

Blackheath Joint Working Party

19 January 2016

Attendees

Cllr Kevin Bonavia (chair)	London Borough of Lewisham
Cllr Aidan Smith	London Borough of Greenwich
Shirley Broughton	Nature Conservation Group
Phillip Craig	Greenwich Society
Sue Corlett	Hare and Billett Action Group
Helen Reeves	Blackheath Society
Mike Norton	Westcombe Society
Tony Butler	Friends of Greenwich Park
Robert Goring	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Steve Roedel	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Janine Whittaker	Royal Borough of Greenwich Events
Chris Devine	Royal Borough of Greenwich Licensing
Jane Dyer	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Martin Hyde	London Borough of Lewisham Parks
Gemma Buttle	Glendale Lewisham
Nicholas Stabeler	London Borough of Lewisham
James Bravin (mins)	London Borough of Lewisham

1. Apologies and introduction

Apologies were received from Margaret Dinkledein, Paul Morrissey and Bob Hills.

James Bravin was introduced by Cllr Kevin Bonavia (KB) as the minute-taker for the meeting.

It was agreed that *Update on Blackheath Events Policy* would be moved to after the *Review of Pre-Approval Questionnaire ('In the Night Garden Live')* on the agenda.

2. Minutes of meeting 17 November 2015

a). The following amendments proposed by Tony Butler (TB) were agreed to be added to the minutes:

Section 8: Add at end of last paragraph

“TB said that, given the likely recurring damage to the Heath RBG should be encouraged to look elsewhere to provide that variety. This view was generally supported.”

Action: RBG to note the concerns of BJWP and seek another venue.

Section 12: Add at end of last paragraph

“TB expressed concern that there had been no consultation with local residents. This should be undertaken before any decision was taken”.

Action: TB to discuss with RBG Councillors, residents and Tim Barnes.

b) Matters arising:

Item 8. (Preparation of a Licence for Kings Troop to use the Circus Field):

Robert Goering (RG) provided an update on the Kings Troop’s proposed usage of the Circus Field. The new proposal is for the Kings Troop to use the Circus Field for a maximum of 3 times a year (with a max session time of 4 hours). It has also been stipulated that any other events will take priority over the Kings Troop. These arrangements will be written up into a legal document by the 1st of February. KB noted that the new proposal of 3 times a year is a significant (and more preferable) change from the 2 times a week previously proposed.

Item 9. (Blackheath (SMINC) Nature Conservation Group)

Shirley Broughton (SB) explained that there had been no update received on the ecology survey.

Item 12 (Discussion re ‘The Point’ proposal (Greenwich Society):

Having studied the plans, TB had raised three concerns with RBG Councillors. These were a) the lack of consultation, b) the possible loss of the rural feel of that area below the Point and c) the health and safety issue that could result if gaps were left in the fence at the top of the western slope and children then used the slope for a slide – there was a brick wall at the foot of that slope. Having sought the views of local residents via the Maidenstone and Dutton Street Facebook page, and face to face, TB met Tim Barnes on 10 December 2015. Tim explained the funding situation, and that it was unlikely that Veolia would respond before the end of March. There would now be a pause until finance had been committed. Only £5k was to come from RBG. Time expressed the hope that in April there would be a Public Meeting of local residents, Councillors and RBG officials to finalize how the views could be improved, and the hard standing, fencing and seating arrangements.

Action: RGB to ensure that there is full consultation and that BJWP see the plans before they are finalized.

3. Update of Circus Field Licence Application

KB thanked members of the committee and officers for giving their time for reviewing drafts and plans for events that would take place on the Circus Field.

Janine Whittaker (JW) advised that RGB had withdrawn their Circus Field licence application the previous night due to overwhelming support for the principle that licence applications should be made on an event by event basis, not as a general application for multiple events. JW advised that there will be a maximum of 2 additional events on the Circus Field this year. KB noted that there were two pending licence Circus Field applications, one of which was urgent (In the Night Garden Live; Item 4) and one of which was less urgent (Food Festival).

4. Review of Pre-Approval Questionnaire (In the Night Garden Live)

JW asked for clarity on the process for accepting applications. KB advised that there was no standardised process and that the process was different for different applicants.

