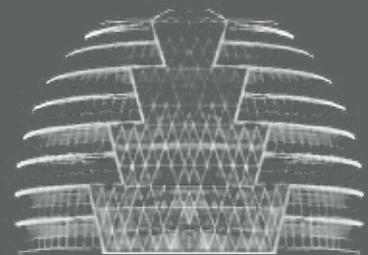


LONDON 2012 EQUESTRIAN EVENT GREENWICH

A CONSULTATION WITH
RESIDENTS OF THE LONDON
BOROUGH OF GREENWICH



GLA CONSERVATIVES
LONDON ASSEMBLY

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INTRODUCTION – LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

It is no secret that there has been much controversy over the cost and location of a number of the proposed temporary venues for the 2012 Olympic Games. However, arguments between LOCOG¹ and the Mayor, or the Government and just about everybody else, is not what has prompted me to launch my own consultation with local residents about this particular venue. My motivation was twofold. Firstly, Greenwich Park is a fantastic local resource, and a unique historic location, exemplified by the fact that it is designated a “World Heritage Site”. Secondly, I am concerned from anecdotal evidence that Olympic organisers have not properly consulted local residents about the possible impact of holding the event in the Park, or adequately solicited their views on how to best mitigate any issues that could impact on their lives.

From the response rate that exceeded 10 percent, it is clear that local residents feel strongly about the event and its possible impact, whether they support the concept of it being held in the Park or not. It was evident that any consultation undertaken with local residents was at best patchy and selective, and that an information vacuum exists.

I hope this report will enlighten those involved in delivering the Olympics as to local feeling and concern, and encourage those stakeholders to revisit how they conduct consultation with residents. The opinions expressed in this report are genuine and deserve to be treated seriously by LOCOG, the Mayor and the professional sporting bodies.

Gareth Bacon AM

¹ London Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games

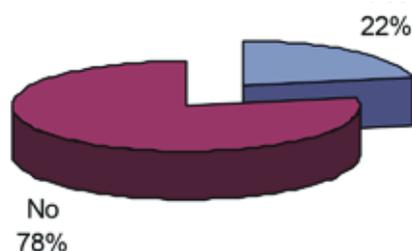
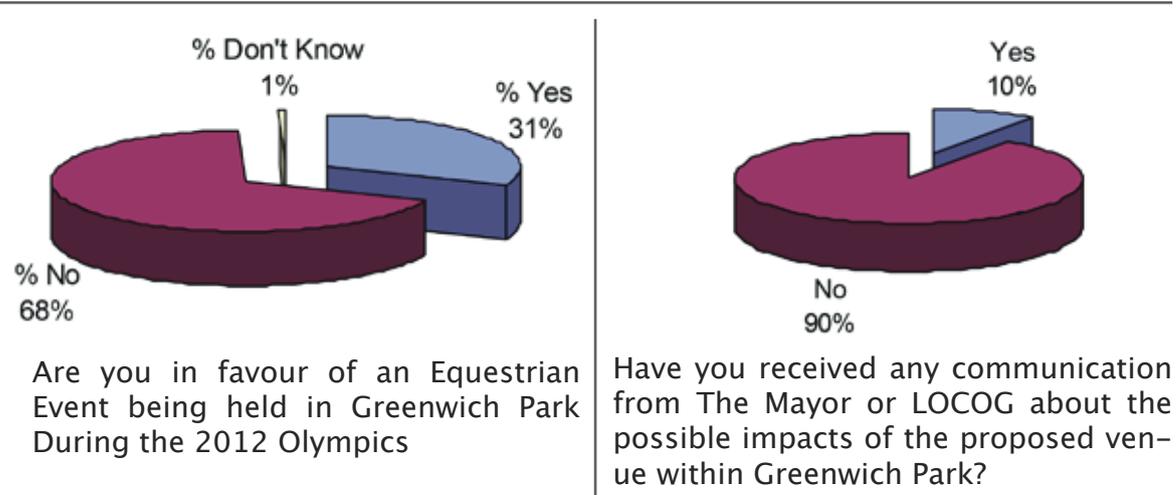
RESULTS AND METHODOLOGY

A survey was sent out to three wards surrounding Greenwich Park. The three wards selected were Greenwich West, Blackheath Westcombe and Peninsula. In total 11,985 surveys were sent. These were either sent through the post or electronically on request. The total number of responses received is 1,267, a response rate of 10.6%. A copy of the pro forma is attached to the report as an appendix.

