

# *The London Fields Lido History*



*London Fields Lido c. 1939*

In the late 1920's the London County Council (LCC), encouraged by the success of the 6 Lidos they had already built, offered London boroughs the chance to build their own Lidos with a large subsidy from the LCC. Hackney first investigated the idea in 1928 and after some initial disagreement over where the lido should be situated (at London Fields or Hackney Marshes). An agreement was made between the LCC and Hackney Council for its present site on 9th July 1930.

The original 165x66ft Lido was wholly different from what had gone before. It was the earliest surviving example of its style with an advanced filtration plant, a tiered water aerator (fountain), a large sunbathing area, a refreshment kiosk and a first aid room. Designed in house by the LCC (probably by Rowbotham & Smithson) along with its twin at Kennington Park, which was opened in 1931 (closed 1988). The cost of building at the time was estimated at £10,870. A bargain price even in those days. The Lido first opened in 1932 and remained open until the war. It reopened in 1951, the year of the Festival of Britain that celebrated recovery from the war, until its closure in 1988.

In 1963 the LCC was expanded by the government, by their addition of the outer London boroughs, to become the Greater London Council (GLC). At the time, it was denied that this was only a way to prevent Labour's continual control of central London. The London suburbs had inexorably expanded into the surrounding countryside since the initial formation of the LCC in 1889.

The GLC was responsible for all London Lidos until 1973 when they were given to their local borough councils to run. In 1978 the younger children's paddling pool was added, which we were latter to discover was very poorly built. While at the same time the original fountain in the Lido was taken out, with the excuse that it was "to make an additional sunbathing area". An alternative reason that was whisp-

ered, was that the water source for the fountain was diverted to the Paddling pool.

In the 1980's there were numerous cutbacks in government funding to the councils. Because swimming and other leisure facilities (like municipal parks) are not a legal requirement for councils, it is one of the first items to suffer cutbacks at times of funding shortages. By 1986 Prime Minister Thatcher abolished the GLC, the services previously provided by the GLC were carved up between central government, the boroughs and a new set of London-wide bodies. Leaving a lack of integration of services and a further burden for the local councils. Of the 68 Lido's and open-air pools in the Greater London area at the time, there was eventually to be only 10 surviving in use.

With only two full-time staff (most Lido lifeguards at the time were part time or casual) London Fields Lido was easy to dispose of. Its eventual closure in 1988 was due to a severe lack of funds brought on by Government funding cuts to most councils. This was a period when many council swimming facilities up and down the country were finding difficulties with funding maintenance, basic overheads and staffing. (*See facsimile of original council report - Appendix A*).

To quote the LBH officers excuse in their 07/12/89 report, "The pool did not open in 1988 due to a shortage of staff available, triggered by excessively high vacancy levels in the indoor pools". While the outcome of this officers report was, "It is proposed that the pools and buildings be demolished and be put back to grass" and "The proposals in this report for the demolition are made in the present difficult financial position and the case for approving funding for the pool in future financial years will be difficult to justify against other projects providing an all year round facility". The council officers had produced a dismal, negative report, playing on all the existing weaknesses of this poorly maintained facility, with

very low entry fee and its consequent low income. That was apart from all the youngsters who would "bunk in" over the wall.

The London Fields User Group, in concern, formed a Lido sub-committee. We produced an alternative report for the council showing how during the very short season of its opening the running costs are comparable with those of the other Hackney pools and how the community could play a vital part in running the pool.

By this time the larger, very popular and relatively close, Victoria Park Lido had been closed and bulldozed to make a car park. The London Fields User Group was furious at this report and started a campaign against the closure of the Lido. We found wide support for the campaign among the public and many of the councillors were canvassed for support. It was decided that we should write an alternative report to place before the full council. An alternative report was prepared by Mike Martin and eventually we agreed on a final draft. Permission was sought and granted to distribute our report to all the councillors and John Drummond one of our group was allowed 5 minutes to speak to the full council. John was later to become a councillor for Hackney. The council decided to halt any demolition and to call for a feasibility report. *(See facsimile of our original report - Appendix B).*



*1960's View of sunbathing area from tower block*

As ever the wheels of council bureaucracy turned slowly and this decision did not get carried to the demolition contractors in time. Shortly after this decision was made we were informed at short notice that the bulldozer would be at the Lido 7am the next morning. A small group of us turned up just in time to stand in front of the bulldozer and stop the demolition, while another one of us chased off to get a local Councillor, Tony Allen to confirm the new council decision to the council officers and contractor. It was a very close call.

In the summer of 1992 a team led by Strategic Leisure Ltd. was appointed by LBH to carry out a consultancy study into the Lido. The team consisted of: Strategic Leisure Ltd. (management consultants); Gibson Hamilton Partnership (architects); Hoare Lea & Partners (consulting mechanical & electrical engineers); Brian Moorhead & Partners (consulting structural engineers) and Gardiner & Theobald (quantity surveyors). The feasibility study and report, costing over £9000, was completed for August 1992. Later that year an ugly corrugated iron fence was erected all around the empty Lido. This remained for many years despite our protestation.

The London Fields Lido sub-committee not satisfied with the procrastination of the council continued with the campaign. By 1994 they started collecting signatures on another petition for the re-opening of the Olympic size open-air swimming pool. In August a stall on Ridley Market, all decked out with pictures of swimmers and pools, balloons and swimming paraphernalia attracted many signatures. The stall was kindly given to us for the day by the Ridley Road Traders Association. Over 500 signatures were collected making a total of over 1000 signatures at the beginning of this campaign. The total of signatures grew and grew, but to no avail.

In 1996 further government funding cuts reduced available money in parks down from £3 million p.a. 5 years before, down to £1.9 million. Parks and leisure facilities not being statutory lost funding once again. All this time the sub-committee was looking into alternative ways to finance this facility, outside of council control; while all our development plans and proposals were turned down again. Some children were using the nearby Grand Union Canal as an alternative to an open a air pool in summer, with the possible threat of catching Wiles disease. This valuable facility was still under threat of being destroyed. Eventually, we managed to extract a promise not to destroy what existed of the Lido

We went out and did a survey of local opinion and got a "thumbs up" from almost everyone. We had won the battle against the bulldozers and a halt on its destruction until an alternative plan could be produced. The results of the feasibility study confirmed the integrity and substantial quality of the basic buildings. The basic tank of the pool was pronounced to be solid with just the expansion joints between the three base slabs requiring re-corking



with new mastic.

