

BATTERSEA PARK ACTION GROUP

NEWSLETTER



24th September 2020

Volume 5 No. 2

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NEWS

Two Enable Officers have recently resigned. Jack Adams, who was probably due for retirement anyway, and Simon Ingyon, the Executive Director. The latter resignation is a surprise, since he was very helpful and supportive, and had only been in post a relatively short while. Maybe he has a better job?

PLANNING APPLICATION 2020/2853

Proposal: Installation of 20m telecommunications pole, 6 x antennas, 2 x GPS modules, 9 x ERSs on headframe, 3 x RRUs, 5 x equipment cabinets and ancillary

This was another surprise, since we are registered to receive notices of planning applications for matters in the Park and surrounding it. The Secretary had received nothing, and only received the information thanks to Frances Ratcliffe of the Friends. Thus, there was no time to email any of you, but just enough time to submit an objection within 2 hours of the deadline – which we understand had been altered to an earlier date, although the application states 12th October. However, since it also says the application is still open and accepting comments, could we ask you to submit something? Here is the link, but you may need to get in quick.

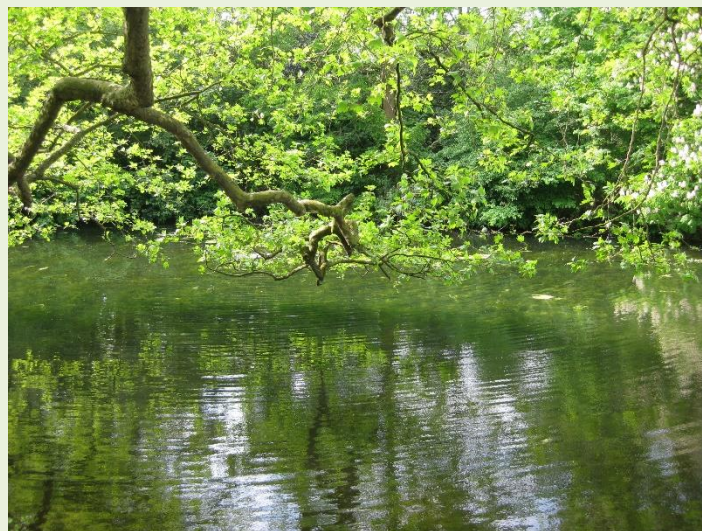
<https://planning2.wandsworth.gov.uk/planningcase/comments.aspx?case=2020%2f2853>

It is not clear from the application what this is intended for. Is it for emergency services such as ambulance and police? Or more likely, is it for large events, including television, in the newly extended Evolution Building? It would be sited at the edge of the Tennis **Courts. The Applicants are Telefonica, Vodafone and Cornerstone, c/o Mono Consultants**

Interestingly, Neil Blackley of Enable has submitted an objection, so maybe the idea that it is anything to do with Evolution is a false trail, and WBC is “renting” out more parts of the Park.

Mr. Blackley writes:

The proposal is not in keeping with the character and historic context of Battersea Park. While it is acknowledged that improved telecommunication signals would be seen by some as a benefit it is fair to say that there will be no direct benefit to users of this public open space if the application is approved. On the contrary there will be a clear visual impact in this location which is primarily a site for healthy leisure pursuits, tranquility, biodiversity, nature and wellbeing. it is not clear why this location has merit and should prevail over others locally, especially considering that a significant urban regeneration project is underway a few hundred meters east around Battersea Power station site, where installations such as these would have far less visual intrusion on the local surroundings.



Evolution Building

Is it our park? Or theirs?

Earlier in the year, when we were allowed in the Park in small groups, my family had a very small picnic. It was difficult to find a shady spot, because everyone else had the same idea, but we did. Except that just when we were leaving, we were ordered off. Why? Because the large piece of lawn, with bushes and trees apparently “belonged” to the Evolution Building. Which was closed due to lockdown. Have we learned nothing about the physical and mental value of green spaces during this lockdown?



Dr Andrew Smith, who has written extensively about green spaces, and who has sometimes been quoted in our Newsletter, has recently published an article, which is reprinted below.

Precarious Parks

The impact of coronavirus on London’s green space

Local green spaces were used heavily during the coronavirus lockdown as many of us craved fresh air and exercise. Yet rather than heralding a new dawn for London’s parks, Dr Andrew Smith, Reader at the University of Westminster, explains how the COVID-19 crisis exposed the funding frailties which have long threatened their survival

London’s parks are world renowned, but they have received unprecedented levels of attention and appreciation during the coronavirus crisis. Parks and

green spaces supplied much needed fresh air and green space, particularly for the 21% of London households who do not have access to private gardens. Parks also provided places where people could socialise at a distance. When cafés, pubs and other social infrastructure were closed, the park became the place where public life was enacted and experienced.



