

## COMMENT

**Danny Wittenberg**

The 16-year-old editor of the  
Ham&High's Young Readers' Edition



# Teenagers invited to write for H&H

**M**ainstream journalism, it would be fair to say, is stuck in something of a mosh pit. Often struggling to move forwards but unable to go back, it's like Christmas at Camden Market in here. That's why we think it deserves another makeover, David Bowie-style. It is our aim to give the next generation of writers, roving reporters and community activists a voice in their local newspaper and a platform to do good for their neighbourhood, by publishing a special supplement written totally for teenagers, by teenagers.

Following on from our successful launch edition in May this year, we are again encouraging the youth of north London to write freely about the issues that matter to them most, at a time when our views are so often left unheard. Which is always a shame.

We recognise the media as a crucial means of communication – particularly owing to our extensive use of social networks – but young people have so far been unable to embrace its power as a societal mouthpiece and the cement that binds our communities.

Times change, however, and all indications show that the years will be kind to newspapers – or at least their online allies. In recent decades, so I am told, journalism has transformed from a one-sided current affairs lecture to a constant game of ping-pong between readers and writers, helped by the audience's willingness to help shape the debate.

Yet this has largely been reserved for adults until now, inexplicably so. In a world where anyone with a camera, a keyboard or a smartphone can lay claim to being a journalist (and where people can become paperboys too in the click of a 'like', 'share' or 're-tweet' button), we are inviting teenagers to take up that opportunity and submit their stories.

Few would refute the fact that, at the ripe old age of 160-plus, the *Ham&High* has aged well. More than a third of you are estimated to be reading this article online, whilst I suspect the proportion of 11 to 18-year-olds doing so is even higher.

So, this next step seems an obvious one: handing over control of our content to a new cohort of north Londoners in the *Young Readers' Edition* brings endless scope for creativity and fresh ideas. We want local secondary school students to bring their feelings to the fore, whether it concerns news and current affairs, teenage themes, culture or sport.

It may be that 21st century technology has changed journalism forever, but we understand the young people behind the screens are those who will shape its future.

Email us or join us on [www.facebook.com/HamHighYRE](http://www.facebook.com/HamHighYRE) for more details on the *Ham&High Young Readers' Edition*, due for publication in January. The suggested topics for entry are:

2013 year in review – film, music, sport or general interest; what makes me stand out from the crowd; my local picture – art or photography; my interview with a totally famous local; an open letter to someone totally important; in my opinion... (get it off your chest!); I really hate it when... (or #NorthLondonProblems); how to be a teenager – in the 21st century or north London; north London's best kept secrets; when I grow up... (my ambitions and passions).

Please send your submissions to [youngreaders@hamhigh.co.uk](mailto:youngreaders@hamhigh.co.uk) by January 7, 2014.

“It is our aim to give the next generation of writers, reporters and community activists a voice in their local newspaper and a platform to do good for their neighbourhood”

**! What do you think? Have your say at streetlife.com**

## Cycling deaths

# Safety lessons can be learned from Europe

Clive Carter writes:

In a recent 13-day period, six cyclists were knocked down and killed on London roads – a rate of almost one every other day. Are the authorities doing enough to help cycling and cyclist safety?

Some councils, including Haringey, are now addicted to the revenue they extract one way and another from motorists. The low-rent cyclists offer few taxation possibilities and receive little attention.

Road/transport engineers are dedicated to speeding up vehicular traffic and appear to be geared up to conditions obtaining 30 years ago. The fading paint of a few cycle lanes is one of the token gestures towards the rise of cycling.

The Dr Bike advice sessions in parks in the summer were welcome. However, Haringey still does not take cycling seriously enough. On the pavement corner of Stroud Green and Woodstock Roads, engineers designed a tiny, joke cycle route about three metres long.

There, the waste of public money was not huge but, for the council, it represented another ticked box to show that money was spent on cycling “improvements”. Even though the tight, S-shaped, twin-lanes are unused, pointless and ludicrous. It's not the only example of such cycle insincerity in the borough.

