# Community rallies to save historic Bethnal Green Working Men's Club



A new initiative has emerged to safeguard the historic Bethnal Green Working Men’s Club, the legendary East London venue famous for its contributions to the realms of music, comedy, and theatre. The venue has established itself as a vital space for the LGBTQ+ community, hosting a myriad of seminal performances throughout its more than 100-year history as well as shoots with gay celebrities for gay publications, such as the Russell Tovey Gay Times cover pictured.

Recognised as both an Asset of Community Value and a Grade II listed building, the Bethnal Green Working Men’s Club (BGWMC) has received formal acknowledgment of its use as an official cabaret theatre. However, despite these protections, the venue faces threats from prospective property developers, prompting the creation of a ‘fighting fund’ aimed at raising £12,000 by April 8th, with a time frame of just six weeks.

To encourage community participation, the fundraising effort offers various incentives for donors. Individuals who contribute £70 or more will receive an A3 print of the club by artist Lawrence Brand, while those donating £30 will receive bespoke BGWMC beer mats. A Save BGWMC campaign postcard will be provided to anyone donating £20.

Nick Keegan, the Variety Organiser for Equity, emphasised the complexities of a community purchase on such a scale. Speaking to Clash Magazine, Keegan stated, "We are trying to be absolutely realistic about this. We believe a partnership between the community of BGWMC and Tower Hamlets Council does have the ability to achieve this. We believe it is essential to save this unique cultural facility and give it a chance to continue serving the local community of Tower Hamlets, the LGBTQ+ community, and the wider cultural tapestry of London for future generations."

Keegan further highlighted the BGWMC's historical and cultural significance, noting its role as a catalyst for new artists and cultural workers within the city. He elucidated the importance of preserving the venue, delineating it as a safe haven for the LGBTQ+ community and an integral part of London’s cultural heritage. "It is vital that we protect BGWMC for future generations and allow its legacy to live on," Keegan added.

The initiative not only aims to secure the future of this cherished venue but also seeks to remind the community of its intrinsic cultural value and the need for a united effort to maintain such spaces. With the deadline for the fundraising rapidly approaching, the emphasis remains on raising awareness and securing the necessary financial backing to protect the BGWMC from looming development threats.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://bethnalgreenlondon.co.uk/bethnal-green-working-mens-club-margo-marshall-interview/> - This article highlights Bethnal Green Working Men's Club as a vital space for the LGBTQ+ community, emphasizing its role in fostering new talent and providing a safe environment for queer performances.
* <https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/07/30/bethnal-green-working-mens-club-closure-rally/> - This news piece discusses the rally to save the club from closure, underscoring its importance as an LGBTQ+ venue and the community's efforts to preserve it.
* <https://www.londoncentric.media/p/drag-queens-secret-votes-and-the> - This investigation delves into the complex issues surrounding the club's ownership and the fight to save it, highlighting the challenges faced by community venues in gentrified areas.
* <https://bethnalgreenlondon.co.uk/working-mens-club-bgwmc-explores-community-ownership/> - This article explores the initiative for community ownership of the club, emphasizing its significance as a cultural hub and the efforts to safeguard its future.