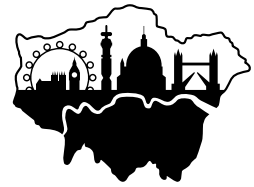


# newsforum



The London Forum - working to protect and improve the quality of life in London

**The London Forum of  
Amenity and Civic Societies**

Founded 1988

[www.londonforum.org.uk](http://www.londonforum.org.uk)

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## Threats to open spaces and parks

# Threats to parks and open spaces Dismay at Crystal Palace Park ruling

*Many would agree with the Open Spaces Society that there can be no circumstances under which any part of such a special park should be redeveloped. It sets a disastrous precedent.*

## London Forum Survey

### London Forum Survey of Members

The new survey to gather your views and inform London Forum's future representations, is being processed. The results will be presented and discussed at an

**Open Meeting**  
**Tuesday September 11**  
**6:00pm for a 6:30pm**

at

**The Gallery**

See back page for more details ■

The CPCA has lost its High Court challenge to the Secretary State's approval of the London Development Agency's Crystal Palace Park Masterplan which includes the sale of protected public parkland for 180 private luxury apartments on Grade II\* registered Metropolitan Open Land. Mr. Justice Keith ruled that although there is "...very strong presumption against development on such land." he finds "... very special circumstances which were sufficient to outweigh this..." something the CPCA rejects.

Many would agree with the Open Spaces Society that there can be no circumstances under which any part of such a special park should be redeveloped. It sets a disastrous precedent.

The London Development Agency's 20-year plan for the park, including building homes, won government backing in 2010. The agency's plans to regenerate the area have been supported by Bromley Council, the Mayor of London, English Heritage, Natural England and the Garden History Society. Their lawyers argued the proposal was the best opportunity to protect the Grade II-listed park and the listed buildings in it.

The CPCA has said that although disappointed by the judge's decision it is more determined than ever to save Crystal Palace Park from commercial development. They point out that the LDA does not even

exist any more, its functions having been absorbed into the GLA, and that Mayor Boris Johnson says there is £2 Million 'set aside' for Crystal Palace Park but no further money available.

The park, designed by Sir Joseph Paxton, was originally created to house the Crystal Palace, the highlight of the 1851 Great Exhibition, on the Penge Place Estate in Sydenham Hill. It opened in 1854.

But the Victorian structure was destroyed in a fire in 1936. The park now houses the National Sports Centre and the Italian Terraces.

But the condition of the park has been deteriorating and, along with several of the listed buildings within it, was on the Heritage at Risk Register.

The decision has divided the local community – some support the plan – but, as CPCA has pointed out, it sets a dangerous precedent for the protection of green open spaces, even if designated Metropolitan Open Land.

The Open Spaces Society, which supported CPCA's challenge, has expressed dismay at the High Court ruling, that part of this unique park, which is designated MOL and should be protected, can be sacrificed for commercial development and sold off for private gain. ■

# Parks and open spaces - threats and opportunities

Town Green applications to save King's Stairs Gardens' and Bromley's Italian Garden; RAF Bomber Command memorial and Alexandra Palace

**A**nother open space in Bromley that is under threat is its unique Italian Garden.

Bromley Council plans to sell the Garden, an open space on the south side of Queen's Gardens, so as to build five restaurants there.

Bromley Civic Society and the Friends of Bromley Town Parks & Gardens group have worked jointly to oppose the scheme with backing from the Open Spaces Society.

The Italian Garden was added to Queen's Gardens about 20 years ago to compensate for the loss of another part of Queen's Gardens taken to build The Glades shopping centre in the redevelopment of Bromley town centre.

The site forms part of a conservation area and the proposed development is contrary to the requirements of development in a conservation area: that it should preserve or enhance the area.

A previous application was rejected at council's Development Control Committee meeting in February on the grounds that the proposal would be an over-intensive development of the site, detrimental to the character and appearance of the Bromley Town Centre Conservation Area, and contrary to the Unitary Development Plan Policy

To try to safeguard the threatened area the campaigners have also submitted an application for it to be designated as a Town Green under the Commons Act 2006. Over 50 letters of support for their application have been received from the local public. A Public Notice announcing this application was published in April 2012. ■

**K**ing's Stairs Gardens next to the Thames in Rotherhithe is maintained by the Borough of Southwark's Parks Section and is approximately three hectares. It has been under threat from Thames Water's super-sewer plans. These would see all the vegetation stripped out (including felling an avenue of mature trees) and the sinking of a shaft 250 feet deep and 100 feet wide.

Local people submitted an application to register the land as a town or village green, to the London Borough of Southwark, the greens registration authority, in August 2011, with supporting evidence of local people's use of the land.

The land is owned by the council who did not object, but it raised queries about whether the land had been acquired as open space, which would have prevented it from being registered as a green. In fact, no evidence was found to clarify for what purpose the land had been acquired.

On 25 January 2012, the Council Assembly, on the recommendation of the Strategic Director of Communities, Law and Governance, agreed to register the land as a green.

However the threat from Thames Water is not entirely lifted and the Save our Park group are maintaining their vigilance. ■

## Bomber Command memorial

### Queen unveils RAF Bomber Command memorial

A £6m memorial to the 55,573 airmen of Bomber Command who died during World War II has been unveiled by the Queen. The memorial, in Green Park at Hyde Park Corner, was designed by Liam O'Connor and built in Portland stone.

It features a bronze 9ft-high sculpture of seven aircrew by sculptor Philip Jackson. Its roof is made of aluminium reclaimed from a Handley Page Halifax III bomber shot down over Belgium in May 1944. An inscription says the memorial "also commemorates those of all nations who lost their lives in the bombing of 1939-1945".

The ceremony was the culmination of a five-year campaign, spearheaded by the late Bee Gees pop singer Robin Gibb.

The imposing and grandiose scale of the memorial has aroused much controversy (newsforum Issues 56 Spring, 57 Autumn 2010)

While many support the idea of a memorial, the grandiosity of its neoclassical pavilion has been criticised by many as inappropriately evoking the work of Hitler's architect Albert Speer, or the Italian fascist style. Many also feel that allowing a large swathe of precious greenery in this important park to be "developed" in this manner sets a bad precedent.

But the grandeur of the monument was acclaimed by veterans, who may well see its lavish appearance as some kind of belated compensation for a long delay in commemorating their sacrifice. ■

## Regeneration Of Alexandra Palace

Earlier this year, Alexandra Palace was awarded over £320,000 in funding by English Heritage so that it could make much needed repairs to the Palace and appoint conservation architects.

Now, following a competitive tender process, Alexandra Park & Palace Charitable Trust have commissioned Terry Farrell and Partners to draw up a strategic spatial masterplan for the transformation of the Palace. The regeneration plans were unveiled for public consultation in May. The

aim is to transform the 1873 Grade II-listed building into a new hub for culture, community events, learning and recreation.

Plans include restoration of the Victorian theatre, a new hotel and the opening up of Ally Pally's BBC television studios. Improvements to public realm and restoration of the structure's basement have also been proposed. Donald Insall Associates is working on the building's conservation.

The chief executive Duncan Wilson's vision is to create a "vibrant cultural and recreational People's Palace north of the river .....in much the same way as the South Bank has carved a cultural niche for itself"

Terry Farrell & Partners, designed the temporary pavilion there, 30 years ago. (For more comment see *Round the Societies* page 18) ■

# Open Meeting on Parks and Open Spaces

To discuss the many issues facing London's 3,000 green spaces, and to celebrate the work of Friends Groups, the London Forum held a well-attended meeting on Open Spaces in March 2012, with Dave Morris - the chair of the London Green Spaces Friends Groups Network (LFGN) - as the key-note speaker. **Peter Pickering** reports

Due to the impending elections officers of the GLA were unavailable to speak; the opening presentations were made by Peter Eversden, Chairman of the London Forum, and Dave Morris, Chairman of the London Green Spaces Friends Groups Network.

## The London Plan and current policies

Mr Eversden explained the relevant provisions of the London Plan, which the boroughs were obliged to follow. Under that plan, the Mayor would have a Green Infrastructure and Open Environment Portfolio. There would be an all-London Green Grid, linking green chains. A Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Preparing Tree and Woodland Strategies' (a joint publication with the Forestry Commission, which should stop the practice of replacing all trees with flowering cherries) was open for consultation; another relevant SPG was 'Shaping Neighbourhoods'. The Mayor also had a 'Great Outdoors Programme', covering for instance the Fairlop Waters Country Park initiative. All of these were meant to cohere. But the Mayor's Planning Decisions Unit, to which many cases were referred, had too great an emphasis on housing in its decisions.

## Opportunities and threats

Mr Morris described the umbrella group which he led, and Lordship Park, which was his base. He said that there were over 3000 protected green spaces in London. Since the dark days of the 1970s-80s, when most green spaces were neglected and a drain on the community, there had been a renaissance, spearheaded by Friends groups (of which there were more than 5000 in the United Kingdom as a whole) who organised events and managed their green space in co-operation with their borough council. The profile of green spaces had been raised, and they had gained a long-term vision and serious resources. But more recently boroughs were cutting their parks budget, and had become more willing to do damaging deals with developers.

Mr Morris said that the prime enemy was neglect - which could lead to selling-off, as the green space came to seem less important to the local community. Mr Morris emphasised the need for more

Friends Groups, and for them to link up; he was always ready to help set up borough-wide forums.

The discussion that followed was a lively and well-informed one.

## Threats to MOL and Green Belt – commercial use and noise

Mike Gee (Finchley Society) said that Barnet Council were proposing to permit parts of parks to be hired out for private events, and were ignoring the views of local people who were overwhelmingly opposed to it; or of the evidence that the scheme would produce very little net revenue. He also described how Barnet Council had advertised the potential of a derelict pavilion in Cherry Tree Woods without making it clear to potential clients that it was in Metropolitan Open Land and therefore had serious restrictions on what development would be permissible.

Monica Smith (Enfield Society) was worried about the Green Belt - Tottenham Hotspur were erecting a building three times as big as a supermarket.

Robin Brown (Hayes Community Development Forum) said that a park created in 1991 and well laid-out and supported by local people had now been raided for a new primary school.

Peter Eversden responded that the London Plan was strong on Green Belt policy, and firmer on the protection of Metropolitan Open Land, but we had to persuade the Mayor to implement it and enforce it on boroughs. He pointed out that the Localism Act required councils to engage with the public.

Events with up to 78 decibels were permitted in Hyde Park, and English Heritage wanted corporate events in Chiswick Park; it was very difficult to stop a local authority from deciding how to use its open spaces, though in one case the Ombudsman had been a great help.