We wanted to completely refurbish the Lido, making a lively multi-purpose complex. Giving it heated water; a fold out roof enclosure for the pool in winter or bad weather; possibly Solar Heating and a Sauna; a weight training gym; a hall for aerobics; a cafeteria and taking in the grassed area with trees to the West of the Lido to have a further sunbathing area with picnic tables. Among our many contacts we had support for various sport uses, including water polo, a sub-aqu club, canoeing and water aerobics.

Our Lido sub-committee was greatly assisted by Peter Stechman, a swimming pool campaigner, who as Sports Centre Manager of The Oasis, Holborn, had transformed the outdoor pool into an all year round, heated swimming facility, in the late 1980's. With his great experience in the management of swimming pools in Camden he helped us to produce a working business plan for the Lido's reopening. He came all the way from South West London to our meetings. Carol Drummond who played a major role in co-ordinating the support for the pool had sent out hundreds of letters, to bring support, offers of pool plant spares, proposals, architectural plans and drawings.

In 1997 it became known that Hackney had benefited from a windfall from the National Lottery Sports Grants, potentially of several million over 2 years. Councillor Peter Snell notified us that this money had to be bid for and that we would have to get our ideas together fast to stand a chance of a Sports and Leisure development in London Fields. And so a meeting was called for January 7th. Peter Snell was responsible for most of the organisation and chaired the meeting.



***1980's Lifeguard***

The meeting was called to present the ideas of the London Fields User Group and its Lido sub-committee for sports and leisure development in the Park. Also, we had in mind the needs for local schools and other young people for better sports facilities. We wished to present these to as many local

people as possible and hear their responses and comments. It was well attended with 30 members of the public, Councillors Peter Snell, Neil Hughes, Chris O'Leary and Philip Pearson, plus council officers Michael Gabe (Area Parks and Amenities Manager), Shaun Dawson (Assistant Director Education and Leisure), Ian Morgan (Parks Co-ordinator). Peter Stechman, our pool expert also attended.

On 18th Feb. 1997 another Public Meeting was called to support our bid. We had over 30 people attending. Ken Belton the consultant assisting in the Lottery Bid attended and gave us a realistic assessment of the possibilities for gaining what we wanted. The User Group gave full voice to the details of what we required from the Bid. We were informed that the Lido, in the existing economic climate, is most unlikely to achieve a positive bid, even with all the plans and improvements that have been proposed. Therefore, it is necessary to come up with both support from other groups and clubs and further proposals for this unique facility. Again we got nowhere.



***1980's Winter Bathing 7 to 9.30am***

A proposal was made to clean the Lido so that the space could be used for community events. And so permission was sought to have a clean up. Mark Williams and Lynda Thoroughgood coordinated the cleanup and distribute 3,000 leaflets around the area. The leaflet proclaimed, "Come to the London Fields Lido CLEAN UP! This is a chance to have a look behind that corrugated iron fence by London Fields West Side and see what they have been hiding from us.

We need volunteers to hack down the Buddleia Jungle that is now strangling the Pool. Sat. & Sun., 28th and 29th of June, from 10am. until we finish. A skip will be provided. Bring tools and appropriate clothing."

People were excited about the success of London Fields Lido CLEAN UP on the 28th and 29th of June. With nearly 80 people turning up on the weekend the Buddleia Jungle was cut down revealing the full extent of this Olympic sized Lido. The years of dead and rotting leaves were swept and shovelled up valiantly. One lady of 84 had brought her own broom from her tower block flat opposite the site, to give a hand. The skip provided was soon filled, while a pile of full bin liners grew rapidly besides it. Drinks and refreshments were provided by local people between them helping with this project. A great bond of friendship and good will grew between everyone who was involved. One unknown Councillor complained about us getting permission to do this.

The following weekend, July 12th and 13th, found even more people who came to help. With the council shredder we were able to reduce all the boughs and branches to manageable chips, filling further skips. Over 180 people came along on the 4 days. It was a magnificent effort. But there was further rubbish to clear.



*1997 clearing the deepend*

Mark and Lynda of the Lido sub-committee organised the 3rd community clear up. It took place on the weekend of November 1-2 in conjunction with National "Make a Difference Day". The event was again

well attended, with over 40 people turning up to finish the job of clearing out the remaining rubbish left in the pool. The Media was well represented with Liz Earl from GMTV, the Hackney Gazette with another positive photo article, while Lennox Lewis's coach turned up to see the work done and the potential of the Olympic size Pool. He thought that the opening of this Pool would be exactly what the Youth of Hackney required. A local Councillor who attended was surprised at the size of this facility and angry that it was allowed to get into such a poor state of repair. This reflected the common thought of all the people who had not seen it before. The weather stayed fine and the objective of completely clearing the Pool of 8 years of debris was finally accomplished.

With the pool cleared we now asked for the corrugated iron to be removed and the pool secured. So by Mar. 1998 the fence was removed, the windows boarded up and painted (blue) and razor wire placed at the top of the perimeter wall. The ground around the Lido wall has been cleared, showing bare patches where



*1997 Some of the Clean up Squad*

the piles of dead leaves had accumulated behind the corrugated iron and had killed off the grass. Rolls of turf arrived to lay on these patches. While a suggestion was made for drifts of narcissi to be planted on these areas later in the year. It was looking good.

The Lido began to be used again. We held an event for Yellow Pages/CVS "Make A Difference Day" on Wed. 29th July, in the Lido. This had tremendous support. Although Ken Livingston was reported to be attending by the Hackney Gazette, he was unable to make it on the day. In his place Annabel Croft, the TV personality, gamely stepped in to the empty pool dressed in a 1930's swimming costume. Our local copper, PC Edgar, generously assisted Annabel out of the pool later, which made his day. For a number of people this was their first sight of the large (Olympic size) pool.

Of course, the main reason for the effort was to keep up the good work that started the previous year, keeping the Lido clear of weeds and rubbish. They only managed to fill one skip this time. Carlos Cortez, an LBH officer, supplied 6 large brooms,



plenty of gloves and paintbrushes.

Among the people attending were 2 of the 3 partners then running the Brockwell Lido, who were examples for anyone reopening a Lido on a business basis. Supported by Lambeth Council, they ran their pool profitably 3 months a year. While all the way from Plymouth were two organisers for the reopening of their Tinside Lido. Another supporter from the Enfield Lido campaign also attended. All of them saw the London Fields Lido as a viable public amenity and pledged their support.