Excess litter in
Mountsfield Park
(Andrew Smith)

Given this prominence in the public sphere, it is tempting to think that the coronavirus crisis might have had positive effects for parks. This couldn't be further from the truth.

Looming in the background is a familiar and established problem: funding. London Boroughs were already struggling to fund their parks and green spaces¹, and they now face an unprecedented budget crisis. There is a triple threat:

- general local authority shortfalls caused by the crisis;
 - the loss of commercial income which now offsets the costs of maintaining many parks;
 - additional costs caused by the intense use of parks as lockdown measures began to be eased.
-
- Clearing up the mess in Mountsfield Park (Andrew Smith)

Local authorities have been promised additional monies to help offset the effects of the crisis, but this will not be enough to prevent further cuts to local authority budgets. One thing we have learned from a decade of austerity is that,

as non-statutory services, parks are not given the same priority as other services when council budgets are squeezed.

Over the past ten years, parks have been forced to generate more of their own income – by increasing the amount of revenue earned from car parking, concessions and sports facilities, and by hiring out space to event organisers. Before the COVID-19 crisis, the proportion of UK park funding derived from commercial sources of income was believed to be around 29%. In 2018-9 the charitable trust that runs The Royal Parks generated three quarters of its operating budget⁴ from commercial revenue. London Boroughs like Lambeth, Wandsworth and Haringey have also adopted entrepreneurial approaches, and several of London's largest municipal parks now generate more money than is needed to pay for their upkeep.

Park authorities that have diversified their sources of income have been worst hit by the coronavirus crisis. Revenue streams have collapsed, with losses up to £1,000,000 affecting large, commercially oriented parks. Despite the reopening of cafés and some sports facilities, it will be next year before authorities can generate revenue from big ticket items like music festivals⁵.

Many London parks are now run by social enterprises or trusts, and these organisations may not survive the effects of COVID-19. The Community Interest Company (CIC) that runs Gunnersbury Park is reporting a 40% reduction in its annual income because it had to close facilities and cancel events.

Budget shortfalls have been exacerbated by the additional costs of maintaining parks during the crisis. When park use increases, as it has done since lockdown measures were eased⁶, so do the costs of maintaining parks.

There have been big increases in littering and additional work for overstretched employees. Staff in Alexandra Park collected 25 tonnes of litter during the month of May, placing additional pressure on the trust that runs this park. Parties, raves and other unauthorised events have caused additional problems, with staff having to deal with associated urination, vandalism and complaints. Additional costs have been exacerbated by the loss of volunteer labour – when these in-kind contributions are taken into consideration, the losses caused by COVID-19 are even higher.

Faced with inadequate public funding, additional costs and the collapse of commercial income, park authorities are now seeking funds from other

sources. Some, including Gunnersbury Park CIC and Lordship Rec, are asking for donations from users. This may help to offset short term deficits, and there may be potential to generate money from this source in the future⁹, but sustainable funding for London's parks remains elusive. Commercial funding is precarious, and the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted that over-relying on income from events is not sensible. However, with public funding likely to be even more scarce, park authorities may be forced to ramp up commercial activity as soon as it is safe to do so.

There are no easy solutions to the funding problems facing London's parks, but the 2020 coronavirus pandemic suggests we should have more faith in our local authorities. Despite being undermined and underfunded by successive national governments, London's borough councils have rightly earned praise for keeping parks open and safe during the COVID-19 crisis. Keeping them open and safe in the longer term might be achieved by backing local authority park management, rather than constantly searching for new entrepreneurial governance and funding models. London's parks seem more important than ever and, if they are to continue to deliver a range of public benefits and assist the green recovery, more public funding is urgently needed.

3rd September 2020

WINTERVILLE RETURNING TO CLAPHAM COMMON BUT ON A SITE UNDER WANDSWORTH'S JURISDICTION ?

Just to let you know that there has been correspondence with councillors, but so far everything seems to be at a standstill. Reading between the lines of the various non-committal council emails, it does seem as if the Council would have given permission. However, as you may know, Winter Wonderland, sited for weeks in Hyde Park, is not going ahead this season, due to the Covid Virus, so one would assume that the same thing would apply to Winterville.

