



ALEXANDRA PARK AND PALACE JOINT MEETING OF THE STATUTORY ADVISORY AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES

1st September 2020

Report Title: CEO's Report

Report of: Louise Stewart, Chief Executive Officer

Purpose: *This report provides information to the Statutory Advisory and Consultative Committees on planning and policy issues in relation to Alexandra Park and Palace. It also provides additional information on the events programme and a range of activities of the Charitable Trust.*

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985: N/A

1. Recommendation

1.1 To note the content of this report.

2. Covid-19 Response

2.1 Despite the closure of the Palace on 17th March and the majority of scheduled events for 2020/21 cancelled or postponed, due to the pandemic and the need to protect the public, staff and volunteers, the Charity continued to deliver its charitable purposes through,

- creative Learning adapting swiftly to deliver online content
- the Park providing respite for local people
- continuation of essential maintenance work.

2.2 Although the Palace was closed to the public, it provided support to the pandemic response efforts through,

- hosting an Essential Supplies Distribution Centre, working with Haringey Council and Edible London
- hosting Compassion London in the main kitchens to prepare and distribute hot meals
- hosting a bi-weekly Mobile Military Covid-19 testing unit in the Paddocks car park.

Anti-social behaviour

2.5 The Park saw an increase of 168% in the number of visitors during the lockdown. Between 17 March and 22 May 2020 an estimated 1.5m people visited, which put immense pressure on the Park and Grounds Maintenance staff (more detail in the Park section below).

- 2.6 Despite signage and social media communication the Trust experienced an increase in negative social media comments, complaints and enquiries that more needed to be done to protect public safety and the charitable assets due to visitors failing to observe social distancing, group fighting, dangerous driving, illegal (double and triple) parking, trespassing, illegal trading and drug use.

Road Closure

- 2.7 The situation raised significant safety concerns, particularly the dangerous driving and illegal parking. It was having a detrimental impact on visitors to the Park, and surrounding areas. In agreement with our partners, Haringey Council, the Police and TfL it was decided to close Alexandra Palace Way between the hours of 8pm and 5am. The Trust also invested in concrete infrastructure to block the parking in the bays for the foreseeable future. This was communicated to stakeholders and publicised on our social media channels and in a blog on the website a few days before the closure came into effect on 2nd June (until 13th July).
- 2.8 The Road closure was a temporary measure, which could be repeated. At the time of writing we have noticed a recurrence of the ASB activity and are in dialogue with our partners about appropriate measures.
- 2.9 We are extremely grateful to members of the community who have rallied to support us by donating, supporting the measures we have undertaken, being advocates on social media, particularly on our fundraising efforts, actively helping to deal with the litter, as well as being 'eyes and ears' for the Trust as the majority of our staff have been furloughed or working remotely.
- 2.10 The Trust came under pressure to reopen park facilities but was consistent in the reasons for not reopening; (1) safety of the public and personnel (2) the cost to the Trust, of reopening, especially in a Covid secure way, when there is no income being generated to pay for the management of the facilities.

Parking donations

- 2.11 Our car parks were closed at the start of lockdown to discourage people from breaking the government guidance to stay at home. However, the car park closures caused issues particularly as the weather was fine and the number of people in the local area working from home or furloughed meant visitors were using the road and grassed areas as a car park instead. This was becoming dangerous due to speeding vehicles and causing damage to the park and its infrastructure. There was also a noticeable increase in parking in surrounding streets when people were permitted to drive to locations for leisure.
- 2.12 To mitigate the impact, in May, the car parks were opened, incurring staffing costs therefore, as a temporary measure, drivers were invited to make a donation (using a socially distant 'tap to donate' system). We communicated this to our stakeholders, including ward councillors and local resident groups and individuals. It has been received well, with only a handful of drivers declining to donate.

3. Recovery

- 3.1 The Trust's focus currently is on securing funding to keep the Trust going in year and for the future and preparing for reopening the building and staff returning. Risk assessments and carefully planned processes and systems are needed to protect staff, volunteers and customers.

4. Repairs and maintenance

- 4.1 With visitor areas closed the team have been able to complete maintenance or repair work in areas, which are usually high usage with little down time. The work we have been able to undertake may not all be visible to the public but it will increase the resilience of the building.
- 4.2 Work in public areas include:
- Ice Rink: trench edge reinforcement (complete), new kickboards (80% complete), replacement electrical distribution boards, new valve and controller boards on the refrigeration plant (all complete).
 - Tower masonry repairs to the public facing elevations of South Terrace and The Beach (complete).
 - Redecoration (complete) and renewal of seals (ongoing) to Theatre doors.
 - Floor repairs to Great Hall (complete).
 - Glazing repairs to East Lightwell (complete).
 - Replacement fire doors installed to East Lightwell serving BBC corridor/event store (complete).
- 4.3 Back of house areas:
- Replacement electric boards and rewiring in the BBC Tower (on-going, complete rewire required to almost every floor, due to aging brittle wiring and non-compliant defects).
 - Boiler and hot water expansion vessels works (complete).
 - New flooring, sink repairs and anti-slip treatment to stairs in the Phoenix Bar & Kitchen (complete).
 - Fitting of new rooflights over Marble Staircase (complete).
 - Redecoration of rear fire escape staircases and back of house areas (complete to Level 5 and Security, Organisers Office corridor).
 - Repairs and decoration planned to BBC toilets/corridor (complete) and part offices (ongoing as delayed by essential rewiring to BBC offices)
 - Installation of goods lift to West Yard Building storage unit (complete). Additional high level cage due to be installed in September, to add extra protection from storage objects potentially falling into lift.

