

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Meeting: Economic Partnership
Date: 10th January 2012
Subject: Crystal Palace Park Project
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Please see Appendix 1 to accompany this report

1. Recommendations.

The Partnership is asked to:-

- 1.1 Note the contents a summarised report that was approved at the Council's Executive on 19th October 2012 and is summarised below.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The report recognises Crystal Palace Park as a site of local, regional, national and international significance which now requires an alternative approach to its management to ensure that it is enjoyed for generations to come. The approved Masterplan for Crystal Palace Park, although subject to a judicial review, requires consideration to be given to the mechanism by which the Masterplan can be implemented and the need to attract significant external support and funding whilst retaining and increasing the support of local residents, interest groups and associations.
- 2.2 The report examines different options for the future governance of the park and recommends that management of the park in the form of a 'not-for-profit' organisation be further investigated. The report also suggests pursuing discussions with established and experienced organisations such as the National Trust, English Heritage and other industry sectors who have a history and reputation for managing green spaces.
- 2.3 Recognising the complexities of the park's history, the diverse range of parties that have an interest in the future of the park and the scale of resources likely to be required to implement (in all or in part) the Masterplan, this report recommends the creation of the Crystal Palace Park Management Board (**Appendix 1**). The Board will be established to explore opportunities for the management, restoration, development and protection of Crystal Palace Park; recognising the site's multi-faceted historical significance and creating an environment which is valued and admired by local people and visitors alike.

Background

3. Crystal Palace Park is an English Heritage Grade II* listed park which was once home to Sir Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace, the structure which originally housed the Great Exhibition in 1851. The London Borough of Bromley took control of Crystal Palace Park in 1986 from the Greater London Council. The Park's 200 acres incorporates a number of heritage features and the National Sports Centre, the latter being a separately managed entity.
- 3.1 In 1999, the park was awarded £4.4m from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore 40% of the landscape and infrastructure. However, further investment is needed to restore, conserve, protect and develop the remaining elements of the park.

- 3.2 The London Borough of Bromley has not been able to guarantee the level of investment required given the park's status as a national asset. In the current economic climate where there are competing priorities on local authority funding, this is unlikely to improve.
- 3.3 Because the park is situated on the borders of five London boroughs; Bromley, Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark, it has evoked a diverse range of interest and support from a wide range of residents.
- 3.4 The Council granted the London Development Agency a 125 year lease of the National Sports Centre and grounds immediately surrounding the site on 25th March 2006. Since that date, under the terms of that lease, the London Development Agency have been wholly responsible for the National Sports Centre site, including insurance, although there is no covenant on their part to keep or maintain the buildings in any particular condition. A further 125 year lease (running for the same term) of that part of the Crystal Palace Park Farm not included in the National Sports Centre lease was subsequently granted to the London Development Agency to enable them to grant a lease of the whole of the farm to Capel Manor College for use as part of the college.
- 3.5 The agreement entered into between the Council and the London Development Agency which led to the lease of the National Sports Centre site also granted the London Development Agency an option to take a 125 year lease of the whole park. With the potential of taking over the management of the park, the London Development Agency commissioned Latz + Partner (a landscape architecture firm) to carry out extensive public consultation and create a landscape Masterplan for the park.

The Masterplan applications for planning permission, Conservation Area Consent and Listed Building Consent were submitted in November 2007. In December 2008 the Development Control Committee resolved to grant permission, but the applications were called in by the Secretary of State for Communities (SoS) decision. A local inquiry took place between July and September 2009 and the Inspector's report of April 2010 was considered by the SoS, who granted permission in December 2010. This decision is subject to a legal challenge with a hearing on 7th March 2012.

- 3.6 The aim of the Masterplan is to create a 21st century park which reflects Paxton's original ideas while responding to today's concerns and opportunities. The aim is that the park should be:
- Innovative
 - Inspirational
 - Trend – setting
 - Recreational, fun and educational for all
 - An exemplar of a modern sustainable park
- 3.7 In terms of the costs of implementing the Masterplan, in 2007 the London Development estimated £68M which did not include certain elements that would attract grants and or other separate funding streams, for example the build of a new museum, restoration of the subway, restoration of the stonework of the listed terraces and works to the National Sports Centre. As such the total costs of implementing the Masterplan could be nearly twice the figure originally quoted. It was estimated that the receipt from the sale of the two residential sites would be in the region of £12.8M, but this estimate was prior to the recession

Potential Governance Options for Crystal Palace Park

- i) Single Borough Governance

- The park could be managed by a single London borough; Bromley, Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham or Southwark, all of which adjoin the park.
 - On evaluation, the report does not recommend a single borough governance option. This option does not provide the management, partnership and funding opportunities that Crystal Palace Park requires.
- ii) Multiple Borough Governance
- The park could be managed by a consortium of local boroughs who would all contribute financially to the park.
 - On evaluation, this report does not recommend a multiple borough governance option. The disadvantages outweigh the advantages of this arrangement.
- iii) Generic Regional Borough Governance
- The management of the park would be transferred to an existing generic regional body (i.e. an organisation not primarily concerned with parks).
 - On evaluation, the report does not recommend a generic regional borough governance option. Since the London Development Agency is going to be absorbed by the Greater London Authority it seems unlikely that a generic regional body will be prepared to extend their remit to include a park, particularly in the current economic climate.
- iv) Specialist Parks Authority Governance
- On evaluation, specialist parks authority governance is not the preferred option, however further investigations will be carried out to ensure that this is evaluation is accurate.