If you still have our February Newsletter on file, it might be worthwhile just reminding yourselves of this. Contact emails below:

Leader and Deputy Leader

Ravi Govindia cllr.r.govindia@wandsworth.gov.uk

Jonathon Cook, Shaftesbury ward. Cllr.J.Cook@wandsworth.gov.uk

Balham Ward

Clare Salier Cllr.C.Salier@wandsworth.gov.uk

Paul Ellis Cllr.P.Ellis@wandsworth.gov.uk

Lucy Mowatt Cllr.L.mowatt@wandsworth.gov.uk

Northcote Ward

Aled Richards-Jones cllr.a.richards-jones@wandsworth.gov.uk

Louise Calland cllr.l.calland@wandsworth.gov.uk

Peter Dawson Cllr.P.Dawson@wandsworth.gov.uk

Shaftesbury Ward

Hugh Byrne and Jonathon Cook (see above)

Guy Senior Cllr.G.Senior@wandsworth.gov.uk

Hugh Byrne, Shaftesbury Ward cllr.h.byrne@wandsworth.gov.uk

NB. It was Hugh Byrne who voted to extend the Evolution Building the reason being that we owed it to other London residents.

CATS CHATS AND 88 KEYS



One of our BPAG supporters, an international concert pianist, who also appeared in Fiona Cunningham Reid's video – remember that? has started a series of lock down concerts shown on his YouTube Channel. They take place every two weeks, at 7.30 on a Friday, and the advantage of YouTube is that if you cannot pick up the live stream, you can pick it up later. These will continue once we are out of this epidemic, since they have been proving extremely popular. Music Societies have already booked him to give an on-line a concert for their members. In addition, he has recorded 6 levels of the ABRSM piano pieces, with explanatory talk to help the students.

You will also have seen him at our meetings. You probably know him as JP. Take a look here. Remember to press the subscribe button, leave a comment, as this will ensure you are kept up to date with the latest events.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMMxbvC9KmdO5slhy_pDhkA



NOISE

Complaints about **noise** from any events should go to **Noise Line**. But surely one should first ring the perpetrator/hirer – Enable – and only ring Noise Line if that fails? So here are both contacts. We urge you to use these numbers and not let excessive noise pass unreported.

(020) 8871 6127

events@enablelc.org

020 3959 0068

WBC Noise Control 0208 871 6127

Hours of Operation Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 09.00 - 17.00 hrs

Thursday (Day time) 09.00 - 17.00 hrs

Thursday (Evening) 19.00 - 02.00 hrs

Friday 20.00 - 03.00 hrs

Saturday 13.00 - 03.00 hrs

Sunday (Day time) 09.00 - 04.00 hrs

Sunday (Evening) 19.00 - 02.00 hrs

**Emergency Control will take the call and pass it on to the Noise Officer
who will
then telephone the complainant for confirmation, and to arrange a visit
to the area
of the home, to assess the noise, and make a report.**

The Council says:

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, we have assessed the service we provide responding to noise complaints to ensure that we do not put you or our officers at risk. We will therefore be using a pragmatic approach responding to complaints. We will not be visiting complainants and individuals alleged to be causing noise problems in all cases, unless an assessment has been made that it is safe for us to do so. We will still continue to operate our service and respond to complaints using alternative measures such as carrying out noise assessments outside properties in some cases. It is hoped that you will appreciate why we have come to this decision.

VICTORIA TOWER GARDENS (a Grade 2* Park)

Update

The proposed erection of a Holocaust Centre on the site of the Victoria Tower Gardens near the Houses of Parliament.

As we wrote in the September Newsletter, no-one is against this memorial. What people are objecting to is its siting in such a tiny garden, a space that has been used for decades for relaxation and peace

Here is an update received a couple of days ago:

The judicial review case brought by the London Gardens Trust (LGT) against the government, with the support of Save Victoria Tower Gardens, was heard earlier this month. The Judge is now considering his decision.

As you will remember, what we and the LGT object to is the situation where, following the public inquiry in front of a planning inspector, the final decision on planning permission for the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre will be made not by an impartial decision-maker but by a minister in the selfsame department that is applying for the permission – and indeed in a government which has publicly pledged to build it in VTG. The Judge's decision will probably only be known after the inquiry has started, which will be late October, but that is not a problem because the question is who gets to make the final decision on the inspector's recommendation.