Many others came along, including Councillor Hettie Peters, Sarah Vaughan Roberts of the Hackney Society, council officer Brendan Wells (Strategic Commissioner for Urban Regeneration) and Jackie MacKenzie (Renası Regeneration).

By Aug. 1998 the Lido, which has been empty for 10 years and cleaned up by the community, became squatted. With the squatters in occupation, the license giving to the User Group by the council, for greater control of the facility could not be used. Using the Lido for community events was lost at a stroke. Taking advantage of the community's hard voluntary work the squatters started living in the changing rooms, using the Lido as an Entertainment Venue for raves, charging people at the gate.



*1997 Lynda giving a lead*

With amplified music, coloured lights, food and drinks for sale. A leaflet for one of these raves stated an entry charge to benefit "Reclaim the Streets". The handful of people actually living in the Lido (5 or 6 only) appeared to be merely a front for the people organising this Profitable Venue. The interior was certainly not as we left it.

We were informed of the poor state that the Lido has got into since the squatters broke in and how buddleia has started to grow from the remaining root stumps, with piles of empty cans from the raves. Some of the squatters came along to our meetings. They assured the meeting that they did not want to destroy community property and that they supported its refurbishment.

By 1999, with all our efforts worrying the council to see progress, the council had proposed another feasibility study. Matthew Lloyd, of Matthew Lloyd Architects, represented one of the groups of people who made a bid to act as Consultants for this Feasibility Study for the regeneration and development of London Fields. Another bidder was Jon Aldenton of The Environmental Trust.

They were our preferred bidders as they both wanted to have full consultation with local people and users, and they had come to our meetings previously, informing us of their projects. Unfortunately like previous development plans for London Fields this Feasibility Study was not consummated. We are told that there was still money reserved for this study but somehow there was a lack of will to make the decisive decision - to proceed.

Now Matthew Lloyd offered to speculatively produce plans and ideas, in cooperation with The Environmental Trust, for the future development of London Fields (including the Lido which is such an important part of this future for us). They were also skilled in obtaining funding from all diverse sources, from Europe to the private sector. The Environment Trust had been responsible in this way for the development of the Mile End Park. A development that has been widely commended as an imaginative transformation, based upon the ideas and initiative of the local people and users. We were delighted at the offer.

We were invited to hold a discussion with Matthew Lloyd Architects and The Environmental Trust. Mike, Lynda and Paul representing the User Group while Matthew Lloyd and Jon Aldenton made their presentation. Their proposal was to go into Partnership with the User Group for a Feasibility Study for the regeneration and development of London Fields including the Lido, with full consultation with local people and users, but on a speculative basis. We were told of the various imaginative projects they had both been involved with and how they were willing to begin negotiations with various officers in Hackney while looking for funding sources for the project.

We held a meeting of the User Group to discuss these proposals. The Environment Trust and Matthew Lloyd Architects, were supporting us on a no win - no fee basis. Our only other option at the time was to form a Trust in the hands of local people, with funding coming from charities and other sources. After a short discussion the meeting unanimously agreed to this partnership. At this difficult juncture in time, this was the only positive proposal that could possibly bring regeneration and development to fruition. We had nothing to lose and everything we had been asking for to gain. Our proposed Focus groups could then become an advisory groups in the developments.



**1997 Mark making a clean sweep**

In April 2000, we were invited to a meeting by the council, held at Renaisi (the Hackney development agency). This was a meeting that that we had been trying to get organised for over a year, concerning the future development of London Fields.

Mike and Lynda represented the User Group, with Jon Aldenton and Matthew Lloyd negotiating on our behalf with the council. We had a very positive meeting. Kevin Sugrue the head of Renaisi, offered us support and said he would be willing to look for part funding of the Fields development, provided that we obtain permission from Hackney Council. We then had to arrange a joint meeting with Kevin Crompton the Director of Learning & Leisure.

On Friday 26th of May, Mike and Lynda attended a meeting called by our Partners Jon Aldenton and Matthew Lloyd. This was also attended by Danny Clark of

Sport England, the lottery funding distributor; Christine Double the Project Manager of North and East London Sports Network; John Hodson of Renaisi and Andrew Westcott and Keith Hellen of Hackney Learning & Leisure. The meeting was called to discuss the possibility of using our Lido as a 50 metre training pool and obtain sports funding. We could not get into the pool directly but viewed it from above, from a nearby tower block.

Christine Double said that the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) had identified a national shortage of 50 metre training pools. There is not one left in the whole of the northeast London quadrant. We were told a few local authorities in the area were looking for funding to build a new 50 metre training pool from scratch for the proposed Olympics Games in London. Picketts Lock, on the River Lea at Edmonton, was one possible site for the London Olympics at the time; but had negative attributes with the reported dioxin fall-out from the nearby Edmonton rubbish Incinerator.

The Hackney Marsh area has been proposed as another possible site for the Olympics. Hackney had an Olympic sized pool and was doing nothing with it. Christine saw great potential in our Lido site, but London Sports Network did not do funding, it only assists in the development of sports. Ken Livingston the new London Mayor at the time was said to be interested in our Lido for training as part of the proposed 2012 Olympic Bid for East London.

Meanwhile, Lynda had been investigating and comparing swimming facilities in the London Boroughs and had also been doing a survey on the transport connections to London Fields. This helped to place the meeting in a perspective. Showing London Fields to be in easy reached by bus and train from virtually any part of North and East London. This all reinforced the arguments to use the Lido as the North East London swimming training centre.

It was at this meeting that Hackney Council officers first told us that they were about to make an appraisal on the future development of the London Fields Lido. This, they said, "would be a proper assessment this time". Knowing how we have been given the run around so often in the past we took this with a pinch of salt. Eventually they informed us that the reopening of the Lido would be raised on the 30th of May in a report about the possible closure of the Haggerston Leisure Centre.

The report called for an Options Appraisal Study for Haggerston. But all the options given, from the sale of the site (a grade II listed building), to the possible reopening of London Fields, are fashioned to depriving the people of Hackney of Leisure Facilities. Anyway, the officers of our almost bankrupt council admitted they could not afford to refurbish Haggerston in the report. So they certainly couldn't reopen London Fields, which on previous costings would cost much more than the £395,000 quoted for Haggerston.



