

**BLU public meeting: At 10.00am on 19 January 2002
Delicious Brunch followed by meeting 10.30am---12.00pm at
Brockwell Lido. See you there!!**

Thanks for your support over the last 5 months. We look forward to seeing you at the next public meeting when there will be:

1. a full progress report on BLU's activities;
2. an update on the status of the Lido's future;
3. a vote to approve the BLU constitution; and
4. an election of steering group members.

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

Why BLU?

When the turnstiles started turning over in May 2001 everyone was delighted and relieved that Brockwell Lido was open for another season, but this didn't dispel people's disquiet, since the lease was due to expire in May 2002 with no clear indications of the council's intentions after this time.

A group of dedicated Lido users, Mary Hill, Yvonne Levy and Judy Holman started a newsletter around the pool and mooted the idea of a support group to campaign to keep the Lido open. Yvonne Levy lent her skills as a market research consultant and devised a questionnaire, and through the energy of Lido user volunteers and Lido staff led by Nikki, they managed to achieve 873 completed returns as well as have many conversations with people about what turned out to be a shared passion.

(The results of the questionnaire provided overwhelming support for the maintenance of the open air swimming pool and the other community facilities such as Whippersnappers and the yoga and meditation classes.)

On 12 August there was a lively public meeting at the Lido attended by about 60 people. There was overwhelming support for the idea of a 'friends of the Lido' group to represent Lido users interests and views, with its main aim as keeping the Lido open as a public facility. A steering group was set up and went straight into 'top gear' as there was only a month left before the Lido was due to close for the winter.

The group was named **BLU – Brockwell Lido Users**. It was agreed that BLU should be a not for profit organisation. *A constitution has been drafted which will need to be endorsed by the membership on 19 January 2002.* Key post holders were elected (Chair, Mary Hill, Vice-Chair, Alex MacGillivray who has left us because he has moved out of London, Secretary, Susan MacDonald, and Treasurer, Tristram Sutton. Other steering group members agreed to take on responsibilities for key areas like research and communication.

The ***immediate priority*** was to urgently raise BLU's profile so as to facilitate a meaningful dialogue with key stake holders about the future of the pool before it closed on 15 September 2001.

Discussions with the incumbent management team, Paddy Castledine and Casey McGlue, offered us useful information, which coincided with BLU'S own assessment of the Lido's future namely that:

- the lease would need to be granted for a substantial period in order for any management company to attract long term investment and sponsorship;

- ❑ the lido by itself was not viable because of climate considerations and would need additional cash generating facilities introduced in order to subsidise the open air swimming pool;
- ❑ as the council was considering going out to tender, and the pool was an expensive facility to run, there was a concern that the site might be passed to a corporate sports facility who would develop it as a luxury facility to make it viable thereby undermining its essentially community focused public base.

However, essential to BLU's aims and philosophy was the need to act as a *completely independent* organisation, ensuring a voice for users and that decisions were not in any way partisan to any interest groups. Therefore over the past 5 months BLU has discussed the aim, to keep the Lido open and flourishing, with a wide variety of stakeholders.

On 13 September 2001 there was a further public meeting of BLU attended by about 100 people. The meeting was addressed by Councillor Paul McGlone and by local Councillor Peter O'Connell.

Cllr McGlone informed the meeting that the council was absolutely committed to keeping the Lido open. He went on to say that the council would be market testing (i.e. putting the matter out to tender) and would be seeking bids. He also said that the Council was duty bound to get best value and that they were not in a position to put any money into the project.

Paddy and Casey put their position to the meeting, particularly the need for an urgent resolution since they had potential sponsors who would not weather uncertainty for any length of time. They had a number of ideas for improving income generation that were well received by BLU members.

The meeting was also addressed by Caroline and Kirk from Whippersnappers who offer early learning opportunities, specialising in music, running 18 workshops for 250 children per week and their carers at the Lido, as well as a substantial number of children in schools in their outreach programme. Caroline informed the meeting that on the strength of their work they had been able to secure a £20,000 charity grant. The Lido offered a unique facility in a safe and familiar environment and in a climate where public provision for under 5s had declined they were offering a creative and thriving facility for children and their families.

The meeting also heard from Aidan Dunsdon on behalf of members from the Yoga Martial Arts and Meditation classes. There are 26 classes a week, attended by around 300 students who are participating in several different kinds of Yoga, from beginners to advanced levels as well as Tai Chi and Meditation classes.

The meeting gave BLU's Steering Group an overwhelming mandate to campaign to keep the Lido open.

One of the first priorities, therefore, was to open a Bank Account, which was duly done by Tristram Sutton our Treasurer. Funds collected at the previous open meetings total £331.15 which is the balance of the BLU account excluding the cost of this mail-out. Funding has been an on going discussion. Once our constitution and future activities are agreed, we will be able to forecast our expenditure more accurately. Ros Price is preparing an application to local charities. Thanks to everyone who put their hand in the pocket at the public meeting on 14 September.

Since then a number of Lambeth Councillors and our local Member of Parliament have been contacted. MP Tessa Jowell's office was contacted and we were informed that Ms Jowell has a very positive view about the maintenance of the Lido as an open air local facility.

BLU has lobbied key local people who are well known in media and sympathetic to BLU's aims and many of them are well disposed to using their profile and influence if there is a future need for a more vociferous campaign.

