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WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE?

WELCOME TO THE SUMMER ISSUE OF SOUTHWARK LIFE HOUSING NEWS

In this issue we celebrate summer on page 16 and 17 with some of our most exciting upcoming events, including the brilliant Elephant and the Nun festival which is taking place on Saturday 15 August. You won’t want to miss it.

We also update you on the new and innovative ways we are working together to improve our repairs service on page 8 and 9 and introduce you to Bilal Amin, one of our fantastic new communal repairs technical officers on page 10.

I’m sure you’ll also enjoy hearing from Nancy Hammond on page 18, who is part of our young advisors team. She tells us all about her Southwark and engaging with the borough’s young people.

We also update you on the exciting news that 1 O’Reilly Street is the first of our new homes at Willow Walk to be completed and is ready to welcome its first residents on page 7.

And don’t miss out on learning about ways we are helping our young people. Turn to page 14 to learn all about our Southwark Smart Savers and to page 15 to hear about our youth guarantee.

With competitions, money advice and much more we hope you enjoy this issue and as always, please do get in touch with any comments or article ideas.

Best wishes

Cllr. Richard Livingstone

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

CONTACT US
Do you have something to say about Southwark Life Housing News? Write to: Letters, Southwark Life Housing News, Communications, Southwark Council, 160 Tooley Street, Second floor, Hub 5, SE1 2QH or email SLHN@southwark.gov.uk

TWEET TWEET
We’re online – come and say hi.
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THE SOUTHWARK LIFE HOUSING NEWS TEAM
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TWEET TWEET
We’re online – come and say hi.
@lb_southwark
www.facebook.com/southwarkcouncil
Following the damaging fire in March 2013 we have developed a vision for the future of the Walworth Town Hall (WTH) with community support. The new facility will include an enhanced library space, the Cuming collection and Southwark Museum.

There is also a flexible space for community and civic events, as well as ceremonies undertaken by the registrar’s service. Ultimately, we want the WTH to be a civic building right at the heart of the community.

In May we mutually agreed with heating contractors T Brown to terminate their contract. Since then contractors OCO have taken over responsibility for these repairs until the contract runs out next year. OCO are one of our top performing contractors with a proven track record for service.

Thank you for your patience whilst we have put the new arrangements in place, particularly to residents in some parts of the borough who may have experienced issues with their heating and hot water during that period. This will not affect the way you report repair issues, but we hope it will mean we can provide you with a more efficient and responsive repairs service.

If you do have any further questions please contact Paul Gathercole, Southwark Council’s contract services manager on 020 7525 2625 or email paul.gathercole@southwark.gov.uk.

MySouthwark, the council’s online self service portal, has reached a landmark 100,000 users.

That’s a lot of reporting repairs in pyjamas, paying council tax while nipping out on a lunch break and renewing library books while stuck on the bus.

To make sure you are up to date with all the ways it can make your life easier, sign up or log in to your account at www.southwark.gov.uk/mysouthwark.

Each year we contact every household in the borough to collect up-to-date information for the electoral register.

All homes in Southwark will shortly receive a letter from us that will include a household enquiry form (HEF) which you will need to return to us to let us know who should be registered to vote at your address. From this information we can then invite any members of your household who are not registered, to register. It is really important that you either send the letter back to us or get in touch online. If we don’t hear from you a canvasser will visit your address in the autumn.

To find out more about how you can register online please go to www.southwark.gov.uk/vote.

A total of 379 people so far have been employed on the site, 166 of who were previously unemployed. All 379 employees will be on at least the London Living Wage as part of our commitment to fair pay.

Hundreds of residents from across Southwark have found employment on one of the borough’s major regeneration sites – Elephant Park.

A COMMUNITY GARDEN FOR ALL

We have worked with Elmington estate residents and Brunswick Park primary school to design and revitalise the Benhill Road nature garden for everyone in the community to enjoy.

From beautiful birds, flowers and butterflies, finding mini beasts and frogs, visiting a wildflower meadow, to viewing the Pied Piper mural, there are loads of things for you and your family to see.