TB asked that if the “In the Night Garden Live” (ITNGL) was to become an annual event who would be the approving officer from the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG). JW advised that there is not an approving officer in RBG. KB added that unlike Lewisham who hire Glendale to manage their parks, RBG manage their parks themselves and as such do have an approving officer.

Oli Seadon (OS) from Minor Entertainment the company producing ITNGL was invited by the BJWP to present the event application. OS gave some background to ITNGL, explaining that it is a touring live show based on the BBC children’s television programme “In the Night Garden”. The show has been touring since 2010 and visits 5 – 6 venues a year, often local authority managed parks. Previous venues have included Bute Park in Cardiff, the Old Deer Park in Richmond, and Queen’s Park in Glasgow. The production is aimed at preschool children and their families, and is held in a 30m x 40m purpose built inflatable theatre.

OS asked to address some of the concerns that had been highlighted by the Westcombe Society, which he had received prior to this meeting. Initially the site was proposed as being in the NE of Circus Field, allowing it to be as close to hard standing as possible; however the Westcombe Society proposed an alternative site. OS advised that he would be happy for the ITNGL to move to the site proposed by the Westcombe Society.

OS explained that the show has been built on locations that are closer to residential buildings than the proposed Blackheath site and they have never had problems with noise complaints, so this should not be a problem. OS also explained that they have toured several grass sites and both plastic and metal tracking is laid down to protect the grass during construction and deconstruction of the site. OS advised that on leaving, grass sites are usually left in good condition, usually with some discolouration of the grass which is able to recover naturally. Occasionally some reseeding and light rolling is needed and in the event that this occurs Minor Entertainment would pay for any work that was carried out.

OS advised that he was happy to move the car parking site as suggested by the Westcombe Society. OS explained that the production team were experienced in managing car-parks. Pre-event emails would be sent to all attendees explaining the car parking facilities and that travel by public transport would be encouraged. OS advised the area would be properly marked with appropriate signage. The production team were expecting a maximum of 200 cars at any one time.

OS agreed to answer questions about the proposals from BJWP members. Phillip Craig (PC) asked whether OS was aware that BH is a site of metropolitan nature conservation. OS responded that he was not aware of that. PC asked if the length of time of the event (36 days) was too long for the heavy duty track way to be used as it might damage the site. OS advised that the period on site is not dissimilar to the duration spent at other grass sites (e.g. Richmond Park) where there had been no serious damage. OS said that there tends to be a maximum of 20 – 30 truck moves per event. Richard Goering (RG) also advised that the ground at Blackheath does stand up well to wear. OS added that at Queen’s Park in Glasgow despite persistent wet weather the ground still held up well throughout the production.

TB asked why there was an eleven day set up and only a two day take-down of the production. OS said that the reason that the set up was longer was that Blackheath would be the first site to host the production this year and as such there were five additional days of technical rehearsal which had to take place on site.

Helen Reeves (HR) asked that if it is decided that ITNGL is to be an annual event will it always be put on first at Blackheath. OS said they intended for Blackheath to be the first but this could be changed if needed. He also noted that a show in the middle of the run would only take 23 days.

KB asked JW if she could ensure that all Lewisham residents would be consulted on the event, to which JW replied that this would happen within 20 working days. Jane Dyer (JD) asked that if ITNGL was granted a one-off licence this year would it be considered for a return next year. HR suggested that it would depend on the other events taking place on Blackheath in any given year. KB added that the approach to planning the events at Blackheath needs to be more holistic and perhaps there should be a specific meeting of the BJWP dedicated to reviewing licence applications.

Shirley Broughton (SB) noted that the site of the car park is close to the nature conservation area and noted that there may be an impact on nature in the surrounding areas. Chris Devine (CD) said that there will be no overspill of the car park into the surrounding areas. HR asked if the proposed car park was of sufficient size to hold up to 200 cars. OS indicated that the proposed area was 100m x 50m and was more than adequate to accommodate the number of cars expected at the event.

PC questioned whether RBG would be subsidising the ITNGL in any way. OS noted that they were paying more for the BH site than they were for some commercial sites, and JW confirmed that RBG would not be subsidising the event.