The following three questions (all of which were deliberately neutral in tone in order to elicit genuine responses) were asked:

- Are you in favour of the Equestrian Event being held in Greenwich Park during the 2012 Olympics?
- Have you received any communications from the Mayor or LOCOG about the possible impacts of the proposed venue within Greenwich Park?
- Have you been invited to or attended any public meetings regarding the Equestrian Competition to be held in Greenwich Park?

The following statistical results were generated based on survey returns:



Have you been invited or attended any public meetings regarding the Equestrian Competition to be held in Greenwich Park?

RESIDENTS COMMENTS

Comments received from residents highlighted a number of reoccurring issues of concern.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Many residents were extremely concerned about the possible environmental impact of holding the equestrian events in the Park, these ranged from damage to the ground and visual landscape to the potential felling of ancient oaks. Below are examples of typical comments received:

“Greenwich Park is not designed for major equestrian events. I am concerned about the Long term impact of holding the events on the park (e.g cutting down trees, introducing a stable area for the horses etc)

“the most important reason for not having the equestrian competition is that the so called “pruning” of the trees, cutting down lower branches will change the face of the park forever-lower branches cannot be re-grown.”

“LOCOG is still in denial about potential damage to the ancient trees, failing to address the problem of damage to the root area by impact from horses’ hoofs and spectators feet”

TRANSPORT IMPACT

A chief concern of respondents was the possible negative impact on traffic and public transport, especially in light of the introduction of a designated Olympic route around the venue, which would mean roads being shut off to general traffic in order to allow exclusive

access to Olympians and officials. The area around the Park is already plagued by severe congestion. Typical comments received:

“...has no one thought about the impact on the residents locally who will possibly be faced with being unable to park in their own street, or get in and out of the area on competition days, either by road or rail. As residents the inhabitants of Greenwich would effectively be ‘under siege’ for as long as the competition takes place”

“...congestion in the area is already a problem (in terms of the numbers of people already in Greenwich brought by boat, DLR, rail and by foot- not just by private vehicles). Transport and local facilities could not cope with the greater influx of people – to the detriment of local residents”

“The choice of Greenwich as venue can only have been made by a person or people who have never seen south London roads and have an extended fantasy that people travel to it and through it by public transport. Even minor accidents or road works induce major paralysis on the area. It is proposed to have priority lanes on local roads for vehicles carrying officials, VIPs and competitors. Where and how will these operate? Trafalgar Road and Woolwich Road are single lanes for a majority of their coverage. If public transport is so good for all of us and these are to be the ‘greenest games on record’ why cannot all people engaged in the activities use it?”



ECONOMIC IMPACT

Concerns were raised by respondents about the possible impact extended disruption and barred access might have on local businesses in Greenwich, especially as many shops and enterprises rely on the influx of tourism over the summer months in particular. Below are comments lifted from the survey responses that highlight this issue:

“Tourism will drop off during the preparations/Olympics de-commissioning periods with people without tickets avoiding the area when the events actually take place. Why would a person choose to visit Greenwich during this time if they do not have a ticket – it would be like standing outside Wembley during Cup Final”

“...the cost to businesses as a result of traffic difficulties, and also the impact to me as a health worker having to commute across Greenwich everyday will be truly terrible.”

LACK OF ACCESS

In the absence of definitive information available to the public at large, many of those surveyed were worried about the lack of access to the Park over

a prolonged period. For many residents access to open space provided by the Park was an absolute necessity. Families living in social housing more often than not lack any personal open space in which to spend leisure time. The selected comments are a representative sample of the views of respondents:

“Our park is well used by ordinary people and is a rare haven of peace in busy London Life. I am horrified that such a short term temporary status-ridden excitement can threaten the calm and spiritual nature of a such a well-needed refuge for Londoners.”

“I was in the park today and it was busy with so many people (especially families) making the most of the park facilities. It would be very sad to see that all the enjoyment of these people will need to stop for a long period while a large proportion of Greenwich Park is made inaccessible due to the Equestrian Event.”

“I am fully in support of the 2012 Olympics generally, but from reading details on the London Olympics website it appears that the changes required to Greenwich Park to prepare it for the equestrian competition will mean that the park is closed for a significant period of time. This seems disproportionate to the benefit of holding the event in the Park.”

LACK OF CONSULTATION/INFORMATION

A common theme from respondents whether they supported the event being held in Greenwich Park or were against, was the lack information on the plans and almost a complete absence of meaningful consultation with residents. This situation inevitably led to bad feeling about the event being held in the Park and rumours being passed off as fact in a Chinese whisper style in the absence of factual information. Overleaf are some quotes lifted from surveys that illustrate the views of residents on the issue of consultation and lack of information:

“I also feel very left out of any consultation process (this survey being the only item received so far), and get the impression that the process is being shrouded in secrecy”

“Greenwich residents have not been adequately consulted about holding this event in Greenwich Park and have instead only been told that the decision has been taken before we have even been consulted.”

