



## GOVERNMENT SQUASHES THE DREAMS OF EAST LONDON STUDENTS

### 6th form students speak out



***"I can't have Oxford money and Oxford grades."***

***"No difference between Conservatives and New Labour – their campaigns were the same."***

**Students throughout East London are angry about the end of Educational Maintenance Grants after this academic year. EMA helps students attend Sixth Form and Further Education colleges, a necessary step to get into university.**

Over the last few months students at Tower Hamlets FE College have organised debates and protests. The axing of EMA will have a particularly bad effect on deprived boroughs like Tower Hamlets and Newham. Up to £30 was given to the poorest student, helping them with costs such as transport. In addition, the economic situation means there are far fewer part time jobs, evenings and weekends, which many students depended on to help them get through college. In addition, the students also have to worry up about the massive increase in university tuition fees. Here's what some Newham Tower Hamlets students had to say:

- *If there hadn't been EMA when I started, I would have been put off coming to college.*
- *I went to a college out of the borough because I thought it provided more opportunities for going to university. But my transport costs have now gone up to £60 a month, plus all I have to spend on books and equipment.*
- *I don't like to ask my parents for money so I use the EMA and also money from a part-time job. But if I didn't have to work then I would get higher grades. I plan to write an essay but then I am too tired so I put it off.*
- *You are told to go to university in order to get good jobs by authority figures.*
- *It makes my blood boil. They can't complain if they see a black person selling drugs. We are trying to get to university, trying to make it, but it is an elitist society.*
- *Living in Newham is bad enough, but the idea of university keeps me going. But I need to get good A-level results and that will be harder if I have to work.*
- *I can't have high ambitions because I have to work. If I didn't work then I might get the grades but then wouldn't be able to afford to go. They say the cuts are inevitable but a democratic society should want to help people. If we are going to be the future of humanity then you have to invest in us now.*
- *The younger generation is suffering after the bank crisis. We didn't cause the crisis but it will be our responsibility to turn the country around.*



# THEIR LIES...OUR RESISTANCE

In this issue of the Howler we're focusing on the cuts that will soon hit East London. Labour councillors would have us think that these cuts are merely the forté of the Tories - but by scratching the surface only a little we find the stench of dishonesty at every level of the implementation of these devastating cuts. We will focus on two East London councils: Newham and Tower Hamlets.

*This handy cut-out-and-wear lapel badge for Labour Councillors was kindly made by the Deterritorial Support Group. Please direct your emotionally conflicted Labour Councillors to [dettterritorialsupportgroup.wordpress.com](http://dettterritorialsupportgroup.wordpress.com) where they can download their very own - "Suitable for all future budget meetings"*

**I don't enjoy doing this but it must be done**

## Everything We've Won... They Want It Back

After months of speculation, leaks and scaremongering our new government has finally announced the massive cuts that it intends to make. Nothing is left untouched. Schools, universities, local services, health care and, above all, benefits will all be hacked to pieces one way or another. Every service that we rely on to make our lives possible is to be hacked back, sold off or 'reformed'. In the last hundred years, the working class has won concession after concession from government. The NHS, free education, pensions and benefits - all of these were victories won for and by the working class through class struggle. Our new government of millionaires, aristocrats and spivs has decided that this cannot stand. Everything we have won, they want back. With interest.

It is obvious by now that the cuts are an attack on the whole working class. Changes to university funding will leave poorer students with crippling debts and make sure that the better universities are only for the wealthy. Housing benefit changes are likely to drive poorer people out of wealthier areas, a consequence already prepared for by many councils who've booked up B&Bs across the south of England. The £7 billion cut to all benefits is likely to drive many onto the streets and blight the lives of those who manage to cling onto substandard housing. The cuts in EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance- an allowance that helps young people to study past the age of 16) will affect many households in East London. Locally services like libraries, rubbish collection, youth clubs and our Law Centre will disappear (depriving many of the chance of free legal aid) are likely to disappear as budgets plummet. And all this is before we get to the 490,000 jobs to go in the public sector, with knock-on job losses in the private sector likely to push that to a million.

