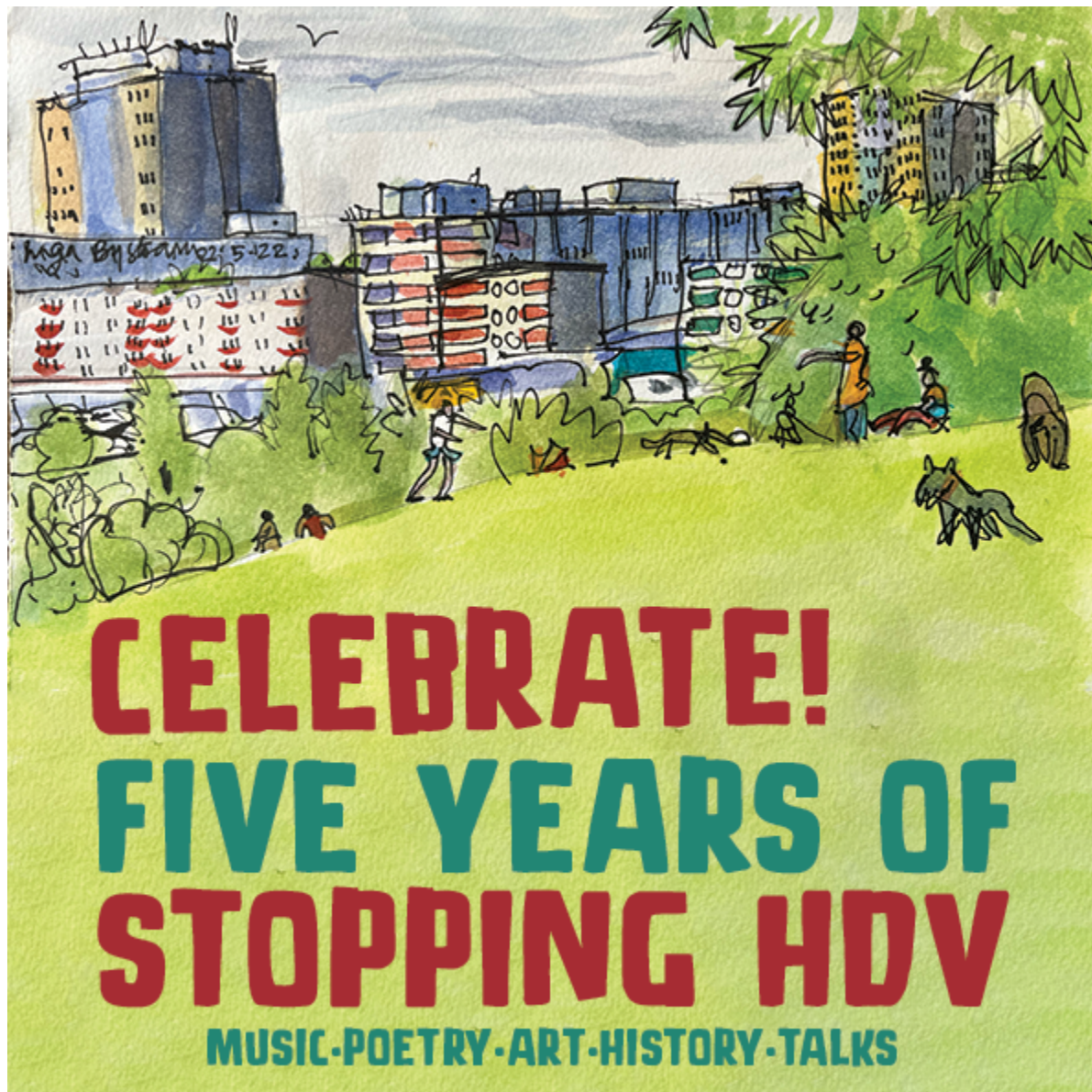


## Five Years of Stopping HDV Celebration, Haringey, 3rd September 2023



Poster for the Event by Cut-Through Collective, Original Art by Inga B, design by C-T

On 3rd September, with a community of local political organisers, our collective ran a cultural event about housing justice and our [right to the city](#). Together we produced an event specifically to celebrate the passing of five years since a social housing defence campaign, [StopHDV](#), found success in the London borough of Haringey. HDV stood for 'Haringey Development Vehicle', a [widely reviled](#) plan to demolish social housing in the borough

We put together a programme of music, poetry, film, and political talks, which included many of the original StopHDV campaigners as speakers/performers. A eulogy was made for the local

housing campaigner Phil Jackson, who sadly passed away shortly after the original campaign achieved its primary aim of stopping HDV. London Renters Union, ACORN, and Haringey Community Action Network, held stalls where attendees could sign up to participate in ongoing housing justice campaigns and hear about local actions, such as the Haringey [#RightToFood Hunger March](#) (23rd September). Sisters Uncut, Nijour Manush, and Haringey Save the Warehouses gave talks about specific ongoing campaign drives.



