



Proposal to the Alexandra Park & Palace Trust Board

IT is proposed that the APPTB, with support from the London Borough of Haringey, should apply for *UNESCO World Heritage Site* recognition for at least the south-east wing of Alexandra Palace. This is to include the BBC television studios, control rooms, dressing and transmitter rooms, telecine area, tower offices and the main transmission tower.

THE benefits and advantages of this proposal include:

Terms

The World Heritage Committee annually confers UN World Heritage status on cultural, natural & 'mixed' sites deemed worthy

■ the relevant UNESCO **cultural criteria** are,
"to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius"
"exhibits an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in ...
technology ..."

"bears a **unique or exceptional testimony** to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared"

■ Under certain conditions, listed sites can obtain funds from the World Heritage Fund. It is considered in the interest of the international community to preserve each site

■ BBC studios **A & B** have the strongest claim to be the birthplace of public TV broadcasting in the UK – on 2 Nov. 1936 – and a strong claim for global significance

Technical

A recognition that the Studios, known as the birthplace of television, are of the highest international historical importance

■ **Unique Selling Point** – the television history is one of the few aspects for which Alexandra Palace is known **internationally** and the only thing about Alexandra Palace that is unique

■ would lead to the Studios being brought up to the needed standard, with cost spread over time

■ the case for boosting the status of *The London Television Station* has been already been set out in detail by the former Head of BBC Heritage, Robin Reynolds and others (see Appendix)

Target

A clear goal that all in London would be proud to see and support

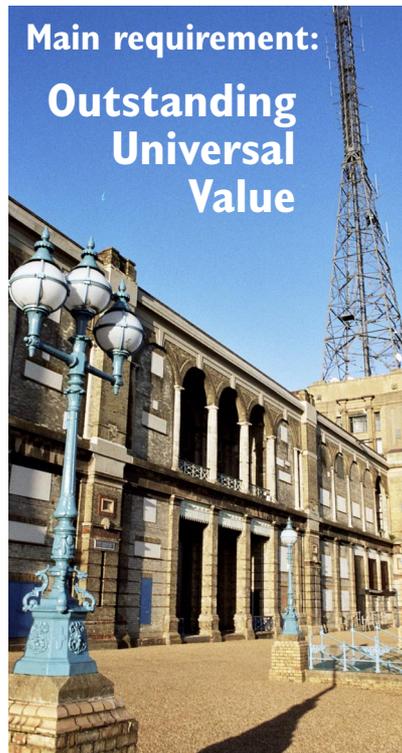
■ provides a **strategic goal**, a transparent objective and offers long-term continuity. This goal posits a big prize, equal to the building's size and importance

■ this ambition aims not higher, but **highest**. It would boost morale and lift everyone's sights

■ a goal that is **independent** of the form of governance or the composition of the Trustees

■ if achieved, **global awareness**. UN World Heritage Sites are not ten-a-penny!

■ if an Application were to fall at the last hurdle (i.e. at the international stage) it would not be a failure, because much good work would have had to have happened, in order to advance it to that point;



Tone

A goal of UN World Heritage site would set the tone: positive and prestigious

■ a **virtuous circle**: likely to attract **high profile and influential Trustees** to a reformed Board

■ attract the most prestigious **corporate sponsors** – especially if the council connection could be loosened

■ attract **publicity** and attention to AP for all the *right* reasons;

■ act as an **impetus** to get things done; enthuses and galvanises others;

■ **Catalyst** – most physical parts of the palace depend for *their* advancement on improvements in *other* parts of the building and in the palace as a whole. The palace needs an over-arching metaphysical goal that acts as a *catalyst*

■ **Halo** – a goal or status that comes with an inevitable halo effect. The Studios are inseparable from the Palace. Anything else that is proposed or established at AP (such as a hotel) would enjoy a reflected glory and an enhanced status from mere proximity. AP would become a destination in general for international visitors;

Totem

AP is a huge, unusual and eccentric building on a prominent hill, with a diffuse image and disparate parts. It lacks focus and a focal point. It is hard to categorise & has had an uncertain purpose.