There are currently some product safety notices out about faulty Beko appliances including some fridge freezers, tumble dryers and gas cookers.

If you think this might affect an appliance in your home you can check at www.beko.co.uk/safety or by ringing the customer care line on 0800 917 2018.

For more information visit www.southwark.gov.uk/benhillroad or call 020 7525 1215.

In brief

Southwark IN BRIEF

Southwark residents who live in the 20 controlled parking zones can now purchase and activate parking sessions for their visitors via the web, SMS or telephone. By simply creating a personal and secure account through the new online permit system, residents can have instant access to order parking for one hour, five hours or all day.

For more information visit www.southwark.gov.uk/parking.

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MySouthwark users and counting

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BEKO PRODUCT SAFETY NOTICES

Southwark

AGE UK

London Business Directory aims to help you avoid rogue traders by connecting you with traders that you can trust. The directory can be accessed online at www.aubdlondon.co.uk or by calling free on 0800 334 5056, where a member of staff will search the directory for you.

If you are a business wanting to join then please email ywatkins-knight@ageuklondon.org.uk.

The Age UK

Heating contractor announced

In May we mutually agreed with heating contractors T Brown to terminate their contract. Since then contractors OCO have taken over responsibility for these repairs until the contract runs out next year. OCO are one of our top performing contractors with a proven track record for service.

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ELEPHANT EMPLOYMENT MAP

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PARKING PERMITS NOW DIGITAL

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ARE YOU REGISTERED TO VOTE?

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To find out more about how you can register online please go to www.southwark.gov.uk/vote.
NEW KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS

One of the estates that has already benefited from the improvement programme is the Hawkstone estate. Tenants on this estate have been given control over the design of their new kitchen and bathrooms, from choosing the layout to the door handles.

Mrs Moody of Canute Gardens within the Hawkstone estate has lived in her home for over 35 years and recently had her new kitchen and bathroom replaced. "I’m very pleased with my new kitchen and bathroom. It was lovely being able to choose exactly how I wanted my kitchen to look." If your home is due for the works we will be in touch to organise a survey to be taken.

We are committed to providing the best quality council homes and improving housing standards in Southwark, and this new programme will see all council tenants with kitchens more than 20 years old and bathrooms more than 30 years old get brand new facilities.

The first of our 11,000 new council homes, at 1 O’Reilly Street, Willow Walk, is now complete and welcoming its first residents. There are two blocks, one for general housing needs and one offering temporary accommodation.

We need you to tell us where you think we could build new council homes. Visit our interactive map and let us know at www.southwark.gov.uk/11000homes

We also want to hear your views on how to develop high quality council homes which support healthy and thriving communities. Your feedback will help us identify the most important design features, community facilities and amenities for our residents, such as improved lighting, green spaces and access to local shops.

Join us at the following events:
- Bermondsey Carnival – 4 July
- Butterfly Walk, Camberwell – 11 July
- Eid festival – 17 or 18 July
- Peckham Square – 8 August
- The Elephant and the Nun festival – 15 August

Have your say online or check out our full programme at www.southwark.gov.uk/11000homes
As part of our commitment to provide quality affordable homes to all our residents, we have invested in several new ways to tackle repairs.

COMMUNAL REPAIRS

We are very proud to introduce our new communal repairs team. The team has been gradually recruited since last summer and has already made a huge difference to the repairs service. Each officer has their own area where they make sure any communal issues have been sorted or reported. You can learn more about a typical day for a communal repairs technical officer in our interview with Bilal Amin on page 10.

Our new and improved estate action days now include the deep clean team who will leave your estate looking as good as new. The communal and housing repairs teams are also on site, as well as safer neighbourhood police, recycling experts and ground maintenance teams. Easy fix communal repairs are sorted on the spot. You can also report individual housing repairs or more complex communal issues. And if you have any repair or housing questions these are the people to answer them. To find out when an action day is coming to your estate go to www.southwark.gov/estateactiondays

ESTATE ACTION DAYS

THE SKY’S THE LIMIT

We have recently invested in next generation SkyVac gutter cleaning machines. They allow us to survey and clean gutters from ground level, without the need for expensive scaffolding or ladders. Look out for one on your estate; they are hard to miss.

