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Nick looks to the east



AH, SO! I hear that remarkable young man Nick Wates has gone East to fight off property speculators on London's far-flung frontiers.

Nick — once the super squatter of Tolmers Square, Euston — is campaigning again. This time to keep the huge disused Limehouse Basin in the heart of Docklands for the people.

He's floating a unique idea among East End trade unionists and tenants' leaders for a people's property development company.

A talented architect and a formidable organiser, he dreams of a £20 million project involving public housing; craft workshops; and a water adventure playground.

But he'd better watch out. I gather other property speculators — the nasty sort — see the site as a lucrative tourist trap.

His new home is a vast, £28,000 disused Seamen's Mission in Limehouse complete with swimming bath, which he and six friends have bought and are converting.

And he says those who are quick to knock him should ask themselves honestly if they would rather have seen him continue squatting or "jumping" the housing waiting list.

He blames inflated property prices and a backward council housing policy — which discriminates against single people and those who want "the space and freedom" to live together communally — for forcing him out of Camden.

As he explained to me: "You can't expect anyone to spend their whole life squatting."

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