Dave Morris agreed that there was a real and continuing general threat from commercial activities in parks; this was not a matter simply of a few dodgy councillors or committees. The voice of the people must be heard, if necessary through direct action.

A representative of Just Space drew attention to the problem with monitoring the loss of public open space in London, some of which was being converted to private open space, available only to the

inhabitants of the dwellings.

Barbara Knowles of Maygrove Peace Park described how this park lay between two railway lines, and after a difficult period in the 1990s had been refurbished and won Green Flag status; but it was under pressure from intensive development on its edges.

Mr Morris said that if an open space was designated there was some planning protection for its environs; Green Flag status was a minimum - which ought to be met by all open spaces.

Mr Eversden said that there was a threat to financing in that the Government had said that developers could renegotiate too burdensome Section 106 agreements.

The Friends of Jubilee Gardens said that though they had got the gardens designated as Metropolitan Open Land part had now been de-designated so that it could be used as a car park.

Mr Eversden asked the Friends, with the Waterloo Community Development Group, to keep the Forum in touch with problems.

## Other issues of concern

David Evans (Battersea Society) was concerned at the replacement of specialised Park Police with general metropolitan police constables.

The Friends of Ravenscourt Park were concerned that the park was being used more and more by private secondary schools, who paid, rather than by local primary schools.

Tom Ball was concerned about St. James's and Green Park; with the Mayor's greater involvement their boards were politically dominated, and had lost continuity and ecological knowledge.

Louanne Tranchell (Hammersmith Community Trust) wondered what was happening about space to grow food.

In response, Mr Eversden emphasised the importance of using the assembly to rein in the Mayor (the Localism Act gave it more powers in this respect).

Mr Morris said that the Friends Groups Network preferred money to go to parks staff rather than parks police - the metropolitan police were likely to patrol less if there were parks police. Food growing was rising on the agenda; it was possible to combine food growing in open spaces (for instance fruit trees) with public access.

*continued on page 4*

# Thames Water supersewer

New consultation - update

## Open Spaces meeting report (continued)

He drew attention to Love Parks week in the last week of July, including a picnic in Victoria Tower Gardens on 29th July.

John Egan (Highbury Community Association) said that Jubilee Trust status had been obtained for Gillespie Park.

Tom Ball drew attention to the activities of 'Natural Estates' and the London Wildlife Trust in Churchill Gardens, where they had ignored local residents in their incompetent attempt to create a wildlife garden.

Mr Morris said that though initiatives to encourage wildlife in parks were good, they should not be imposed from the top down, as this seemed to have been. ■

Thames Water is currently conducting the second phase of a major public consultation on the plans for a supersewer, Construction work on the super-sewer tunnel, which would run 32km beneath the route of the river through London, will take at least seven years. The consultation which ends on 10th February, has included a number of heated debates at public meetings where Phil Stride, Head of London Tideway Tunnels and Richard Aylard Director of External Affairs and Sustainability have appeared in person to speak for Thames. There are mixed views about it. Local councils and other groups affected by the proposed building works are still voicing strong opposition to the plans.

## Environmental NGOs support super-sewer proposals

The tunnel has received strong support from several quarters, particularly environmental organisations. Head of the Environment Agency Lord Smith has described Thames Water's proposed "super-sewer" as a necessity, not an option.

Lord Smith's comments came in a speech at a ceremony to mark the 30th anniversary of the London Wildlife Trust, when he described current problems of sewage entering the Thames as the worst sewage pollution problem in the UK. The London Wildlife Trust belongs to the Thames

Tunnel Now Coalition, which also counts the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, WWF UK, Waterways Association, River Thames Society, Mammal Society and Marine Conservation Society amongst its members.

Set up in October last year, the Coalition described the situation as "a large scale problem which requires a large scale solution for the capital for at least the next 120 years. It will cost £3.6 billion, and will be paid for by Thames Water customers; each household will pay £60-65 extra a year, with bills starting to rise in 2013. Thames Water bills are currently among the lowest in the country and the new higher rates will still be lower than many other water companies' in the UK.

"Construction of the tunnel will create 4,000 direct jobs and many more associated jobs as well as a clean and healthy tidal river which could support many thousands more employment opportunities in recreation, leisure and tourism industries of the future."

However, other estimates put the figure of the cost to the average water bill much higher.

## Support from Business leaders and unions

Business leaders and unions in London have also thrown their weight behind the supersewer, despite local opposition and the prospect of higher water bills for householders. ■

## Canal & River Trust heralds a new life for the waterways

Some 2,000 miles of canals and rivers in England and Wales were placed in trust for the nation by being handed over to the Canal & River Trust this month—the largest ever single transfer of a public body into the charitable sector in financial terms. The Prince of Wales is its Patron.

The transfer includes £450m of canal and riverside properties, which will help to generate income for the maintenance of the canals.

The canals and waterways, once the arteries of the industrial revolution, fell into disuse and were, for decades, seen as derelict and dangerous. Organisations such as the Inland Waterways Association, which has been fighting since 1946 to preserve the UK's inland waterways, recall the dark days of the 1950s when the canals were little more than glorified dumping grounds and the government was trying to fill them in. In recent years, they have experienced something of a renaissance.

The asset transfer from British Waterways to CRT is part of the coalition government's Public Bodies Reform programme, which will see more than 250 public bodies or quangos disappear. Their functions will either be absorbed back into government, privatised or handed to the voluntary sector.

Viewed as part of the government's "Big Society" project, it has been welcomed by those that live and work on the canals, many of whom see a better chance of them being preserved and improved than when they were administered by British Waterways.

The trust has a 15-year funding agreement for £800m with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, giving it long-term income stability. This makes up only 30p of every pound the trust needs to maintain the waterways, but the property endowment will generate a significant income and fund

about half of the maintenance costs.

The properties belonging to the trust account for only 2 per cent of canal frontage, but they include some key properties in London.

The trust also has the support of three corporate sponsors, including the Co-operative Bank, and Google, which has put the UK's canal tow paths and cycle paths on to Google Maps as part of a campaign with the Sustrans charity to promote sustainable travel.

The 10 million people who visit and love the waterways will have the chance to play a greater role in making them more beautiful than ever by becoming Friends of the Canal & River Trust. By pledging money or time, people can get involved in one of the trust's 50 projects such as creating new habitats, including one along the Hertford Union Canal in east London, that will create an "edible wall" lined with strawberries, tomatoes and lettuce. ■

# The future for UK waste disposal

Disposal of waste is one of the most important and controversial issues facing us and opinion is divided on every aspect. The Engineering Employers' Federation criticise inadequate government response

A report by the manufacturers' organisation, Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) earlier this year finds that Companies are wasting millions of tonnes of valuable raw materials. Based on a survey of 200 leading manufacturing executives, it blamed the lack of adequate recycling facilities and confusing legislation for hampering Britain's economy as demand and prices for raw materials soars.

## Poor infrastructure

Britain's recycling infrastructure is so poor that it exports 15 million tonnes of industrial waste each year, half of which is valuable scrap metal; industrial waste by weight makes up one sixth of our total exports.

Twenty-year old legislation dictating how British companies deal with their waste is "unnecessarily complex, confusing and based on out-of-date assumptions" that waste will be sent to landfill. It must be overhauled, the EEF said, with a new generation of specialised, affordable and accessible recycling centres.

## Waste policy review delayed

Yet when the government unveiled its National Planning Policy Framework the waste sector was largely left out of the changes, although a waste policy review was announced by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) last year. A progress report on this review, originally due to appear this spring has been postponed and may not now appear until the end of 2013.

Planning Policy Statement 10 on waste will remain in force, but it may not provide enough certainty to enable essential waste infrastructure to be successfully delivered. The last national waste strategy for England appeared in 2007.

Defra says it is exploring how to address potential raw material shortages and to improve recovery, recycling and re-use of critical resources but industry sources say they are not ambitious enough and quite narrow in focus. The Government has to take more concrete action.

## What are the options?

Should we be burning non-recyclable waste and using its latent value to create lean, dependable energy instead of wastefully sending it to landfill?

Are large-scale energy recovery plants

with economies of scale the right approach. Or are small-scale anaerobic digestion (AD) plants more appropriate?

Some say larger plants lock local communities into a long-term inflexible diversion route, for energy recovery; incinerators tend to be sized at 25 plus megawatts - over 350,000 tonnes - and rarely make efficient use of the heat which is lost up the chimney; the only people who benefit from large centralised facilities are the bankers and the large waste management companies.

Emergent starved air systems operating at similar temperatures offer routes to higher levels of energetic conversion efficiency and are competitive at smaller scale. In consequence the heat output is more easily utilised as well in a local network.

## Hostility of local communities

Another problem area is the hostility of local communities to proposed facilities, whether incineration or landfill, in their vicinity.

Plans by South London Waste Partnership for an incinerator for its landfill site in Beddington have aroused fierce local opposition, as has a similar project by the North London Waste Authority (Newsforum 59 Sept 2011)

## Are the local authorities to blame?

In letter to The Times, Dr. William Temple-Pediani of KTI Energy Limited in Luton, blamed public sector incompetence and planning officers lacking technical background or training as the reason why so many undesirable incineration projects are coming forward.

He claims that they are refusing adoption of clean biomass fuel produced from waste, like solid recovered fuel (SRF) and waste woodchip. He says "Residents are asked by the public sector to trust operators of incinerators - with qualifications significantly less than must be possessed by nuclear engineers - not to kill them. Government should ban stand-alone incinerators and permit only those facilities fired by waste biomass fuel operating in a qualifying combined heat and power configuration."

## What can be done?

But something must be done. And who are we to believe? Evidence from EU countries with the very highest recycling levels, shows that Energy-from-Waste (EfW) competes with recycling, and can operate alongside recycling systems in a complementary manner.

## Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme

Meanwhile in March the Government announced its commitment to growing the UK market for renewable heat technologies by announcing further support for the domestic sector under a second phase of the Renewable Heat Premium Payment Scheme (RHPP). It also set out a delivery timetable for providing longer term support for households, and expanding the non-domestic scheme

The Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) is the first of its kind in the world and provides long term support for renewable heat technologies such as heat pumps, biomass boilers and solar thermal panels. ■

## London's future energy needs

### Business and the City say London needs to plan better for its future energy needs

*Delivering Power: The Future of Electricity Regulation in London's Central Business District*, a report published in March by the City of London, London First and the City Property Association, says London needs to plan now to guarantee a reliable supply of electricity if it is to meet the demand for power from growth anticipated in its central business district over the next 20 years.

It comes ahead of talks between London distribution network operator UK Power Networks and Ofgem, which will decide the regulatory framework and level of investment for the period 2015-2023.

The report makes the case for increased investment in electricity networks in central London, and reforms to make the system more flexible to meet future growth.

