London NFB logo image:



Happy New Year London NFB members!

I hope you have all enjoyed the holidays and are feeling positive for 2022. Welcome to our latest edition of London Life no 28 featuring:

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# London NFB dates for your diary

## AGM

Our London branch AGM will be on Saturday 29th January 2022. Although we would have very much liked an in-person event the London committee has decided that we will again hold the AGM on zoom. The formal meeting is from 10:30am to 12:30pm with a social afterwards from 1pm – 2pm. More details on the AGM will be sent shortly in a separate email.

## Sunday socials

Our fun packed Sunday socials return in 2022. These will now be held monthly on the second Sunday of the month live on zoom 4pm – 5pm. So please join us for the first social of the year on **Sunday 9th January**. Here’s a reminder of the zoom link and phoning details:

<https://zoom.us/j/9876541948?pwd=SDlKOHRLMmtWbVlCaGNIbnNHYjQ5dz09>

Phone: 0203 481 5240

Meeting ID: 987 654 1948

Passcode: 010203

# NFBUK Campaign Successes by Andrew Hodgson

Those of you who are members of our E group may have seen a number of postings on rainbow crossings. For those of you who don’t know these are colourful adaptations of controlled crossings - zebra, pelican puffin and toucan – which have been advocated by the LGBTQ+ community in order to promote their identity. We in NFBUK have no objection to their aims, but for vision impaired people these crossings can be confusing, and I am sure we are not the only community which is adversely affected by them. Children and people with learning difficulties must also be impacted.

One of our very active Associate Members, Peter Monk, who used to be an access officer, brought to my attention that the Access Association, a national body, was gathering together information about rainbow crossings and so with his help and that of Vaughan Rees, one of our members who lives in Warwickshire but is a member of our Leeds and District Branch, we made a submission. We have since learned that the London Mayor, Sadiq Khan has announced that no more of these crossings should be installed pending an investigation of their suitability.

Here's a photo of a rainbow crossing at Warren Street, London



Meanwhile, following two fires caused by an e scooter battery, one of them at Parsons Green, TFL have now banned e scooters from the underground system. It was Sarah Gayton who brought these fires to our attention, and we added our voice to the alarm and protest.

Both of these issues are examples of where we have leant our voice to protests in collaboration with other organizations. This shows that if we protest collectively we can gather strength on issues.

You can join the NFBUK e-group by sending a blank email with subscribe in the subject box to [nfbuk+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:nfbuk+subscribe@groups.io)

You will then receive an email from groups io giving instructions on what to do next.

# Call for Evidence on railway whole industry strategic plan

Last year NFBUK members met with Helen Dolphin for a consultation on the future of the railway. Our input will form an integral part of what will be considered.

There is still time to contribute further as the call for evidence on their website is open until Friday 4th February.

<https://gbrtt.co.uk/wisp/>,

# My experiences with a guide dog by Jason Beal

I put my name down before COVID in 2020 and was told that there was a long waiting time of five years. I received the phone call in the later part of 2021 saying that they had a match for me and would I like to meet the dog. I went to the guide dog office in London and was introduced to Caine and was slightly concerned with his size. Caine is a large dog but I have noticed that he can curl himself quite small into a ball.

The next step was that I was offered a one-night visit at home which I think is a good idea. Caine seemed to settle in well but I was still unsure at this stage if I wanted to go ahead with the next step. I was still cautious because my experience of my last guide dog was not successful because of his mischievous personality.

Then the next step was that I went away for two weeks of intense training with him in a hotel in London where I was introduce to the essential commands and care of looking after a guide dog. At this time I bonded greatly with Caine. There was one day where I unfortunately was suffering from a very bad allergic reaction and this did worry me if I was making the right decision. From this bonding experience that I had at the hotel I decided to go ahead. The hotel experience was very tiring but helped me gain a better understanding of Caine’s behaviour. Then I had a further 2 weeks of training at home to familiarise myself with routes that I would use in my day-to-day work.

It has now been four months since those times and he has made a massive difference to me because I am no longer struggling to get home when is either night-time or when it is a very bright day. I’m very happy I made this decision to go ahead and have a guide dog and I would not be without him now.

The photo below shows Caine on his first day at work with Jason at a client’s home with a lot of dog toys to play with!



# Feedback from DWP Consultation on rethinking assessments by Pardy Gill

Further to my previous article on attending a DWP Health & Disability Green Paper virtual consultation event on Rethinking Assessments, please find useful feedback below from DWP. It is reassuring that the constructive engagement process has critically identified the real lived experience themes highlighted by consultees like myself, with the aim to shape future policies and design of services that are accessible to people with sight loss.