## Newham

### Mayor's dishonesty

The Newham Mayor (Sir Robin Wales) has been branching out. In a recent article he tries to explain why cuts in Newham are all the government's fault and really nothing to do with him. The 'Great Helmsman' rightly attacks the "manifest dishonesty ministers have employed in their presentation of how much they are cutting out of our budgets". He targets Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities Bob Neill's claim that Newham faces an 8.8% cut in Revenue Spending Power', saying that this "masked the fact that this year we will receive £43.7 million less from central government". This means that the cuts will be more like 14%.

What the article doesn't say is that between 2008-2011, Newham council had already made £67 million in cuts to local services (failing to meet a target of £70 million) - and that whilst Newham faces a total of £75.5m of grant cuts over the next 4 years, it plans to go much further than the restrictions imposed by central government and make cuts totalling £116 million.

He is cynically pretending to be anti-cuts to his Labour Party friends, using the appalling decisions of the coalition government as a smoke-screen, one designed to hide his own indifference towards actively defending vital local services.

"It's naïve of me to expect some honesty about spending policy", says the Mayor. It would be naïve of the rest of us to expect the same from Newham council.

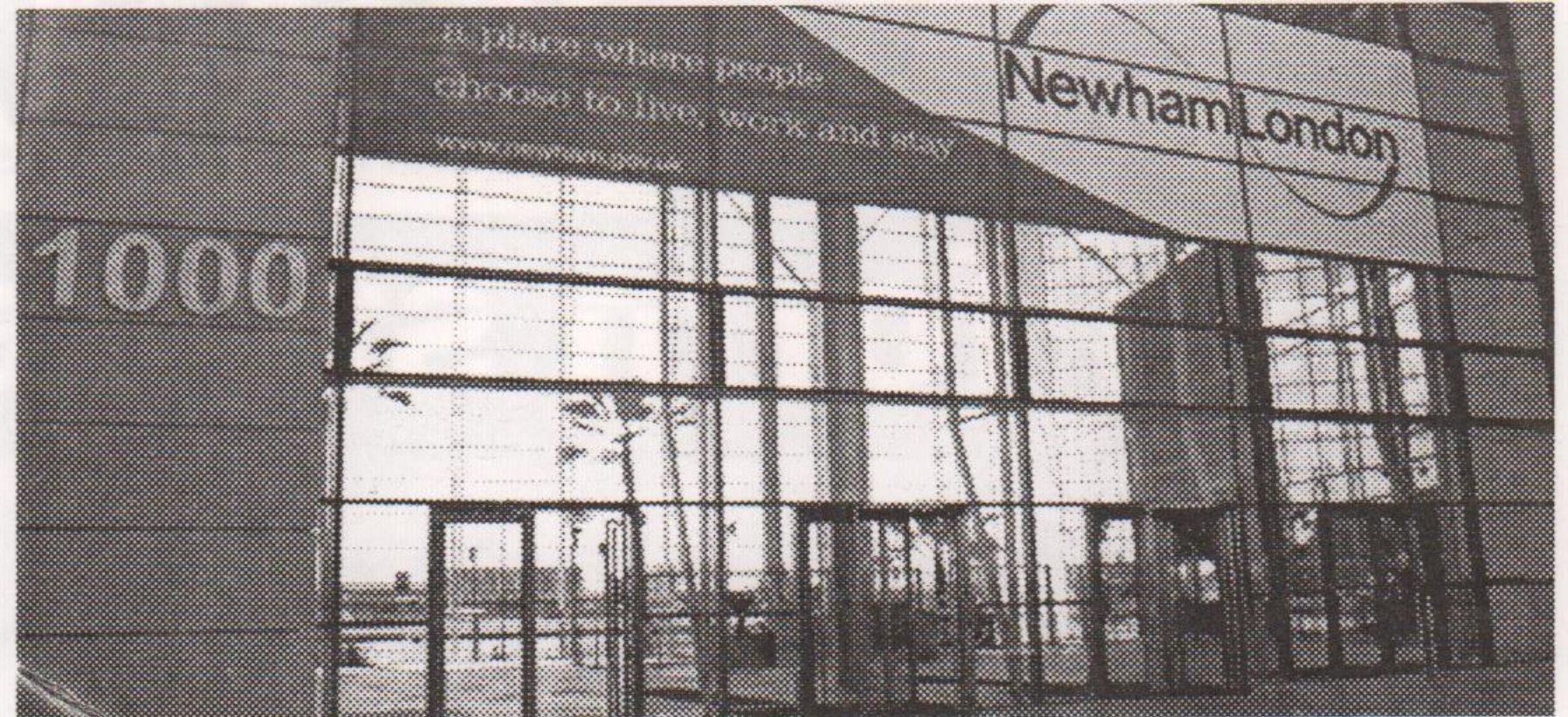
### Cuts for some, but not for all

With the cuts that we have already had, plus the massive ones planned, one would expect that the council has been in a terrible financial distress. However, this is not the case. Echoing David Cameron's ludicrous claim that "we are all in this together", the Great Helmsman is holding a series of one-hour events over three days under the banner of 'Newham Together'.

