

# friends of New Walk

NEWSLETTER

## *Spirit of New Walk* to revitalise the city

The Mayor of Leicester, Sir Peter Soulsby, has launched an initiative to further integrate New Walk into the heart of the city centre.

With his 'Connecting Leicester' project, the Mayor is seeking to spread the ethos of New Walk by improving the experience of pedestrians. His intention is that large hub projects will combine with a plethora of ground level changes to improve links by foot across the city.

One such proposal that has already come to fruition centres on the intersection of New Walk and King Street outside the City Council's New Walk Centre. This

busy one-way street was a major impediment to New Walk users heading towards the city, as pedestrians were forced to intermingle with vehicles. With the installation of retractable bollards, King Street is now closed to traffic entirely, thus creating a fully pedestrianised area for New Walk users.

A further plan aims to encourage footfall from New Walk towards the 15th Century Magazine Gateway and beyond to the De Montfort University campus by widening the pavements along Vaughan Way. One of the three lanes of traffic has already been coned off as a pilot and work on the pavements is likely to begin soon.

Now is a great time to get involved in what could be an interesting initiative for New Walk users.



- *To read about Sir Peter's vision for Connecting Leicester, visit <http://citymayor.leicester.gov.uk>*
- *Public planning consultations can be accessed via <http://consultations.leicester.gov.uk>.*





## *A taste of Bollywood spice on New Walk*

A touch of glamour came to New Walk when it became a location for a Bollywood film production.

Building and Students' Union at the University of Leicester, and around the Golden Mile on Belgrave Road.

Yamla Pagla Deewana 2 is a sequel to the 2011 smash hit comedy and features “living legend” Dharmendra alongside his sons Sunny and Bobby Deol. Filming took place in October around the New Walk Museum's grand facade. Action continued along the Walk, taking advantage of the distinctive Victorian architecture and mature broad leaf trees in their full autumnal glory.



Some lucky Leicester Bollywood fans landed roles as extras. Dressed in their colourful finery, many braved early starts to catch a glimpse of their idols and to have a chance to be immortalised in film.

Further scenes were filmed across Leicester, including in front of the Fielding Johnson

Those looking to see if they made the cut did not have to wait long – Yamla Pagla Deewana 2 was released in June.

## *Charity gives 50 New Walk a new lease of life*

A charity working with young people has found a new home at 50 New Walk.

Built in 1951, number 50 is one of the more distinctive buildings on New Walk. The lofty modernist arches of the facade give little hint to the building's original purpose as a car showroom. More recently the building was used as a workplace nursery by Leicester City Council. But when that closed in 2006, the Council struggled to find another use or lasting tenant for the property. As a result, 50 New Walk stood empty for a number of years.

Soft Touch aims to blow out the cobwebs. Having bought the building from the Council, the charity intends to transform 50 New Walk into a vibrant arts and heritage centre.

The Leicester based charity engages over a thousand 13-19 year olds a year with participatory arts projects such as performance, music, film and literature. Number 50 will host a range of activities helping these young people with their personal confidence, employability and

interpersonal skills, and to tackle issues that affect them in their communities.