There is a little hypocrisy



■ The 'joke' cycle route on Stroud Green and Woodstock Roads

within the council about green commitment. Whereas the public and lesser council staff are encouraged to go green, senior officers enjoy generous car parking behind River Park House, out of public gaze. Surely, what is sauce for the staff-goose is sauce for the senior manager-gander? Are top bosses too well-padded to peddle?

The council needs to reduce their car dependency, catch up with the shifted pattern of transport use and take steps to make cycling safer.

The pavement hoops to lock up bikes are inadequate in quality and quantity. The relatively few existing basic hoops ought to be M-shaped to provide a better range of securing points.

Other things that councils ought to provide are (1) joined-up cycle lanes, (2) physically separate lanes, even if these comprise a concrete barrier just a few inches high and (3) consider a cycles-first phase on traffic lights (4) Dutch-style roundabouts

where cyclists have priority.

**Cllr Paul Braithwaite, Camden's Cycling Champion, writes:**

After the deaths of six cyclists, I can't be alone, as I continue to ride each day around Camden, in being in fear that I too might become “road kill”. I don't think it at all fair or helpful of Mayor Boris Johnson to imply that cyclists may be at fault. Three of these deaths have been “mature” men, like me, in their 60s and I doubt they were from the new and anarchic lycra-wearing racing brigade.

It's striking that in Paris, with large numbers of cyclists, there was not one cyclist death last year. And what is possibly the biggest influence on that? Paris bans big lorries in the daytime. Whereas, in inner London lorries over 18 tonnes are banned overnight and permitted into the city from 7am. It's a fact that five per cent of vehicles are trucks but they cause the majority of cyclists' fatalities.

I was pleased to read of a police lorry spot check on Monday morning on Vauxhall Bridge, but appalled that they found 50 per cent of the 20 lorries checked had serious defects. I think we cyclists must demand that trucks be banned from inner London streets for, say, at least two hours of commuting time each morning and evening.

## Busking licences

# Mixed response to new rules

**David Reed, of Swiss Cottage, writes:**

By what arrogant reasoning do buskers and their supporters demand the right to inflict their music, amplified as much as they like and at any time they feel like it, on everybody else (“*Buskers' human rights 'stifled'*”, Nov 14)?

And they are being utterly ridiculous to claim that Camden's move to bring some measure of control on their activities affects their human rights. Being allowed to make a noise on our streets whenever and wherever they feel like it is not a human right, it's an arrogant and aggressive act.

Most people in Camden are working, in all sorts of shift patterns, and need as much peace and quiet in and around their homes as possible. Buskers 'work' when they feel like it and I see no reason why a community should not ask them to think about others when they perform.

As for Jonny Walker's idiotic

remark about this being an attack on “spontaneity and creativity,” words begin to fail me, do he and his like really have absolutely no respect for anyone else?

Buskers are not being banned, only asked to follow a few basic rules. No amplifiers and ending at 9pm at night sounds reasonable to me.

**Cllr Jonny Bucknell, Conservative, Belsize ward, writes:**

Camden's decision to license buskers is one of the worst pieces of democracy that I have ever seen.

The gathering storm about licensing started off at the licensing committee of August 7 when I wrote to the committee in my absence using the key words of “this is using a sledgehammer to crack a nut” and “you should never create a new law unless all other efforts to solve the problem have been exhausted”.

Labour councillors have constantly cited that existing legislation has failed, while officers have quietly told us that the number of complaints has dropped dramatically since it started to be used.

At the licensing committee of October 29, I made a proposal, seconded by the Lib Dems, that the matter be put on hold until we had formed a steering group of buskers, residents, police and licensing officers to pilot a code of conduct as was being used in Bournemouth. Labour councillors voted against my resolution.

Camden has had a reputation for supporting up and coming bands but there is a danger that this spirit could be lost forever. Alternatively, you could end up with mass non-compliance and scarce resources being wasted on a cat and mouse game between the buskers and the council.

It is vital that this policy is stopped in its tracks for a period to consider the alternatives.