ALL ABOARD

Ok, it’s not new, but the mobile housing office makes its rounds across the borough every day, visiting different estates and key locations. So make sure you come aboard for friendly advice from council officers, or to login onto our housing services online. You can report repairs or antisocial behaviour, as well as follow up on any issues or concerns. All are welcome; there is assisted disabled access and comfortable interview areas, as well as the odd biscuit and cup of tea.

To find out when the mobile office is coming to your area visit www.southwark.gov.uk/mobilehousingoffice

Fix it at Home videos

This is why we’ve produced a series of Fix it at Home videos to show you how to do simple repairs around your home. The videos cover a whole range of subjects from mould to blocked sinks and central heating problems. A blocked toilet for most of us is a daunting prospect. But by following our video, nine times out of ten, fixing it will take you five minutes max. You’ll be left flushed with success and you won’t be caught short waiting for a plumber. Go to www.youtube.co.uk/southwarkcouncil to check the videos out.

How can you help?

With 50,000 homes to look after across the borough, the housing team can’t fix everything themselves. They need your help so they can focus their time and expertise on more complex problems.

MySouthwark

If you do need to report a repair make sure you are one of our 100,000 plus residents signed up to a MySouthwark account. It means you can report repairs, track appointments and check your repairs history online, all from the comfort of your duvet. It saves everyone time, there is no hanging on the phone and you can do it anytime, anywhere. Requests are instantly logged and appointments made. If any further communication is needed, you are given top priority and will receive an email from the team within half an hour during the day. So what are you waiting for? Go to www.southwark.gov.uk/mysouthwark to sign up or log in to your account.

Moving out of your property

Last but not least we ask that if you move out of your property you leave it in the same condition you found it. This includes removing any flooring, curtains or furniture you have put in. Clearing an empty property and making it ready for the next tenant costs the council around £7,000 a time. Multiply that by 1,600 to 2,000 vacated homes a year and it reaches mind-boggling sums. This is why we are launching a new strategy for recharging people who don’t leave their home in the state set out in their tenancy agreement. So make sure you’re not hit with a big bill for ‘accidentally’ forgetting Great Aunt Maude’s favourite three piece suite. Go to www.southwark.gov.uk/movingout to find out more.
“When I started six months ago, this estate was like a maze, now I know it like the back of my hand” says Bilal Amin. Bilal is one part of the new communal repairs technical team. Each member of the team is given an area or ‘patch’ to look after, in which they inspect and report on communal technical repairs. Bilal’s patch is in the south of the borough, and if you live in Peckham or Nunhead you may have seen him wandering around, inspecting all the external and internal communal areas to your estate.

Bilal is responsible for a large area, of around 12 individual estates all of different sizes, and the aim is to carry out an inspection on each every month. This translates as an inspection pretty much every day. These are booked in with the resident service officer and the local TRA. “We walk around the estate and inspect any repairs that are needed such as blockages to drains, broken guttering, underground leaks, smashed windows and that kind of thing,” he says.

Bilal also helps run estate action days on his patch. He is a big fan of these as he says, “they are really useful for getting a lot done. We have an extra budget for these so we can do some really useful things then and there which go beyond our normal remit. Last time I arranged the hire of a cherry picker for the day and it went around clearing guttering to those hard to reach places. I have also got people in to paint the communal areas which are great for giving a bit of a facelift.”

His normal hours are 8am to 4pm but the team often goes above and beyond to make sure everything gets done. “It is a really intense job, and very busy but there is a really good management team in place. The team itself is great, one of the best I’ve worked in.” He adds, “it’s also very important to be aware of health and safety, with things like communal doors not operating correctly, slipped roof tiles or uneven paving that can become a trip hazard.”