This shows the options appraisal as an expensive sham, as they had no funding for any option. Because of this, the Shoreditch New Deal (SND) Trust proposed the obvious and asked the council to allow them to run the Haggerston Pool for local people; pursuing non council funding. We supported the SND Trust proposal for Haggerston as the only realistic option; but could not accept the equivalence given with London Fields, which is in a totally different league in quality swimming terms. We had been asked to wait for this pseudo report up to the end of the year. It was obvious to us that this was another non-option.

We had been through empty promises before. The last time we had been promised 5 feasibility proposals 2 years ago, from various organisations. The 2 best proposals were chosen but not proceeded with in spite of the funds being available at the time.

By Nov 2000, Keith Hellen, one of the officers responsible for analysing the possible viability of reopening the London Fields Lido, reported their positive proposals had gone through committee and had been passed. The report was favourable to the refurbishment and upgrading of the Lido facilities using the former council yard next to the pool for some of this development. It was proposed to retain the 50 metre pool, primarily as a long swim sub-regional training facility for the North East London quadrant (one of 4 for London proposed by Sports England). This would still leave plenty of time and space for leisure swimming.

There were also proposals for an all weather sliding roof and possible dry training area suitable for other sports. Ian Hook, the newly appointed Director of Community and Learning (formerly called Learning and Leisure) were then discussing with KPMG, the top accountancy and finance advisers, about sources of funding. But, all these proposals and reports amounted to nothing while Hackney Council was practically economically bankrupt.

London Fields User Group and the Environment Trust visited London Fields Primary School on Monday 7 July to discuss difficulties with pool provision and access to sports in the area. This was organised by Lynda Thoroughgood, followed by the children drawing and colouring Olympic Flag of all nations to celebrate sport. This was in preparation of our event on the Fields. Headmaster, Ken Glazier, gave his full support to the proposals and lent sports equipment for our event. Mr Glazier pointed out, that "London Fields School used to have four swimming lessons per week and a morning swim club - sadly, the lack of facilities, meant that there is now only one lesson".

On Saturday 12 July 2003 we held a special event on London Fields in support of reopening the Lido. We called this 'SwimTime @ London Fields'. This was organised by Lynda and helped by Robert Spender of the Environment Trust. This was also supported by Matthew Lloyd Architects and Mar-

ket Sports who had joined us as the management side of our enterprise. The purpose of the day was to show the potential of the Partnership's plans for reopening this valuable community asset. While an architects model of the scheme was on display. This model was later displayed at the Hackney library, Mare Street. (*See SwimTime report - Appendix C*).

The extent of the community involvement and overwhelming level of support on the day showed how much residents and users of London Fields wanted their pool back. Over 1000 people were introduced to the plans for our Lido. Among the most popular activities were the heavily subscribed guided tours of our Olympic sized Lido site.

This was done with the agreement of the squatters living in there. 160 people were shown around the Lido. It was a real team effort. There were many volunteers, local organisations and council officers to thank for making the day and we received a number of apologies and good luck messages from Council members, local community figures and partners who were unable to attend on the Saturday.

Haggerston Pool and the London Pools Campaign were there to publicise their activities: "People might think we would be in competition...but these are projects to benefit the community and to ensure facilities for all" said John O'Callaghan. He continued, "Everyone was very supportive of our campaigns and we fully support the plans to reopen the London Fields site - it's a good plan".

We organised a further meeting at the London Fields Junior School at Westgate Street (facing the Fields) on October 7th as a further introduction to this 50m Lido and the role of the London Fields User Group. A model of the design of the Lido was on display.

Ken Glazier, head teacher of London Fields Junior School, opened the meeting by telling of the difficulty in teaching swimming (part of the required curriculum for junior schools) and how reopening the Lido would solve this problem for many local schools. The children would be able to walk to the facility instead of hiring expensive transport and losing teaching time.

Mike Martin, the Chair of the meeting, gave a brief history of the User Group and the part they played in saving the Lido. Jon Aldenton of the Environment Trust, one of the proposed developers, went into further details of what developments were possible now. Brian Brinkley, an Olympic medal winner for swimming spoke about the extreme shortage of 50m pools in Britain. He compared the 17 remaining 50m pools in England with the 18 in Paris alone. Brian showed us his medal and also answered questions along with his swimmer friend Paul Lazarus. We then had a break for refreshments, with a video show and people were invited to write down questions.

This was followed by a Question and Answer session with the proposed developers, Jon Aldenton of the

Environment Trust, Matthew Lloyd of Matthew Lloyd Architects and Mike Martin of the London Fields User Group. Danny Russell, a regular swimmer in the audience, told us of her experiences with Market Sports the proposed management group for the pool. She had used 2 of their pools and expressed how well they were run with reasonable prices. We were pleased that around 70 people attended.

By Apr 2004 we heard that the council had rejected the Environment Trust proposals. We had had a long association with our partners. We had been discussing about park developments with the Environment Trust (an ecological developer) since 1996. This was when we heard about their work with the Mile End Park development. We had also been discussed proposals with Matthew Lloyd Architects since 1998. While Market Sports had given our Lido sub-committee management advice, as long ago as 1994.

We have seen the plans and read their costed rebuilding proposal for a 50m pool with gym (£2.1M), along with detailed management plans. We were delighted that they would also be able to build and operate at no capital or revenue cost to Hackney Council. (See the [Environment Trust report - Appendix D](#)). We had been through many months struggle to try and convince the Council to allow the redevelopment of the London Fields Lido. But we would have required their permission and a lease before we could start. We felt this was a real loss to the community and felt very dejected.

At that time, after 16 years campaigning since its closure, we had looked for all sorts of alternative ways in which this unique Hackney facility could be brought back into use. We had worked with many different experts, architects and Councillors as well as with previous feasibility studies. We had been in consultation with the local community and the various other community groups about their varied requirements.

It was Nov 2004 when we heard that the council had finally decided to spend £2M to rebuild the London Fields Lido and bring this valuable facility back into use, retaining its 50m pool. The fact that the council had so many problems with their other pools, particularly the Clissold Leisure Centre fiasco, obviously had nothing to do with this decision.

We were invited along with other swimming organisations as a local stakeholder, in early November, for consultation with their architects, experienced swimming pool designers - S&P Architects and Interior Designers - <http://www.s-parchitects.com/> who have designed pools all over Europe. We had prepared a list of proposals with a plan and were able to convince the other stakeholders at this consultation to support us. (See our [proposed plan - Appendix E](#)). The council's policy for community consultation amounted to one 2 hour session. They said they hoped to build the pool to open by spring 2006. And then we were left in suspension for months while the plans and decisions were being prepared.