'Not-for-profit' organisation

- 3.8 A new 'not-for-profit' organisation, for example a charitable trust, could be created with the sole purpose of caring for the management, development, protection and restoration of Crystal Palace Park.
- 3.9 The advantages of a 'not-for-profit' organisation are:
- Setting up a new 'not-for-profit' organisation is relatively straightforward.
 - 'Not-for-profit' organisations can apply for external funding and grants for which statutory bodies are not eligible. The charitable status of 'not-for-profit' organisations can also bring tax-relief benefits.
 - A 'not-for-profit' organisation can be structured to provide local accountability, opportunities for local input and is attractive to influential and dynamic individuals who wish to make a valuable contribution to a national asset.
 - The 'not-for-profit' organisation can focus on raising additional monies and tap additional sources of income. They often have a strong entrepreneurial culture to access funding from a variety of sources such as other business opportunities and commercial finance.
 - Trusts can encourage cohesion as interested residents and stakeholders, including the local authority, have opportunities to become members or trustees.

- Trusts can focus on green spaces and so would not face the competitive pressures inherent within local authorities.

3.10 The disadvantages of an independent ‘not-for-profit’ organisation are:

- Recruiting people with the right expertise to govern the trust could be a challenge.
- Fundraising and donor programmes can be more suitable for specific capital projects as they can be directly linked to new development initiatives. Funding for green space maintenance may therefore be limited.
- The composition of the trust could raise questions about equity of representation, especially from local groups.

3.11 On evaluation, this report recommends an independent ‘not-for-profit’ organisation for the future governance of Crystal Palace Park. Based on the findings above, this report suggests that the advantages associated with setting up an independent ‘not-for-profit’ organisation outweigh those of other governance options. It also suggests that the identified disadvantages could be managed by careful and effective planning. This model has been used successfully in a number of other parks across the country. Particularly successful examples include the Chiswick House and Gardens Trust (www.chgt.org.uk) and the Nene Park Trust (www.neneparktrust.org.uk).

3.12 In summary, on evaluation of each of the identified governance options, the report recommends a ‘not-for-profit’ governance model for the future management of Crystal Palace Park and suggests that further investigation into the practicalities of this option should be made. It also recommends that some investigations should be made into the specialist parks authority governance model to ensure the is accurate. The report also recommends exploring management options with established industry standard organisations such as the National Trust, English Heritage and the Eden Project.

3.13 Given the complexities of the history and the diverse interests in Crystal Palace Park, members have agreed to further investigate the ‘not-for-profit’ organisation governance model and by setting up a Crystal Palace Park Management Board (at **Appendix 1**).

The Crystal Palace Park Management Board

3.14 The Crystal Palace Park Management Board will be responsible for making recommendations to Bromley Council’s Executive Committee which will determine the future management of Crystal Palace Park. This recommendation will place an emphasis on:

- Restoring and protecting Crystal Palace Park ’s heritage and infrastructure
- Improving and developing community use and investment in the park
- Recognising the park’s local, regional and national significance
- Determining and securing the park’s importance for the future.

3.15 It is suggested that the Crystal Palace Park Management Board members all work towards the following aims:

- To examine and agree a legal structure for the future management of Crystal Palace Park .
- To challenge the Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966 in collaboration with neighbouring boroughs to obtain agreement to reinvest Bromley’s funds into Crystal Palace Park.

- To approve and champion capital and revenue projects that improve the usage and visitor experience at Crystal Palace Park.
- To examine and pioneer different opportunities for investment at Crystal Palace Park.
- To work closely with the Mayor of London to:
 - Explore a regional status for Crystal Palace Park
 - Enter into discussions with the National Trust, English Heritage and other industry sectors about the future governance of Crystal Palace Park .
- Develop employment and skills opportunities at Crystal Palace Park.

4. Timetable

Hold first Executive Project Board meeting and agree Terms of Reference	February 2012
Set up four stakeholder groups and agree tasks <i>Including formal recruitment process for Community stakeholder Group membership opportunities. See Appendix 1, boxes 4,5,6,7.</i>	End December 2011
A Community Conference to report on progress, galvanise the vision	April 2012
Stakeholder Groups' tasks completed	End October 2012
Report back to the Executive on progress and findings	End November 2012