Bilal previously worked at the repair contact centre and his knowledge of the IT systems have stood him in good stead. He normally gets in early to raise repair orders and write reports. Bilal will then go out onto an estate in the morning, come back to raise more repairs and go back out to the estate again in the afternoon. And then you guessed it, back to the office for more report writing. As well as reporting new repairs, he also needs to keep an eye on the progress of those he’s already raised. He is given a list each month of all the repairs due for completion and checks at least 60 to make sure they reach his standards. Bilal’s approach is “if I had paid for the repair out of my own pocket, would it be good enough?” he says. “If not I will raise a recall on the job.”

Even with all the challenges he is really enjoying the job. “I’ve always wanted to have a job where I get out and about and manage my own time. It’s really satisfying to see issues get fixed and the condition of the estates improving.”
SALLY SAYS...
As a general rule it is worth trusting your instincts – if an offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Scammers often use cold calling and doorstep sales to target victims, so before agreeing or signing anything first tell someone you trust about the offer. Having this conversation with a family member, friend, or a good neighbour could stop you from losing money.

Always take a moment to check out traders’ details. Check with the trader that they belong to a professional organisation, such as TrustMark, and then phone the organisation or look on their website to make sure it’s true. Legitimate traders should be happy for you to take their details and say you need more time to make a decision. Avoid handing over money before a job is started. A reliable trader won’t ask you to do this as they should have the money to cover materials until they are paid.

If you are concerned about an offer, think you may have been caught out by a rogue trader, or are concerned for a neighbour, call the Citizens Advice helpline on 0345 404 0506. If you’ve been scammed, report it to the police and to Action Fraud.

SALLY SAYS...
The earlier you get help with debt problems the easier it is to get them sorted. Trying to carry on as if everything is normal can make things worse, as debts can pile up quickly. Letting your creditors, especially the council, know if you will be unable to pay them is key. It is important that you prioritise paying certain debts, such as the rent, council tax or energy bills, to keep a roof over your head and the heating on. Depending on your circumstances you may be able to get support through benefits, so it is worth checking this with the Department for Work and Pensions, or your local CAB. You can also contact the council’s Rightfully Yours team.

Go to www.southwark.gov.uk/rightfullyyours to find out more or call 020 7525 7434. Drawing up a proper budget of your expenses can identify areas you can cut down on. Before you turn to a loan to cover costs, think carefully about future repayments and interest that will be due on the loan. CAB offer free, confidential and independent advice, can help you work out costs and negotiate with your creditors, and may be able to help you get debt free by looking at the appropriate options available to you.

I lost my job a few months ago. I’ve been struggling with my finances for a while, and now it’s got to the point where I can’t afford bills like council tax or my rent. I’m worried that if I can’t find a solution soon, I might be taken to court and evicted. I also owe money to my bank and on credit cards. What can I do?

SALLY SAYS...
You can use our interactive map to view the areas where we have garages. Just go to www.southwark.gov.uk/garagerent. Alternatively you can contact the garages team directly by calling 020 7525 5630 or emailing garages@southwark.gov.uk.

The standard rent for a secure Southwark council tenant, resident leaseholder or a resident freeholder who pays service charges is £18.62 and now it’s got to the point where I can’t afford bills like council tax or my rent. I’m worried that if I can’t find a solution soon, I might be taken to court and evicted. I also owe money to my bank and on credit cards. What can I do?

SALLY SAYS...
For full details of opening times and more useful information about the advice agencies in Southwark please visit www.southwarkadvice.org.uk.

Email SLHN@southwark.gov.uk
Sally can’t answer all letters personally but if you need help with money issues contact Southwark Citizens Advice Bureau on 0344 4994 134.
For full details of opening times and more useful information about the advice agencies in Southwark please visit www.southwarkadvice.org.uk.
Do you squirrel it away or spend in a day? Pinch pennies or pay through the nose? Southwark Council has teamed up with London Mutual Credit Union to help everyone save smarter, starting with 11 year olds.*

London Mutual Credit Union is a not for profit organisation offering a safe and convenient place to save and loans at a very reasonable rate of interest. It is estimated that as many as five per cent of people in the UK have no bank account at all. In a climate where some are turning to extortionate payday loans to pay the rent or buy clothes for their children, the council are determined to help residents find positive alternatives.