*Left: The late Phil Jackson holds up a speaker for Northumberland Park estate resident Lyn Silver 23rd Sept 2017. Right: Phil Rose gives a eulogy to his comrade Phil Jackson at the event 3rd Sept 2023.*

## **An Approach to Producing the Event**

Our event took place at a community centre in Lordship Lane Recreation Ground, a public space referred to by the local council as [‘the heart of Haringey’](#). Lordship Rec’s North East side runs into the Broadwater Farm Estate, a social housing block that the council has attempted to demolish on numerous occasions - most recently in 2013. The estate and park have undergone numerous rounds of state-funded, community-led regeneration. Despite this, the estate has been consistently monstrored in the right-wing gutter press and even recently has been labelled, [‘notorious’](#). It lies in what the [Greater London Authority](#) calls a ‘Strategic Area for Regeneration’, bordering the ‘Lea Valley Opportunity Area’. But replacing the estate with luxury apartments, as happened in the London borough of [Southwark](#), appears to be a political impossibility here. It is important to ensure that stays the case.

The Cut-Through Collective meetings that laid much of the groundwork for this event were conducted on Zoom. Our comrades from different parts of the country, who might otherwise find it difficult to meet in person, were able to participate in the preparatory discussions.

We drew from each other's experience and knowledge of anti-gentrification/housing justice campaigns (e.g. [Living Rent](#) in Glasgow) and agreed that a project focussing on the HDV would be in keeping with the kind of artwork we aim to make. That is, an artwork that is alive and responsive to the conditions in which we struggle to make art.

Initially we hoped to make a film as part of the work, which would have involved interviewing campaigners over Zoom. However, as we progressed further along the timeline the work became intensely local and event-focussed, requiring more logistical conversations with campaign group organisers and collaborating artists. Though the collective remains open to the possibilities of taking this work about housing justice and HDV further.

## **When**

Planning began in late May, with the event originally scheduled to coincide with the 5 year anniversary of the council cabinet's final decision to withdraw the HDV plans. This would have been July 17th, however, we set the date back to the 3rd September as some of the original StopHDV campaigners thought it would require more time to build. The advice and knowledge of these original campaigners throughout the process was vital in helping us understand the local history, the present political reality, and in authenticating the plans to produce an event out of the campaign that they built.

## **Our Area**



*Artists Wendy C and Abe G after their film and reading performance*

From personal connections and those involved in the community hub, such as [Dave Morris](#), we drew up a contact list of people we hoped to work together with on the event. Most of those we contacted without a prior reference did not respond to our emails. This was just as true of artists as it was political campaigners. In-person encounters with people at related events, such as a 'Haringey Save the Warehouses' [day-festival](#) (Saturday 5th August), were essential to placing

ourselves within the volunteer networks of mutual trust that characterise the best of social movements.

In addition to pre-established local political organiser and artistic communities, activist-artist and Broadwater Farm estate resident [Inga Bystam](#) helped us distribute posters around the estate, inviting performances as an open call. This was on the basis of sensing that artists might live on the estate, and could be encouraged to share their work in a politicized setting. However, this was not enough to generate any direct responses. Most likely the gap between ourselves as a relatively unknown art group and the residents was too great to be bridged by a poster. Direct messaging through a mutual point of reference proved to be the only way of generating participation from the estate's residential community.

Abe Gibson, a Broadwater resident who had worked before with the artist-activist [Wendy C](#), performed a live dramatic reading alongside Wendy's video portrait of the estate. The performance reached a significant emotional depth and was followed by a lively political discussion amongst the audience about the future of social housing in London. From this, it felt like there was a hunger in the room to set property into its political place, residual anger at the lack of positive change from the council and the limits of StopHDV, and fundamentally, a desire to drive further into the heart of things.



LRU Organizer Nadz and event compere Allan S

Part of what made the project seem feasible to begin with was a sense that the networks of people with independent leftwing political and artistic practices already existed locally. The borough has a lively history of community-based organising and of artists making their work here, which the event seemed to confirm is still the case.