■ AP would benefit from a **symbol** and a main **theme**, meaningful both nationally and internationally

■ a long-range strategic goal that would **sustain interest** and **survive changes** in personnel, trading-performance, trusteeship or form-of-governance

■ AP will remain the most important building in Haringey Borough: ideally, an appropriate goal should be something that **unites** our Trust and the Council in a project with a common purpose

■ ideally, we should have a goal that is **broad enough** at the beginning in order to gain wide support. A goal not attempting to be described in minutiae at the outset

Trust

There hasn't always been full confidence in the council's intentions over AP

■ project a **positive image** for AP and signal a fresh start and a new chapter for our Charity. **signal** to all that LBH is serious about AP; a signal not just about the Studios & not just to the BBC

■ conforms with Trust's **charitable status** and the letter and spirit of the remit

■ an **apolitical** goal, likely to **unify** different interests and attract a spectrum of support

■ act as a **reassurance** about the future under possible independent status

■ **control** – an Application is within the power and control of the Trust. It would not require negotiations with a lessee or

developer, nor huge legal costs

■ our charity and the council could collaborate on a **common goal**, likely to have side-benefits for the Borough

■ if **confidence** could be re-built with respect to the Studios, this could lead to its former contents and other exhibits – currently held elsewhere – being returned to their **first**

home (e.g. from BBC heritage, EMI archives, Bradford museum etc.)

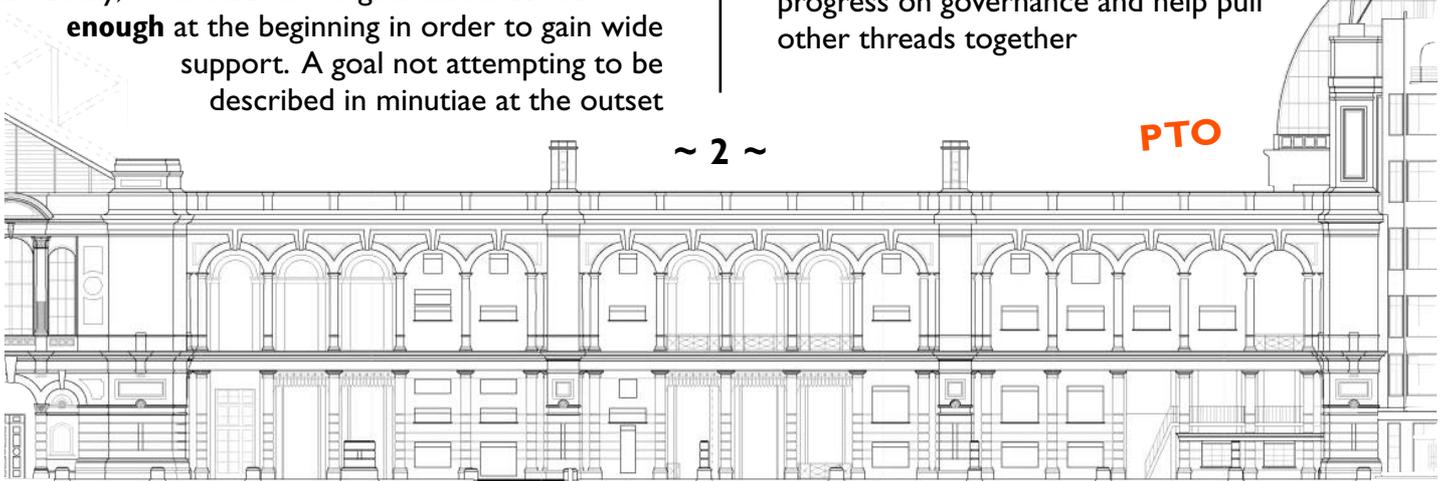
■ **support** from individuals and groups willing to contribute time & effort towards filling the requirements of the goal (see Appendix);