Find out more about London Mutual at www.creditunion.co.uk

£10 vouchers have been sent to every year 6 and year 7 child living in Southwark as part of new council initiative Southwark Smart Savers. To claim the £10, children just have to take their voucher to one of five London Mutual Credit Union branches in the borough and deposit their £10 into a new or existing savings account. As well as this, every child who claims their voucher will be entered into a draw to win one of six iPad minis.**

The scheme is designed to give young people experience of money matters, budgeting and handling cash to teach them how to be financially responsible and independent when they’re older, creating a generation of Southwark Smart Savers. With the great services that London Mutual offer, we’re hoping mums and dads get involved too, as it’s never too late to start saving. And you don’t have to save a lot – put aside a little every month and you’ll be laughing all the way to the credit union.

If your child saves:

- £5 a month for one year = £60
- = A new pair of trainers
- £5 a month for six years = £360
- = 14 driving lessons when they turn 17
- £5 a month for ten years = £600
- = Return flights to Thailand for that first adventure holiday.

What is London Mutual?
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*Children living in Southwark who were or will be 11 years old between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2015 are eligible for the current scheme. **Terms and conditions apply, see www.southwark.gov.uk/smartsavers for details.

If you have any questions about the scheme, or if your child is eligible but you haven’t yet received your voucher, please email us at southwarksmartsavers@southwark.gov.uk

Help us to create a generation of Southwark Smart Savers, and help them learn to make sound financial decisions throughout their lives.

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We want every young person to have something to do when they leave school. Southwark has opportunities for every school leaver who wants to learn, work or train. Find out more on Southwark’s website.
THE ELEPHANT AND THE NUN

The Elephant and the Nun returns on Saturday 15 August, from 12pm to 8pm in Burgess Park, SE5.

This large, free family festival features a weird and wonderful mix of events and activities guaranteed to capture the imagination. Expect fantastic performances on the music and dance stages and lots to do in the family area. There is also a food village, an African market and funfair.

The festival welcomes back Kinetika Bloco, an exuberant performance group of over 100 young musicians and dancers from Southwark and Lambeth. You won’t miss them as they don colourful costumes, with performances influenced by the Caribbean, Brazil, west and southern Africa and New Orleans jazz, funk and hip hop.

SUMMER EVENTS

If you have cupboards full of old stuff that are just not used anymore but are in perfectly good condition, there’s still a chance for you to host your own Rumble in the Jumble stall and raise a bit of cash for yourself or a charity of your choice. To host a stall at The Elephant and the Nun, please apply by Monday 13 July at www.southwark.gov.uk/summertrading

GET INVOLVED:
RUMBLE IN THE JUMBLE

GET INVOLVED:
VOLUNTEER

Volunteering at events is a great way to meet new people, see behind the scenes, gain useful work experience and a chance to give something back to your community. For more information visit www.southwark.gov.uk/stewards

SUMMER FUN

Southwark presents a jam packed programme of family events

BE A READING RECORD BREAKER THIS SUMMER

Children of all ages can learn about weird, wonderful and wacky records from around the world as part of this year’s record breaker Summer Reading Challenge from Saturday 11 July until Sunday 6 September.

We have a range of fun and interactive activities for children and young people to take part in and our third Southwark libraries graphic art competition will run during the summer holidays.

If you’re not already a Southwark library member it’s free and easy to join.

Go to your local library or visit www.southwark.gov.uk/libraries to find out more about how you can get involved.

GET ON YOUR BIKE

There are lots of fun BMX bike activities taking place at Burgess Park. The whole family can get into gear with this disciplined sport through trying out bike limbo, relay races and skills to impress on the BMX track.

The Burgess Park BMX track is also available for hire. Get on track with an organised school holiday activity, child’s birthday party, local community cycling opportunity, or a corporate event.