It feels necessary to address a contradiction: some of these counter-cultural qualities are attractive to the gentrifying property developers from whom we must defend ourselves. We realise that artwashing is a part of urban displacement, including the 'redevelopment' of artist living/work spaces. Artists can turn their work against this with varying measures of directness.

## **Doing Work**

It should be said that, apart from the venue managers, everyone who worked directly on this event was a volunteer. This includes the performing artists:

[Smokeworld](#)

[Jamie Benzies](#)

[Justin Katko](#)

[Wobbie Wobbit](#)

Hither Greens

(Poet [Danny Hayward](#) unfortunately couldn't make it on the day)

There is an interesting cultural difference between artistic and political practitioners. While unpaid work is a strong cultural norm within political left, for artists there is a countervailing tendency to reject non-paying work in principle as protection against exploitation. The artists performing at this event did so in solidarity with the political organisers and with one another. The same property developers and local councils that attack social housing are also pricing out and destroying independent art spaces across the city, so for artists to perform with political organisers is an act of self-defence.

With everyone volunteering, it was vital that our work held meaning and purpose for all involved. Artists Inga B and Wendy C have already been mentioned, their work was essential! Phil R, Dave M, Milena B, Noah J were all able to offer key insights into the background of StopHDV and the various networks of community organisers for which Haringey is known. Their phone calls and blog posts [cataloguing](#) and [explaining](#) housing activism in Tottenham were essential, and their support for this event seems an outgrowth of this political commitment to justice.



*StopHDV and Haringey Defend Council Houses organiser Paul Burnham talks us through the campaign to victory over the HDV*

## **Politics**

As is known to all of the campaigners, and as *Haringey Defend Council Housing's* Paul Burnham made evident in his speech on the day, StopHDV holds a significance that radiates far beyond the borough. To Cut-Through, it appears undoubtedly the case that organising in the local Labour Party was integral to stopping HDV. A critical mass of engaged constituency Labour Party (CLP) members, energised by the Corbyn leadership, were able to contest an internal election that replaced most of the local councilors responsible for HDV with ones who stood against the plans. It feels important to bear in mind the forces and possible directions for grassroots struggle that were present in 2017, while organising campaigns to maintain and expand social housing in the present and future.

Two such examples would be the [Save Brick Lane](#) and [Haringey Save the Warehouses](#) campaigns. Representatives from each spoke at the event. Though neither deal specifically with social housing, both encompass attempts to protect diverse social formations under threat from the exorbitant rent-seeking of property developer scum.

There is work to be done in analysing how these campaigns can be fought successfully, what leverage grassroots organisers have here, what tactics can be put to greatest effect. This will require a conversation that shares experiences and lessons not just between different boroughs of London, but in different cities internationally.



*Right to Left: Jazz band The Hither Greens, Justin Katko and Julika Gittner with sculpture, Faces of Regeneration, 2021, Inga B and Allan S with StopHDV visual display*



*Close-up of StopHDV Visual Display*

**Intentions and Outcomes**

The principle reasons for running this event were:

- Victories for the left are few and far between, we should celebrate when we can
- There is a lack of publicly accessible history concerning social struggle, this is something we should remedy

Across the entire afternoon, the event was attended by around 50-70 people. People came after hearing about the event through word of mouth, political WhatsApp groups or Facebook posts.

Through this event we were able to:

- Bring together activists from different campaigns
- Provide a platform for left wing speakers and performers to build on their experiences
- Keep the memory of HDV in people's minds
- Create some appetite for further action around HDV in the public memory
- Celebrate a political win in a way that was enjoyable
- Address the contradiction between housing and art
- Spark live debate around social housing
- Make and solidify some links between activists, artists, and people in the local area.

### **What To Work On? Lessons for the Future**

The local focus presented a limit to long-distance participation, which was regrettably at odds with the art group's geographically dispersed working practices. We could do with preparing for long-distance participation further in advance.

On the day, our schedule was very delayed and this was something that participants commented on in the survey. We were delayed because there had been a miscommunication about what time we could set up from, delays in performers' transport, and because hardly any spectators had turned up for the first 45 minute to an hour so we didn't want to ask people to speak/perform into an empty space!





Some original StopHDV banners and ACORN haringey's 'Boot the Bailiffs' campaign prop boot



Smoke World (Shamma and Sian) performance to close the event