5. Dukes Avenue Bridge

In June a note was circulated to committee members about the future of the disused railway bridge at Dukes Avenue. The bridge, owned by the Crown Estate, is being considered for demolition due to safety reasons. The Trust is keen for the bridge to be retained as part of AP's heritage story but understands the safety issues that have been raised. At the time of writing no further updates are available. The note is attached at Appendix 1, should the SAC & CC wish to raise any additional issues during the meeting.

6. Park Update

Litter

- 6.1 The level of litter in the Park since March has been overwhelming (in May the weight of litter was up 79% on May 2019 and up 252% on May 2018).
- 6.2 The public donations have enabled us to make additional litter collections at weekends and provide litter pickers to around 100 volunteers. Two graphs are displayed in appendix 2 to demonstrate the increase in litter in the Park this year, 30 tonnes collected in June 2020 compared to 11 tonnes in June 2019.
- 6.3 We are very grateful to our local community, neighbours and park users who have helped us to combat the level of abuse the Park has been receiving, by actively volunteering and collecting litter. We are also grateful for the continued support of the Friends of the Park and who have co-ordinated groups of new volunteers. This not only improves the experience for park users, it prevents the litter problem from getting worse and assists to prevent harm to other people and wildlife in and around the Park. A grid-map of the Park is provided at Appendix 3, which has proved useful for Park users to report areas of concern to the Trust.

Reporting Anti-social behaviour

- 6.4 As mentioned earlier in this report we have seen an increase in antisocial behaviour and many reported incidents of young people climbing over the gates to access the Park at night time, as well as motorbikes/mopeds driving through pedestrian areas and crimes being committed in surrounding areas.
- 6.5 We encourage local residents to contact 020 8365 2121 which goes to our Visitor Services Team Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm and the Security Control Room during out of hours. However, our security team are not the Police and have no powers of enforcement. We encourage people to report crimes and anti-social behaviour to the local authority and the Police, who we work closely with.

6.6 Tree and Woodland Management Plan

Work on the Tree and Woodland Management Plan continues. It sets out a framework to manage and protect the diversity of species and the Park's landscape character and tree stock from the increasing threat of tree diseases. A summary or full version can be requested from Natalie Layton (Charity Secretary) and any comments submitted to the Park Manager, Mark Evison, via Natalie.Layton@alexandrapalace.com.

- 6.7 At the last meeting the SAC/CC sought additional information on the Tree planting project, which is included at Appendix 4.

6.8 Thames Water repairs

In March Thames Water were on site to repair a leak which surfaced around the Grove Bus Stop. The pipes are reported to be 90 years old and the defect may have moved to the next weak joint in the pipe, along the lower road.

7. Creative Learning

Opening of the Creativity Pavilion (the 'Learning Zone')

- 7.1 The Creativity Pavilion opened its doors on 25 February 2020 with Children from Friern Barnet and St James' schools taking part in a 3D Modelling workshop led by the project architects.
- 7.2 The new purpose-built learning space in the East Court provides a home for our growing Creative Learning programme, offering opportunities for local communities to explore their creativity through workshops, courses and volunteering.
- 7.3 The Pavilion programme opened with an exhibition of ingenious inventions, designed by local children as part of our Little Inventors project and brought to life by students from Middlesex redLoop Innovation Centre.

Activities

- 7.4 Despite various challenges and having to respond to the rapidly changing situation AP has been able to continue producing learning programmes and is leading discussions with Haringey Education Partnership to support teachers and young people in making their programmes relevant to the situation. For example, in September the Haringey Tuition Service will be delivering some of their sessions in the Creativity Pavilion.
- 7.5 Free downloadable content includes: wildlife and nature (and creating dens), interactive content around magic and creativity and four Creativity Summer Camps took place over the summer: Street Art, Fashion, Dance and Spoken Word. We also launched a music programme encouraging people to create a graphic score and create links for other people to add to it.
- 7.6 20 young people will be joining the Creative Learning team to input into creating 8 events and have their say on the arts and culture they want to see in the building, although this is likely to be delivered online.
- 7.7 The Little Inventors Challenge launched in April with young people invited to design and create a wildlife invention. This year's theme aims to encourage focused learning about sustainability and the environment on their journey through the Park and to continue the learning at home. To encourage more schools to engage in the challenge the deadline has been extended to October and the partner artist 'Jack The Artist' has been commissioned to make three new short films on sustainable issues and invention. Six of the inventions will be selected for display in the Park's outdoor learning area, to be made by Jack The Artist working with a community or school group.
- 7.8 One challenge was transferring the Biblio-Buzz book awards into an online event. Cancelling the event was not an option as so many young people in Haringey had invested their time in reading the 6 books and voting on a favourite. They were able to discuss the books, meet the authors and meet Cressida Cowell, Children's Laureate for Waterstones Books.
- 7.9 Big Schools; Green Screen Champions
The Creative Learning Team adapted the 1 day session to deliver a 2 week programme of webinars, films and downloadable resources. In addition to BAFTA and Discovery Learning the Big Schools partners have been broadened to include: Albert (providers of guidance on creating sustainable content), Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