- Newham managed to hand over £1,276,615 during the last year to recruitment consultant Badenoch and Clarke.

- Last summer Wales gave himself an inflation-busting pay increase of four per cent rise, taking his salary to £81,029 a year.

- Leak from a senior council officer to the BBC reveals more about the criminal amount of money spent on their new council headquarters. Having spent £111m on Newham Dockside that the council spent a staggering £18.7m on the cost of the design and décor of its new offices. The local authority claims that by moving staff from 26 other buildings, it will save around £7m per year. However, the majority of these buildings are either still occupied by council staff or lie empty. They therefore remain a financial burden on local council taxpayers and are almost impossible to sell, due to the state of the property market. It looks as though even more of the buildings listed as 'still in use' may become empty from April as the council seeks to make 1600 of its staff redundant, as part of plans for a drastic 25% budget cut over four years. So will the move to Newham Dockside have really saved £12m by March or is this a fantasy figure that takes no account of the continuing cost of maintaining the council's large portfolio of properties?



- The council seems to have found £40 million to loan to the struggling West Ham football club for their purchase of the Olympic Stadium. This after commercial lenders refused, clearly thinking that it was a risky loan. The council, and therefore us as the local taxpayers, will be liable if West Ham default on the debt, which is very likely given their current troubles.

## Tower Hamlets

### Plundering the Public Sector

Now the cuts are hitting home here in Tower Hamlets. The council plans to tax 500 jobs and warned workers that they might lose their jobs. Two hundred of these will be council workers and another three hundred will be agency-employed workers. The council wants to save £29 million, a quarter of its budget over the next financial year, with a total of £55 million over 3 years. The Chief Executive of the Council, Kevan Collins, has gone on to say that £78 million must be saved over the next three to four years, announcing this at a council cabinet meeting. This means job losses among workers in Tower Hamlets AND it means drastic cuts in our services.

Yet the Mayor Lutfur Rahman was elected because he promised that he would fight the cuts. It is a Conservative-Liberal Democrat government that has started these cuts and locally it is a predominantly Labour council that will be implementing them. In practice there is no difference between the parties. They are all pledged to bring in austerity measures. Local MP Jim Fitzpatrick has gone on record to say that "we all know" there have to be cuts.

This is not about 'saving the economy' but about restoring profitability to the banks and businesses that made the mess in the first place. These cuts are about strip mining the public sector to support a financial sector hungry for 'opportunities'. This is a massive transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor modelled on the programmes imposed on Latin America, Asia and Africa through the last 30 years. This is not 'prudent economics' pulling Britain 'back from the brink', it's plunder plain and simple.

### Labour, Tory, Same Old Story

Just as the government is turning back the clock, so the loyal opposition in the Labour party and the trade union movement tries to do the same. Already, the traditional left are calling for the Labour party to do something. The same party that proposed all but £6 billion of the Lib-Dem/Tory cuts, that began the creeping privatisation that the new government will speed up, is expected to lead the fight against both of them. This loyal opposition would have us forget everything they did to make the mess we're in now possible. They would have us believe that this time it will be different, that this time they really are serious about fighting for the working class rather than for their own careers.

Just as we should expose and ignore the lies from the government, so we should expose and ignore the lies of the loyal opposition. Labour won't save us. The trade union bureaucracies will posture but ultimately do nothing. The best they've managed so far is to call for a rally sometime in March - too little, too late. We can't look to any of the generals without



armies shouting for our support. If we're going to fight back against these attacks we're going to have to do it ourselves.

### **Fighting Back**

That means joint action between council workers, tenants and residents, pensioners and young people, school students and FE and university students. The cuts affect all of us. We cannot rely on either Rahman and his group or the 41 Labour councillors to lead a fight back. They are unwilling to do so. Rahman will blame the Labour group for failing to back him as he "does the dirty work" (his own words). Neither can we rely on the two Labour MPs in the borough, they have already admitted that they are not against cuts.

