



Introduction



by Cllr Donatus Anyanwu,
Lambeth Council Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Sport

“The eleven volunteer forums in the Lambeth Forum Network (LFN) work and campaign passionately to influence changes that will build a better Lambeth. They make sure that Lambeth Council and other providers acknowledge the power of community voices.

This year, forums and the communities they represent have seen important new council policies and services go live – influenced by community insights and partnerships between grassroots organisations. These include Tackling Poverty initiatives, a new All-Age Autism Strategy, and programmes for clean air and road safety near schools across the borough.

Lambeth believes in equity and social justice as the ‘golden thread’ in all the aims we and our partners have for a better borough by 2030. The forums have also been working to make these shared ambitions a reality. From reviewing how well their own membership and leadership represents their diverse neighbourhoods and ensuring LGBTQ+ voices are proudly heard, to action on food poverty and supporting health and wellbeing as a community, the Forums have worked with equity and justice as guiding principles.

We recognise and value the immense work forums do to represent their communities and their role in helping shape the future of Lambeth. By working with them, we can deliver sustainable change and continue to build a stronger, equitable, future-fit Lambeth.”

Introduction to the Lambeth Forum Network

2023-24 saw Lambeth Forum Network (LFN) membership grow from nine to eleven active community forums. Ten neighbourhood forums support community-building and gather resident voices locally and the LFN is proud to include Lambeth Links supporting and representing LGBTQ+ voices borough-wide.

Each forum sets priorities based on local needs and ambitions – representing groups and residents in borough-wide decision-making and delivering neighbourhood community-building projects – and all have their own distinct character and aims.

To help drive and deliver LFN projects, the network received £50,000 in 2023-24 from Lambeth Council, from which each forum was able to bid for up to £5,000. This has previously covered admin, enabled community conversations, and met running costs on projects such as employability programmes, climate action workshops, social inclusion for elderly people, youth activities, festivals for health and wellbeing, community arts, campaigning and engaging with people on community safety and transport issues.

While the eleven forums operate independently, they come together through the Lambeth Forum Network (LFN) to include community voices in shaping Lambeth strategies, policies and programmes, to deliver shared ambitions in support of building stronger communities, and to provide opportunities for peer learning and support between network members.





The LFN invite council officers to talk to the forums before they consult communities about their plans. Council officers working on the Housing Strategy, Age Friendly Lambeth and e-scooter parking visited LFN meetings in 2023-24. LFN forums also made hundreds of residents aware of key strategic consultations around transport, school closures, climate and public health strategies, and more via websites and newsletters.

The 2024 LFN awayday gave council officers and Forum Chairs and members an opportunity to discuss working collaboratively to support communities. In four roundtable discussions, sixteen council officers and twenty-one forum members discussed strengths and challenges in health and wellbeing, transport, housing and Voluntary & Community Sector support and explored ways of working together to influence change or build on good practice.

Forums highlighted many good practice examples, especially on community support for health and wellbeing. Five forums are delivering 'Thriving Communities' Public Health funded projects with LFN support, either managing small grants for local wellbeing programmes or setting up community living rooms and working with social prescribers.

The LFN partnered with High Trees Community Development Trust, who produced a report about the forums' development and capacity-building needs from a survey of members. A creative practitioner facilitated a workshop on the awayday to draw out the steps needed to reach the Network's collective goals.

2023-24 also saw six LFN forums follow up on diversity training started at the 2023 awayday. Forums reported back that the training supported them to consider inclusivity when choosing meeting venues and increased their knowledge about ways of increasing diversity and recruiting new committee members. One forum member found the training "very engaging and worked at a very personal level." Another called it "useful, well-delivered and focusing."

The Network trialled a new initiative to collect community voices in 2024, introducing a digital form for bitesize feedback from engagement events – aiming to improve listening to community priorities and build continuous conversations between Lambeth Council and community groups. The forms successfully collected feedback from across the borough on needs for community spaces, affordable housing, food growing, health services and support for economic and mental wellbeing, environmental issues, security and petty crime, language barriers in accessing services and cultural priorities.

The LFN plans to follow up on improving these listening mechanisms with work on structuring joined-up listening, ensuring impact and delivering better responses to community voices.

Health and wellbeing

Tackling health inequalities at a grassroots level is a Lambeth priority. Community forums connect people with locally-sourced health advice and wellbeing support – putting into action the belief that wellbeing involves whole communities, not just health professionals.