The research was undertaken by Stephen Jones Associates and South East Economics. It is based on a comprehensive set of interviews with developers and other interested parties, together with Ofgem. The GLA and UK Power Networks were also consulted. ■

# Green museums

The country's leading museums and institutions are leading the way in energy saving schemes at South Kensington and Greenwich

Energy minister Greg Barker launched a proposal in November 2011, for an energy sharing and storage system linking the whole of London's South Kensington Estate, including the Science Museum, Natural History Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum, the Royal Albert Hall, the Royal College of Art, the Royal College of Music, Imperial College and the Royal Geographic Society. The £32m scheme would be the largest of its kind in the world.

Boreholes drilled into the chalk aquifer 70m beneath Exhibition Road would allow heat to be collected from the buildings during summer, stored, and recycled to provide winter heating. During winter, an underground cold store would be built up to provide summertime cooling. Heat maps show that some buildings have cooling requirements while others need heating. Mott MacDonald, the firm behind the technical study underpinning the initiative, also hopes to make use of the existing Victorian network of tunnels beneath the institutions for the pipework needed to pump the warm and cold water required.

## The 1851 Group,

The proposal was developed for the 1851 Group, representing all of the institutions on the South Kensington Estate. "By working together, building owners and occupiers can make a much greater return on investment, both in terms of cost and carbon reduction, than by acting alone," their spokesman says. "We're going back to the idea that if you all pull together in terms of neighbourhood-scale infrastructure planning, everyone benefits." The proposal could be applied anywhere with mixed heating and cooling requirements, ranging from institution campuses to whole city districts.

The study shows that the South Kensington network would pay for itself in 10 years, yielding a whole-life financial benefit of £18 million. It is envisaged that utility companies will adopt the technology to provide heating and cooling to domestic customers as well as large organisations. A number of UK power and water providers are showing interest.

## The National Maritime Museum

Mott MacDonald Fulcrum has also worked with the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, to use underground systems to become self-sufficient in energy. A £35 million museum refurbishment and extension began in 2009 and several innovative energy saving systems are now in use. The highly efficient building design has opened up archives, created new exhibition and learning spaces, and improved access with a new "more welcoming" entrance.

## Aquifer thermal energy storage

An aquifer thermal energy storage (ATES) system provides the majority of energy needed for heating and cooling the new wing. This extremely energy efficient heating and cooling system uses two boreholes (one being a hot well, and one a cold well), each 300mm diameter and 80 metres deep. Large areas of the wing, for example the special exhibitions gallery, are underground. This enables significant energy savings in heating and cooling as the ground reduces large swings in temperature. Heat is recovered from extracted air and used to pre-heat fresh air entering the spaces.

At the new Sammy Ofer wing the archive spaces are extremely well insulated, and humidity is buffered through the use of clay in the walls – this reduces the amount of time mechanical plants need to operate. The central boiler plant comprises five modular 220 kW low temperature hot water gas-fired boilers providing energy efficiency and flexibility.

A water borehole serves the new wing with filtered water for flushing WCs. In addition the wing incorporates 4/2 litre dual-flush toilets and aerated, flow-regulated, auto shut-off taps. Large volumes of rainwater are drained from hard surfaces around the building and stored in an underground tank. Rainwater is then pumped via a system of pipes to the surrounding landscape for irrigation.

## Landscape

The landscape has been designed to minimise use of treated water. The majority of the soft landscape area is covered with drought-tolerant grass and

turf which will not require irrigation.

The planting zone on the terrace of the new wing incorporates drought-tolerant species such as those found at maritime cliff top locations, able to grow in vary shallow depths of nutrient-poor soil.

The new landscaping is designed to integrate the area with Greenwich Park and complement the World Heritage Site.

## Ventilation

The majority of the building is mechanically-ventilated. This enables heat to be recovered from extracted air and used to pre-heat fresh incoming air. ■

## New rules on VAT

### VAT on alterations to listed buildings

Government's plans to charge VAT on alterations to listed buildings has caused widespread dismay. There are currently about 400,000 listed buildings in the UK. The VAT increase is due to take effect from October 1.

### Cut the VAT Coalition

A campaign to get the proposals changed called Cut the VAT Coalition was formed led by the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the Heritage Alliance. Among first 21 organisations who signed up were the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Federation of Master Builders, the Institute of Historic Building Conservation, and the Historic Houses Association. Support for the campaign now extends to over 50 organisations and countless individuals, including some very senior politicians and well-known celebrities.

Since the campaign began, the EU has changed the law to allow member states to permanently reduce VAT to 5% in this area in order to support economic growth.

More information about the campaign can be found on the websites of the above mentioned organisations. ■

# Windows and energy efficiency

Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage stirred up a hornet's nest with an article in the Financial Times in March in which he highlighted the damage to the cultural value of historic areas of replacing original windows with un-plasticised polyvinyl chloride or PVC-U.

Thurley's article provoked a flurry of dismayed responses from within the Glass and Glazing Federation (GGF), (employers and companies in the flat glass, glazing, home improvement and window film industries), and other pvc led businesses.

But there were also some interesting and well considered opinions, in particular from the Aluminium Trade Supply website which, while pointing out that the pvc industry has progressed enormously on the "authentic look", admitted that "a pvc window remains a pvc window" and agreed that "only the original window can TRULY replicate the original look". There are now companies producing very good work but, he says, "when designers can get rid of the welded look and the general plastic appearance then I think they will have an even stronger case".

## Are old windows really are the problem?

The Aluminium Trade writer also suggested that those defending PVC-U windows against Thurley's article in the Financial Times, had missed the point somewhat, as the article was also attempting to say to homeowners that existing traditional windows can be improved to perform better.

Thurley questions whether old windows really are the problem and makes a case for their sustainability. Old windows have been cast as "the villain of the piece" and many owners are convinced that their old windows cannot meet the UK target of a U value of 2 or less, (although the GGF corrected him on this saying that since October 2010, the requirement in England and Wales has been a U Value of 1.6 or less; the U value is a measure of heat loss through a sq m of a building). But with new information a case can be made that replacing old wooden windows with PVCu units made by carbon-hungry processes may not only damage conservation areas but also the planet.

The UK English House Condition Survey undertaken in 2006 reported that more than 40 per cent of houses built between 1850 and 1899 now have PVCu double glazing; many of these are illegally installed in conservation areas.

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*Even with new techniques a case can be made that replacing old wooden windows with PVCu units made by carbon-hungry processes may not only damage conservation areas but also the planet.*

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Thurley blames domestic energy assessments required in the EU by the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (2002), and says they almost always unfairly discriminate against traditionally constructed buildings, using a simplified and stripped-down box-ticking assessment system that makes no allowance for the subtleties of traditional construction.

He cites research undertaken by Danish and English national heritage agencies that has recently demonstrated that traditional windows can perform just as well (and in some circumstances better) than plastic ones. Simple maintenance, secondary glazing or even thick curtains can reduce heat loss by nearly 90 per cent.

## A global issue.

Thurley claims it has become a hotly contested problem not just in the UK but across Europe and North America and is now a global issue. "The fight back to reverse prejudice against traditional windows has begun, led by a number of northern European heritage agencies, particularly in the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden. Green governments in cold countries have a particular interest in the problem".

The lifespan of PVC-U was also subject to claim and counter claim. Thurley claimed that PVC-U windows last barely twenty years; the industry is now heavily promoting a lifespan of well over 40 years; but the Aluminium Trade Supply writer throws doubt on this claim saying it is more like 25 years. ■

## The beta of GOVUK

### The first step towards a single government website

The government is running an experimental trial replacement for Directgov.Gov.uk. The aim is to have a "single domain for central government with simpler, clearer, faster services for users and savings and innovation for Government".

As a result of Martha Lane Fox's report demanding that Government 'revolutionise' its online services, the Government Digital Service (GDS) was formed, and launched an experimental prototype of GOV.UK.

### New domain given the go-ahead

The beta of single domain was given the go-ahead in August 2011 and has three phases:

Public beta test of the site delivering the mainstream, citizen-facing aspects of GOV.UK.

Private beta test of a shared GOV.UK 'corporate' publishing platform, aimed at replacing most of the activity currently hosted on numerous departmental publishing environments.

The third phase will be a first draft of a GOV.UK 'Global Experience Language', to provide clear, consistent design, user-experience and brand clarity for those developing sites for the single GOV.UK domain.

The GOV.UK beta builds on years of work and learning across government and outside it about how to deliver better services to users. Directgov is now 8 years old and is thought to need updating.

### Information for techies

They're hosting it with Amazon Web Services for now and will shift it to the government's G-Cloud framework once it's up and running (another international example of infrastructure as a service); The code behind GOV.UK has been released as open source code on GitHub.

For more information see:

[w https://www.gov.uk/](https://www.gov.uk/) ■

# How redevelopment in London is affecting its heritage.

London's rich history often throws up problems for developers. Three have been in the news in the last year. **Helen Marcus** reports

## The London Stone

It seems that the usually irresistible force of Foster and Partners, architects, may have hit an immovable object in the form of the legendary London Stone - also known as the Stone of Brutus - which has been a symbol of the City for at least 900 years.

Often unnoticed by passers-by the Stone is encased in glass behind a 19th-century ironwork grille within the wall of 111 Cannon Street, at pavement level where it is in the way of the 35,000 square feet of retail and restaurant accommodation planned for the ground floor of the Walbrook Building. Minerva, the developers who commissioned Foster, have applied for permission to move it several yards down the road to a 'purpose built display' in their new complex.

## Myths and legends

The Stone has become the subject of countless myths and legends and London's fate is said to lie with it: 'as long as the stone is safe, then London will remain so too'.

First recorded in a 12th C document, nobody knows exactly what it is, apart from a piece of oolitic limestone, which suggests that it may have been brought to London in the Roman period, but its mythic traction overrides dates and historical facts.

It has been claimed that it was the stone from which King Arthur drew the sword Excalibur; it also known as the Brutus Stone from another legend claiming that it is a remnant of a temple built by Brutus at Ludgate Hill. It is said that in 1450 when Jack Cade entered the City leading his rebellious band of Kentish peasants he 'rode up to the Stone and it struck with his sword and by that gesture claimed to be the rightful 'Lord of London'.

Shakespeare elaborated the myth; William Blake forged a connection between the London Stone and Stonehenge and introduced the Druids, to the story. Half a century later, in 1862, the druid, Morgan of Merioneth, published the hitherto unknown 'ancient saying' that if the stone were moved it would bring disaster on the City. "So long as the Stone of Brutus is safe, So long will London flourish"

## Not the first move

However this would by no means be the first time the stone has been moved. It was moved in 1742 when it was deemed a traffic hazard, again in 1798, for unspecified reasons, and once more in 1828 when it was set into the wall of Wren's St Swithin's church, where it should have been safe. But the church was hit in the Blitz and later demolished. The stone has been in its present location only since 1961. All of which might suggest that another removal wouldn't matter much.