■ has the potential to speed up progress on governance and help pull other threads together



~ 2 ~

PTO



Timing

Now is the right time to begin planning for the process of an Application

- the proposal **looks beyond** the current cash cut-backs and governance structure
- while funding is at its tightest for the next couple of years, the proposed statement of intent requires little expenditure in the short term
- **reinforces** and may even requires, **governance reform**. One criterion for the World Heritage Committee is assuring themselves of the **sound governance** of sites
- Next year, 2011, is the **75th Anniversary** of the birth of television at Alexandra Palace
- 2012 is year of the **Olympic Games**, which will be televised from northeast London to a global audience. 54 years earlier and a relatively short distance away, the Olympics Games of 1948 were broadcast to London from the birthplace of television – a further possible tie-in;

Tower

The corporate logo of the London Borough of Haringey (also on the shield on the coat of arms) celebrates the first radiating signals from the first public service television tower in 1936

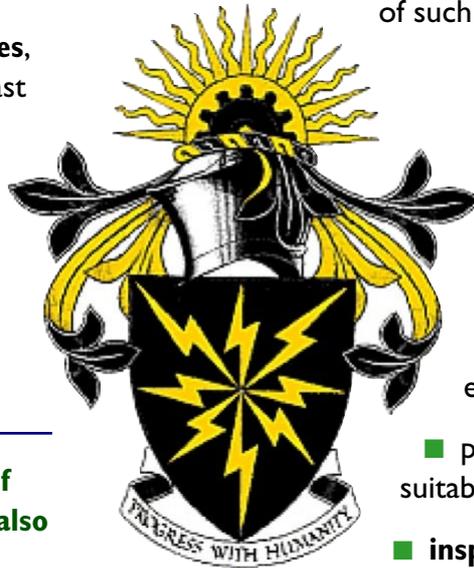
- can the council return to its past pride in AP's history? The tower is physically the tallest structure of the palace, visible from all over the Borough, much of London and beyond; a visible permanent reminder of the pioneer work.

It makes sense to build (metaphorically) on this already **listed** structure. A UN World Heritage accolade would represent the highest flag on the flagship of a rejuvenated Ally Pally.

Tourism

UN World Heritage Site status would boost attention among potential international visitors

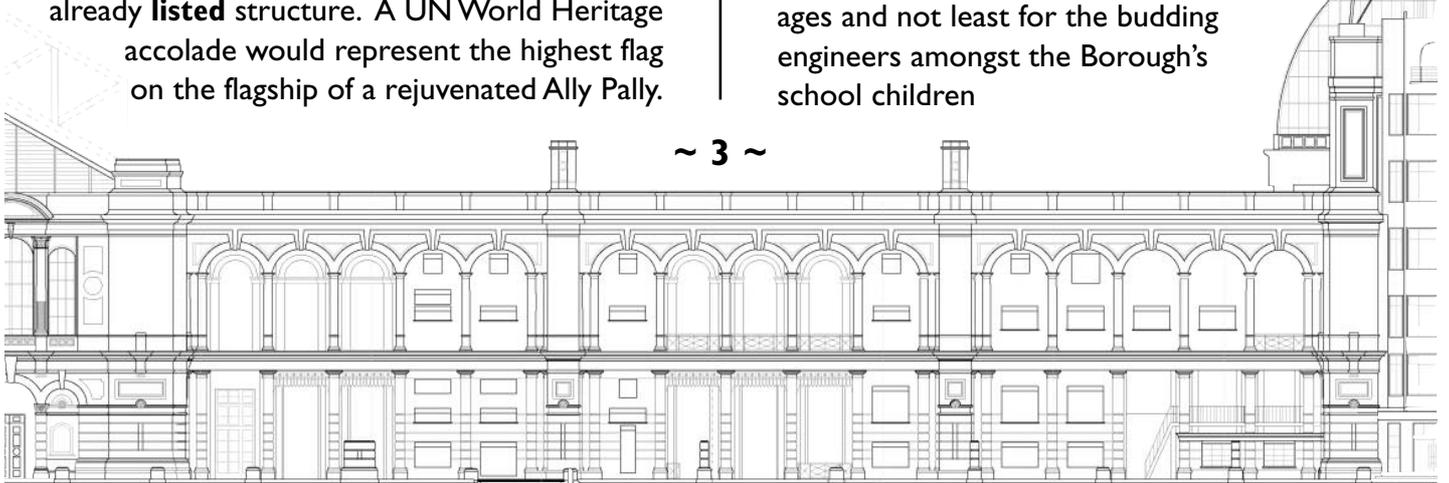
- would leverage Alexandra Palace's natural advantages: the best panoramic view of London; on a hill, atop a park
- **co-branding** with **Bletchley Park?**
- status would fit well with a tourist **hotel**
- if this proposal ever looked serious, it would come to the attention of central government and it is hardly conceivable that there would not be material support, as governments world-wide recognise the impact of such recognition



