

More Welly

January 2025

24 Mead Row, London, SE1

Welcome to our first edition of the More Welly in 2025.

We hope you all had a good Xmas break and ready to face 2025 energised and with more confidence. Don't forget to keep up with the new year resolutions: eat well and healthy, exercise more and take a break sometimes to relax.

Our first More Welly for the year will feature more on the heating and hot water issues and potential upcoming major works on the estate.

MAJOR WORKS STEERING COMMITTEE

We'd like to say a big thank you to Doug and the major works steering committee members for their hard work over the past year in working with WM Management Committee to:

- Act as the key information point for WM residents on the proposed Major Works
- Liaise directly with Lambeth's Major Works team and, with MC approval, be acknowledged as the main point of contact between Lambeth Major works team and WM
- Identify and, with MC approval, commission and brief potential independent surveyors to act on WM's behalf to provide 'expert advice', evaluation and monitoring of all aspects of the Major Works program.

The team have been liaising with Lambeth Council on both past and future Major Works issues.

MAJOR WORKS

We are sure you are all wondering what became of the Council's promise almost two years ago to carry out major works (new roof, replacement of cladding and windows) on the estate.

As at now, there's been no progress from Lambeth Council on the way forward. Copy of a letter from Wellington Mills Management Committee to Lambeth Council on the issue, has been published on the last page of this newsletter. We are still waiting for a response from Lambeth Council.

ISSUES WITH HOT WATER

The estate office is aware of the problems faced by some residents with their hot water supply. T Brown engineers were on the estate in the last couple of weeks to try and fix a problem on the boiler, which we hope has helped to resolve or alleviate the problem with the hot water. Also, the Management Committee is currently waiting for a date from Lambeth Council's Heating engineers to meet with them with the hope of finding a solution to the problem. Residents will be kept updated of the outcome.

BIRD OF THE MONTH: Ring-Parakeet



Was anyone able to guess the mystery bird of the month in our December 2024 edition.?

The Ring-Parakeet.

Habitat:- It is generally found in gardens, parks and orchards. In India, where most of these birds originated, it is found in the jungle, also in cities, around gardens and farms and on cultivated land.
Food:- In Britain it eats apples, pears, cherries and often visits bird tables for peanuts and sunflower seeds.

Population:- The latest estimate is that there are over 5,900 adults in England and the birds have increased in recent years.

Conservation:- How these birds became established in Britain is not fully known. Some may have escaped from captivity

Regards from The Wellington Mills bird watcher.

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LETTER FROM WMHC TO LAMBETH

17 January 2025

Dear Mr. Gary Dickson
(Gdickson@lambeth.gov.uk,)

Copies to:

Andy Marshall (Housing Capital and Asset Management,
Lucy Sudbury (TMO liaison officer)
Salam Tejan (Project Manager Capital Works)
Rosaline Mann, (Estate Director Wellington Mills)

Thank you for the message of 17th December 2025 (sent by Mr. Tejan) outlining the current thinking of Lambeth officials in relation to the suggested Major Works program for the Wellington Mills estate.

The Wellington Mills Housing Cooperative Board is grateful for your report and having reviewed the proposals has the following comments.

Is there a realistic and reliable program to review with you.

We are unconvinced that Lambeth has the ability and finance to proceed on the timetable you propose. You state the capital works program is aiming to commence work in October 2025; spanning two financial years, 2025/2026 and 2026/2027.

A Lambeth Finance Planning and Medium Term Strategy Report to Lambeth Cabinet, recorded that the council needed to save around £69.9m by 2028 Further, that the delay to the capital works program was to enable the council to raise another £89m over a four year period. We find these, apparently contradictory aims worrying.

More generally, we are concerned with Lambeth's £846.3m debt pile. The interest upon which is costing Lambeth £34.6m p.a. A Corporate Committee meeting in December 2023 put forward a plan to borrow an extra £175m putting Lambeth's debt pile to £1.09bn. Rising interest rates are likely to make it even harder to finance projects. Taken

together it casts considerable doubt as to whether the capital works program will, in fact, go ahead.

Given the large number and scale of estate that Lambeth manages, and assuming some capital works program exists, which estates would be prioritized? At the recent TMO liaison meeting we attended on 5 December, chaired by Councilor Issa, estates were identified for capital works and Wellington Mills was not included. How is this consistent with the aim to commence work here by second half 2025/2026?