BLU has networked with local community groups including Herne Hill Forum, Brixton Forum, Friends of Brockwell Park, Brockwell Park Management and Advisory Committee (MAC). On 18 November we met with Derek Hoare, chair of Brockwell Park MAC, joint chairs of Herne Hill forum Giles Gibson and Alan Gaunt and previous Lido campaign veteran, Michael Boyle, to look at the nature of the relationship between BLU and local community fora. There was a lively discussion and it was generally agreed that a Lido committee as part of the Herne Hill Forum would be helpful.

We met with Ian Barclay from Torkildsen Barclay Consultants who researched the 'Brockwell Park Lido Options Report' who listened attentively to what we had to say and accurately summarised BLU's views in his report.

We attended Lambeth's Assets Committee.

Philip Kolvin, Chair of the very successful Save Crystal Palace Campaign, attended a steering group meeting to offer advice and support. Phil was very excited about the idea of BLU becoming a development trust. Judy Holman undertook to research this further. Her findings were that this would be quite a complex and lengthy process and that the Lido might not fit the criteria. It would move the emphasis from a users' group to a charity seeking to have a substantial stake in running the Lido. The Steering Group felt it was a little early in the process to be taking such far-reaching steps but it would certainly be an inspiring thought for the future. It is clearly an approach that the MAC are giving a lot of thought to as well.

It goes without saying that we have been in a regular dialogue with Casey and Paddy and have we feel established a relationship of mutual respect and look forward to that continuing in the New Year.

We were also pleased, that upon request, a meeting with Cllr Paul McGlone was offered very speedily, just prior to the Consultation Report being released on 23rd November 2001. Our two main aims were to ensure that we were able to access the Consultant's report and to ensure that we would be consulted in the development of the tender and the consideration of the applicants. We were duly emailed the report and Cllr McGlone was receptive on the latter two requests.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Consultant's report offered 4 options:

- Continue the present arrangements with a subsidy and look at a trust possibly managing the Lido
- Closure
- Closure and Redevelopment as a 5 a side football centre
- Partial site development to subsidise the Lido by:
 - (a) *Permitting a commercial health and fitness development whereby the ground rent is used to subsidise the Lido;*
 - (b) *Permitting an integrated community Lido/health and fitness development managed by a local trust with capital input from the Council or other sources;*
 - (c) *Permitting an integrated community Lido/health and fitness development managed by a specialist private operator who will invest the capital.*

The view of the Consultant was: *'.....that the Lido is considered to be a community facility, and therefore that some form of community involvement in its management – either in an advisory capacity or via a more direct community management route – should be pursued. However, all parties must realise that the Lido cannot be sustained without some commercial development on or adjacent to the site to generate sufficient revenue to*

subsidise the Lido's ongoing operation and upkeep, and therefore commercial interest needs to be formally sought. The various community and interest groups will also need to decide between themselves the mechanism for, and the extent of their future involvement.'

Ian Barclay then goes onto suggest an intense timetable for consultation and tendering.

BLU has made a response to the consultant's report and the council have issued a press release as a response to the Consultant's report which you can read on their web site at www.lambeth.gov.uk and you can email John Harrison, Press Contact, at jharrison@lambeth.gov.uk with your views.

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On 18 November 2001 BLU met with Cllr Kirsty McHugh. She reinforced Paul McGlone's original assurances that the council wants to keep the Lido open. She was very interested in our views and said she would be reporting them back to her colleagues.

Paddy and Casey have obviously had their own discussions with the council about the report and will be able to speak to the public meeting on 19th January.

What is clear is that the future of the Lido depends on the council reaching agreement about the terms of the extended lease period. The consultant's report states that at least £30,000 a year is needed. We are now waiting to see if an agreement can be reached so that the pool can open for the next two seasons to allow time for a longer term solution to be found. BLU will be monitoring this carefully. The two challenges for BLU are:

In the short term: to see whether satisfactory temporary arrangements can be made for the next two seasons.

In the longer term: to participate in the procurement process as suggested in the Consultants' report and influence specifications for the tender and ensure community voice in further decisions about the Lido.

The Lido is not just a summer time dream and we firmly believe that with a small amount of money it could be kept open until there is a more comprehensive plan in place to establish it's long-term viability.

We also believe if it is not kept open then it will deprive the community of an essential 'treasured resource' and will decay and be lost to Lambeth residents for good.

We have researched other pools including at Cirencester, Hampton, Tooting Bec, Hampstead, and Pells, who are trying to get a national pressure group going. Although, many of them are struggling there has been an upsurge in interest and so it's watch this space – people *are* saving their Lidos.

It's cold and it's winter time but next summer when that sun comes up and you look out the window and think *Lido*, where will you be if it's a dead empty shell? Where will all those kids from Whippersnappers go and what about all the people for whom the Yoga centre is an established part of their keeping fit and stress busting routine? You can help by:

1. Lobbying your local councillor and MP to ensure that the Lido is kept open. You can find councillors' names on Lambeth's web site or from the Information desk at the Town Hall on 020 7926 1000.
2. Come to the public meeting on 19 January 2002 at the Lido and bring anyone else you know who uses the Lido's facilities. We'll want to look at latest developments and to discuss where we go from here.

3. Read the report on the website and email John Harrison to let the council know the strength of feeling there is on this matter. Tell them what the Lido means to you and your family.

Have a wonderful Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

We'll see you on the 19th

Best wishes

Linda Daley on behalf of BLU Steering Group