office.

Respond to local planning applications.

Look at Wandsworth's revamped Northcote Road web page at www.wandsworth.gov.uk/northcote

Media Coverage

We'll be posting all the coverage on our soon-to-be launched Northcote website, but in the meantime, here's a brief synopsis of media attention we gathered.

The Grocer - 4 November

Scales...is battling to save her local high street from being taken over by larger retail chains....

Wandsworth Borough News - 1-7 November

Councillor James Cousins, Wandsworth Council's executive member for regeneration and community safety said: "The council is right behind the independent retailers of Northcote Road. Councillors are helping to identify all the ways in which we can help.

"The Northcote Road petition shows at the local level just how highly people value their quality of life."

Sunday Mirror - 5 November

TESCO ad star Prunella Scales is spearheading a new campaign - to stop mega-store chains moving into her local high street.

The actress handed over a 7,000-name petition calling for her local council to protect the "distinctive" character of Battersea, South-West London.

Time Out 25 October

The Times - 7 November

The actress Prunella Scales has joined the campaign to save Northcote Road, a rather chi-chi street of small shops just around the corner from Clapham Junction, South London, I read in The Grocer magazine.

She was, of course, for nearly a decade the voice of Tesco as Doty in its "every little helps" campaign, but is now on the side of the small shop and local traders, it seems. Basil!

Sunday Telegraph - 12 November

"I think local shopping areas and markets are terribly important, both for trades people and the local feeling of an area," Miss Scales said. "There are a few supermarkets in the area but that is enough.

"I have worked for Tesco and am grateful to them ... but in principle I believe in individual shops. Supermarkets must not eliminate the individual retailers and market roads

like the Northcote."

Daily Mail - 14 November

"Miss Scales is backing a campaign to save the independent trader and keep supermarkets and big name stores out of her local area. She is fighting to save Northcote Road, a street in Battersea South-West London which is renowned for its small independent food shops and street market."

The Week - 18 November

Good week for: Small shops which recruited an unlikely ally in the shape of Prunella Scales. The actress has made an estimated £1m promoting Tesco, but is now fighting to protect independent traders on Northcote Road, near her south London home.

For further information on anything in this newsletter, please contact:

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