Rahman at a council Cabinet meeting in January announced the £55 million of cuts over three years and said: "This was forced upon us by central government. We want to protect frontline services"! Whilst he pleads that there would be no "frontline cuts", a housing service to people with mental health problems is being axed. Just what is that if not a frontline cut?!

500 jobs will go by March, £3m will be cut from children's centres funds, as well as a cut of £1.8 million from housing for people with mental health problems. Home care workers employed by the council will see 55 jobs axed by 2012-13 and £3.7m will be shaved from their budget. Home care workers look after elderly people and disabled people. Not only will this impact upon the workers but on those they look after. Cynically the Cabinet recommended a plan to move home care towards a "re-enablement service" to help residents "regain skills" that they lost because of disability or bad health. In practice this means looking out for themselves! The cabinet plans on looking at further cuts of £1.8 m by substituting supported housing over residential care for people with mental health problems..

The Cabinet also decided to only provide after-school services for working parents. As a result the number of part-time care workers will be cut by 103. It should be pointed out that currently non-working parents make up 47% of after school users. In addition the cost of after school clubs will rise from £5 to £8 a day (actually this may rise to as much as £10, with changes coming in from as early as April. Tower Hamlets parents are afraid that this will force them out of work. 18 schools are operating the service and this will be reduced to 8!! The council hopes to save 873,000 on these schemes.

In addition to the grim news of both cuts by Tower Hamlets Council and the NHS Trust, Toynbee Hall in Aldgate announced that it was cutting its face-to-face sessions advising on debts. This service will be replaced by six week waits for appointments. The debt advice scheme assists 500 people a year in Tower Hamlets. For the last five years it has been funded by the Government's Financial Inclusion Fund (FIF). This will be axed on March 31st.

As a result, many more people will see their homes reposessed before they can get support. This will increase costs for local councils and impact on the health services through the resulting problems of anxiety and depression. Last year the scheme was praised by the National Audit Office because it saved considerable amounts to the courts, NHS, providers of housing and creditors

There is plenty of money for the Olympics extravaganza, there is plenty of money for their wars, there is plenty of money for their nuclear submarines. We have to stand up and stand together to defeat these cuts and defeat this government, with their willing servants in the council!!

## **Hospital management take the surgeon's knife to jobs**

**The Barts and London NHS trust announced in early February that it was intending to cut 650 jobs at Barts, the London Hospital at Whitechapel and the London Chest Hospital at Bethnal Green. These would be implemented by not replacing staff that leave and the cancellation of new vacancies. It now seems likely that 100 jobs will be axed and that 100 beds will be lost at the hospitals. In addition the hiring of consultants would be cut right back as well as the hiring of agency staff.**

Corporate departments would have 30% cuts in funding. This will mean that 10% of staff in the East End's hospitals will go! The government has set 20% savings. The overpaid parasite Peter Morgan, chief executive of the Trust said that the Trust had to "get better value for money" and said that it would be "asking hospital staff to be flexible". This means in practice that staff would be asked to contribute towards a 20% "productivity improvement".

The Conservatives had as one of their election promises that they would leave the NHS alone. Here at the Howler we are not surprised that these lying politicians have broken this promise. Rising costs means that even the Con-Dem government's promised increase still requires efficiency savings of 20%, that is, more than £20 billion by 2015.

Several hundred people attended an emergency rally outside the London Hospital on Friday 11th February. The demonstrators blocked the Whitechapel Road for several minutes as part of the protest. Now in the East End we need to show the politicians and their friends in the NHS Trusts and the local Councils who are implementing these cuts that we will not take this lying down. Speech therapists in Southwark have shown the way by striking over job cuts. In addition to industrial action against these cuts we need to develop a big movement on the streets and begin confronting them at their decision-making meetings to make it clear to these robbers that we mean business.

### **HE'S HAVING A BUBBLE....**

**What a joker Tower Hamlets Mayor Lutfur Rahman is. He has implemented a massive package of cuts in the borough and has now announced, at a packed meeting called by Tower Hamlets Joint Unions, that he will join the march against the cuts on March 26th!**

### **What you can do**

#### **1. Get involved in a local anti-cuts group.**

- Save Newham Services campaign. A website has been set up - see [savenewhamservices.wordpress.com](http://savenewhamservices.wordpress.com) for more details.

