

Islington Tribune

Friday January 27, 2017

An independent paper

No 680

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KEEP RICH OUT!

**Plea over
flats at old
fire station**

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Charity urges Mayor to back bid to give building shut for three years a new role in community

‘Keep super-rich flats out of fire station’

A CHARITY wants to avoid a “sell-off to the super-rich” by turning Clerkenwell Fire Station into a museum and social housing.

Water Incorporated, which campaigns for clean water supplies in developing countries, hopes to base itself at the fire station to raise its profile.

It is calling on London Mayor Sadiq Khan to reopen the public sale process so the future of the historic building can be secured.

Clerkenwell, the oldest fire station in the country, was one of 10 closed under previous Mayor Boris Johnson’s fire cuts.

Trustee Peter Ulrich and his team have collected more than 1,000 signatures from people in the area backing the charity’s plan, but so far the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA), which owns the building in Rosebery Avenue, has stonewalled its advances.

The charity has published two sets of architects’ plans for the building which satisfy Islington Council planning requirements – including public access to the site, a

by **JOE COOPER**

museum celebrating the history of Clerkenwell’s firefighters and new affordable homes, as well as housing the charity’s proposed water resources education centre. Up to 90 affordable homes could be built behind the fire station.

“There can be no doubt there is huge public support for the station to have a new role in the community rather than becoming another faceless block of luxury flats,” Mr Ulrich said.

Neighbouring Hackney Council last week gave approval for Kingsland Fire Station to be turned into a free school and 68 luxury flats – but the building was sold during Mr Johnson’s tenure as Mayor.

London Assembly Green member Caroline Russell, who sits on the LFEPA, said luxury flats were “not on the agenda” in Clerkenwell.

“It’s important that the fire station remains a public asset,” Cllr Russell said.

A spokeswoman for Mr Khan said: “Sadiq is determined to get to grips with London’s housing



Charity trustee Peter Ulrich warns that the fire station could become ‘another faceless block of luxury flats’

crisis and is leading by example when developing sites owned by the Greater London Authority and its functional bodies.

“The former Clerkenwell Fire Station is one of a number of sites included in a review being carried out by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, in line

with the Mayor’s commitment to delivering the genuinely affordable homes Londoners need.”

One of the founding trustees of Water Incorporated is Wolf Barleugh, a retired Dutch solicitor

with a love of historic buildings, who would be able to stump up the millions required to buy the

building. The charity aims to set up a universal scheme that would allow hotels to reduce their towel washing operations, with savings going to water projects.

Mr Ulrich, who is a musician and was a drummer in the band Dead Can Dance, said the charity would be ready to step in straight away if given permission, though the project would take up to two years to complete.

Figures released last year show that more than £260,000 of public money had been spent on security at the site since its closure.

“There is considerable anger that Clerkenwell Fire Station was closed over three years ago and still nothing has been done with it,” Mr Ulrich added.

“The Mayor could put a stop to this waste by instructing LFEPA to remarket the fire station and allow us to make our formal bid.”