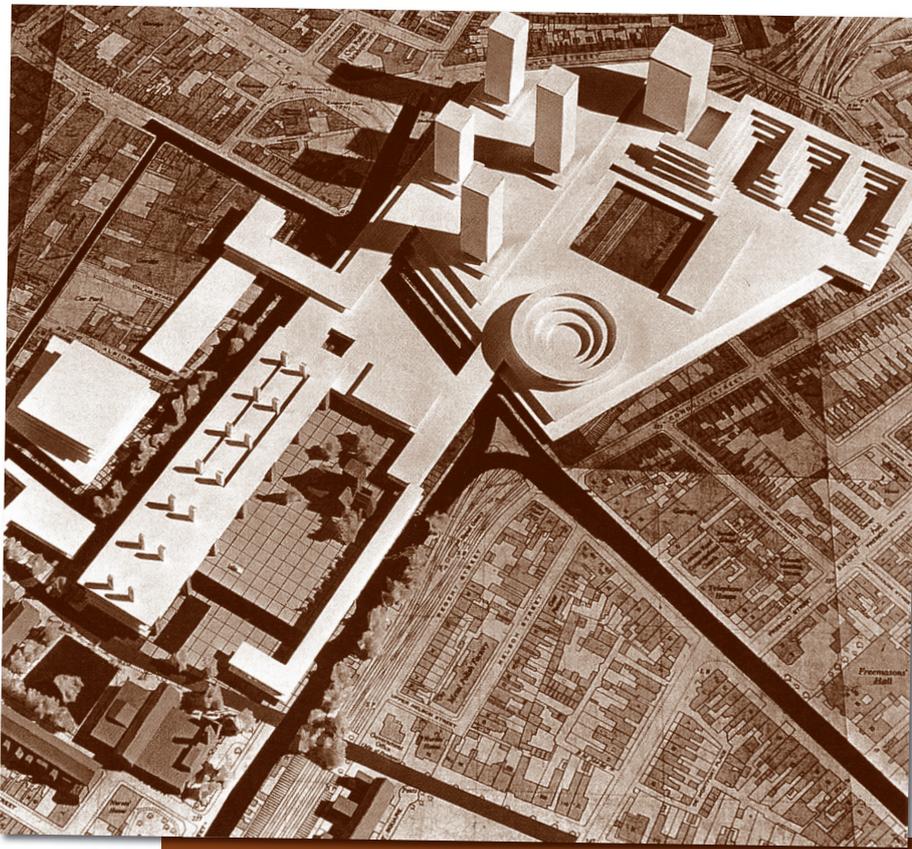
Christina Wigmore, Business and Strategic Director for Soft Touch, says: "It's our dream building and it's great to have the keys after a five-year search."

Christina continued, "We knew immediately it was the place to realise our vision of creating an amazing, buzzing new arts and heritage centre for young people – a place where young people who lack opportunities to participate in arts, culture and heritage can develop their creative potential, broaden their horizons and be part of the cultural life of the city."

"It's a very ambitious project for a small charity but we are confident we're going to make it a great success."

Christina also acknowledges that 50 New Walk is "currently in very poor condition". As such, the charity is looking for local business partners to help them raise money and realise their vision. If you or your business can help, or if you would like to donate, visit their web site [www.soft-touch.org.uk](http://www.soft-touch.org.uk).





## The Walk through history

In the 1960s, Leicester City Council outlined plans for a new Civic Centre. Adjoining New Walk, the scheme was a typical exercise in concrete brutalism, entailing the redevelopment of the train station and swallowing the St. John the Divine Church almost whole. Thankfully for New Walk the plan encountered huge objections, then ran out of money before it could be implemented.

Image from 'The History of New Walk, Leicester' by Helen E. Boynton.

## Keeping New Walk cycle-free

An article in the Leicester Mercury raised the idea of opening up New Walk to cyclists.



The article, 'Safety fears spark pleas to end cycling ban on New Walk', suggested that the rate of accidents between traffic and cyclists on London Road could be ameliorated by letting cyclists use New Walk.

Whilst sympathetic to the plight of bicycle users, The Friends of New Walk are fundamentally opposed to cyclists using New Walk primarily for the same reason that cyclists are not allowed to ride on the pavement: safety.

Thanks to its longstanding traffic-free nature, New Walk pedestrians can travel

without fear of being clipped by cyclists, many of whom travel largely silently and at a much greater speed than walking pace.

Enshrined in a bylaw and enforced by the police, the traffic and bicycle-free nature of New Walk is an attribute that the Friends feel is worth protecting. We will continue to lobby Leicester City Council to ensure that it remains so.

*The original article can be read at [www.leicestermercury.co.uk/Safety-fears-spark-pleas-end-cycling-ban-New-Walk/story-15828828-detail/story.html](http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/Safety-fears-spark-pleas-end-cycling-ban-New-Walk/story-15828828-detail/story.html)*

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*The current trustees of Friends of New Walk Charitable Trust are:*

*James Bowie  
(Chairman to the Trustees & Resident)*

*Mark Dunkley  
(Clerk to the Trustees & Trustee)*

*Wendy Allum  
(Trustee & Resident)*

*Norman Gill  
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*July 2013*

*friends of*  
**New Walk**