## The objections

But it is a Grade II\* 'designated heritage asset' and there are a number of significant objectors, including English Heritage, the Victorian Society and the Ancient Monument Society.

Minerva's intention is to put the stone on display in a glass case in the foyer of its new offices - making it untouchable: 'It will be safely positioned within a glass enclosure along the Cannon Street facade at the approximate height that it originally stood before it was moved in the 19th century and then again in the 1960s.'

But the Victorian Society described the stone as a 'tangible part of the London streetscape' and pointed out that it can currently still be touched, through its metal grille, on Cannon Street. It has become "a symbol of the city for at least 900 years. It is not a portable exhibit to be moved inside a building and displayed using lighting and mirrors" ■



## The Mithras Temple

### Restoration of the Mithras Temple, Walbrook Square

In December 2010, Bloomberg LP purchased the Walbrook Square site near the Bank of England to build its new European headquarters building. It is the site where the Roman Temple of Mithras was discovered in 1952 by archaeologist WF Grimes as the site was being prepared for redevelopment. On the last day of excavation, 18 September 1954, the marble head of the god was unearthed together with several artefacts and sculptures.

The temple was dismantled and put into storage until 1962 when it was reconstructed on a podium, set in modern cement mortar, in Temple Court, adjacent to Queen Victoria Street, 90 metres from its original site, and nine metres above its original level.

Now as part of their redevelopment of the site Bloomberg will work with the Museum of London to restore the ancient Temple to its original location on Walbrook Square. Listed building consent has been granted for the project.

Expert stone masons have been commissioned by Bloomberg to carefully extract the Roman stone and tile from the 1960s cement mortar in preparation for a more faithful reconstruction by Museum of London Archaeology on its original location at Roman ground level - about 6m below current street level, off the Walbrook River. It will be housed in a purpose-built and publicly accessible interpretation space in a new square within the new building.

The redevelopment to designs by Norman Foster, and French architect Jean Nouvel, features new retail, a public square and pedestrian streets, a new entrance to London Underground Bank Station and four office buildings. ■



# English Heritage to the rescue of Rare murals in Farringdon

Nine ceramic tile murals by Dorothy Annan granted Grade II listed status

The Fleet Building was London's largest telephone exchange when it opened in 1961 on Farringdon Street. It was designed by Eric Bedford, architect of the Post Office Tower (now the BT Tower). But the IT revolution has made thousands of such buildings redundant across the country, and the Fleet Building has been a derelict eyesore for years. It has been acquired by Goldman Sachs as part of ambitious proposals to expand its European headquarters in London.

But the future of a sequence of nine ceramic tile murals by Dorothy Annan, commissioned in 1960 for the Ministry of Works to decorate the front of the telephone exchange, will have to be secured first. Goldman's plans suffered a setback in November when the government granted Grade II listed status to the murals, depicting the white heat of British technology - the teleprinters, wiring

circuits, spiky aerials and banks of switching gear which constituted 1960s telecommunications - in colours of smoky blue, brown and green.

Goldman had opposed the listing of the murals and relocating them could be costly and time-consuming. The US bank had argued the panels were by a relatively unknown artist, are not rare, and on a building which lacks special architectural quality.

But English Heritage said: "The series of nine ceramic panels at the Fleet Building by Dorothy Annan has special artistic interest, with a striking and highly distinctive design that is of real quality. They also have historic interest for their subject matter, period character, and relative rarity as surviving works of 1960s mural art. They are recognisable as stand-alone objects of special artistic interest."

Annan collected scores of images of communications kit, and visited General Post Office buildings for inspiration before designing the murals, which include stylised representations of pylons, cables, telegraph poles, cabling, television and radio aerials and generators. She visited the Hathernware pottery in Loughborough and hand-scored her designs onto each wet clay tile. Her brush marks can be seen in the fired panels.

Annan, who died in 1983, exhibited with the leftwing Artists International Association, and once featured in a morale-boosting wartime show in an air-raid shelter beside work by Augustus John.

Her paintings are in many national collections, but many of her tile murals such as *Expanding Universe* at the Bank of England, have been destroyed in recent decades. Only three of her major public murals are believed to survive. ■

## UNESCO warns again of threat to London's world heritage sites

UNESCO warned yet again last November that the Tower of London could be downgraded because of the negative impact of the Shard on its panorama. Officials from Unesco's Europe unit spent four days in the capital, meeting Mayor Boris Johnson, and also officers from Southwark and Westminster Councils.

Their last inspection was in 2006, when they said the Tower of London was becoming "overshadowed" by new buildings. The officials looked at whether the 2006 recommendations were implemented, and will study the impact of new buildings built since then in particular the Shard and the Doon Street development. The famous view of London with St. Pauls from Parliament Hill on Hampstead Heath has already been destroyed by the Shard.

Westminster council described the 43-storey Doon Street tower, which is to be built across the river in Lambeth, as an "act of cultural vandalism" and went to the High

Court two years ago in a bid to get planning permission overturned.

UNESCO is now considering the ranking of the Palace of Westminster which it fears will be blighted by the Doon Street tower. It could place both the Tower of London and Parliament on its "at risk" register. This would reduce the number of world heritage sites in England which include Stonehenge, the Jurassic Coast, the city of Bath, Maritime Greenwich and Kew Gardens, to fifteen.

They commented that "the incremental developments around the Tower over the past five years have impacted adversely on its visual integrity" and that there were no "buffer zones" between the sites and 20 ongoing or new developments to protect the views. "The majority of World Heritage sites have a buffer zone which guarantees the protection of the sites, that's not the case with the two sites in London, that's a major concern of the World Heritage Committee."

They said visual impact assessments prior to development, had not been adequate, and requested that Britain "refrains from approving new construction projects in their vicinity" without first considering what potential impact they could have on the "outstanding universal value" of the site.

Only two sites of the 870 around the globe have ever lost their status outright: Dresden in Germany and the Arabian Oryx sanctuary in Oman.

Government and Mayoral spokespersons made the usual noises such as: "The last thing the government wants is to see two iconic monuments becoming in danger of losing World Heritage status," (DCMS) and "These historic parts of London are of truly global significance"

But is it too late? ■

# Spotlight on London Green Spaces Friends Groups Network

London's open green spaces – how do we ensure their future? Following London Forum's well-attended meeting on Open Spaces in March Forum committee member **Diane Burridge** talked to **Dave Morris**, chair of the new Friends' network

Member societies are reporting on major threats to open green spaces – parks, sports fields, nature reserves, woodlands and cemeteries etc. They are witnessing cuts in parks' staff, increasing commercial usage and even loss of sites to development.

## Abundant policies do not stop cuts

Most of London's Friends Groups were set up by local park users over the last 15 years to try to reverse the neglect their local green spaces had fallen into as the result of savage public spending cuts in the 1970s and 1980s. After much success, but still much to do to complete the job, it was felt in 2009 that the looming new round of public spending cuts could herald a return to 'those bad old days'. To counter this we would need to coordinate and strengthen our efforts, speak out together and take up strategic issues facing green spaces. Also we had so many stories and successes to share! This picture was reflected across the UK with the development of other regional networks and in 2010 the launch of the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces.

With an increasing population and rising obesity levels amongst London's children, public parks are needed more than ever and should be expanding rather than shrinking, improving rather than deteriorating. Where else can community cohesion occur so abundantly - with London's many minority ethnic, ages and interest groups intermingling, enjoying the exhilaration and freedom of open public and green space?

Policies and programmes abound to protect and enhance London's open green spaces: the London Plan's all-London Green Grid; Spatial Planning Guidance - Preparing Tree and Woodland Strategies; the Green Flag, Silver Jubilee and London in Bloom awards; Metropolitan Open Land and other designations; and the arrival in 2013 of the largest new urban park for generations in east London on the Olympics site.

Yet despite all this, Government public spending cuts have seen 44% reductions to London boroughs' parks maintenance budgets over the last 4 years - with more

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*We realised that if we could link up we could become a force to be reckoned with on behalf of London's green spaces.*

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cuts threatened. Hence the rise of the Friends Groups movement and the LFGN is to be welcomed!

## A new network established

Dave wonders: was it really only 3 years ago that a few of us Friends Groups activists first met up to help organise a London conference to discuss our common concerns as park users? We discovered that there were over 500 Friends groups around London, many having already formed local Friends Forums in various boroughs to support one another. We realised that if we could link up we could become a force to be reckoned with on behalf of London's green spaces.

Every local space is different and has different needs. My local park is Lordship Rec, the largest public green space in Tottenham. I have been active in the Friends of Lordship Rec since 2001, and am very pleased to say that after a lot of collective effort and partnership-working with the Council we have reversed the previous slide into neglect and are near the completion of a major lottery-funded and community-led £6m regeneration programme.

## Taking ownership for local communities

Local Friends Groups are set up by park users and local residents to promote, protect and improve a local green space - in essence to 'take ownership' of the space on behalf of local communities and park users. Friends Groups are responsible for a wide range of highly positive achievements, including: organising local events of all kinds, planting bulbs and helping increase biodiversity, disseminating information and news, producing publicity and history pamphlets, working closely with parks staff and

managers, getting key user groups to work together, developing visions for improving local spaces, accessing resources and funding, and so on.

Every green space should have the management and maintenance it deserves to enable the local community to enjoy its many benefits. This includes adequate on-site staffing, buildings and facilities in good condition and in daily use, and well-maintained natural and horticultural areas, playgrounds, paths and park furniture. And most importantly, the local community and in particular any Friends or User groups need to be able to be fully involved in the management of that green space.

Take my borough, Haringey. There are now over 40 local Friends groups involved with the Haringey Friends of Parks Forum, which has been active since 2002. We have discussed every green space issue under the sun, but in the last 18 months we have had to respond to the biggest crisis yet - 50% budget and staffing cuts to an already-underfunded parks department! We have therefore had to learn how to lobby, petition and protest, and to link up with other community groups and trades unions to stand up for the many local public services facing similar cuts.

## Calls for a Parliamentary Select Committee National Inquiry

We don't want London's green spaces to return to the scandalous neglect and dereliction that afflicted most of the country's urban green spaces after the savage cuts to public services in the 1970s and '80s. Most Friends Groups were set up in the last 15 years precisely for that reason. Their often stupendous efforts have gradually borne fruit, but for most the recovery is not yet complete – and Government cuts have thrown the gears into reverse. There are also growing problems caused by privatisation and fragmentation of local services. Most spaces don't even have a Friends Group yet so are likely to be in a particularly poor state. For these reasons we are supporting the growing calls for a Parliamentary Select Committee National Inquiry into these matters – and for all MPs to sign Early Day Motion 219.