Community Living Rooms

Created at a 2019 **Stockwell Forum** meeting, Thriving Stockwell enables residents to actively identify health and wellbeing needs and create solutions. Thriving Stockwell strengthens links between residents and the voluntary and health sectors, connecting people to wellbeing improvement activities.

With support from the LFN and Lambeth Together, we co-designed and launched a Community Living Room programme where 17 community-led groups shape and deliver wellbeing activities – healthy eating, exercise, social connection. People sustain those healthy activities alone and together.

People experiencing the greatest inequalities – the Little Portugal community facing greater risk of diabetes and mental health issues, or older, isolated people – often ask for the least. Extra funding and support also help us address issues like chronic pain among Black people and cardiovascular risk among Northeast Africans.

By measuring community wellbeing against evidence-based health indicators we've seen the numbers reporting they feel poor physical health down from 35% to 22%, those experiencing poor mental health change from 49% to 27%, and people who were worrying all the time – about living costs or other stress factors – halved. Our next task is asking 'why' – and doing more.





Support for grassroots projects

South Bank & Waterloo Neighbours ran a new Health and Wellbeing programme supported by Lambeth Together. Grants totalling £50,000 enabled 12 projects including youth sports, chair Pilates for older residents, digital skills support, sewing skills, gardening, support for significantly disadvantaged young people, help for parents of neurodivergent children, activities for socially isolated residents and support for homeless people.

Streatham Action managed Public Health grants for grassroots health and wellbeing initiatives, funding projects which include Carers4Carers, Men's Walk n Talk, Danbrook & Colmer Planters, Maternal Journal Day Retreat, and weekly socials at Streatham's Lambeth Asian Centre.

Building good food partnerships

Lambeth is home to many organisations committed to improving healthy eating, offering training and education, pantries, community cafes, food growing support and social spaces for food sharing. But people still face food insecurity – half the borough's children live with food poverty.

Myatt's Fields Forum and Lambeth Food Partnership teamed up to explore how to build a sustainable good food neighbourhood where everyone can eat well, all the time. Local feedback was that everyone needs access to organic fruit and vegetables and food-growing spaces, and adults can learn much from young people. The result is Food Fiveways – with a mission of bringing in funds to support local hubs, support innovation and create grassroots-led policy change



Culture and community

Lambeth’s forums create and curate arts, music, and cultural events, inspiring their communities to come together and build a sense of shared identity and purpose.

Music and memories



Clapham Park Neighbourhood Forum invited a local DJ to deliver a project at their Over-50s Social Club giving back to people who made him feel closer to his Jamaican family and aunts. After talking with people about the music they love, he compiles a playlist for their community meal every month.

“People get up dancing, singing and talking about what this music means in their lives. When music plays, people don’t act their age. They look rejuvenated. In some cases, they remember lyrics as if their dementia was reversed. They get animated discussing the best singers and the biggest stars.”

Music has built a caring community who check each other’s health. Music creates a place they call home.

LGBTQ+ Art and health

Lambeth Links invited artists to show their work in Brixton Library for LGBTQ+ History Month. “We hosted an event, ‘Art is Medicine’. Artists with health challenges – HIV, mental health issues, Lyme disease – talked about how creativity helps them cope or how they create despite pain.

“LFN funding allowed us to award art materials vouchers for the public’s favourite works. We were also able to fund artists to be there to welcome visitors and talk about their work.”





Seasonal celebrations

Every November, the Herne Hill Station area magically transforms into a buzzing Halloween hub bringing families together and strengthening community bonds. **Herne Hill Forum's** impromptu market research shows more than 1,500 revellers visited 2024's Halloween event - mainly locals who never miss the event and hugely appreciate the forum's work that keeps it happening for free.

Youth opportunities

Summer's Grove Adventure Playground playscheme, **Loughborough Junction Action Group's** largest project, welcomed up to 75 young people each day for five weeks. One highlight was at a workshop in a local railway arch run by women blacksmiths. Young people from the Grove learned basic blacksmithing and metal cutting skills and were keen for more.