- Hands Off Our Publics Sevices (HOOPS) Tower Hamlets- see [handsofftowerhamlets.blogspot.com](http://handsofftowerhamlets.blogspot.com) for info.

#### **2. Give a piece of your mind to the mayors:**

- Newham mayor Robin Wales:

<http://www.newham.gov.uk/YourCouncil/NewhamTogetherfacingthecutsasone.htm>

- Tower Hamlets mayor Lutfur Rahman: Tel: 020 7364 4993 or email: [mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

#### **3. Take part in protests:**

- National anti-cuts demonstration: Saturday 26th March - assemble 11am Victoria Embankment, to march to a rally in Hyde Park.

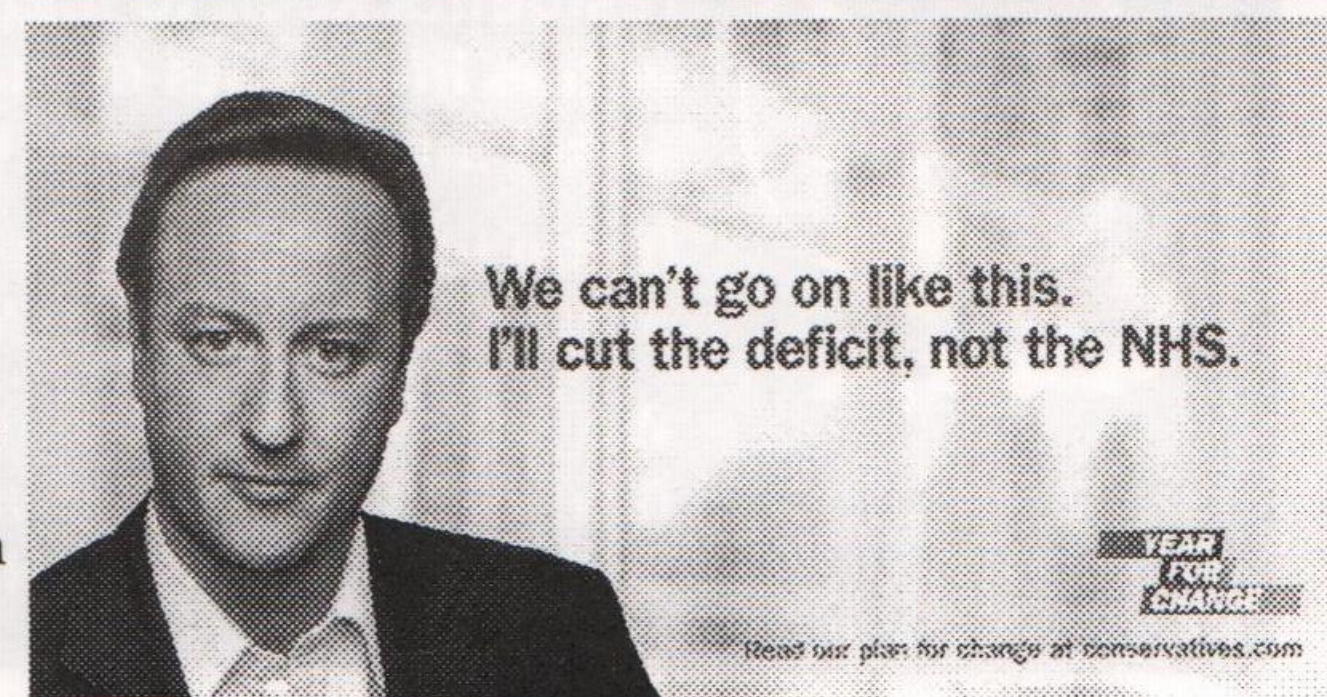
- Mass Lobby and Protest at Tower Hamlets Council Budget Setting Meeting: Wednesday 23 February - 5pm at the Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, East India Dock, London E14 2BG

- March and Lobby of full Newham council meeting: Monday 28th of February. This is the meeting that will set Newham's cuts budget. Local trade unions have called a demonstration that assembles at Plashet Park at 5.00pm and will march to East Ham Town Hall (to be confirmed, check [savenewhamservices.wordpress.com](http://savenewhamservices.wordpress.com) to keep updated).