## London Green Spaces Friends Groups Network

**Contact:** Chairman: Dave Morris

**email:** dmorris@onetel.com

**tel:** 020 8216 9651

**website:** www.lfgn.net

### What can societies do?

Local amenity groups can help out in a number of ways. For example: support local Friends Groups or help form them where needed, publicise their activities, help with local history projects, lobby for protective planning policies and for 'planning gain' funds to go to green spaces, oppose cuts to parks budgets and maintenance, lobby MPs to support EDM 219, etc. Also local Friends Groups might need help to get together and form their own borough-wide Forum.

### Development of active Friends Forums in all 32 London boroughs.

We are gradually encouraging the development of active Friends Forums in all 32 London boroughs. Nationally, there are well over 5,000 local Friends Groups and the many local networks are linked together through the new National Federation of Parks & Green Spaces. It now feels that our grass-roots (literally!) movement is fast-growing and fast-evolving into something very significant. We are aiming for a Friends Group for every urban green space, a Friends Groups Forum for every area, and a statutory duty on all Councils and landowners to protect and manage all their spaces to Green Flag standards.

It is not only very exciting and empowering for those of us actively involved, but most importantly, in the current political and economic climate, we now have a real opportunity to promote and defend the country's green spaces.

### Date for your diary:

#### The next Friends Groups meeting

Monday 24th September 2012, 6pm - 8pm at City Hall (Committee Room downstairs by the cafe). For members and representatives of local Friends groups throughout London.

**The London Forum** will continue to work with the LFGN and keep you up to date on developments. We welcome your views and feedback.

London Green Spaces  
Friends Groups Network  
lobbying Parliament



**Age:** 3 formed in 2009

**Circumstances of birth:** A conference attended by 80 Friends groups' representatives from 17 boroughs,

**Biggest successes:** Bringing so many Friends groups together to speak with one voice. There are currently 420 local Friends groups on the Network's contacts list. The Forums, networks and Federations linking up the local groups have enabled the sharing of news, views and promotion of best practice. This remarkable and inspirational movement has involved maybe hundreds of thousands of people across the UK and helped raise the profile of green spaces significantly.

**Biggest disappointments/ frustrations:** The failure of local and national government to ensure adequate budgets for our vital public services; gains made for green space policies within the planning system are now facing revision and uncertainty; public spending cuts of £600,000 wiped off the £1.1bn parks maintenance budget this year; degradation of parks for commercial use; councils are desperate for income and developers are on the lookout for cheap land; pressure on Friends Groups to increase their over-stretched voluntary efforts to compensate for lack of adequate staffing and maintenance; councils failing to adhere to policies on the uses of their parks, or to listen to the views of their electorate.

**Present preoccupations:** To raise the profile of green space persuade councils that it is important to look after them; that monies raised through CIL levy could be used to pay for improvements to community infrastructure, such as parks and play spaces; an active Friends Group for every green space, residents' group/association for every street, estate and neighbourhood, and amenity organisation for every area!

**Working details:** The Network holds open meetings every two months for London's Friends Groups- to swap information and best practice and to speak out for all London's green spaces.

**Special characteristics:** A real grass roots movement!

**Last word:** To celebrate our efforts, share our ideas and experiences, and to support each other in valuing and improving London's parks and open green spaces. Community groups should never underestimate the importance of spreading communication and co-operation among each other! ■

# Heathrow – the pressure continues

Lobbying by the aviation industry has increased several-fold in vehemence and intensity in recent weeks; regional airports step up the pressure against the Heathrow campaign

**Helen Marcus** reports

Lobbying from business and the airline industry for more airport capacity and runways has intensified in recent months, with statements by government ministers arousing fears of a change of policy on a third runway at Heathrow.

As Simon Jenkins put it in his ever-trenchant style in the Evening Standard in June: "It won't lie down. Like some ancient vampire, the 'third runway at Heathrow' is the living dead. Born of greed and sucking lobbying cash into its veins, its coffin is hammered shut time and again. Yet come the fall of dusk over west London, with much creaking and howling, it slinks back on stage. This runway will not vanish until buried at a crossroads on the A4, with garlic in its mouth and a stake through its heart. And possibly not even then."

## Specious claims

Some of the usual suspects have surfaced again: Peter Mandelson, whose close links to BAA's PR firm were revealed when he was in government, was to be found in The Times on July 12th making the usual specious claims:

"Air travel, competitiveness and prosperity are intertwined". Really? He does at least admit that: "Future growth in demand for air travel may not be quite as fast as in the recent past", but is quite sure that "it will rise steadily as business gets more global and leisure travel from the Bric nations increases". Perhaps his most startling claim is that "Future growth in demand, economics and climate change point firmly to the desirability of building new airport capacity".

But as Sir Simon says: "The industry may present Heathrow as the throbbing hub, the nerve centre, of the nation's economy..... wrapping themselves in the flag of "growth" and "UK plc"; as if Heathrow had anything to do with some wider public interest". He points out that only 30 per cent of Heathrow passengers are in any sense "business": "British aviation is actually chiefly about shifting millions of leisure travellers, mostly British tourists going overseas. .... The UK's deficit on foreign tourism is £15 billion a year. This is hardly in the national interest."

Indeed a story in The Times on March 13 reported that "the attraction of the Brazilian

carnival lifted the number of passengers travelling through Britain's airports last month". Who knew the Brazilian Carnival was such an important 'business' destination!

Even British Airways chief Willie Walsh appears to have seen the light; speaking in June in a debate organized by the Evening Standard he recognised that a 3rd runway is off the agenda at Heathrow and also ruled out mixed-mode which he said would make the situation at the airport worse. He was congratulated by HACAN.

## Contradictory messages

The most puzzling element of the story is the complete contradiction between the continuous claims that the lack of expanded aviation facilities is hampering the UK economy, and the reports in the financial pages about the airlines parlous financial state because of falling passenger numbers and rising oil prices.

As we reported last Autumn (newsforum PDF Supplement) IATA was predicting a reduction in leisure travellers, contraction and losses; Ryanair was scaling back expansion, Air cargo profitability was falling and there was a 'mismatch' between capacity growth and demand.

This year's financial pages tell the same story with industry experts warning that aviation is still struggling. IATA doubled its 2012 loss forecast for European airlines and said the EU's debt crisis could wipe out an expected global profit. Recent headlines include: Europe airline losses expected to soar; Airlines face appalling tide of loss over oil; BA falls to a loss. BA even resorted to what appeared to be a desperate measure of trying to raise funds to cover its debts by issuing bonds against its Heathrow landing slots. There were no takers.

UK flights were down 4.8 per cent, while European charter flights, hit by falling numbers of holidaymakers, fell by 18.6 per cent. Air France-KLM is making job cuts; German flagcarrier Lufthansa has issued a profits warning for 2012 citing economic uncertainty.

BAA said losses at its three London hubs – Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted – had hit £546m in the first six months of the year, with 4.4 million fewer passengers,

using the airports. This therefore raises the question, asked in the Times letters column, what do they need the extra capacity "growth" for in the absence of "demand" for it. Other letters pointed out that any "business impediment" had nothing to do with a third runway and everything to do with an underfunded Border Agency, incompetence on the ground and too much space taken up with shopping provision.

## Protesters in Germany

The industry PR also glosses over a hard political reality: while they claim that European airports are overtaking us, in fact Germans are now also protesting at airport expansion.

In Frankfurt campaigners are objecting about the impact of the 4th runway which was opened there in October. Thousands have occupied the airport terminal every Monday night and have won a night flight ban after the German courts ruled in their favour in April. It is thought the ruling could have implications for night flights at other European airports, including Heathrow where the Government will begin consulting later this year on plans for a new night flight regime after the current agreement with the airlines runs out in 2014.

## British regional airports speak out

In another twist reports in the press highlighted irritation expressed at both Gatwick and Birmingham airports at the negative tone of the Heathrow campaign. From Gatwick came "We're doing fine so stop spreading gloom". Another story suggested "Forget third runway, the answer for all Heathrow's woes lies in Birmingham".

They point out that the emphasis on a centralised airport system in the South-East has made the industry too regional, uncompetitive and inflexible. "There are 42 million other people in the UK outside of the South East that require air transportation to these brand new markets in India, China and Brazil." ■

# London's buses are going greener

Nine European cities two-year trial

## Airport consultation delay

The Government has postponed the long-awaited consultation on future UK airport capacity needs yet again. A "call for evidence" on how to maintain the UK's international connectivity and hub status was to have been published alongside an aviation policy framework document.

Publishing the policy framework document, Ms Greening said the open call for evidence "inviting stakeholders to submit specific, evidence-based proposals for consideration in identifying the medium and long-term steps needed to meet the Government's economic and environmental objectives for aviation" would follow later this year.

She added: "This is a structured process towards delivering a solution that is sustainable, not only economically and environmentally but also politically. The failure of successive governments to tackle this issue shows that we need to get it right this time. Success depends upon agreeing a solution that can be delivered regardless of the political cycle and that requires an objective evidence-based process which draws on the views of the full range of interested parties."

Friends of the Earth's campaigns head Andrew Pendleton said: "The aviation industry must do more to reduce its significant impact on communities and the environment, and ministers must take steps to make it face up to its responsibilities. "Building more airports or runways will create more noise and pollution misery for thousands of people and make it harder to meet UK climate targets. London already has more flights to the world's top business centres than any of its European competitors. We don't need more airports or runways."

London Forum's Michael Bach, said that much of the problem stemmed from the approach of British Airways and the former Airports authority, and the failure to use all the six London airports in the way that best benefitted the user. ■

London now has eight fuel cell buses, which have been plying the RV1 riverside route since early 2011. Their hydrogen filled tanks allow each bus to operate for up to eighteen hours a day. They are operated by First Group for Transport for London and feature Ballard fuel cells and Wrightbus chassis integrated by ISE Corporation. In addition to the RV1, Covent Garden to Tower Gateway, they have run on route 25 between Oxford Circus and Ilford and during the past year.

London is one of nine European cities participating in a two-year trial as part of a scheme to reduce pollution. It is hoped the trial will find out whether the expensive fuel cell technology can become more efficient. The hydrogen technology was trialled on the RV1 route for three years to demonstrate its feasibility and gain public support.