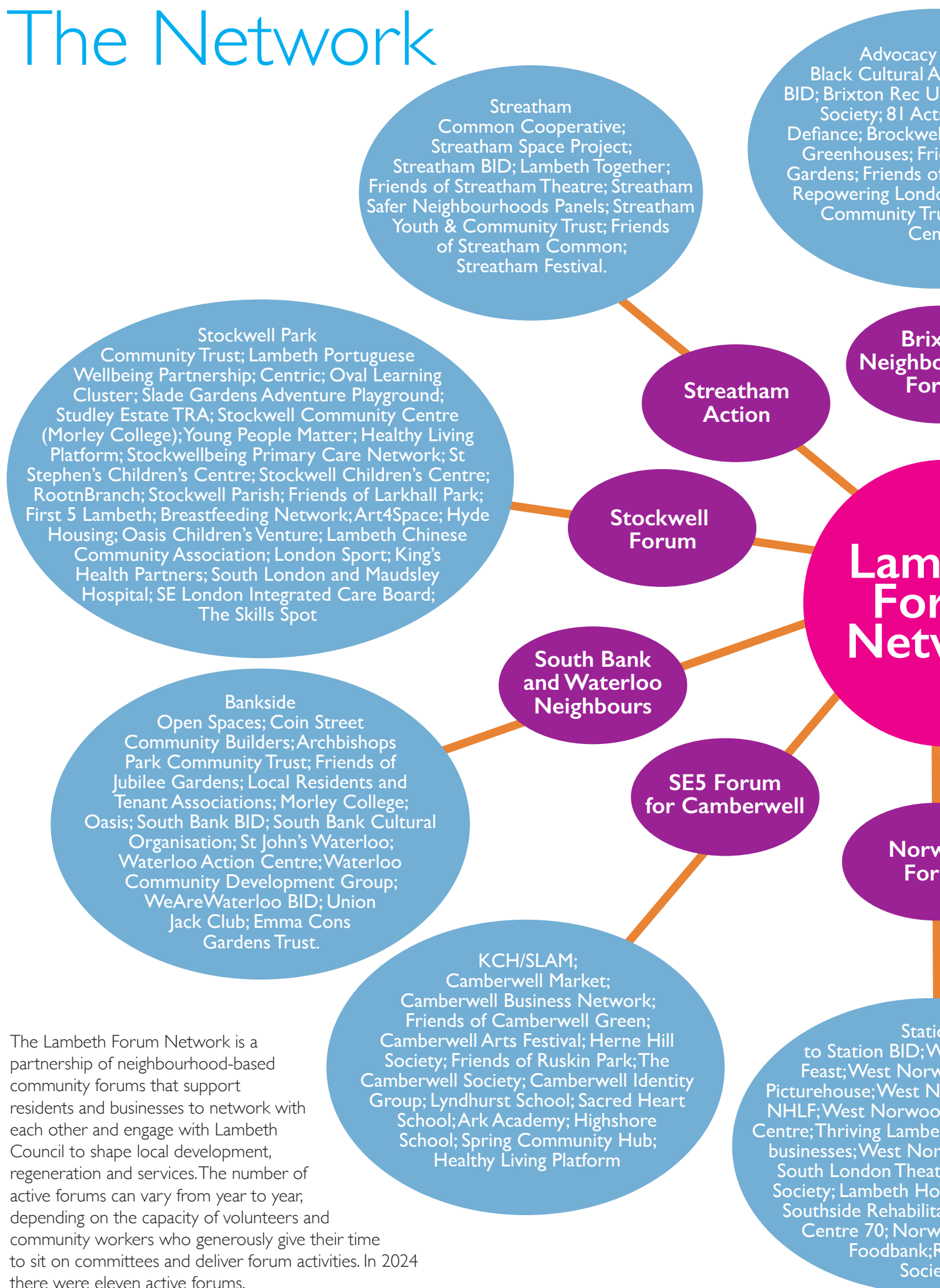
How Green Can We Go

Norwood Forum has a long history of environmental sustainability work which has embraced clean air citizen science, local COP meetings timed to match the international climate summits, our Wild Norwood project celebrating our local natural world, and our umbrella 15min Neighbourhood initiative, as well as supporting numerous local projects through our small grant schemes. In 2024 we were very proud to be recognised for our work as a finalist in the Climate Justice category at the Lambeth Civic Awards.

Our current campaign is focussed on Public Transport and Active Travel. We wanted to know what's missing, what's important, and what should be done better and we are now turning our extensive community consultation results into an Action Plan.



The Network



The Lambeth Forum Network is a partnership of neighbourhood-based community forums that support residents and businesses to network with each other and engage with Lambeth Council to shape local development, regeneration and services. The number of active forums can vary from year to year, depending on the capacity of volunteers and community workers who generously give their time to sit on committees and deliver forum activities. In 2024 there were eleven active forums.

Lambeth Forum Network

Academy; Brixton Archives; Brixton User Group; Brixton Friends of Exuberant Park Community; Friends of Windmill; Windrush Square; Brixton; Stockwell Park; St. Vincent's Church.

