

## CRYSTAL PALACE PARK COMMUNITY CONFERENCE 26<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2012

Paxton Suite, The Lodge, Crystal Palace Park

### Conference Notes

**Ray Sacks** (joint-Chair) welcomed everyone at the start of the conference and dealt with the housekeeping items.

**Peter Austin** (joint-Chair) outlined the purpose of the second Crystal Palace Park conference: to hear about the progress Bromley has made and how it sees the future. He thanked all those involved with the organisation of the Conference and highlighted the absence of Malcolm Woods of English Heritage who is taking Voluntary Redundancy on 31st October. He said that Malcolm will be sadly missed after Eight years of Expert Advice and Support to the original CPP Dialogue Working Parties and successor groups. He also paid tribute to Louisa Allen, now with the City of London Corporation, for her considerable contribution between May 2011 and July 2012.

**Stephen Carr** (Leader of the Council, London Borough of Bromley) warmly welcomed everyone to the conference and pointed out that the Masterplan presented a great opportunity. "If we miss this opportunity, it's going to be gone for a long time." He added that it was important for everyone to work together, and that Bromley was committed to the process.

**Colin Brand** (Assistant Director, Leisure and Culture, London Borough of Bromley) said it was a challenging time for parks. Significant funding needed to be attracted while retaining the support of local communities. He said that not all solutions found favour with all groups but he felt that the present was the most positive engagement period there had ever been in the park.

**Martin Tempia** (Crystal Palace Park Community Stakeholder Group) outlined the progress of the Crystal Palace Park Community Stakeholder Group. He pointed out that the group was an unfunded body, a lot of effort was needed in fund-raising and progress could be messy and difficult, but this was "the only show in town". He said that the Group have a vision and mission statement, which is on their website. ([www.crystalpalacepark.org](http://www.crystalpalacepark.org)).

He mentioned the successes the group have already had, including: an award of £250 from the Metropolitan Public Garden's Association for tree labelling in the Park; and the awarding of £50,000 from the Job Centre Plus for the 'Shaping Places' project to be delivered in partnership with Living Networks and local businesses. He added they are awaiting the outcome of an application to the Big Lottery 'Awards for All' scheme for £10,000.

He said that increasing the educational value of the Park was a priority for the Group, and that they were approaching service providers for the concert bowl. He also outlined ongoing projects, including: the community garden around the Museum and a project to 'Save the Sphinxes'. He emphasised the importance of these practical projects and his hope that future grant applications could support similar projects for other groups. He added: "We're all on a sharp learning curve and the progress is often slow and frustrating." The future depended on being able to package funds and work with other groups.

**Fiona Fletcher-Smith** (Executive Director, Development and Environment, Greater London Authority) presented a 10 point plan for Crystal Palace Park. She said: "I see the mayor very frequently. Whenever I see him, he points at me and says 'what are you doing about Crystal Palace?'" She said the rationale for the ten points was that there was a need for improvements that could generate an income stream ("cash is king") and to create projects with community involvement that would animate the park.

She added that the £2 million capital from the GLA could be used both for projects now and as leverage for more funding; that they had received positive feedback from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF); and that community engagement was key for attaining funding from the HLF.

Following the presentations, the speakers took questions from the floor.

**Mike Warwick** (CPCA) questioned the support that English Heritage had showed the Park over the years. **Zosia Mellor** (English Heritage) answered from the floor that English Heritage totally supports the Park and proof of this was recent expenditure.

**Norman Edgell** (London Federation of Sport and Recreation) emphasised the importance of security in the Park.

**Robert Buckley** (Conservation Planner – London Borough of Bromley) asked about the legal status of the Masterplan. **Ray Sacks** (Crystal Palace Campaign) reported that the CPCA has been granted an oral hearing to be heard in the High Court at 10:00 on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2012.

**Wendy Jones** asked whether disabled access to the station has been considered. **Ray Sacks** mentioned that four lifts would be installed.

**John Payne** (CPCA) said that English Heritage had supported all previous planning applications for the Park. He stated his disappointment at what he felt was a lack of detail in the Crystal Palace Park Community Stakeholder Group minutes, and raised concerns about the issue of information being fed back to stakeholders and the community, saying that all communications seemed to be internet based. Lastly he expressed his concern over that lack of play facilities in the Park. **Lucy Hopkins** (Community Stakeholder Group) replied that she was working with the Crystal Palace Railway Station to hold an exhibition showing ongoing projects in the Park, and to encourage people to get involved.

**Richard Lines** (Norwood Society) asked what the Greater London Authority priorities for the Park were. **Fiona Fletcher-Smith** replied that this was for the Crystal Palace Park Management Board to determine, however, income generating projects would be favourable.

**Martin Heath** (Ecospheres Project) expressed his disappointment with the LDA Masterplan, and what he felt is a under appreciation of the biodiversity of the Park. He also expressed his disappointment that Bromley are not taking forward his plans for the Hill top site, stating that they should reconsider and plan ecology first. Lastly however, he stated that there was positive stuff happening at the Conference today.