Attendees spoke about issues around the accessibility of DWP health assessments, and suggested that assessments be recorded. Attendees also felt that it was unnecessary for people with long-term conditions or learning difficulties to be regularly reassessed when their condition is unlikely to change.

We also heard that some people find completing application forms a difficult process, especially people with mental health condition. Attendees asked for them the forms to be made more accessible and for there to be greater support available to help people. We heard about the value of advocacy to people who are struggling to navigate the benefits system by themselves.

Attendees suggested that an email address or online portal for supplying medical evidence would make the process quicker and prevent the loss of documents. We also heard the suggestion of a short form for healthcare professionals to complete that could support applications.

Attendees expressed their view that we need to take into account more evidence when making health assessments. We also heard that in some cases the health assessment, being held on a single day, sometimes fails to capture the full picture of the impact of a person’s disability of health condition on their life.

The Green Paper will be followed by a White Paper in mid-2022, shaped by feedback from the consultation process. I will update and continue advocating on behalf of members to ensure accessibility is at the forefront of future DWP Benefit Assessments.

# London Assembly Consultation: Planning for London Programme

This consultation has been sent in by London member Linda Miller.

I thought the London branch would be interested in a new consultation that is being run by the London Assembly. It is part of the statutory review of the London Plan although it is being 'presented' as being about 'the environment.' However I think there is reason to suspect that a large part of the focus will be on benefitting the interests of the cycling fraternity, given this appears to be the Mayor's only consideration nowadays.

<https://t.co/aYkR4pW4Cg>

National Planning Policy requires plans to be reviewed every five years. It takes many years to review or develop a new London Plan, including early engagement and background evidence so we need to start preparing now. The Planning for London Programme will begin this process, gathering evidence and the views of Londoners, identifying issues that a future London Plan review could consider.

At this stage, we are calling for evidence that Londoners and other stakeholders think we should consider while developing the programme. This could include:

* Published reports, research, case studies or other information which might help us understand how London should change or develop in the future
* Personal accounts of how development, buildings, places, spaces and planning affect different communities, especially impacts that relate to age, disability, sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, marital status or pregnancy and maternity. This may include personal accounts of how people from different groups experience places very differently, and experiences of those who identify with more than one of these characteristics
* International or national examples of best practice
* Suggestions for how we can reach a more diverse range of Londoners

**Please submit any evidence by 31 January 2022.** Submissions may address any aspect above and do not need to cover the entire remit of the London Plan. Please make clear who the submission is from (e.g. your name or the organisation the submission is on behalf of) and whether you are happy to be contacted by the GLA in relation to your submission, in which case please provide contact details.

Submissions should be sent to [PlanningforLondonProgramme@london.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningforLondonProgramme@london.gov.uk?subject=Planning%20for%20London%20Programme) or: The Planning Team, Greater London Authority, City Hall, Kamal Chunchie Way, London, E16 1ZE.

# Get involved with Health Data Research UK Voices

In our last newsletter we talked about INSIGHT the Health Data Research Hub focused on eye health and associated conditions. It is one of ten hubs set up by Health Data Research UK (HDRUK) our national institute for health data science, to provide access to patient data collected in NHS Hospitals.

HDRUK is looking for people to join in their Public and Patient Involvement and Engagement Programme: HDRUK Voices. The programme is working to ensure that everyone is heard in the data conversation, therefore ensuring the work has the trust and confidence of patients, public and practitioners.

There are varying levels of commitment, you can register your interest and find out more at:

<https://www.hdruk.ac.uk/about-us/patient-and-public-involvement-and-engagement/join-hdr-uk-voices/>

# Sharon’s Shortcuts

Sign up for a weekly email from Sharon with a handy keyboard shortcut – how to use a PC without a mouse is especially useful for screen reader users. Here’s the latest email from Sharon.

https://sharons-shortcuts.ie/

I was going to give you one of the first Shortcuts of the Week from five years ago for this occasion, but I couldn't choose, so here are four to wish you a generous and prosperous 2022!

• Find and Replace in a document/spreadsheet, Control + H.

• Insert Date and/or Time in a document, Alt + Shift + D and Alt + Shift + T.

• Lock your screen, Windows key + L.

A New Year's feast of shortcuts!

You can find these shortcuts and previous shortcuts of the week on the website in the Shortcut of the Week section and also on Twitter @sharonshortcut. As always, if you would like to find out or share a particular shortcut for an everyday task on your PC, please get in touch!