Find out more by calling 020 8546 9842, or visit www.southwark.gov.uk/burgessparkBMX @BurgessParkBMX

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GET INVOLVED:
RUMBLE IN THE JUMBLE

BLACKFRIARS STORIES: GONE IN 20 MINUTES (GI20)

Gone in 20 minutes will feature spectacular street theatre and music plus street and contemporary dance.

Blackfriars Stories will be hosting the first of two London showcase events on Friday 28 August, with 12 performances between 12pm and 6pm on the southbank between Coin Street and Tate Modern.

Six emerging outdoor artists have been commissioned to create groundbreaking new work as part of a national outdoor arts development programme, supported by Arts Council England and produced by Remarkable Productions in association with Event International.

ROTHERHITHE FESTIVAL

Rotherhithe Festival will be taking place on Saturday 11 July, from 11am to 9pm, where visitors can enjoy music, entertainment and food. This wonderful, free local event will be taking place at King Georges Fields, SE16.

GET INVOLVED:
VOLUNTEER

Volunteering at events is a great way to meet new people, see behind the scenes, gain useful work experience and a chance to give something back to your community. For more information visit www.southwark.gov.uk/stewards

For more information on our upcoming events, please visit www.southwark.gov.uk/southwarkpresents

Follow us on twitter @southwarkevents

Check out all the highlights of last year’s events programme with our YouTube video at www.youtube.co.uk/southwarkcouncil

Southwark presents a jam packed programme of family events

On 9, 10 and 11 July, come on a journey into the world of Animaland, where beat box and rap come together set within a graffiti maze.

Join spoken-word artist Maxwell Golden and graffiti artist Mr Dane in this outdoor, immersive and fun packed adventure for children and their families. There will be performances during the day and after school.

BLACKFRIARS STORIES: BOUNCING CATS AND BOOM BOOM PUPS

Gone in 20 minutes will feature spectacular street theatre and music plus street and contemporary dance.

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Volunteering at events is a great way to meet new people, see behind the scenes, gain useful work experience and a chance to give something back to your community. For more information visit www.southwark.gov.uk/stewards

For more information on our upcoming events, please visit www.southwark.gov.uk/southwarkpresents

Follow us on twitter @southwarkevents

Check out all the highlights of last year’s events programme with our YouTube video at www.youtube.co.uk/southwarkcouncil

Southwark presents a jam packed programme of family events

On 9, 10 and 11 July, come on a journey into the world of Animaland, where beat box and rap come together set within a graffiti maze.

Join spoken-word artist Maxwell Golden and graffiti artist Mr Dane in this outdoor, immersive and fun packed adventure for children and their families. There will be performances during the day and after school.

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In 2014/2015 young advisors engaged with over 2,000 young people through Street Base.

Thursday is my mentoring day at the base in Peckham. We normally have a topic for the week and anybody aged nine to 18 can come along to get advice. It is about helping young people make positive choices about their future. We get a good turn out of people especially when it’s a nice day.

We also help out at council events a lot, such as the Weighting circus show at Dulwich Park.

What's your favourite part of the job?
I just enjoy engaging with young people. I think they find it easier to talk to us because we're a similar age to them. And I think they find it easier to trust us because we are also young people and we're talking for them. The different young advisor teams stick to the same areas of the borough so people get to know who we are and build up a relationship with us.

What do you love about Southwark?
There is always lots of things going on. It's a diverse community but everyone comes together when there are events going on.

Best park in the borough?
Burgess Park. It's really big and there are loads of things you can do. There are football pitches, tennis courts and a BMX track. It's also a good shortcut to other places; it's much nicer to walk through than going around the outside.

Want to share your Southwark with Southwark Life Housing News? Email SLHN@southwark.gov.uk and let us know what makes the borough special to you.
WORDSEARCH

SOLVE BOTH PUZZLES FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A £50 SHOPPING VOUCHER

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Levi Quebomra was the lucky winner last issue.
Tell us what you would like to see in the next issue of Southwark Life Housing News.

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There are five slight differences in the two pictures of Nelly (Helen) Orford, an award winning Hula Hoop artist performing at the Weighting circus spectacular in Dulwich Park. Can you spot them?