Brixton Neighbourhood Forum

Clapham Park Neighbourhood Forum

Maytree Nursery; Weir Estate TRA; Roupell Park Estate TRA; Friends of Agnes Riley Gardens; Clapham Park Over 50s Social Club; Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing; Knights Youth Centre; Weir Link; The Hebe Foundation; Autism Voice; Tutors United; Ascension Trust; CEF Lyncx; GoldStars Vision; Oasis Children's Venture; Met Police; Esports Youth Club; Learning Unlimited; Harris Academy; Bonneville School; Glenbrook School; Mamas Kitchen; Poynders Gardens TRA.

Herne Hill Forum

Community Southwark; CCFM Herne Hill Market; Brockwell Lido Users; Carnegie Library; Herne Hill Traders; Station Hall CIO; Herne Hill Society; Dulwich Society; Local primary schools; I98 Gallery; Herne Hill Free Film Festival; Friends of Brockwell Park; Friends of Ruskin Park; Meath House residents; Poets Corner residents; Safer Neighbourhood team.

Loughborough Junction Action Group

Loughborough Farm; The Platform Café; Grove Adventure Playground; Thriving Fiveways; Carnegie Library Hub; Wyck Gardens Orchard and Forest Garden; Ebony Horse Club; LJ Works; Friends of Loughborough Park; Sunshine International Arts; Ecosystem Coldharbour; Marcus Lipton Community Enterprise; 7 Bridges Project; Building Young Brixton; Food Five Ways; First 5 Lambeth.

Myatt's Fields Forum

Lambeth Links

Norwood Forum

West Norwood Wood Library & Norwood Cemetery; Wood Health & Leisure; Local schools and Norwood Repair Café; The Norwood Horticultural Society; Association; Wood & Brixton; Rathbone; Society.

Food Five Ways; Arup; Rastafarian Movement UK Wellbeing; Incredible Edible Lambeth; Loughborough Community Centre; Loughborough Junction Action Group; Myatt's Fields Park Project; Healthy Living Platform; Women's Environmental Network; Tower Hamlets; Black Farmers Market; Impact on Urban Health; One Planet.

London LGBT+ Forum; LGBT+ Foundation; LGBT+ Consortium; Schools Out; Outside Project; Stonewall Housing; Tonic; Brighton Switchboard; Brixton Umbrella Circle; Compassion in Care; Lambeth Archives; Lambeth Tour Guides; Age UK Lambeth; Healthwatch Lambeth; Kings College London; Kings College Hospital; CliniQ; Metro Charity; Creating Inclusive Residential Care for LGBTQ+ Elders (CIRCLE); Met Police CRG; National Hate Crime AW.



Lambeth

Partnerships

In Lambeth, our communities include local businesses both large and small, charities, services, schools and people with all kinds of specialist knowledge, working in a wide range of partnerships to achieve different goals to benefit everyone living and working locally.

Taken as a whole, the Lambeth Forum Network’s reach demonstrates its members’ strengths in bringing stakeholders together and galvanizing community action across the borough.

Building relationships

SE5 Forum for Camberwell focuses on partnerships to benefit Camberwell – where Lambeth and Southwark meet - as a whole.

King’s College Hospital is an anchor organisation, providing local employment as well as healthcare. Volunteers from SE5 Forum and Camberwell Arts, who run the UK’s longest-established arts festival, hosted a community wellbeing event at King’s to build relationships that both create value for the staff and benefit local businesses.

The community groups brought a wellbeing map, travel and food guides, and food and drink samples from local businesses to share with hospital staff. “Enjoying Camberwell’s eateries, galleries and green spaces can improve health and wellbeing for staff and patients. It was an opportunity to support King’s hardworking staff, while putting the spotlight on businesses on our doorstep.”



Strategic support

Southbank and Waterloo Neighbours (SoWN) re-launched London Eye Community Chest grants in 2024, following research into key social and economic issues and the charities and community groups offering community support in Waterloo and the South Bank. The grants programme is funded through an agreement between the London Eye and Lambeth Council. Projects with the theme of 'Helping build community and strengthen community resilience' will go live in 2025.

SoWN have also devised a retail strategy for Lower Marsh in partnership with Waterloo Community Development Group, Waterloo Business Improvement District and Lambeth Council. This strategy supports a vision for Lower Marsh's businesses - independent retailers, food and beverage offers, and outdoor market - and contributes to Waterloo's regeneration.