The original council proposals appeared to be a return to the "original feel" buildings and layout but with heating. While a temporary winter roof would be an imperative for school use in term time and all year use. We were getting concerned and proposed a consultative committee consisting of all the interested parties. (See our [e-mail to Mayor Jules Pipe and Jessica Crowe - Appendix F](#)). This consultation never did occur. We asked local schools to support the roof proposal.

Eventually we were informed that the plans had been agreed and that the winter roof would be added the year following the pools completion. The total with the roof estimated at £2.5M. And when we did eventually see the plans (kept in the dark by the council as usual) at the end of Sep 2005, we found them dated Feb 2005. We were relieved to discover that the architects had included practically all our proposals.

The Lido didn't get started at the proposed start time of Sep 2005. In fact, it didn't really get going until Dec. There were various delays. (See [council Cabinet report for 29th Mar 2005 - Appendix G](#)). And it certainly wasn't ready for the spring. In July 2006 we were told of further delays caused by the discovery of large quantities of asbestos on the site. Every one speculated how they could suddenly find asbestos so late in the construction. We later discovered it was underground lagging around some old pipes. Finally, our Lido reopened on Thu 26 October 2006 until the 17th December, for a testing period. It was then temporarily closed to allow scheduled minor works to be completed by the construction contractors, finishing and snagging.

Then there were the security improvements (CCTV, intruder alarm system and extra perimeter fences on walls and roof tops), reception improvements, queue control system, the external café area, additional bike racks and access areas for equipment and general deliveries. There were also the details of the café franchise to finalise. It reopened again in time for the 2007 Easter holiday and had over 6,500 visitors. Then after 2 weeks it closed again for another two weeks, for the installation of a pool blanket cover, to retain water temperature of a night.

[The Lido is now permanently open all through the year](#). The new pool is 17m x 50m, 2m at the deep end and 1m at the shallow end, with the water level with the poolside. Slightly smaller than the original 165 x 66 ft (50.3 x 20.1m). The reduced width was originally to accommodate the reinforcing required for a seasonal roof that could possibly be added later. But now the swimmers have decided they prefer it without the roof, in the open air. With the water [heated to a comfortable 25°C](#), it adds to the atmosphere.

[With 2 inside cafés](#) (one at either end of the pool) and the exterior parkside café near the new Lido entrance, London Fields visitors are extremely well catered for. Our new caterer "Hoxton Beach" is getting quite a reputation for their fresh coffee and Falafels. Their Lebanese snacks (mezze) are fresh



and authentic. <[www.hoxtonbeach.com/index.php](http://www.hoxtonbeach.com/index.php)>

#### Sources:

London Fields User Group old newsletters;

Various Hackney Council reports;

“Liquid Assets” by Janet Smith produced by Malvan Media <[www.playedinbritain.co.uk/](http://www.playedinbritain.co.uk/)>

“Farewell My Lido” produced by The Thirties Society <[www.c20society.org.uk/docs/publications/reports.html](http://www.c20society.org.uk/docs/publications/reports.html)>.



*Lots of fun*



*Easy access to the pool for young or disabled*



*The new lifeguards*

**The London Fields Lido** is managed for Hackney Council by **Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL)**, that is an employee owned **not-for-profit** organisation, structured as an Industrial and Provident Society, which manages more than fifty public leisure centres. For opening times etc. phone 020 7254 9038 or visit the Greenwich web page at <[www.gll.org/centre/london-fields-lido.asp](http://www.gll.org/centre/london-fields-lido.asp)>. Address - London Fields Westside, London E8 3EU. Tel: 020 7254 9038 - Email: [ben.brumfit@gll.org](mailto:ben.brumfit@gll.org)

#### For Non Members:

Adults (age 16 and over) £4

Juniors (age 15 and under) £2.40

#### Membership

[www.hackney.gov.uk/cs-sports-leisure-card.htm](http://www.hackney.gov.uk/cs-sports-leisure-card.htm)



*Now that's a long swim!*

## ***We are now asking for our other proposal for the Lido to be implemented:***

**A.** To improve the capacity of the Lido by adding the grassy strip with its shady trees to the west of the Lido, as a sunbathing overflow and picnic area, with about 6 picnic tables. Far more people will be able to use the facility. This is urgently needed for the busy summer sessions. It was also proposed to have about 2m of paving in the set back section with benches against the Lido wall. While the brickwork recessed panels in the Lido wall would be ideal for the display of public art to enhance the pool. This would necessitate a high security fence around the new area.

**B.** A keep fit and sports training centre would work so well with the Lido. By using the under used 1960's park staff yard area, next door to the Lido, a whole health suite could offered. With a sauna, steam room, solarium and treatment room enhancing the present Lido facilities. And also a gym area fitted with top quality cardiovascular and resistance equipment along with ample free weights for the more experienced gym user. This would be vital. Also an aerobics room that can be used for various free exercise, such as yoga, Ti Chi, Pilates, dance etc. It would also allow space for community occasions and meetings. It could fulfil everything for any sport or for someone just wanting to keep fit for life.

**C.** By using a geological heat pump to use the earth's free energy, this could prime the water temperature to a higher level, saving thousands in heating costs. It would be simple to add to the existing set up and would consist of a heat pump, like a refrigerator pump but working in reverse, to circulate fluid through black pipes under the ground to extract ground heat and to add this heat to the water for the pool. <[www.heatpumpnet.org.uk/](http://www.heatpumpnet.org.uk/)> - Alternatively, we have had a suggestion for solar heating panels on the south facing wall of the tower block opposite, in the Morland Estate. Once the system is built, this could also provide at low cost - a low carbon energy source.

**D.** During the darker mornings and evenings the Lido is unable to facilitate swimming, as there isn't sufficient lighting at present for health and safety standards. The London Fields Lido User Groups has had discussions with council planning to add further lighting to the Lido, to allow longer morning and evening swimming when the days get shorter. The LFUG have supported these proposals. It really is needed. Unfortunately, the costs for the elaborate lighting that the council has been quoted for, would be too great at present. We have been informed that if the keep fit centre is added at a later date, this may then become economic.