HR commented that she liked the idea of the event but the duration of 36 days seemed too long. JW advised that it could be negotiated that the ITNGL would not start its run in Blackheath beyond 2016 as this would reduce the time on site. KB noted if ITNGL was to go ahead this year the overall occupation of Blackheath by events would be slightly longer than last year. PC felt that he thought the event would be nice, but the increasing popularity and number of different events on Blackheath meant that there is less time to enjoy the heath in its normal state, however he felt that holding the event this year and reviewing how it goes was the best option. TB questioned whether OS had been asked if the 2016 event could be moved to the middle of the run, to reduce the number of days needed for the event. JW advised that this was not a possibility in 2016. The BJWP strongly recommend that in 2017 the ITNGL would not start its run at Blackheath so that the time on site is reduced.

Mike Norton (MN) wanted to confirm that the BJWP agreed with the new site proposal that had already been accepted by Minor Entertainment. The BJWP agreed that this was a more appropriate site.

The BJWP agreed to allow the ITNGL to take place in principal.

Action

JW to inform OS and Minor Entertainment that the BJWP agree to allow the event to take place.

5. Update on Blackheath events policy.

KB stated that both London Borough of Lewisham (LBL) and RBG deal with their own events policies and then there is a separate events policy for Blackheath. The LBL policy had been amended last year to allow up to 5 large events per year to be held on Blackheath. KB also stated that LBL have just reviewed and approved their events policy. KB noted that although the BJWP had been notified of the results of LBL's public

consultation regarding its review of its events policy, it was unfortunate that the BJWP had not been given a draft of the revised version. KN added, however, that he had since spoken to Kevin Sheehan (KS) from LBL, and KS made it clear that he would be open to suggested amendments on Lewisham's event policy from the BJWP. In light of the withdrawal of RBG Circus Field Licence application KB has suggested that LBL and RBG have a more joined up approach to their events policies. KB also suggested that a dedicated meeting is held to review all annual events licence applications. PC noted that he liked the idea of holding a single meeting for 2017 licence applications to be discussed together.

TB asked what KB's position was on why he couldn't be the voice of the BJWP when discussions are taking place in Cabinet, and why this would be a conflict of interest. KB clarified that he takes a strict view on conflicts of interest of which there two types – personal and prejudicial. In this KB felt he had a personal interest, as a member of the BJWP and therefore excluded himself from any discussion or voting on the LBL's events policy. TB noted that the confirmation was helpful but it posed a dilemma as BJWP cannot put forward its views on the events policy (due to the KB's conflict of interest and role as Chair). KB suggested that the Vice-chair of BJWP could write a letter to both LBL informing them of BJWP's position. KB also noted that TB was right to want to clarify how the BJWP should present its views to decision makers.

HR explained that one of the issues with the Blackheath Events policy is that just stipulating the number of events is no longer sufficient as the attendance of the events has gone up to a maximum size of 10,000, and there needed to be more in the detail including maximum number of events, maximum number of people, maximum number of cars etc. SB also noted that large events such as the Blackheath Fireworks were not included in the quota of events that were allowed each year.

Action:

KB to relay messages of both councils on the Blackheath events policy back to BJWP.

Amenity societies to make their recommendation on the events policy and to determine how they want to consult the public for their views.

6. Planning for Public Meeting (16th February)

KB proposed that this year when the public meeting is advertised that it encourages members of the public to bring along any of their proposals for the OnBlackheath fund to the meeting. KB explained that this year the amenity societies would be advertising the public meeting.

KB noted that the public meeting is set for the 16th of February at the Bakehouse.

Action

Gemma Buttle to make sure that Glendale are ready for the public meeting.

7. Dates for Meetings (April 2016 onwards)

The BJWP agreed that the next meetings would be held on:

Tuesday 15th of March

Tuesday 24th May

Tuesday 19th July

Tuesday 20th September
18th October (Meeting dedicated to discussing Licence applications)
15th November

JW suggested that the last day of September would be the closing date for the receipt of any event licence applications for 2017. The BJWP agreed that this was a good idea.

8. AOB

It was put forward that members of the BJWP need copies of the BJWP constitution to review.

Action:

Rosalind Jeffery to email the BJWP constitution to BJWP members.

DRAFT