**Ken Lewington** (Crystal Palace Foundation) expressed his concerns about the future governance of the Park and how that relates to the development proposals presented today. He asked what progress had been made regarding future governance. **Colin Brand** responded that a report on governance was presented last year, but that the discussion hasn't progressed to a point where a decision can be made. He believed that it was important to first correct the wrongs with the Park and make it fit for purpose for future management.

**Kate Boyle** (City of Westminster Guide) emphasised the importance of toilets in the Park and that they should be included in any redevelopment.

After the coffee break, there were contributions from Jennifer Ullman, Sarah Finch-Crisp and Tony Leach.

**Jennifer Ullman** (Landscape Management Consultant) spoke about governance structures and said she was an advocate for the "slightly unpopular approach" of running the project through the local authority rather than taking the 'Trust' route; adding that many Park Trusts will fail from lack of funding. She said that income generation from events at Battersea Park did not equal the budget needed. These were difficult times for funding and there were pluses and minuses on both sides (of the governance argument). Good leadership support was essential and working with the people who were making the funding decisions was critical. Local authorities were used to forward planning and are more capable of dealing with emergencies.

**Sarah Finch-Crisp** (Chiswick House and Gardens Trust) said Chiswick House and Gardens Trust had been formed in 2005 but had not taken financial responsibility until 2010. A bedrock of funding from the London Borough of Hounslow had been pivotal to success, as had close liaison with the

borough. She urged those involved in Crystal Palace Park to decide what its key selling factors were. She said that as a Trust, Chiswick was able to respond quickly to circumstances but said she was not advocating a Trust as 'one size fits all'. She added: "I think you are very lucky to have a local authority keen to act and having £2million in the bank through the mayor's support is a fabulous way to begin."

**Tony Leach** (London Parks and Green Spaces Forum) spoke about the proposed London Festival of Parks – a new concept which was a means to restoring the strategic (i.e., bigger) parks and raising their profile. He said the festival would take place between Easter and the end of August every four years and would aim to appeal to a diversity of ages, backgrounds and interests. Community involvement at the planning stage was a key ingredient and the festival would leave a legacy of a revived landscape and restored facilities. He set out a number of criteria for selection of parks as follows: it must be heritage at risk; 50 hectares or larger; have a single landowner; have community support; have a Masterplan in place; have good transport links; have high visitor numbers; and have the potential as a legacy park. He added that the probable shortlist for the first festival (ideally in 2015) were Gunnersbury Park, Crystal Palace Park, Trent Park (Enfield) and Wanstead Park. The cost of staging each festival would be £45 million. (It was pointed out from the floor that the first World Expo had been held in Crystal Palace and the next Expo – to be held in Milan – was due in 2015.)

Following the presentations, the speakers took questions from the floor.

**John Payne** wanted to know how the Friends of Battersea Park raised so much money and whether Trust management might be in competition with the Local Authority. He said his belief was that the National Sports Centre should contribute to the Park financially. **Jennifer Ullman** responded that it took the Friends 8 years to raise money, working with a fund raising Officer who helped them identify funders and make applications. She said that the right support structure was a key to progress.

**John Greatrex** (Great Exhibitions) expressed his support of the festival idea and his hope that it would take place in 2015. **Tony Leach** responded that the festival will not happen without community and political support.

**John Payne** questioned whether building on the Park will set a dangerous precedent.

**Mike Warwick** (CPCA) said that he was impressed with the presentations but felt that the festival could be a diversion. He said that the Park needs greater care and maintenance rather than restoration, and he is therefore opposed to the Masterplan.

**Vicki Papworth** (Friends of Crystal Palace Park) said that the Friends would like to be involved with anything and welcome any opportunities.

**Stephen Dowbiggin** (Capel Manor College) said that he was involved with early meetings about the redevelopment of Chiswick and Battersea and that he believed they show that if people chose to go with an idea then they can make it happen.

**Alan Freeman** (West Beckenham Residents Association) said that it was wonderful that so many organisations have an interest in the Park, but that he was unhappy about the Masterplan's proposals of luxury flats in the Park. He said that the Park needs 2 cafés and more toilets, and, that visitor facilities should be the priorities for spending. He asked for a way of financing the Park without, what he believes, would destroy it. **Sarah Finch-Crisp** responded by stating that it was important to look at all options for generating funds, that the money must come from somewhere, and that, when reviewing all options, to keep in mind respect for heritage, that Park, and park users. She stated that in her experience at Chiswick, people had genuine fears over development in the Park, that development must not be piecemeal, and that it must be sold to all stakeholders, corporate and local community.

**Ken Lewington** questioned to whom the Trustees are accountable. **Sarah Finch-Crisp** responded that the trust is an independent charity trust and is managed as a business. There are quarterly meetings and a Friends group. The Trust manages from onsite and is not a "closed shop".

**Martin Heath** asked that biodiversity not be neglected.

**Ray Sacks** asked everyone to visit the FW Design stall in the Paxton Suite where they will find information on the Wayfinding Strategy Consultation Report undertaken by FW Design. He then closed the conference.

*Notes taken by David Barter and Wendy Jones*

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