(FCBS) architects and artists and animators commissioned to teach young people how to make films. The data is still being evaluated but approximately 1,786 pupils have engaged with this programme.

8. Wild in the Park

- 8.1 In summer 2019, we embarked upon on a major new creative learning programme in the Park, supported by a fantastic three-year commitment from Matchroom Sport Charitable Foundation. There is a huge amount of evidence showing the benefit of time spent outdoors surrounded by nature for all of us, but particularly for young people.
- 8.2 Pilot programmes have continued since September with 6-10 taster sessions delivered with our outdoor learning experts **Forest and Family** working in consultation with children, young people and education specialists from the **Haringey Tuition Service**, **Alexandra Park Primary** and **Heartlands Learning Support Unit**. Through these pilot programmes we are developing provision for outdoor learning for children and young people with Special Education Needs, young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs and forestry school provision for primary schools.
- 8.3 Wild in the Park's family programmes and performances are now happening regularly, with after school clubs, some weekends activities and school holidays, including Creativity Camps. Family performances take families on trails through the park, and we are offering family crafting activities. These activities are continuing even through this very wet winter... a key objective is demonstrating that outdoor learning is not just a summertime activity.
- 8.5 We have always been clear that we would not be delivering this programme on our own, but in conjunction with other experienced and expert local organisations and practitioners. Alexandra Palace's Creative Learning team is working with organisations including Haringey Pupil Referral Units, Education Trusts, and the Haringey Youth Board. These partners act as referral agencies but also offer support and guidance to ensure they remain relevant when addressing young people's needs. In addition, we have developed strong partnerships with creative companies specialising in creative arts outdoor learning provision, such as **Emergency Exit Arts**, **Scarabaeus Circus Performance Company** and **Collage Arts**.
- 8.5 So far, participants have worked with specialists from a range of fields including artists, forestry school educators and wild life/conservation experts. Activities have included designing 'Grab and Go' activities for families, conservation initiatives, building insect hotels, den-making, and building camp fire and toasting marshmallows. As hoped the programme is beginning leave a footprint and legacy for future park users and communities to enjoy, for example young people worked with street artist **Carleen De Souzer** to create a mural to decorate the bridge that leads to Muswell Hill.
- 8.6 We committed to reaching at least 1,500 children and young people through this programme in the first year and we exceeded this figure.
- 8.7 What is even more encouraging is the diversity of young people we are reaching, including those in Pupil Referral Units and children with special needs. Many of these young people will not have had opportunities like this before, and this is where we think the programme can make a profound and long-term impact.

9. Events

- 9.1 Generating income by restarting our operations is essential to keep the Park and Palace safely open, all year round, for everyone to enjoy.
- 9.2 'The Terrace' is a Covid secure food and drink experience based on the 'beach area' of the South Terrace outside the Phoenix Bar and Kitchen.
- 9.3 Ice rink is due to open in early September, when the maintenance work is completed and the ice can be refrozen.
- 9.4 There are some exhibitions that are currently on the schedule that we are expecting to go ahead, such as Knit and Stitch, which is normally one of our largest shows.
- 9.5 The Theatre has been in use during lockdown by Melody VR who recorded artists and the Wireless Festival, which was streamed live. The artist Nick Cave also recorded his video album in the West Hall and another large film shoot took place in the Great Hall.
- 9.6 Licence Variation
In July we communicated to the SAC/CC the Trust's intention to apply for a minor variation to the outdoor events premises licence to include the Pavilion to host a series of small music events over the August 2020 Bank Holiday weekend. We worked extremely hard on a number of options to deliver the event, with the relevant authorities recognising the high standards we were working towards, however despite meeting government guidelines, it was decided that the event could not be delivered in a way that would not compromise the experience.
- 9.7 Fireworks
At the time of writing this report options were still being discussed with the relevant authorities for the Fireworks Festival.

10. Legal Implications

- 10.1 The Council's Assistant Director of Corporate Governance has been consulted on this report and advises that there are no legal implications arising from this report.

11. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Dukes Avenue Bridge information note
- Appendix 2 – Waste increase graphs
- Appendix 3 – Park Grid-Map
- Appendix 4 – Tree Planting Project additional information