

Volume 1 Issue 11

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The WHAG Winter Update

Don't let Sainsbury's rip the heart out of it

WHITE LANE

Support the **White Hart Action Group** www.savetheheartofwhitehartlane.co.uk

God Rest Ye Gentle White Hart Folk.....

...let nothing you dismay.

The fight to save our neighbourhood, continues every day.

We're looking for an Angel, who will buy the lease and then,



There'll be tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy...

Tidings of comfort and joy.



It's nearly a year since the WHAG was formed to fight the building of a Sainsbury's at the river end of White Hart Lane.

In that time, we have organised public meetings, street parties and events of all kinds.

We have attracted media coverage from television, radio and the press, both local and national.

We have galvanised the local council into supporting us, got our local MP and the local Tory candidate to present a united, cross-party opposition and forced the CEO of Sainsbury's to meet with us.

Most impressive of all, we organised a local referendum of the area which Sainsbury's claim their customers will come from and won a resounding NO vote – 4,062 to 687.

As a result of all this action, Justin King has stated that if we can find a company to make a viable commercial offer to take over their lease, he will seriously consider it.

In the last few months we have been doing just that; searching for a business which would be welcome in the area and which can afford the lease.

We've had a couple of near misses, some which were simply not commercially viable and at the moment are talking to another who are definitely interested.

We would never have got to this stage without the wonderful support of local people and the WHAG thanks you and urges you to continue with your support. Keep the posters up in your windows, visit the website for latest news, watch out for our newsletters which from now on will be roughly once a month.

And please – if you know of any company who would fit in here and are interested, put them in touch with us !

Merry Christmas to you all and let's hope we can bring you good tidings soon.

Welcome to the **WHAG WINTER UPDATE**– your guide to the campaign to stop **Sainsbury's** ruining our neighbourhood forever-usually free, (despite the enormous production costs.....) —a donation to the **Friends of Barnes Hospital**, to tie in with the White Hart Lane Christmas Party, would be nice .

“MILKED: SUPERMARKETS FINED £16M FOR SUBJECTING CUSTOMERS TO TWO YEARS OF DAIRY PRICE-FIXING

08.12.07 22:52 Great milk robbery: Supermarkets in trouble with the OFT

Supermarkets have been fined £116million for their part in a "Great Milk Robbery" that inflated prices imposed on shoppers for two years.

Sainsbury's and Asda together with a group of dairies face substantial penalties after they held up their hands yesterday to cheating the public.

However, they are not the only ones in the dock, for government watchdogs are now turning their attention to Tesco, Morrisons and others.

Consumer groups condemned the price-fixing and questioned whether other products could be involved at a time when food prices are soaring.

The fines follow an investigation by the Office of Fair Trading which found that dairy prices were artificially inflated by £270million in 2002 and 2003.

The scam added 3p to the price of a pint of milk, 15p to a half pound of cheese and 15p to a 250g pack of butter.

The supermarkets and their dairy partners claim they colluded to raise prices in a benign attempt to pay more to struggling dairy farmers.

However, the OFT discovered that precious little of the price rise actually reached these hard-pressed producers, thousands of whom have been driven out of the industry in recent years in the face of the low prices they have been receiving.

As a result, the country faces shortages that have caused big increases in the price of milk, butter and cheese in the last few months.

Consumer groups said the OFT's revelations will shatter any claims that supermarkets are acting in the best interests of their customers.

Pula Houghton, campaigns policy chief at Which?, said: "It is shocking that consumers have been ripped off by businesses they trust. Consumers will be asking - if it is milk now, what next?"

The money raised by the fines will go into government coffers, rather than compensating consumers.

Carl Belgrove, competition expert at the National Consumer Council, described the activity of the supermarkets and dairies as "shameful".

He said: "It will do enormous damage to the reputation of supermarkets. Consumers have always trusted supermarkets to provide value for money but they will be more sceptical about their claims in the future."

Neil Parish MEP, Conservative chairman of the European Parliament's agriculture committee, said farmers had long suspected underhand tactics.

Mr Parish, a farmer himself, said: "Dairy farmers have been calling for action against supermarket price fixing for years."

He rejected industry claims that they were trying to ensure farmers got a higher price for their milk as an excuse.

"The Government needs to stand up for farmers as well as consumers and launch a full investigation on how price-fixing has impacted on the dairy industry," he said.

Sainsbury's, which was fined £26million, denied it intended to rip off consumers. Chief executive Justin King said: "We are disappointed that we have been penalised for actions that were intended to help British farmers."

Asda, which has not revealed the amount of its fine, said the price rises were to "provide more money for dairy farmers who were under severe financial pressure at the time".