London continues to suffer from high pollution levels and has had to resort to spraying a binding chemical onto the surface of some of the worst offending routes in a bid to mitigate the effects. Running through the most polluted part of the city, the new buses which are 40% less polluting than traditional diesel vehicles, will help to improve London's air quality. Operating out of First's Lea Interchange bus depot at Stratford they join a fleet that already boasts 100 hybrid vehicles,

and is set to increase to 300. The Stratford depot will have a permanent hydrogen refuelling station maintained by Air Products. A London Buses spokesman said they had "excelled in reliability" and been "very popular with passengers", offering a quiet, smooth ride. However the high cost of the buses is a stumbling block and a mass roll-out is thought to be at least a decade away.

## The new Routemaster bus

The first of eight newly-designed driver-and-conductor Routemasters has also begun service in London, although on its first day a software glitch meant the bus had to be run with its distinctive rear "hop-on, hop-off" platform shut. Its introduction fulfills a pre-election promise made by Mayor Johnson. With a hybrid diesel-electric motor, it will run on route 38 between Victoria Station and Hackney. They will be staffed with conductors and will not run at night or during the weekends.

There has been criticism for the high cost: each new bus costs £1.4m compared with the conventional double-decker bus which costs about £190,000. Concerns have also been expressed over the problem of fare evasion and also, whether London bus operators will decide their cost is prohibitive and refuse to buy them. ■

## National Audit Office report on HS1, with a warning for HS2

A National Audit Office (NAO) report in March, "The completion and sale of High Speed 1", concludes that while passenger numbers have increased, they are still below original expectations. This has provoked the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) to warn that the current High Speed 2 proposals must learn from the mistakes.

The NAO report concludes that passenger numbers on the HS1 Channel Tunnel line fall far short - only two thirds - of original forecasts while the project costs of the £6.16 billion London to Folkestone line have exceeded the value of journey-time saving benefits, the National Audit Office report said.

Chris Richards, Transport Policy Advisor of the IET, said: "This report highlights the need to get the details on High Speed 2 right from the outset. In our response to the

Department for Transport consultation we made it clear that there were potential flaws in the analysis, several assumptions were made in crucial areas and serious questions have been left unanswered.

"The report backs up our concerns as the original High Speed 1 business case was based on journey time saving benefits and increased rail capacity. The total value of these benefits is not known as the Department for Transport has not yet developed a method to evaluate HS1 project costs against benefits, despite this forming part of the High Speed 2 justification."

These costs and benefits have not been assessed for over a decade, despite promises made to the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee. "High Speed 2 is a project of major national significance, if we get this wrong, we will regret it for decades to come." ■

# Consultation on reforms to Listed Building Consents system

An important new consultation

A short consultation has begun on reforms to the Listed Building Consents system, as part of the Penfold Review of Non-Planning Consents. The proposed changes could have significant implications for the management of the historic environment, so this is an important opportunity for heritage organisations to make their views known to Government. The consultation period runs for 4 weeks from 26 July 2012 to 23 August.

The consultation seeks views on options to streamline the LBC system as follows:

- A system of prior notification leading to deemed LBC
- A system of local and national class consents granting deemed LBC
- A "certificate of lawful works to Listed Buildings"
- Replacing local authority conservation officer recommendations for LBC by those made by accredited agents, if LBC applicants wish to do so.

## Measures to address building neglect,

There are many listed buildings which have been on the Heritage at Risk Register for a long time; around half of those on the original 1999 Register, 1, 428 buildings, remain there. Although local authorities were granted extensive powers to serve Urgent Works Notices and Repairs Notices or to compulsorily acquire listed buildings in poor repair under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the 1990 Act) they often elect not to pursue any of these courses of action. English Heritage conducted an informal survey of local authority planning officers in which nearly all those asked stated that they and their planning committees were very reluctant to issue Repair Notices or Urgent Works Notices in respect of buildings which have fallen into disrepair.

Views are also sought on new or improved measures to address this problem and to explore the reasons why LPAs are discouraged from taking action to deal with neglected buildings.

**Responses may be sent** by email to [listingsconsultation@culture.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:listingsconsultation@culture.gsi.gov.uk), or by post to

The Heritage Team Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2 – 4 Cockspur Street London SW1Y 5DH

## EH briefing events

To help organisations respond to the consultation English Heritage will be hosting two briefing events on 9 and 16 August at 1 Waterhouse Square, Holborn between 2pm and 4pm. Anyone wishing to attend is asked to contact [Tiva.montalbano@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:Tiva.montalbano@english-heritage.org.uk) with a preferred date.

## Penfold Review Background information

The Penfold Review, set up to identify whether non-planning consents delay or discourage investment, was published in July 2010. It recommended scrapping unnecessary development consents and simplifying others

The consultation documents: Improving Listed Building Consent A Consultation July 2012 can be found at

[www.culture.gov.uk/consultations/9236.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/consultations/9236.aspx)

Penfold Review of Non-Planning Consents is at <http://bit.ly/taLfg>

## Civil service "mutuals"

As part of a programme of public sector reform part of the work and pensions department, involving about 500 staff, is to be converted into a John Lewis-style private profit-making mutual company: MyCSP.

Under a 10-year contract staff will retain their public sector civil service pensions but at the end of this contract, the new mutual will have to compete against other private sector pension administrators to run the scheme.

The Cabinet Office has set up a unit which hopes to get at least three or four mutuals started this year. Groups of staff in probation, children's services and further education are already considering spinning off their work. The government has said that 1 million public sector workers could be in share-owning partnerships by 2015. MyCSP will try to win new business from the public and private sectors.

Its advocates claim it will give staff an unprecedented say in how the business is run and the chance to share in the new company's profits. But the plan has faced substantial opposition from staff, including the PCS, the civil service union, ■

## Reform Bill affects Heritage

### The Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill

Proposals to simplify heritage consents were unveiled in the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill published in June. It includes several measures purporting to improve the regulatory framework for heritage arising from the implementation of the Penfold Review of Non-Planning Consents

The Bill aims to enable the creation of Heritage Partnership Agreements with statutory force; and allow the Heritage List for England to define the extent of special interest in a listed building more clearly.

But it also aims to merge conservation area consent back into the planning system; and make it easier to apply for a Certificate of Immunity from the listing of a building;

At second reading on 11 June the House of Commons voted for the Bill to be sent to a Public Bill Committee, which will scrutinise the Bill line by line. The first sitting of the Public Bill Committee is yet to be announced, but an important Call for Evidence was issued inviting written submissions from those with "relevant expertise and experience or a special interest".

The closing date was 17 July; this notice was emailed to London Forum members on June 20th with details of how to submit your evidence.

London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies would appreciate copies of comments and evidence you submit to [london.forum@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:london.forum@blueyonder.co.uk)

The next stage of the Penfold Review will take forward the B1 and B2 proposals, which address the issue of local authority capacity. A consultation by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on these proposals is due later in the summer.

The text of the Bill is available at

<http://bit.ly/LfJ4eJ>

the part for heritage is in Schedule 16, Section 50.

Explanatory notes are at

<http://bit.ly/Kx50E1>. ■

# Societies instrumental in saving local Libraries

Keats Community Library Opens its Doors

**Steven Bobasch** reports

A victory for reading – Garden Suburb Library saved

**A**t last after months of uncertainty, the former Heath Library in Keats Grove Hampstead reopened on the 17th April 2012 as Keats Community Library.

When Camden Council announced its decision to close Heath Library, The Heath and Hampstead Society, along with the Friends of Heath Library, were instrumental in setting up a new charity to bid, successfully, to take it over.

Camden have given Keats Community Library some transitional funding to buy a new library system, set up a website and buy some new books, stationery etc. They have also "gifted" all the books and furniture.

The City of London, who own the building, intends to use some of the space, particularly the Children's Library, for their own meetings and events. Negotiations were tough but from the outset the City of London talked about partnership and this helped the project to succeed. The City will manage the building and the KCL will not be responsible for building maintenance. There will be a £5 administration charge per household, per annum but after that borrowing books will be free

Hampstead's Business Community is also backing the project, and many individual volunteers have helped with services such as designing stationery and photocopying. This has really brought the community together, recognising how important and popular this cause is locally.

There was a Grand Opening Fair on 26th May in the library and gardens of Keats House.

[www.keatscommunitylibrary.org.uk](http://www.keatscommunitylibrary.org.uk) ■

**H**ampstead Garden Suburb has opened its Community library. The HGS Residents Association and many members of the local community successfully campaigned to prevent the closure by the London Borough of Barnet of the little Hampstead Garden Suburb Library in the Market Place. Within just a few days of the borough librarians being redeployed to other libraries, Garden Suburb Community Library opened its doors to readers again, this time in the hands of about 70 volunteers who have been trained to run it.

The first few weeks have been a huge success. The opening hours have not been changed, we have already doubled the attendance at the toddlers' read and rhyme and introduced an extra session, have recruited volunteers for older children's activities which will start soon, and are planning an adult book club.

The library was officially opened by Jonathan Ross on Thursday 28th June

[www.gardensuburlibrary.org.uk/](http://www.gardensuburlibrary.org.uk/) ■



## Open House London 2012

**Open House London dates for 2012 are 22 and 23 September**

Open House London has a team of volunteers and interns who help out throughout the year in the office and are core to our work. There are also hundreds of volunteers that assist during the Open House London Annual Event by offering a half day to act as guides or stewards, and volunteers such as architects who provide support for our education programmes.

### Call for Volunteers

The Open House London team are looking for office volunteers and interns. Volunteers receive a badge that lets them jump queues at buildings. If you are interested to join the Volunteer Programme and would like to find out more, full details and how to apply are on the website:

[www.londonopenhouse.org/](http://www.londonopenhouse.org/) ■

## BT forced to halt broadband cabinet installation in Kensington and Chelsea

**B**T was forced to halt its plans to install cabinets to provide high-speed broadband across the Kensington and Chelsea area after Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council blocked 96 out of the 108 planned sites on the ground that they would ruin "our historic streetscape".

The Council criticised BT for its lack of flexibility over installation of the cabinets. "It would not compromise on the number, or on the design;" "It would not use sites that already had unused BT equipment and it would not consider putting the equipment underground, or any other method."

The new cabinets, usually green in colour, are bigger - 1.6m tall and 1.2m wide

- than the existing cabinets, which are 1.15m high and 1.37m wide.

BT said placing equipment underground increased its susceptibility to flooding and smaller cabinets would mean a decreased capacity on the service. Residents should not "have to put up with historic broadband speeds" and that this was "strangling competition". "Other councils, including those of neighbouring boroughs, have shown a greater eagerness to enjoy the benefits of fibre broadband," the company said.

"We will therefore re-focus our efforts in other areas where planning authorities have taken a positive approach and are keen to ensure their residents and

businesses can benefit from this technology." The new cabinets have been approved in 31 of London's 33 boroughs.