“There has been no information given to the general public about what will actually happen; how long will the park be closed before, and after? Will there be any long term changes? Will we be able to get into areas of the park during the Olympics? Will there be any true benefits of this process?”

POSITIVE IMPACT ON GREENWICH

Although a majority of respondents were concerned about negative impacts on the park, there was a significant

minority who welcomed the events to Greenwich. Residents believed that the exposure of such an event would put Greenwich firmly on the international map. Below are a number of typical positive responses that were received:

“I am fully in favour of the Equestrian Event taking place in Greenwich Park. The setting would be unparalleled. This would place Greenwich as an historic landmark in the imagination of the world”

“I believe the Olympic Games will bring a tremendous boost to London and will benefit Greenwich in particular. Hopefully the ‘Barcelona effect’ will happen in 2012 as it did in 1992, bringing a lasting legacy for the whole region.”

“Absolutely 100% pro and in favour of the park being an Olympic venue... We live next to the park, use it everyday, but do not see it as ours in isolation. It is a public park, a royal park and should be shared... The Olympics will be a moment in time, but a moment that will create memories and experiences that will last a lifetime.”



CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

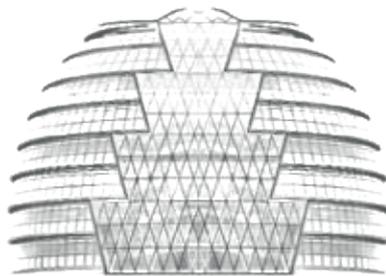
The responses received as a result of this survey demonstrate two clear truths. Firstly, the vast majority of respondents, some 68% are opposed to the equestrian competitions being held in Greenwich Park. Secondly, the vast majority of all respondents (90% of those who completed the questionnaire) have received no information about the possible impacts of the event being held in its suggested location. A clear majority (78% of replies) have not been invited to any public meetings on the subject. These results clearly show that in the eyes of local residents the public consultation on the equestrian event has been woeful. LOCOG and the other Olympic and sporting bodies must understand that holding big “public events” or giving presentations to local societies is no substitute for trying to build a direct picture of the concerns of the majority of residents through questionnaires and surveys that are sent out directly. As happens in planning and licensing processes, residents affected in the locale would receive direct communications to solicit their views. Chairs of residents associations or conservation societies don’t necessarily represent the views of the wider populous. The lack of information forthcoming from Games organisers



has clearly contributed to a misrepresentation of the likely impacts of the event, especially concerning environmental damage to the Park itself.

The following recommendations should be adopted to rectify the lack of information and genuine consultation:

- During the planning process both Greenwich Council and LOCOG should ensure a full consultation process is carried out. This must involve local residents being contacted directly, not filtered through ‘interested third parties’.
- LOCOG should make available all relevant information available at local points of access such as libraries so the public can find out the truth about the plans for the event. They should also consider leaflet drops to residential areas surrounding the Park.
- LOCOG should consider revisiting their consultation strategy in a more general context, to ensure that this type of political climate is not generated at other temporary venue sites.



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APPENDIX 1 – LETTER TO RESIDENT AND PRO FORMA QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear,

As you may be aware Greenwich is to be one of the host boroughs for the 2012 Olympic Games. One of the events taking place will be the equestrian competition. At present the plan is to hold the event within a temporary venue inside historic Greenwich Park.

This proposal has aroused controversy locally and nationally, and many conflicting stories have circulated about possible damage to the park, lack of public access before and after the Games, and the impact of re-routing traffic might have on residential roads.

As members of the London Assembly its part of our remit to look after the interests of Londoners, and to engage them in the governing process of the capitol. I would appreciate it if you took the time to complete the questionnaire overleaf, so we can ensure that local feeling and opinions are fed back to the Mayor and Olympic partners. Alternatively, you can email: liz.thompson@london.gov.uk requesting an electronic version of the survey.

Yours Sincerely,

Gareth Bacon AM

APPENDIX 2 - GREENWICH PARK EQUESTRIAN EVENT FEEDBACK FORM

(Please circle answers)

Are you in favour of the Equestrian Event being held in Greenwich Park during the 2012 Olympics?

YES NO

Have you received any communication from The Mayor or LOCOG about the possible impacts of the proposed venue within Greenwich Park?

YES NO

PLEASE GIVE DETAILS BELOW:

Have you been invited or attended any public meetings regarding the Equestrian Competition to be held in Greenwich Park?

YES NO

We would appreciate any additional views or comments about this issue to feed into the process: