

## **A Personal Statement at Public Inquiry-July 2009 as a member of the Dialogue Process**

**I was not going to ask to speak at this Inquiry but the attempts to undermine the character and integrity of the whole Dialogue process in the first few days I and others consider unwarranted and scandalous. It was not perfect but as facilitated process it was as good as anybody would get without taking on the responsibility of the major cost with the Sponsoring body.**

**I am Peter Austin a local resident for some 40 years who has been involved in various heritage, history, planning and conservation activities in this unique area. I first became aware of the excellent sports facilities at the NSC in the mid 60's and used the hockey and squash facilities extensively in the late 60's and 70's. It was a great privilege to have the opportunity in 2003/4 to help in establishing a working party to pursue the renewal of the Centre and then be part of the consultation process to undertake the eventual refurbishment, see it take place, tour the renewed facilities and make ready for the current range of Events including the Senior World Pentathlon and as a Training Camp venue for the Olympic Games in 2012.**

**My interest in the Park evolved through my wife's involvement in the Crystal Palace Festival in 1974 and then my attendance at the Exhibition in the Park in 1977 when we were asked to consider various improvements and the interesting proposal of a Viewing Tower on the top site. Unfortunately no Public Authority sought to sponsor this approach even though there was a degree of publicity about it nationally, some approval and an indication of possible funding. Very quickly the economic crisis in the late 70's halted the chances of public funding, and no planning application was put to Bromley.**

**So in June 2002 to have the opportunity to take part in a new process with the object of restoring the Park and NSC and which could be facilitated by an independent consultant was great. Also to be sponsored by Bromley which needed to recover its credibility after the Multiplex disaster seemed very credible and was welcomed universally. Now in 2009 the opportunity of moving forward from the history and mythology of the past and advancing forward to an enhanced Heritage Park and recreation profile for the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot and should not be missed.**

**I have participated in about 95% of the Working Party meetings, special Task Groups and Main Group meetings held between February 2003 and May 2008. At all times even in the face of difficult behaviour and personal abuse on several occasions the Dialogue Process was conducted by Nigel Westaway as Facilitator with his Associates in a very responsible and enlightened manner. He listened and responded sensitively to the presentation of a range of options and tried to respect the position of several interest groups who seemed on occasions to revert back to campaigning and conflict as they became uncomfortable with the developing Agenda and found the consensus approach difficult to handle and respond to constructively. One outcome was to develop their own survey on a single question**

based around 'No Housing in the Park'. Lobbying was seen to take place outside the Crystal Palace Park Exhibition venues before visitors actually went round. They were even required to sign up before they went into the Exhibition venue.

The strength and success of the Dialogue process is that the Parks Working Party membership continued to meet on an informal basis from Summer 2008 until May of this year to monitor the progress made. Some Achievements have been made with the arrival of Capel Manor Farm and College in the Park to bring about the return of small animals and vertebrates and setting up an amenity horticultural training and education centre. This was an idea which was generated within the Dialogue Process and through its presentations by members. It is also important to record that the Chairman of LDA undertook the Opening of the Farm and Centre. Other significant improvements have resulted in the removal of the Turnstiles and concrete walkway near the Station. Discussions have also taken place with LDA and GLL about the further refurbishment and operations at the NSC.

There is a great danger that the benefits of the local consultation process and community involvement over the last six years will be lost when the Master Plan process, if given approval, moves forward to the next stage and implementation. This local and community consultation process for Park and Sports needs to continue and be retained alongside any new Local Authority Sponsoring Structure and given certain rights. If the Master Plan is rejected then a great deal of time and tax payer's monies will be lost and wasted and the potential threat of another commercial based scheme for the hilltop site being promoted in its place. I already understand that The Mayor of London is being lobbied this week about a massive scheme for the Hill Top site.

As English Heritage indicated yesterday this could well be a final opportunity to actually undertake the renewal and regeneration works which are badly needed. There is much work to be undertaken to remove this Regional Park from the endangered list of Parks and Gardens. Indeed within the Master Plan and its first phase by restoring the major Terraces and related features, the Subway, all which require urgent attention supported by a new Museum Building and its facilities including the Viewing platform, and the reconstruction of the Grand Axis Route and landscaping works- surely this is enough for the next five years. All these works could be funded from the usual channels with LDA project management and full GLA and Government and Community support. It would offer increased employment opportunities during a very difficult period of unemployment and recession for young people and especially construction workers before and after the Olympic site at Stratford is completed. Crystal Palace's time has come again and its renewal and regeneration needs to be addressed urgently through this Master Plan.

Peter Austin  
July 31<sup>st</sup> 2009