Michael Bach, London Forum Committee member and chairman of Kensington Society's planning committee, told the BBC he believed many residents and businesses backed the council's stance. "It's a question of their size, where they're located and whereabouts in the street. They need to have a really serious rethink about how they can design something that will fit in better." Virgin Media, BT's largest rival, already operates its high-speed service in the area. ■

# Planning, conservation and redevelopment issues of interest across London

## Objectors win first round at Willesden Library

By **Helen Marcus**

**B**rent Council has aroused the anger of local residents with its plans for Willesden Library. After closing 6 libraries across the borough, it then proceeded to hatch up a secret deal with developer GallifordTry which would mean closing Willesden Library, only built 25 years ago, for up to 2 years while it would be redeveloped - again.

### Demolition of local heritage building

The remnant of the old Victorian library, a locally listed landmark in a conservation area was to be sacrificed. This was portrayed as a wonderful deal for the borough whereby in return for allowing GallifordTry to build several blocks of private luxury flats on the site and its car park, GT would provide in return, at no cost to the Council, a brand new improved "Cultural Centre" Library and museum. No affordable housing was included in the deal.

There was no consultation with residents. The scheme bypassed all normal planning process; was not mentioned in the Core Strategy, the Local Development Framework or the site specific allocations list; no planning brief was drawn up. All reference to the scheme was buried in documents whose titles gave no hint of such a project being included in them. One would have needed to be clairvoyant about the need to check on the website to find

out about it.

When the plans were finally produced it became clear why. The much vaunted new "cultural centre" would actually be smaller than the present one, in a building covering only 50% of the footprint of the current Library building. The Council appeared to have allowed the developer to dictate terms, gobbling up in addition to the car park, half the 1980s Library building, the old Victorian Library and the open space in between.

A new group formed locally called Keep Willesden Green (KWG) to organise a protest which included 2 petitions of over 8000 names and an application to get the open space designated as a Town Square. Hundreds of letters of objection were sent in. In addition to staunch support from the local newspaper, the Brent & Kilburn Times, the story has also made the pages of Private Eye and the New York Review of Books.

The date for the planning committee meeting passed; the list of letters on the website got longer by the week. Then suddenly word came that the application had been withdrawn. But KWG are under no illusions that this is merely a temporary halt and the plans will be re-submitted. So they will maintain their vigilance and continue to fight any further proposals. ■

### RIBA report finds newly built houses too cramped

A study of people's living spaces, published by the Royal Institute of British Architecture (RIBA) in May, found that many British homes lack the storage space for basic day-to-day items, such as rubbish bins, household appliances and food.

The report, called *The Way We Live Now: What People Need and Expect from the Homes*, is based on discussion groups and interviews around Britain. RIBA said that its report, which was carried out with Ipsos Mori, is the first research into housing space since the Government-commissioned Parker Morris Committee report over 50 years ago.

It found that people are going to "extreme" and "absurd" lengths to cram their belongings into their houses, in some cases even forced to store vacuum

cleaners at relatives' houses a 20 minute drive away, or keeping supermarket food shopping in the boot of their car because there is no cupboard space inside their home.

Bedrooms in many new homes are too small and there were call for size of rooms in newly-built properties to be regulated.

Ben Page, the chief executive of Ipsos Mori, said: "The research graphically shows just how cramped and poorly planned much of our housing is today, and the extraordinary lengths people go to cope with it."

The RIBA said that its report will be used as evidence by the Future Homes Commission, which is conducting an inquiry into the quality of newly built housing. ■

### Historic Spitalfields

Tower Hamlets councillors voted across party lines to refuse permission for plans by Exemplar for the demolition of the Fruit & Wool Exchange, Gun Pub and Dorset Street. They rejected the advice of their own planning - and conservation - officers who argued strenuously that the demolition should go ahead. Only one councillor praised Exemplar's scheme, but in the end abstained in the vote.

Councillors agreed with objectors that these fine old buildings were worthy of saving; that 16th Century Dorset Street should be saved and re-opened; that housing should be re-introduced on site; and that a mixed use development with ground floor shops would provide jobs for local people.

The local campaign group which included Spitalfields Trust, described it as "an extraordinary victory for local opinion against a big developer, and saves a huge chunk of Spitalfields from being absorbed as bland City office space". But the Mayor has now called the scheme in.

For more information see <http://spitalfieldscommunityaction.wordpress.com/> ■

### Limp demand for City property

Despite last year's optimism of restarted office projects and towers in the City, recent financial pages have featured a spate of reports that the eurozone crisis is hitting UK commercial property with limp demand for office, shop and warehouse rental space

De Montfort University's mid-year report *The UK Commercial Property Lending Market* found that developers are finding it difficult to secure tenants for some of London's best-known skyscraper projects, including the Pinnacle, and the Walkie-Talkie tower. Almost two-thirds of the office space completed last year is not yet leased, even though the amount built was 43 percent lower than the 10-year average.

Foreign companies now own 52 percent of all office buildings in the City, up from 50 percent in 2010. It was only 8 percent in 1980. ■



# NPPF: the debate in the press

Views from Colin Haylock, President of the RTPI, a former planning inspector, and Francis Bennion, retired Parliamentary Counsel

## Battersea Power Station news

### Another new buyer for Battersea Power Station

The ongoing saga at Battersea Power Station entered a new phase this month when Malaysian consortium of property developers, SP Setia and Sime Darby Property bought the site for £400m. They outbid Chelsea Football Club, which had wanted to build a new 60,000-seater stadium south of the river.

The Malaysian partners said they would probably work within the outline planning consent obtained by the site's previous owner, for a scheme by Uruguayan architect Rafael Viñoly that comprised 3,700 homes along with offices, shops and restaurants that would preserve the facade of the historical power plant with its distinctive four white chimney stacks.

In addition to the £400m, the new buyer is committed to the construction of a new underground station as part of the proposed extension of the Northern Line. That contribution is thought to be worth about £250m and "is viewed as fundamental to the success of this regeneration project."

However, members of the Battersea Power Station Community Group, were sceptical that this buyer would succeed where several others have failed. The site is currently saddled with a £330m debt owed to Lloyds Banking Group and Ireland's National Asset Management Agency. The last scheme collapsed into administration last year after Lloyds called in their debt. ■

Many interesting letters from distinguished contributors were sent to the press during the furore surrounding the introduction of the NPPF

Colin Haylock, President of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) wrote to the Financial Times refuting claims made by the Chancellor in the House that "the planning costs in Britain are among the highest in the world and delays among the worst in the world". The RTPI submitted a Freedom of Information request asking for evidence for this assertion. The Treasury replied saying: "I can confirm that after a search of our records the Treasury does not hold any recorded information within the scope of your request". The RTPI and, subsequently, the Communities and Local Government Select Committee, took this to mean that the Treasury had no evidence.

Haylock also described claims that planning approval takes over a year as "another myth". A report from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) last July found only 0.7 per cent of planning applications take longer than 12 months to reach a decision. Government statistics also show that, for at least a decade, more than 80 per cent of all planning applications have been granted, a figure which rises to about 90 per cent for major commercial applications.

In The Times a former planning inspector pointed out:

"The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).... does indeed

compress reams of superseded guidance into 50 pages. However, this is all advice on government policy, the non-statutory part of the framework of planning. It has to be used in compliance with the statutory elements, the Planning Acts from 1990 onwards, often amended, other Acts, the stream of statutory instruments, rules, directions and directives, and indeed case law. These are where the much-vilified red tape lies. There are pointers to red tape: eg, technical guidance on minerals and flood-risk; environmental impact assessments, and habitats regulations"

"And the new NPPF has even got the law wrong in one of my specialities: the definition of a conservation area. Those hoping that this document will reduce red tape will be greatly disappointed"

Francis Bennion, retired Parliamentary Counsel, and a regular contributor to The Times, followed up an article by Edward Fennell, Law correspondent, in April, criticising the inadequate concept of sustainable development:

"It ably shows the wide disquiet felt about this document, particularly its reliance on the faulty concept of 'sustainable development'. With wide experience as a parliamentary draftsman accustomed to framing statutory definitions, I am astonished that heavy weight should be placed on such an inadequate term. It will cause prolonged argument at almost every future planning hearing." ■

## Commercial housebuilders' profits rise

Further evidence that housebuilders' alleged difficulties in obtaining planning permissions are overstated came in recent trading updates which continue the run of resilient statements: **Galliford Try** reported record sales despite the sluggish economy.

**Berkeley** has invested a further £80m in London prime sites over the past three months, generating £1bn in forward sales in the three months to 29 February, up from £850m at the end of August. More than half the group's sales are to buy-to-let investors and 40 per cent are overseas

purchasers, giving the group some protection from the credit squeeze facing first-time buyers. This encouraged the builder to invest more in its land bank, which it said should generate gross margins of more than £2.5bn by the year end.

**Barratt Developments** reported rising revenues - around £950m for the second half of 2011, an 8pc increase on a year earlier. A rise in properties built on land bought following the housing crash, which left prices depressed, drove that increase, as it signalled higher margins. Barratt has

focused more on bigger family houses as opposed to apartments, and has completed the sale of 5,198 properties in the six months, against 4,832 the previous year. .

**Bovis Homes** completed 944 homes in the six months to June 30, up from 801 at the same time last year, with an 18% rise in sales.

There was no mention of affordable housing. ■

# Round the Societies

A round-up of news from our member societies.

By **Haydn Mylchreest**

The response to our call for subscriptions this year has been good and a few cheques are still coming in. Thank you all for your support. We are also very grateful for the donations that have been made, both by Societies and by individuals; I am writing to them all to thank them for their special demonstration of support.

The London Forum continues to be active in putting forward carefully considered critiques of proposals coming from central and local government and our contributions to these important consultation opportunities can now be read on our recently reconstructed website and our members can make use of this material in putting forward their own individual contributions to the debates. One of the strengths of the London Forum is that it is known to represent civic and amenity societies across London. We would like to welcome other groups to be members and your suggestions and recommendations would be valued.

## Consultation at Alexandra Palace

The **Muswell Hill & Fortis Green Association** are pleased that their diligent efforts to foster meaningful consultations on proposals to redevelop Alexandra Palace, an historic local landmark, are at last bearing fruit; Haringey Council is seemingly relaxing its tight control of redevelopment ideas. A public exhibition this month in the foyer of the ice rink shows a set of plans and design concepts, and visitors will be able to gauge how the proposals will affect them. The Association urges its members not to be put off by previous attempts at consultation, but to see this as a new opportunity to influence the redevelopment.