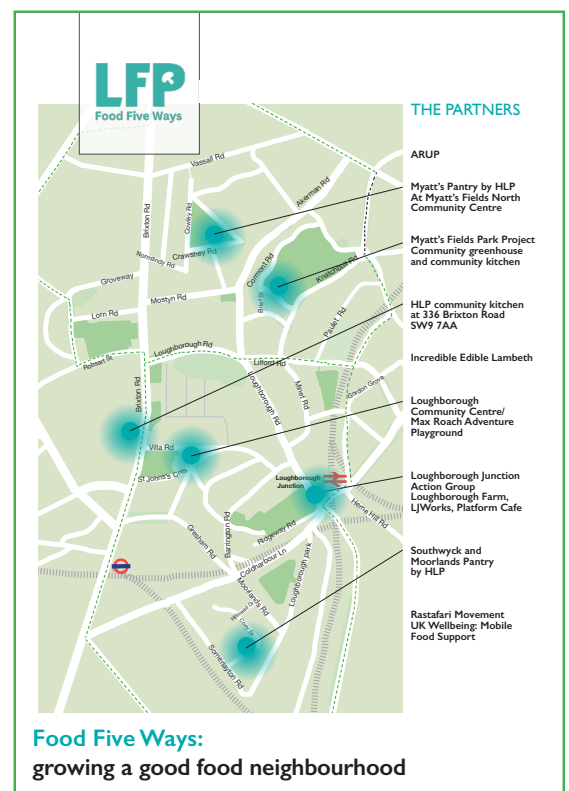


Networking

Loughborough Junction Action Group (LJAG), via project work with Grove Adventure Playground, Loughborough Farm and the Platform Cafe, work with a large network of partners to provide activities for children and young people, wellbeing gardening and craft activities, and employability support. LJAG are part of Building Young Brixton – a consortium of 10 children and young people's projects, First 5 Lambeth – a partnership of community organisations who support families with under-5s, Thriving Fiveways health & wellbeing network, and Food Fiveways.

Food

Myatt's Fields Forum gathered voices to feed into the Food Fiveways project. A steering committee of six organisations lead the work: the Rastafari Movement UK, Healthy Living Platform, The Platform Café, Loughborough Community Centre, Myatt's Fields Park Project and Arup.



Community outreach

Representing and amplifying the voice of local groups and residents are essential roles for all LFN forums – in consultations on their and other partners’ plans, in understanding the needs of the area, and in campaigning for solutions and ways forward that are never forced on the community but come from them. This is only possible through active outreach and listening to a diverse range of people.

Reaching new audiences

Southbank and Waterloo Neighbours set out to sign up new members and diversify its membership, raise awareness of SoWVN and the South Bank Forum meetings, and uncover local issues and concerns.

Posters, leaflets and over 1,000 email invitations went out. People completed surveys in the street and at outreach stalls outside Waterloo Action Centre - showing that people like the area for having lots to do, a thriving community and busy spaces, but worry about antisocial behaviour and petty crime, pollution, lack of affordable housing and living costs forcing people out, and overdevelopment overshadowing the community. Young people added concerns about safety and lack of community activities.

Listening and taking action

Clapham Park Neighbourhood Forum investigated wants and needs via its Over 50s social club. Concerns and priorities raised at a community voice coffee morning included winter fuel payment cuts, parking, and e-Bikes obstructing pavements and linked to robberies. Steps have already been taken to invite relevant agencies to attend future meetings. The group is keen to do this on a regular basis as they felt their voices were being heard and acted upon.



Online, in-person and on the page

As well as a strong online presence and a series of Camberwell Talks (including local old Music Halls, Bolivian activism, and a textile artist talking about stitching and Black Identity), **SE5 Forum for Camberwell** reaches out to the community with a weekly 'meet the people' stall at Camberwell Green's Saturday Farmers Market.

The stall is an informal news exchange, a campaign centre, and a rendezvous point for volunteers to touch base with each other. It is a great place to ask for advice or chat about recent events and future developments for Camberwell. The Travel Guide to Camberwell, an essential companion for those in search of the real SE5, researched and written by residents, is one of their best-loved products.

Brixton Forum regularly reach out to diverse communities in their neighbourhood with a widely read e-newsletter highlighting upcoming local events, sharing information on potential sources of funding and other support, and supporting digital inclusion. This outreach successfully engages people in active citizenship around campaigns for building developments to meet residents' needs.

To develop the Food Fiveways project, **Myatt's Fields Forum** spoke to residents at Moorlands Estate, Myatt's Fields Park and Max Roach community centre. And Streatham Action proactively reached out to hear the voices of parents and carers at an opening event for Streatham Common's community-run paddling pool.