**Written by Mike Martin of the  
London Fields User Group  
A parks community organisation.**

Visit our website for further information. [www.londonfieldsusergroup.org.uk/](http://www.londonfieldsusergroup.org.uk/)  
Also contact the London Fields Lido User Group on - [lflug@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:lflug@hotmail.co.uk)



## ***Appendix A***

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR  
OF LEISURE SERVICES

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE  
JANUARY 1990

LONDON FIELDS OPEN AIR POOL

SUMMARY

1. This report outlines the present position of the Open Air Pool at London Fields and seeks approval for officers to go to tender for the demolition of the pool and the site being put back to grass.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Committee agree the permanent closure of London Fields Open Air Pool and its demolition and return to grass.

3. That the sum of £30,000 be agreed for the above work to be carried out in the 1990/91 financial year and tenders be sent for the work to be carried out as in paragraphs 14 to 16.

BACKGROUND

4. In 1973 this pool was transferred from the GLC to LBH with two full-time staff. The small children's paddling pool was added in 1978 at which time the fountain was taken out to make additional sunbathing area.

5. The building is dated and the changing facilities are particularly antiquated and do not meet the needs of the discerning modern-day customer. The pools are badly sited, surrounded by large trees, which block much of the sun and contaminate the pool with leaves and seeds. These conditions do not allow for the provision of a high quality service.

6. The pool did not open in 1988 due to a shortage of staff available, triggered by excessively high vacancy levels in the indoor pools. The pool did not open in 1989 when it was agreed with the Redirection of Resources Exercise for the pool to remain closed, giving a saving of £80,000 in the 1989/90 financial year.

7. In addition to the large trees which create adverse conditions there are other major problems that need to be reversed if an effective and worthwhile service is to be provided:

a) There is a major problem of water loss through structural cracks in the pool tank. Preliminary survey work undertaken by DTCS suggests there may be a serious problem causing excessive structural decay. There is a possibility of a requirement of major works in the long term costing between £50,000 and £100,000. Excavation is required to establish the extent of the damage and the cost of repair.



- b) The pool suffers badly from vandalism. There are frequent illegal entries, when the buildings, equipment and plant are damaged.
- c) Entrance to the pool for prams and people in wheelchairs is through the gents toilet.
- d) The pool, which is used for leisure pursuits as compared to sporting activities, has little to offer that will interest or excite users.
- e) During the two years the pool has been closed extensive damage to roofs and the building have occurred due to the weather and vandalism. A major overhaul of the water treatment plant is now required as a result of the two year closure.
- f) The pool surrounds are in a poor state of repair and in their present condition represent a safety hazard to users and staff.
- g) The flats built to the west of the pool create shade over much of the pool.

#### FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

8. Due to the original construction of the pool, its buildings and the siting, all contribute to problems of facility and produce an excessively high bather subsidy. Existing Health and Safety guidelines require staffing levels for swimming pools be determined by the water area. London Fields has a large water area and thus requires a high staff level - 5 at all times. Against this, attendances are low because one of the main attractions of open air pools is sunbathing facilities. At this pool this facility is very restricted by lack of space and too much shade. This results in high operating costs, low attendances and a high subsidy per bather.

9. Attendances are significantly low compared with the indoor pools in the Borough. A breakdown of attendances for 1985-87 is given in Appendix A. Below, the expenditure is compared against attendances and expressed as a subsidy per bather and income is compared against expenditure as a percentage recovery rate.

	1985/86	1986/87	1987/88	1990/91 estimate
1. Total users	11,731	8,464	13,610	12,000
2. Expenditure	£59,912	£74,234	£89,509	£94,800
3. Income	£1,001	£1,577	£2,683	£5,000
4. Expenditure less income	£58,911	£72,657	£86,826	£89,800 *
5. Subsidy per bather as 4 divided by 1	£5.02	£8.58	£6.38	£7.49
6. Net recovery rate (All income divided by all expenditure)	1.67%	2.12%	3.0%	5.6%

\* For a breakdown of expenditure see Appendix B

10. Figures published by the Sports Council show the average recovery rate for pools in London in 1981 was 27%. The Sports Council, using figures for 1987/88 from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants, found the average was 32%. Comparing the performance of London Fields against these figures there can be no justification for retention of this service on financial grounds.

11. Any significant improvement on these figures would require a large capital input. The capital input required would need to be considered in light of Town Centre Development and the need for considerable injection of capital into other Sport and Recreation sites.

#### COSTS TO OPEN IN 1990

12. A breakdown of the estimate revenue costs to provide a service in 1990 is shown in Appendix B. This amounts to £89,800 of which staffing, electricity, water and rates amount to £89,000; any reduction in these costs can only be achieved by a service reduction.

13. Maintenance work for an operational facility would be substantial and would absorb a major part of the maintenance budget for Sport and Recreation. A budget of between £100,000 to £150,000 would be required.

#### IMPLICATIONS

14. The Race Relations Adviser has advised that other facilities in the Borough may not be easily accessible to disadvantaged groups who use the open air pool. Members should consider the objectives of this report and give due consideration to the needs of the said groups.

15. The Director of Finance states that the recommendations of the report are supported as the savings accruing to the Council would far outweigh the capital cost associated with the closure. This is however dependent on the identification of sources of funding in 1990/91 and reference to Budget and Capital Sub Committee for approval. The loan charges per annum estimated at 10% for 10 years are £4,881.

#### DEMOLITION

16. It is proposed that the pools and buildings be demolished and be put back to grass. All buildings adjacent to the park depot would be retained for future development and use of the park staff.

17. It is suggested the pool tank floor is broken to assist drainage and the pool filled with the rubble from the demolition of the surrounding building. Top soil would be applied and grassed.

18. The total of this work would be £30,000 of which £20,000 is for top soiling and grassing.



### CLOSURE JUSTIFICATION

19. To provide an effective outdoor swimming facility at this site would, require a considerable injection of capital funding to modernise the pool, to provide leisure activities (e.g. flumes), give access for wheelchairs and the repair of the pool tank. Numerous mature trees would need to be cut down to reduce the shade and water pollution; this would not be consistent with the Council's Environmental Policy. With the high running costs, low attendance levels and the capital needed to upgrade the pool to provide an effective and worthwhile service, there is no justification for the further input of financial resources in the present financial climate.

### CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

20. London Fields provides the only outdoor swimming facility in the Borough but due to the operating period of 13 weeks and the restraints mentioned in this report there is not a significant use of the facility. The revenue costs, maintenance costs and capital are substantial and are needed in the indoor facilities to provide an effective all year round swimming provision for casual, organised and educational use.