- Street stalls and leafleting for national anti-cuts demonstration: Saturday March 5th - time and date to be confirmed, check [savenewhamservices.wordpress.com](http://savenewhamservices.wordpress.com) for updates.

### **SOME INSPIRATION...**

**Users of Roma Support Group in Newham won their judicial review of the decision by the city-wide body London Councils to cut £10 million of funding from voluntary sector organisations. It was held that London Councils' consultation process was flawed and that they had failed to meet their statutory equality duties. These duties require councils to assess the gender, disability and race equality impacts of the cuts. He quashed all the funding cut decisions for the 200 plus projects and he said that London Councils must re-run the process, this time with full equality impact assessments. This decision could have implications for all cuts carried out by Newham Council; if it has failed to carry out proper equality impact assessments in deciding the services it intends to cut, then it may be acting unlawfully.**





# Oh look...more luxury flats!!

Local residents have been campaigning for some time to save the Limehouse Conservation Area where the old Poplar Labour exchange stands. The Council originally stopped Trillium Property Group when it applied to have the building demolished so that two tower blocks of luxury flats could be built.

However, a high Court ruling has overturned this and Trillium has been given the green light to go ahead, with the council stitching up a deal. In addition, local MP Jim Fitzpatrick who gave his support to the campaign originally has now gone on record to say that "Unfortunately, empty buildings can blight an area if left empty... when there's such a shortage of housing and a desperate need to improve the East End". Erm, has anyone told Jim, the Friend of the Poor, that the poor cannot actually afford luxury flats? That, perhaps, building luxury flats instead of affordable housing will raise house and rental prices and may even aggravate the problem?



## Ongoing campaigns

### Save Wanstead Flats

The campaign to save the Flats from the blight of a police base for 2012 Olympics 'security' continues.

Currently the priority is to make formal objections to the base.

The Save Wanstead Flats campaign are planning further mass community events following the successful mass picnic and Beating the Bounds and tug of war.

[www.savewansteadflats.org.uk](http://www.savewansteadflats.org.uk)

### No Nuclear Trains

The campaign continues to publicise and oppose the unnecessary risks and dangers of transporting nuclear materials by rail through London (with much of the East End affected). They are planning another big action in summer 2012.

[www.nonucleartrains.org.uk](http://www.nonucleartrains.org.uk)

### Friends of Queens Market

Car park charges for users of Queens Market at Upton Park have more than doubled since November. The car drivers who visit the market are not wealthy people and the charges are hitting them as well as the market traders and consequently people will be more cautious of parking there. Friends of Queen's Market believe this increase is unfair and disproportionate and have demanded that the old charges be reinstated and recently demonstrated about the issue.

[www.friendsofqueensmarket.org.uk](http://www.friendsofqueensmarket.org.uk)

## Counter Olympics Network



The Counter Olympics network (CON) is a network of groups and individuals who have come together to organise around the London 2012 Olympic Games. Our aim is not to oppose the Olympics as such, but to use the spectacle to strengthen existing campaigns and activism on local issues like housing, privatisation and surveillance. We also want to hold the organisers of the Olympic Games to account, to ensure the promises made to the local people impacted on by the Games are kept.

**We ask questions like:**

- How can local communities resist and respond to the impact of the Games, both in the short and long term?
- How can the assumptions behind who benefits from the Olympics be publicly challenged?
- How can the corporate profiteering inherent to the Olympics be exposed and challenged?
- How can we take the opportunity to add London voices to those from other cities around the world who have challenged the Olympics, and further a growing critical perspective?

[counterolympicsnetwork.wordpress.com](http://counterolympicsnetwork.wordpress.com)

Counter Olympics twitter at

[twitter.com/counterOlympics](https://twitter.com/counterOlympics)

## ABOUT ACTION EAST END



The East End Howler is produced by Action East End. We are a small group of local residents keen to highlight issues not taken up by popular media. All of this, as so much in this life, costs money...and surprise surprise we're not millionaires! So please donate a small amount for each copy of the Howler you take.

If you like what we're doing and feel like doing more, please send an email to: [actioneastend@googlemail.com](mailto:actioneastend@googlemail.com)

We will add you to our mailing list and keep you informed of our latest activities. Alternatively if supply us with an address we will send you a paper copy of our news letter and a free East End Howler through the post.