News from Tate London Access Programme

This is a message from Marcus at Tate Britain, with news about our 2022 programme of audio descriptions, touch tours and events for Visually Impaired visitors at Tate Britain and Tate Modern

You will have noticed that in 2021 we ran fewer events than in previous years. This was because we as an institution needed to be very cautious about bringing people together as groups into our galleries. We are going to continue with that approach during the present winter season but all things being well we can make exciting plans for events in Spring/Summer 2022 and beyond

Until then, to help you to stay connected with Tate and our collection, over the next three months we will be releasing three brand new Audio Description recordings for you to listen to. Created and read by members of our own Tate staff, we will shortly be adding these three new pieces to our ever increasing library of online audio description recordings

We will be releasing these on our social media platforms and I will also send you links to the Tate website where you can access them in addition to those we have already produced. I attach an example of one of our current audio description recordings at the end of this email

In the Spring and Summer of this year we hope to be able to invite you to join us for more gallery events

So far I can confirm that we will be offering another opportunity to join an audio description tour of Yayoi Kusama The Infinity Mirror Rooms at Tate Modern. This will take place after hours on 16th May 2022 and description is once again by visually impaired guide Lisa Squirrel. We will be taking additional measures at this event to improve visitor safety and to minimise situations of clustering or crowding, so I hope that you will feel confident about coming along to an event on this scale which will have an audience of about 30 people. I will send out the free ticketing information very soon

Later in the Summer we will be inviting you to join us for a Monumental Millbank Meander, in which we will take a guided walk along the riverside outside Tate Britain for an audio description tour and touching opportunity of a number of outdoor sculptures. This tour will take in works including pieces by Henry Moore and Eduardo Paolozzi, plus the huge bronze mythological sculptures permanently on display in front of Tate Britain. It will be followed by picnic refreshments in the Tate Britain gardens. Dates and joining instructions will follow shortly

Later in the year we aim to offer audio descriptions of displays and exhibitions at both Tate Modern and Tate Britain and we will release further details soon

As always, your care and safety is our priority. At all events we will be accompanied by our team of volunteer hosts who will be available to offer personal guiding using rambletags. If you haven’t used a rambletag before, it is a guiding cuff which means that you have no hand on arm physical touching with your guide. In addition, we always offer earphones for additional hearing support and gallery stools

We wish you a very Happy New Year and we look forward to seeing you soon

With warmest wishes, Marcus

Audio description link follows:

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/meireles-babel-t14041/audio-description-babel>

# Add-Venture in Learning newsletter

Please find attached the Winter 2021 Newsletter from Add-Venture in Learning with details of short breaks - **From Huntsman to Hero- the role of the horn in music, Norwich Past and Present and The Centre for Alternative Technology – Wales.**

# The Young Vic - Best of Enemies: Best Seat in Your House Live Broadcast

Watch on Thursday 20th January, 7:30 pm. A**vailable until** Saturday 22nd January at 12:00 am. Tickets from £15.

**Watch *Best of Enemies* live online via the Young Vic’s immersive, multi-camera broadcast, Best Seat in Your House, which is designed to give you optimal choice as you watch a live show.**

Enjoy the Director’s Chair with our Best Seat in Your House player, where you can control multiple live camera streams. Alternatively, choose the Director’s Cut option and sit back as we deliver a more traditional live edit of the show from the theatre to your screen.

*Best of Enemies*is the bold new play by **James Graham** (*Quiz*, *Labour of Love*), directed by **Jeremy Herrin** (*This House*, *People, Places and Things*)*.*

1968 – a year of protest that divided America. As two men fight to become the next President, all eyes are on the battle between two others: the cunningly conservative William F Buckley Jr., and the iconoclastic liberal Gore Vidal.

[**Booking contact number 020 7922 2922**](tel:020%207922%202922) [**Booking contact email boxoffice@youngvic.org**](mailto:boxoffice@youngvic.org)

# British Museum online audio described talk – Hokusai: The Great Picture Book of Everything

Wednesday 26th January, 6pm on zoom.

Join an online audio description tour of the Museum’s exhibition Hokusai: The Great Picture Book of Everything led by VocalEyes’ Lonny Evans.  The tour provides evocative visual descriptions of the exhibition as well as 10 key artworks on display. We’ll also be joined by exhibition curator Alfred Haft who will provide further insights on Hokusai’s drawings and the artist himself.

Register [**online**](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_VCtIYBPtSSWyJ4jpbdCadw) to attend the free event. For further enquiries please phone [**020 7323 8971**](mailto:020%207323%208971)[or email access@britishmuseum.org](mailto:or%20email%20access@britishmuseum.org)

 That’s all folks for our first London Life edition of the year. Please keep sending your articles, information and feedback to [London@nfbuk.org](mailto:London@nfbuk.org). It’s the same email to let us know if you no longer wish to receive the newsletter.

I’m looking forward to catching up with many of you soon either at our social, AGM or somewhere else! I hope that it won’t be too long until the return of our in-person meetings and social events.

Wishing you a safe, healthy and happy New Year.

Best wishes,

Jess

London NFB Chair