Safeway, which has since been taken over by Morrisons, plus the dairies Robert Wiseman, Dairy Crest and The Cheese Company have also admitted colluding over dairy prices.

All of these companies have been given reduced fines because they have admitted their part in rigging prices.

The dairy company Arla was excused any punishment for its part in the price collusion after volunteering to co-operate with the OFT's investigation at an early stage. The OFT has made clear it considers Tesco was also guilty following a provisional investigation. However, the supermarket insists it was not involved in pricefixing and said it is "defending its case vigorously".

Morrisons and the dairy group Lactalis McLelland also deny any wrongdoing.

John Fingleton, the OFT's chief executive, said supermarket claims that extra money raised from the price-fixing had gone to farmers were not borne out by the figures. He suggested the supermarket claims were part of a damage limitation exercise." "

The view from the WHAG

On the 22nd of November, an e-mail arrived at the WHAG's HQ from Erica Zimmer, Head of External Relations at J Sainsbury plc.

Erica was unhappy about a sentence which appeared in that edition's "The View from The WHAG". It read as follows : "Ever since Justin King held out his white flag and proclaimed "Find me a white knight to rid me of this lease...please!", the WHAG have found themselves playing a new and rather unexpected role as match-makers...."

Ms. Zimmer's point was simple : Justin never actually uttered those words and that it was wrong and misleading to suggest that he did. She went on to request an immediate correction both on our website and in this newsletter.

Ms. Zimmer is quite right. Mr. King did not say those words.

What he **did say** at the start of the meeting was that '*We would never want to find ourselves in the situation we are in, in Barnes*'.

Later in that same meeting, he clearly stated that "if we were to present him with a commercially viable offer to re-assign the lease to another company, he would seriously consider it."

His exact words were reported faithfully on the front page of the newsletter.

From these comments, it is reasonable to assume that the activities of the WHAG and its supporters have been sufficiently powerful to persuade Mr. King to consider re-thinking his company's involvement in the site, providing they did not lose out financially.

In this column, your humble reporter chose to express this sentiment in slightly more flamboyant terms, the only mistake being to set the line in quotation marks, implying they were Mr. King's own words.

Now it is my firm belief that few, if any, of our readers would seriously believe that the CEO of Sainsbury's, an eminent and hard-headed Captain of Industry, would use such histrionic language and that it was clearly a bit of light-hearted hyperbole meant to lighten up the column.

However, as it seems to have struck a raw nerve in Holborn, the WHAG, in the spirit of Goodwill to All Mankind, is more than happy to correct any possible misunderstanding, both in this newsletter and on our website.

In return, I would ask Ms. Zimmer to offer an apology and a correction to the 4062 people who voted NO in the referendum earlier this year.

In an ill-advised letter sent to every house in the polling area, (and repeated in various press articles) The WHAG and its supporters were described as a "vocal minority, who misrepresented the facts", in a clumsy, untruthful and unworthy attempt to ridicule our efforts and influence the views of those being balloted, many of whom wrote to us expressing their anger and disgust that their views should be treated with such contempt.

They showed their dislike of this kind of smear tactics by voting NO in a landslide victory which saw 4062 NO votes registered (85.5%) and just 687 (14.5 %) voting YES.

I think those 4062 people deserve, at the very least, an apology from Mr. King or Ms. Zimmer.

These were the people whom Sainsbury's themselves indentified as their core customer base.

And their message to Sainsbury's couldn't be clearer: we don't want you in our neighbourhood.

And they don't like being dismissed as a "vocal minority", simply because they object to a chain of grocery stores arrogantly using their money and their muscle to decide what happens in this much-loved neighbourhood. So how about it, Justin, Erica, Euan.....a simple quid pro quo :

The WHAG have done the decent thing and set the record straight.

The pages of this newsletter are here for you to do the same.

David Rossiter,

The WHAG



The Information Page



A shopper at the dairy counter does her bit for beleaguered British farmers –see article on page 2

THE FIGHTING FUND– WE STILL NEED YOUR MONEY! BUT, ON TUESDAY 11 DECEMBER AT THE WHITE HART LANE CHRISTMAS PARTY, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE WE'RE RAISING FUNDS FOR THE FRIENDS OF BARNES HOSPITAL.

PLEASE VISIT OUR STALL—WIN THE LAST WHAG BAG, OR A BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE.....PICK UP A NEW POSTER OR A CAR STICKER—HOW MUCH MORE FUN CAN YOU HAVE ON A WET NIGHT IN DECEMBER?

Whilst every effort is made to check the accuracy of information contained in the WHAG Weekly Update, neither WHAG nor any individual member of the group can be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused by any inaccuracy in this publication.



Listen.. I voted NO to Sainsbury's ..why on earth would I vote for Christmas?

Happy Christmas from all at WHAG!