### CONCLUSION

21. The proposals in this report for the demolition are made in the present difficult financial position and the case for approving funding for the pool in future financial years will be difficult to justify against other projects providing an all year round facility.

DIRECTOR OF LEISURE SERVICES - DOUGLAS STEWART  
ACTING HEAD OF SPORT AND RECREATION - MARTIN CORCK  
LEAD ORIGINATOR - JIM MONK, AREA MANAGER

7/12/89

## APENDIX A

### LONDON FIELDS OPEN AIR POOL USAGE STATISTICS 1985-1987

MONTHS YEAR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	TOTAL
1985	0	517	9328	1768	118	11731
1986	0	3047	3658	1651	108	8464
1987	248	495	7863	4354	650	13610

## APENDIX B

### Estimated Operating Cost 1990

	£
Staffing	66,000
Electricity	3,000
Rates	7,000
Water	13,000
Cleaning materials	300
Telephone	400
Materials	4,500
Small tools and equipment	600
	<u>94,000</u>
Income	5,000
Net expenditure	<u>£89,800</u>

## ***Appendix B***



# London Fields Users Group

Please reply to: Peter Snell 26, Fassett Square, London, E8 1DQ Tel 071 254 3630

## REPORT ON THE OPEN AIR SWIMMING POOL (1990)

### SUMMARY

1. On reading the report by the Director of Leisure Services for the Community Services Committee (Jan. 1990), we discovered many factual errors and a general bias against preserving this unique borough asset. The Council officers partiality towards yet another of the inheritances from the former GLC was distinctly obvious.
2. Since the destruction of the popular Victoria Park Lido there is now no other open air pool of this size in inner East London. We, residents and users of Hackney parks and leisure facilities, are annoyed at the complete lack of consultation when this swimming pool was designated for destruction.
3. We have produced many relevant arguments for keeping this local amenity, including demographic reasons. We conclude with suggestions for its updating and improvement, along with sources for funding, and economic comparisons with other similar pools in London.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

4. That the decision to destroy the pool be revoked, while further investigations are made into the costing and alternative funding for its retention.
5. That this pool be made good to existing standards in order to prepare for use in the 1991 summer season.
6. That this pool be eventually given over to the LONDON FIELDS USERS GROUP for a peppercorn rent, to subsequently be run by the users as a SWIMMING AND AQUA SPORTS CLUB, open to all people interested in membership.
7. That this facility be made available to Hackney Schools and other groups in agreement with the SWIMMING AND AQUA SPORTS CLUB.

### DISCREPANCIES IN BACKGROUND REPORT

8. This pool, built by the LCC in the early '30s and transferred to Hackney Borough in 1983, had until the destruction of other open-air swimming facilities in East London been a local pool, little known in the rest of the borough. The building is inconspicuous, nestled in a corner of the London Fields, although the pool is of grand proportions. It is ideal for beginners to receive swimming instruction and can provide a safe training facility for underwater swimming, canoe and water sports of all types.
9. For the enthusiast and experienced swimmer it provides one of the few long swim (of Olympic proportions), open air pools in London. With the nearest alternative across the capital in Ealing

and Crystal Palace. The rustic changing facilities are adequate and much better than you will find at the popular Hampstead open-air pools.

10. Much has been made of the large trees close to the pool and the children's paddling pool. There are 7 Plane trees (see on plan at the back) of around 150 years of age. These are large mature trees that shade the pool to some extent in the summer and provide many leaves in the autumn. But this is no reason to close the pool.
  - a) We suggest pollarding them (cutting them down to within 10 feet of the ground), not to cut them down completely, as indicated in the council report (par.19 council). This would rejuvenate them, removing the risks from future gales and still retain the pleasure of their verdant growth (then in proportion with the buildings near them). We estimate a cost of £2000 to £3,000 to solve this problem for many years to come.
11. The other adverse conditions referred to in the council report, and the high "guesstimates" of £50,000 to £100,000 (par. 7a) or £100,000 to £150,000 (par. 13) for repair in the long term have little foundations in fact.
  - a) With reference to the major problem of water loss: it is purely conjecture that this has been caused through structural cracks in the pool. On inspection by an independent surveyor it was found that the 3 joints that divide the pool into sections, indicate the main structural slabs that the base is made up of. They have been clumsily covered with a cement fillet, which is quite inappropriate. This would have to be removed and replaced with a modern mastic sealant. There is no evidence of large cracks or subsidence of any sort in the strong reinforced concrete structure. A flexible synthetic-rubber membrane, as used on modern pools, would solve any small leakage for an estimated cost of around £10,000 and last for years. The proposal to excavate to find a leak is the most expensive and dangerous method, permanently destroying an existing membrane, and should not be considered.

We have heard from local sources that there may be some leakage in the original iron pipes, but this would be a simple plumbing job and could be found by listening for the water flow. While the removal of the water conditioning aerator in 1978, when the paddling pool was built (erroneously called a fountain, which it resembles, in the council, report (par. 4), is said to have been a "bodged" job and could be a source of the water loss. This requires further detailed investigation.

- b) The pool did suffer from some minor vandalism, but so will any empty premises. Many local children and teenagers have for generations climbed in for a swim while the pool was officially closed. Few do any damage. On our inspection the major damage found was to doors and repair to this would not constitute a major expense.
  - c) It is said in the council report (par. 7c council) that entrance to the pool for prams and wheelchairs is through the gent's toilet. This suggests that the author of the document was not familiar with the pool. It is, in fact, the only pool in Hackney with easy, ground level access for wheeled vehicles. In the plan at the back of this report, it can be seen that access is available from both the children's paddling pool and from London Fields, West Side. Many local people made use of this facility in the past.

- d) The report relegates this pool to leisure activity only. Our report refutes this (see our par. 8). Not only these suggestions, but now, with the demise of ILEA, our local schools cannot afford to bus children miles away to sports and swimming facilities outside of the district. London Fields Pool would be ideal for such use.
- e) During the nearly 3 years since its closure, we found that remarkably little damage has occurred. Even with the gales in that period that damaged so many trees, the roofs are in quite good condition and the building structure is intact. The council report stating the contrary makes us wonder if it was even fully inspected? We agree that the water treatment plant needs an overhaul and probably required this before closure, as we found new pipework ready for installation lying on the ground in the water treatment building. Presumably already paid for.
- f) The pool surrounds do require renovation with some decorating, glazing and replacement of doors and lock. But, with this done, there would be no safety hazards to users and staff, as stated in the report.
- g) Lastly; the tower block built to the west of the pool in the 60's, cannot: create a shadow over the pool (see dotted line in plan at the back of report). It can only shade the sunbathing area just before sunset. The report on this aspect is totally inaccurate.