Would you be so kind to explain what planning application(s) was/were made in relation to the Wellington Mills capital works. If you could provide us with the planning reference also; we were unable to find it on Lambeth's planning portal.

The Proposed Program

We are concerned with the basis and reliability of the works program now proposed by Lambeth. Your own retained surveyors, Kendalls, in their earlier report submitted a much higher estimate than that of Lambeth. Have they commented on your latest estimates? What are their alternative estimates? And if they differ what accounts for the differences?

Wellington Mills Housing Co-op Limited has also retained the independent surveyor Landers and we have had and continue to receive the benefit of their advice and guidance. Their latest estimate for Option III (Cladding restoration + PVCu) is £4,502,656.

We note and welcome the decision to drop the replacement program for the cladding. We believe a regular maintenance/ improvement program can ensure this aspect of the works program can be addressed through the Management Agreement we have already with Lambeth. We are looking to include such a program in the 2025/6 Budget currently being discussed with Lambeth. We trust you will be in support of this.

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As this letter to you was being amended our very vocal residents WhatsApp group was establishing the extent of the system failure on Saturday night to provide heating and hot water to major parts of the estate. Sadly, performance breakdown is not uncommon. There is broad dissatisfaction with the last major capital works program.

And social media leaves no place to hide or dissemble.

Overall, the Wellington Mills Co-op board have deep concerns based on experience regarding the undertaking of the works to the estate all at the same time. This, we believe, will cause incredible disruption, noise, upset and unpleasant living conditions for all. And this is the 50th celebration year !

Given the experience we have had with the specification and implementation of the recent Heating and Hot Water capital works major program, taken with the financing and timings issues raised above we would not support the remaining program as you propose.

There is an alternative

It is the view of the Wellington Mills Coop Board that a piece meal approach would be better for all who live on the estate. At a November public meeting of residents this approach was endorsed.

We would like to review the roof repair/replacement program with you to judge the best way forward on this program, both its scale and timings. We would want to involve our own specialist advisers for such an exercise. We have had the benefit of some of their observations already following inspections. We are particularly concerned on the disruptive effects and the costs involved.

For the window replacement program we would like to propose an alternative way forward (see below) as this is the most urgent.

We note that both firms of Surveyors propose that the window refurbishment option be seriously considered.

A walk around the estate illustrates that many windows/cladding are in very good, structural and decorative condition. There are windows/cladding on the estate that do require refurbishment/repair/replacement as they are more susceptible to weather conditions due to their orientation. A steady move to double glazing is likely to follow as part of the program implementation, and we trust Lambeth will be supportive of this in relation to their own tenant's safety and comfort.

The budget for capital works would be greatly reduced if, only work that was required was undertaken. An assessment of those windows that require little to no repair would be advantageous both environmentally and financially.

We propose an approach whereby the WM Board undertake as a partner with **Lambeth** to manage the repair/replacement of windows on a case-by-case basis. This has been shown to be achievable without major disruption. It would allow for a much clearer managed improvement program. From work done already by our advisers, many windows and cladding boards do not need work at all, other than preventative painting.

Given that the majority of flats are leaseholder owned this approach would allow leaseholders to go ahead at their own cost without the jeopardy that they might be required to contribute to a later major capital works program covering windows and cladding. This would eliminate the double jeopardy which leaseholders face.

The Board also have concerns about the replacement of windows with UPVC which is now proposed. The thick profile of such windows would materially and detrimentally alter the architectural merit of the estate. The estate, as you will know, is admired by many more than those who reside here.

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We expect there to be a report this financial year from Lambeth conservation department on a possible conservation area designation. Window replacements by Lambeth so far have avoided using UPVC and we would it as a retrograde step to do so now.

Refurbishment is our preferred choice but where this is not possible or suitable and timber is deemed unsuitable for replacement (where required) a powder coated aluminum window can be made to closely match their timber counterparts. They are more energy efficient than UPVC, require no maintenance and can be cheaper than UPVC. To repeat, such replacements have already been made by Lambeth on the Estate.

A way forward

Wellington Mills Housing Co-op Limited has operated for 50 years having been set up with the assistance of the GLC. It has been a reliable partner with Lambeth, and is financially stable. We would like to propose a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) setting out shared views and approaches to future major and minor capital works on the Estate, so we can all plan a smoother and more environmentally sensitive approach. The existing Agreement may well provide the mechanism both for actions to be agreed and their costs met.

We look forward to developing a realistic program on a cooperative basis with you.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Lane

Richard Cunningham

Joint Chair

Joint Chair