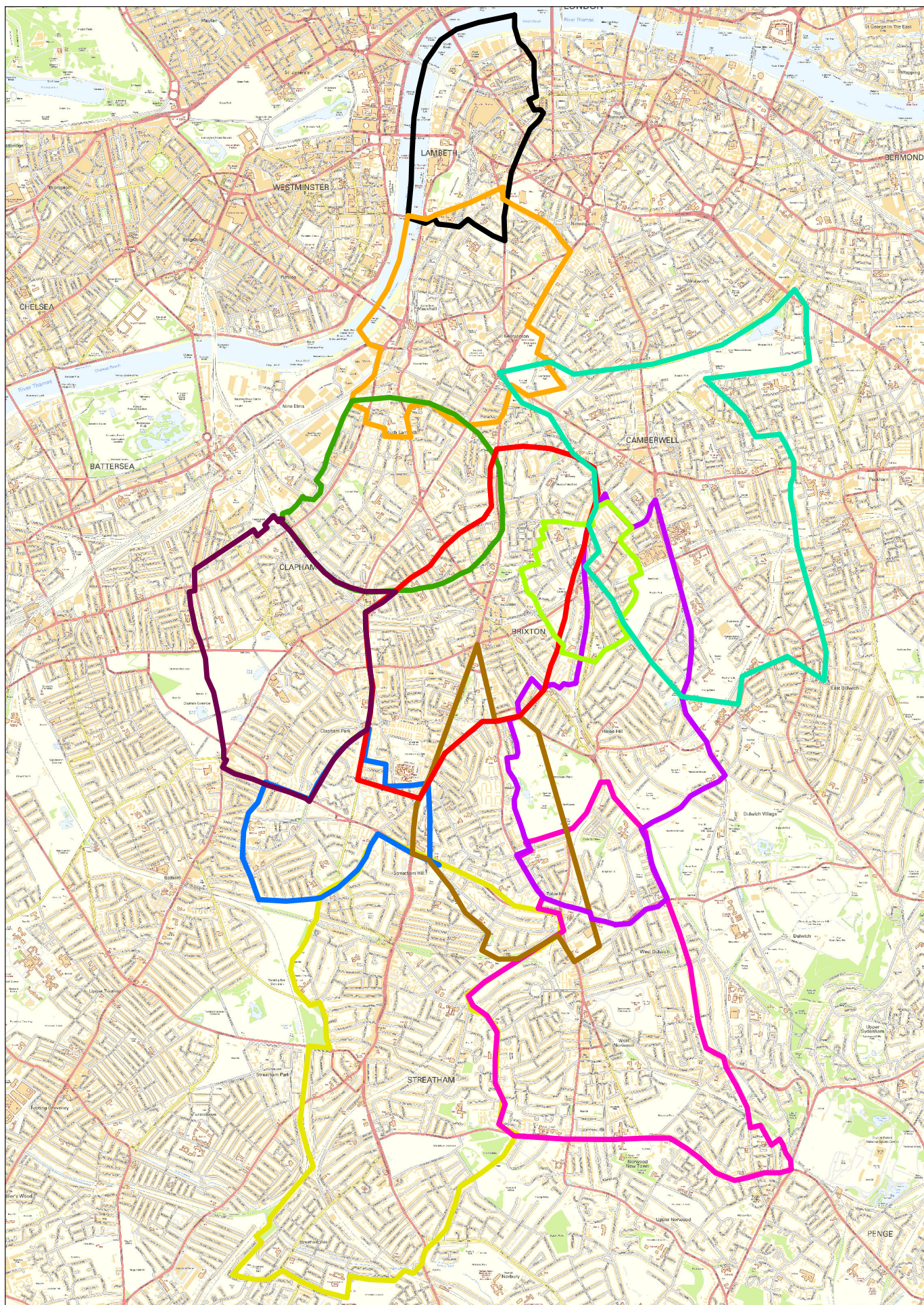
Statistics

In 2023-24 the LFN was funded £50,000 by Lambeth Council.

The forums attracted **£795,483** in additional funding and recorded over **£417,000** worth of volunteer hours in the year.

The forums saw **484,093** web-page visits to their sites, had **37,014** social media followers and sent out newsletters to nearly **10,000** local residents.





To contact the forums or to volunteer with them, please visit individual forum websites. For further information about the LFN please contact Catherine Walsh at Lambeth Council at cwalsh@lambeth.gov.uk