Teaching

The education aspect is one of the Studios' strongest suits

- UN World Heritage status would come to the notice of educators globally
- possible interactive displays suitable for children
- **inspirational:** calls attention to a paradigm of towering electronic engineering achievement
- **innovation:** co-branding with the underplayed regular exhibitor, the *Inventions Show*
- Middlesex University in 2004 proposed a Media Campus based on this site
- a history lesson with London's finest views. An inspiration to visitors of all ages and not least for the budding engineers amongst the Borough's school children



Texts

Appendix and bibliography:

- CIVIX – Media Campus Feasibility Study (August 2004)
- AP Building Survey – studio part: costings from the Schedule of Developer Shell Repairs/ Approximate Costs and 20 year Forward Forecast maintenance Costs
- Front facade elevation credit: part of thesis of the Italian architect *Massimo Moscato*

Relevant submissions to English Heritage (for Grade II STAR status for whole palace):

- Alexandra Palace – Listing Review – “BBC Studios”, page 3 (Mortimer MacSweeney; Design & Conservation Team; Haringey Council 2007-01-26)
- *The Television Studios at Alexandra Palace* – the case for preservation. Robyn Reynolds, head of BBC Heritage; 2007-01-22

Testimony

this proposal is endorsed by the following three television groups associated with the Studios:

- AP Television Group (*Chair: John Thompson*)
- AP Television Society (*Chair: Simon Vaughan*)
- AP 405-line Television group (*Chair: Martin Allen*)
- IET – Institution of Engineering and Technology (*formerly the Institution of Electrical Engineers*)

Risks – The Application would:

- probably take years; ■ not be a complete solution; ■ need council staff time; ■ not progress easily without reform in finance and governance; ■ probably require national and international lobbying; ■ require long-term commitment by Haringey Council to prosecute ■ if awarded, UN World Heritage Site status can be withdrawn if the site is not looked after

- Mr John Trenouth (*former television curator, National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Bradford*) who has kindly supplied the following notes:

Territory

It is of course unique, surviving mainly because the abandoned studios were left undisturbed for so many years

- There were earlier television studios in Britain (Baird's studios at Long Acre and Crystal Palace, plus several others around the world pre-date AP). However AP does contain the worlds **earliest surviving studios**.

The only other surviving early television premises are probably those in **St Petersburg**, which date from a similar time. However it would seem that they have been extensively remodelled over the ensuing years and very little of the original remains in a recognisable form.

The **Berlin** studio (which pre-dated the AP studios) was completely destroyed by the Russian army (who looted the equipment and badly damaged the building) in the closing days of WWII.

In the **USA** the original studios at Schenectady and Farnsworth's San Francisco operation are all long gone. This makes the South East wing at AP the oldest surviving television station site.

~ 4 ~

