



Press Release. For Immediate Release.

6 September 2017

Is it 'Goodbye' to Carnival? Residents fear 'social cleansing' of their cherished Notting Hill.

One of London's most diverse and best-loved communities could be under threat due to a proposed merger between Notting Hill Housing and Genesis Housing Associations. The creative and culturally diverse areas of Notting Hill and Westbourne Park sit at the heart of London's unique culture, made internationally famous through the Notting Hill Carnival and Richard Curtis' film *Notting Hill*. Residents believe the associations' ambition to become 'the UK's biggest property developer' puts the unique nature of this socially mixed community at risk.

An unprecedented residents' meeting called on August 31 took place only a short distance from the site of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, where some of the flats belonged to Notting Hill Housing.

Residents have already handed a formal letter rejecting the merger to Notting Hill CEO Kate Davies. This unique community is no stranger to controversy and protest, and it is voting overwhelmingly against merger – an over 97 per cent rejection rate so far – and they will be protesting outside offices on **13th September**, the date of a crucial shareholder meeting.. In a city whose housing market has become a high-rolling casino for international billionaires, pushing out genuine Londoners.

Davies, A fellow for the (ironically named) centre for social justice chaired by Iain Duncan Smith has made herself very unpopular by declaring social housing was 'low cost living for life **funded** from the public **purse**.' And that tenants "often pay little or no rent, and get their home maintained in good order for free"

praising Iain “From the CSJ we welcomed the determined and broad sweep intellect of Iain Duncan Smith”

concluding that social housing providers should be able to set rent levels and sell assets without restrictions from government.

Kate Davies called for an end to secure tenure in 2008, and was one of the few to support the highly controversial Housing Act of 2016. NHH's website now describes itself as a 'property developer'.

A merger would create a huge organisation, 'Notting Hill Genesis,' responsible for 170,000 homes across London and the South East. Insiders suggest that the management's next step will be to raid its estimated £19bn inner London property portfolio by raising rents and emptying properties ready for sale. Already, Genesis has raised the rents of some old-style 'secure' tenants on fixed incomes by up to 177%.

Genesis and Notting Hill Housing Associations announced the merger on 20 July, burying bad news, and giving residents a sham of a consultation process that ran only through the holiday season which was seen as nothing but a forgone conclusion PR stunt. Even local MP, Emma Dent Coad, who is a resident of Notting Hill Housing, did not know about it, and most Notting Hill residents still don't. Since residents have begun protesting, the associations' websites have taken to describing it as a 'partnership'.

Contacts:

Gemini Verney-Dyde **07808268 134**

listennhh@gmail.com

listen-nhh.org

[facebook.com/groups/ListenNHH/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/ListenNHH/)

See also: genesisresidents.org.uk

Tim Baster 07906187873

e mail: genesis.residents.action@gmail.com

For info: Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/genesisaction>

**For Immediate Release.
6th September 2017**

Notes:

- Notting Hill Housing was founded by Reverend Bruce Kenrick- who was “shocked by social and financial inequalities” he found in Notting Hill in 1962. The

forerunner of Genesis, Paddington Churches Housing Association, had two vicars - Reverend Sharp and Reverend K Bartlett - amongst its seven founding members. PCHA's aim was 'to provide homes at low rent for needy Paddington families.'

- But Notting Hill Housing now builds mostly for sale or high rent homes. In an Investor Update from January 2017 Notting Hill says no social housing will be built at all. Recently they claimed that just under 10% of planned development will be community housing at low rent. Genesis said in its last financial report that they expect to complete no low rent homes at all by 2018 and only 8 in 2017.
- Genesis Housing Association is currently advertising flats for sale at £580,000-. Notting Hill Housing is currently advertising homes from £740,000 up to £1,865,000-. This is not 'affordable'.
- Quotes are from the housing and dependency meeting at the centre for social justice chaired by Kate Davies.
<http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/HousingPoverty.pdf>
- Housing association management and boards appear to be ditching social housing, despite their specific remit. Neil Hadden said in an interview in 2015 that Genesis was:

"Really looking at our asset base and seeing what the value of that is and how we can get our hands on that value, by changing its tenure, **by churning it, by selling it**." [our emphasis].

*<https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/insight/insight/neil-hadden-the-full-interview-44398>
- Current chief executives Neil Hadden and Kate Davies have consistently lobbied to remove residents' legal protections through deregulation. Kate Davies has publicly stated that: 'social housing is not a desirable destination'. Neil Hadden, the current CEO of Genesis, is on record as saying that people without money 'won't be my problem'.

The protest, for both Genesis and Notting Hill residents, is planned **Weds 13 September**
5:30 - 7:00pm

Bruce Kenrick House,

2 Killick Street, London, N1 9FL

ENDS