## Planning enforcement

The summer edition of the **Sydenham Society News** carries an article on planning permission being flouted. At the centre is a local pub which was demolished without planning permission being sought first. Whilst the developer claimed the building had to be demolished because it had deteriorated badly and therefore become a hazard, redevelopment work began without the necessary authorisation. This would appear to be another example of less-than-vigilant work by planning officers. Lewisham's planning department subsequently did receive a retrospective planning application, but this does not excuse the developer or the Council.

## Jubilee Celebrations

The Jubilee Celebrations brought a splendid assembly of boats to the Thames on 3rd June. The tall ships could not join in the event which started just upstream of Battersea Bridge, but some 1,000 boats took part in the pageant led by the rowers and paddlers that had saluted the Queen who then followed in the royal barge closely followed in turn by the powered vessels many of which had fascinating histories to be told. The Battersea Society began its summer edition of Battersea News with a photograph of the rowers and paddlers passing Battersea Park. The weather was not perfect but high spirits were never in doubt.

## Anniversary Congratulations

The **Amwell Society** celebrates the 40th anniversary of its founding this year and every member will in due course receive a copy of a facsimile edition of the 1927 guide to the New River Head. The guide is being sponsored by Thames Water and traces the history of the water supply to London from the start of the 17th century. The **Kingston on Thames Society** celebrates 50 years this month. Congratulations to them both!

## A memorial plaque to Lt. Henry Bowers in Streatham - one of Captain Scott's team

The **Streatham Society** have commemorated Captain Scott's tragic last journey a century ago by presenting to the Minister of the Streatham Baptist Church a memorial plaque to Lt. Henry Bowers, one of Scott's companions, whose family worshipped at the church when they were living in Streatham in the later 1890s and early 1900s. The Society newsletter recalls that, having discovered that the Norwegian explorer, Amundsen, had won the race to be first to reach the Pole, Captain Scott and his four companions were beaten by bad weather only a few miles from the next cache of food and fuel on their return journey from the South Pole.

Mrs Bowers, who was a widow, came to live in Streatham in 1896 with her two daughters and 13 year old son, Henry. He attended Streatham High School for Boys, now a computer training centre. Shortly before he died, Scott had written a letter to Bowers' mother telling her how he was "one of my closest and soundest friends, and I appreciate his upright nature, his ability and energy...." Scott was also accompanied on that last fateful march from the South Pole by Edward Wilson, Edgar Evans and Laurence 'Titus' Oates. The service at Streatham Baptist Church was attended by descendants of Henry Bowers and relatives of Edward Wilson and Laurence Oates.

## 30 Euston Square restored

The **Victorian Society** magazine carries a piece on architect Arthur Beresford Pite; his grand classical design at 30 Euston Square has now been beautifully restored by the Royal College of General Practitioners. This should be a great success story because an important Edwardian office building has been restored for 21st century use, but there is a serious threat: the Government's plans for HS2 rail link mean the spectre of partial demolition hangs over the building.

## Useful Olympic information

The Olympic Games are almost upon us and in the June edition of their Newsletter the Knightsbridge Association has very helpfully devoted the front page to a summary of the dates and events between 18th June and 30th September most likely to affect its members, including the extent of road closures. Whilst all of this information is available on-line, the paper summary is bound to be a valued reference document during the Games because it also gives a list of essential contacts, and advises members to look out for parking suspension signs on designated 'Clearways'. ■

# newsbriefs

Key issues of interest and concern to note.

## Who owns London's water companies?

Thames Water, acquired by Kemble in 2006, is the UK's largest water and sewerage company, serving about 14 million customers, nearly nine million of them Londoners. Kemble Water is a consortium of investors led by Australian investment bank Macquarie but little is known about them or their activities. According to City sources reported in the press, Macquarie has been conducting an auction of its shareholding in Kemble Water. But these dealings are shrouded in secrecy and it is not clear who Macquarie is conducting the current auction for. They involve complicated deals with banks and investment funds around the world. Macquarie European Infrastructure Fund (MEIF) owns around 22pc of Thames Water. They have said they are definitely not selling its stake in the water company. However, there is more speculation that Macquarie may be selling a stake for MEIF.

A 9.9pc shareholding in Thames Water was sold to the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority last year. Now following Chancellor George Osborne's visit to China in June 8.68% has been bought by the China Investment Corporation (CIC), apparently from Santander Private Equity, part of Spanish banking group Santander's asset management arm, and Finpro, a Portuguese investment vehicle. It is not explained how these companies come to be involved in it. It is also suggested that this stake known as a "Thames Unit" gives the owner a seat on the company's board. A further 13% has gone to the BT pension scheme. The price for the Chinese deal is thought to be between £500m and £700m but not once was sale price on these deals disclosed.

Despite reports of customer satisfaction falling and sewer related pollution incidents rising, Thames paid its chief executive an annual bonus of over £400,000.

## Veolia sell-off to cut debts

Another London supplier, Veolia the French utilities giant, has sold its three UK water businesses to Rift Acquisitions, a joint venture of managed infrastructure investment funds run by Prudential and Morgan Stanley, in a deal worth £1.2bn. Veolia Water serves more than 3.5 million in and around London, supplying water to much of Greater London and the Home Counties, and employs about 1,250 people. Residents of Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Enfield, Harrow and Hillingdon will see their water provision change hands.

Veolia is part of Veolia Environment, a multinational conglomerate of waste and water companies that was plunged into loss last year after a massive 90m-euro accounting fraud at a US subsidiary. This is the first major sell-off by the world's largest water supplier as it attempts to cut its colossal debt pile; it plans to get borrowings below £9.6bn by the end of 2013, quitting half of the 70 countries where it operates. Its remaining water business in Britain is an outsourcing division which manages infrastructure and carries out water treatment.

The deals are the latest in Britain's water industry, which has seen the flow of water companies into the hands of foreign owners. Last year Asia's richest man Li Ka-shing bought Northumbrian Water, in a £4.7 billion deal. The Hong Kong company agreed to sell Cambridge Water to HSBC as part of the deal to avoid competition issues.

## Crime figures not recorded by police

Many suspect that the true crime figures are being withheld. Now a study by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary into recording practices has found that nationally some one in seven episodes are being wrongly recorded as "no crimes". The worst was the Metropolitan Police, where the failure to log accurately thousands of crimes is as high as 25 per cent, including some violent offences. Forces were also criticised for still failing to properly report anti-social behaviour or ensure repeat offending is spotted, despite a scathing report by the watchdog two years ago.

The HMIC review found that 14 per cent of those written off across England and Wales should have been recorded as a crime and investigated. The review looked at almost 5,000 records from the 43 forces across England and Wales and British Transport Police. It looked at samples of cases in which each force had decided there was "no crime" to investigate. Only one force, Thames Valley, got the decision right on every occasion checked.

## Westfield extension plans approved

Further development plans for White City were approved in February by Hammersmith & Fulham Council. The £1 billion scheme by Westfield, includes an extension of the existing Westfield shopping centre in Wood Lane, opened in 2008, with new restaurants, cafes and a leisure complex, and plans to build up to 1,522 homes, a new public green, and offices. The development, on brownfield land in the White City Opportunity Area, has been scaled down since it was originally submitted last August. The buildings range from four to 12 storeys in height with one feature building that is 20 storeys high. There will be 250 affordable homes and more than 59,000 sq ft is devoted to a new mall with a large 'anchor store'. The work will be phased in stages over the next 17 years. It is projected to bring up to 6,700 jobs to the area, with local people being given access to training, apprenticeships and employment opportunities through the Work Zone in Shepherds Bush Library.

The deal includes a £20m contribution by Westfield toward improvements for the community, including £3.9m for works to Shepherds Bush overground train station, with an extension to the ticket office, a new entrance and a lengthened platform. One million pounds will go towards highways and junction improvements, £450,000 to buses and local transport, and £75,000 for new town centre signposts. A new bridge and pedestrian footpaths linking east and west of the site will also be built, connecting H&F with Kensington and Chelsea. Consultations will now take place with the local community.

## Change of direction at Camden Lock

The iconic Camden Lock Market in North London, founded in the 1970s, has been purchased by the Urban Market Company in a joint venture between the founders of Camden Lock and the retail development firm, Milligan.

The purchase of the one acre site, for a sum in excess of £30m, was funded by Brockton Capital, the specialist real estate private equity fund. The Urban Market Company intends to acquire and develop other street markets around the country.

# newsbriefs

## Newham scheme to license private landlords

Newham councillors approved a pioneering scheme at a Cabinet meeting on 21 June following an extensive consultation with residents, stakeholders, private sector tenants, landlords and lettings agencies. Seventy-four per cent of residents and 76 per cent of private tenants support the borough-wide licensing scheme. It is part of the borough's drive which included the creation of a task force, to combat 'sheds with beds' – people living illegally in squalor in garden sheds, often exploited by rogue landlords. The council also sees it as a way of reducing crime and anti-social behaviour associated with bad housing.

The initiative had already been successfully piloted on a small scale in the borough's Little Ilford Neighbourhood Improvement Zone (NIZ), achieving 100% compliance following enforcement action against a small number of non-compliant landlords.

The licensing programme covering an estimated 35,000 private tenancies (one in three of all the borough's households) is due to come into force on 1 January, 2013. The council plans to use infra-red cameras and aerial photography to find the shanty-style homes - and ensure the landlords are brought to book. Private landlords will pay £150 for a five year licence if they register before 1 January, 2013. Otherwise the full fee is £500. Landlords who fail to license face fines of up to £20,000. The scheme is backed by national housing charity Shelter which has urged other councils to follow Newham's lead. ■

## London Forum on Twitter

### Don't forget the London Forum Twitter site.

Stories; updates on the latest news as it comes in; useful web addresses.

Do pass on the address to all your amenity society contacts. Twitter can reach far beyond London Forum's e-bulletin list of contacts.

[http://twitter.com/london\\_forum](http://twitter.com/london_forum)

NB - note the underscore: \_ in the name ■

## For information about the London Forum contact:

[www.londonforum.org.uk](http://www.londonforum.org.uk)

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# Dates for your diary

## London Forum events

### London Forum Open Meetings Autumn 2012

#### Tuesday 11 September

#### Survey Of Civic Societies

The results of a survey made in June 2012 of London Forum's civic and community groups on their issues and achievements will be presented and discussed.

#### Wednesday 17 October

#### London Forum AGM

The Annual General Meeting will be followed by discussion on the work of civic and community groups.

#### Friday 16 November

#### Localism And Neighbourhood Planning

Community groups and London boroughs will discuss experience in 2012 with the Localism Act, Neighbourhood Forums and the use of the new National Planning policies.

**Watch out for further information by email**

### Meetings are held at The Gallery,

75 Cowcross Street, EC1M 6EJ,  
(Farringdon station)

All meetings begin with refreshments at 6pm

**for a 6:30pm start ■**

## newsforum

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