We thought you would like to see the LGT's report (taken from [its website](#)) on how the hearing went:

“We have spent the last few days reflecting on an intense court case, which lasted two full days. Due to Covid 19, the hearing took place virtually, with the judge sitting in his living room, wearing robes but no wig. The barristers were either at home or in their chambers with our barristers having the uphill task of presenting the case over 5 hours on the first day – referring to great tomes of preparatory documentation

The Judge took great interest and care in the case, asking many questions. However, the decision on our case will have wide ramifications, and could potentially affect many planning applications made by local authorities to themselves. The Judge was at great pains to acknowledge the public interest in the case and to make no comment about the merits of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens as that was not the point of this JR.

One success, during the course of the hearing, is that the Government was forced to concede that we had not been tardy in our application for a Judicial Review, which is what they had suggested. They therefore withdrew their contention that we had been timed-out – a typical example of their bullying tactics that did not stand the test of reason

We are keeping our campaign open because the fight is not yet over - we still have the Public Inquiry to fund, and even though our lawyers are giving us massively discounted rates, we still have to pay them. If we win the JR then it is possible that the Government will appeal - we would hate to give up at that stage."

Massive thanks to those of you who have already donated to the JR challenge or to the funding of the inquiry. As LGT says, we still need more in order to fund proper representation at the Inquiry. If you can give more, we would be incredibly grateful; and please do share this with anyone you believe can help. All information is below and a Gift Aid form attached. *(I have not attached it, but you can find it on their website – see end of article)*

We are concerned that we have not been able properly to acknowledge all donations. Unfortunately CAF donations appear in The Thorney Island Society's bank account anonymously, so we do not know who they are from. If you have given and have not been thanked, do feel free to let us know who you are – but in any case, special thanks, and do forgive us!

Also attached is information about the Planning Inquiry (as you will soon see on local lampposts). The Inquiry starts on the 6th October and will go on for 16 days. In this information you can see how you can access the Planning Inquiry, which should be fascinating.

We are making one addendum to the information. The words, "An Inspector instructed by the Secretary of State will hold an Inquiry opening on the date shown above in order to report to the Secretary of State to assist with his determination" should instead say, "Subject to Judicial Review. I think I can speak for all of us when I say that we all hope it will be over soon - and we all hope we can keep the park and neighbourhood intact.

Website: www.SaveVictoriaTowerGardens.co.uk

Petition: <https://www.change.org/p/sir-peter-bazalgette-save-victoria-tower-gardens-no-building-in-this-precious-london-park>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SaveVTG/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/savevtg?lang=en>

**Local and Other Organisations that need your support.
Why not, since they support us.**

LONDON FRIENDS OF GREEN SPACES NETWORK

Fighting to protect our green spaces – with your support.

<http://www.lfgn.org.uk/>

They have now turned into a very active group. Do get on their mailing list for regular updates on campaigns, new regulations, privatisation. Keeping informed is a large part of the battle. (SE)

THE OPEN SPACES SOCIETY

The Open Spaces Society was founded in 1865 as the Commons Preservation Society. It is Britain's oldest national conservation body. Its founders and early members included John Stuart Mill, Lord Eversley, Sir Robert Hunter and Octavia Hill. The last two funded the National Trust in 1895, along with Canon Rawnsley. Lord Eversley was a Liberal MP and became a junior minister at the Board of Trade. Over the last century the society has preserved commons for the enjoyment of the public. It has also been active in protecting the historical and vital rights-of-way network through England and Wales.

All this, and much much more. <https://www.oss.org.uk/who-we-are/>

They were very supportive during our long campaign over Formula E, but their help depends very much on donations and subscriptions. Why not join them.

They were also involved in trying to prevent Winterville on the Common in Lambeth. They are now taking an interest in what appears to be happening with Winterville in Wandsworth.

The Battersea Society started in 1965 to help keep alive the identity of Battersea, following its incorporation into the London Borough of Wandsworth.

The best way to:

- Keep in touch with local issues
- Stay informed about planning matters
- Enjoy regular talks and events
- Learn more about Battersea's past, present and future.

www.batterseasociety.org.uk

Friends of Battersea Park was founded in 1988. The latest Review says:

The *Friends of Battersea Park* exist to help protect and maintain the Park as an oasis of tranquillity, natural beauty and recreation. For thirty years we have liaised between Park users and those who manage the Park. Our role constantly changes and includes being consulted on new projects, raising improvement funds and lobbying the Council about problems in the Park. We are also a leading authority on the Park's natural and historic layout. <https://batterseapark.org/>

LIVING STREETS: The UK Charity for Everyday Walking

Find out more on

<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/>

For your Wandsworth Branch, contact

Robert Molteno, Secretary, Wandsworth Living Streets

on Robert.Molteno@gmail.com