## **DEMOGRAPHIC REPORT**

- 12. London Fields, Dalston and its environs form, probably one of the greatest "melting pots" in Hackney. With all the ethnic groups meeting and interacting with one another. There are peoples from the Indian sub continent, Chinese, West Indians, Africans, Turks, Kurds, Greeks and Italians and many other ethnic groups living in the area. The population in the council estates in the area are typical of the general mix.
- 13. The council estates are interspersed with much of the traditional housing that was left after World War 2 and the council blitzkrieg of the 50's and 60's. These houses are mainly Victorian and Edwardian, with a few Georgian buildings left. Many are under multi-occupancy, with a very large turnover of people, but some still retain a large number of families who have remained in the area for many decades, some all their lives. These are typical London Eastenders, with their English, Jewish, Irish, Scottish and Welsh antecedents.
- 14. The relatively low cost of the older housing has attracted a number of professional families and younger first-time buyers to enter the neighbourhood in recent years. This new influx has tended to round off the mix, giving it an interesting flavour and determining a greater demand for higher quality services.
- 15. London Fields Pool is very close to the Hackney Town Hall, with its municipal office complex (5 minutes walk along Richmond Road/behind the? Duke of Marlborough Pub). There are hundreds of people from these offices who could be potential users in the summer months - if only it were publicised.
- 16. The council report notes that the Race Relations Adviser says that facilities in the Borough may not be accessible to the disadvantaged groups who used the pool. In our opinion the closure has confirmed this. There are still many underprivileged children living in the area, who need a



higher level of services. With the high probability of hotter summers and the general confirmation of the greenhouse effect, people are looking for somewhere to cool off. These children have been swimming in the local cuts (canals). With the spread of Weils disease, caused by the rat infestation and the dumping of household rubbish in canals, this is not to be encouraged. This alone should call for an improved facility, and not its destruction.

## **FINANCIAL COSTING'S**

17. As mentioned in paragraph 8, the London Fields Pool is a large pool, situated in a corner of a small park and therefore little known in Hackney. Because of the pools size, under Health and Safety guidelines it requires a staff of 5 people at all times. According to the figures supplied in the council report (appendix B), their wages come to £66,000 for 13 weeks work (par. 20 council report). From this it is not difficult to calculate salaries: With 5 staff costing £66,000 over 13 weeks, that is £1,015.38 each per week, or with 2 shifts and 10 staff, this is £507.69p each per week.
18. This could be the highest wages for pool attendants in the country. However, this calculation is misleading and based upon an input that includes a highly inflated administration cost. Therefore, the charge against the London Fields Pool expenses includes salaries for people working on administration all over the borough. The expenses for staffing the pool for 13 weeks should be far less. Probably half of the £66,000 given. The pool could be opened on the basis of one shift per day, from 11am to 6pm, therefore halving the cost of salaries yet again. Early morning swimmers could use the pool on the club basis, as in the past.
19. The attendance figures provided in the limited statistics supplied in the council report give a peak attendance in 1987 of 13,610 swimmers. 1987 was like 1988, a rather cold, wet year. (It would be interesting to compare the figures with the hot summer of 1975, which unfortunately was not available when we enquired). This would have compared closer to the very hot summers of '89 and '90 after the pools closure. With the income for 1987 of only £2683, this gives an average entry cost of only 19.7p per person.
20. Our limited survey of the area (appendix A), indicates that the majority of people (64%) would be willing to pay £1 to £1-50 or more entry (some even willing to pay £2). This corresponds to what other local authorities charge. This would have given an income closer to £15,000 in 1987, even with reduced rates for the non-waged. Taking this from the basic costs without wages of £28,000 would leave a balance of only £13,000. With better publicity and information, this could be improved to the proportions of Tooting Bee and Hampton Pools (see par. 23 & 26).
21. The council report gives a statistical comparison with the George Sylvester Centre (now closed), that did not have swimming, the Clapton Pool (the old Hackney Baths) and Clissold Pools, where both have many other facilities besides swimming. This is like comparing apples with oranges. A fair comparison can be made if only the swimming during the summer period is calculated. Thus, excluding school swimming, in 1988 there were 12,380 swimmers at Clapton Pool and 26,119 at the two Clissold Pools. These figures are now seen to be very similar per pool to the last figure of 13,610 given for the London Fields Pool. With the present subsidy of £7 per visit per person at Clapton Pool, if the same were applied to London Fields with 13,600 users, this would amount to a subsidy of over £95,000.

22. With a more realistic estimated costing of £61,000 and a higher entrance fee giving an income of around £15,000, a recovery rate of about 25% could be gained instead of the 3% given. This is closer to the Sports Council's average for London of 32%, (par. 10 council report).
23. We have made comparison with other pools and find that Hackney is not tapping the potential demand that other areas have found. For example Tooting Bec Lido in Wandsworth had an income at the last return of over £80,000, charging £1-50 entrance (under review this year) and with expenses of £134,000 and a recovery rate of 60%. We have found that many Hackney swimmers travel long distances out of Hackney to swim in the open air.

### **ALTERNATIVE CONTROL FOR THE POOL?**

24. There are hundreds of keen swimmers in Hackney who would like to keep the London Fields Pool and extend its use. (We have had written support from 10 local Tenants Associations and 764 signatures on our local petition). This signifies the strong local support for our London Fields Pool remaining open. People feel so strongly about this that many would be prepared to assist in it's clean up and refurbishment. Many have technical and trade skills to assist in this task. We are certain that as a users group, we can have access to funds and grants not available to the Hackney Council under the present economic climate. For example funds would be available from the Sports Council (subject to a feasibility report), from the voluntary Sector Grant, the East London Community Partnership and possibly "Business in the Community".
25. We would propose that the LONDON FIELDS USERS GROUP be leased the pool at a peppercorn rent and given a grant from Hackney Council of around the cost of the pool's destruction (£30,000). That the pool is then run as a SWIMMING AND AQUA SPORTS CLUB, open to all people interested in membership. Already there is a water polo team and a sub-aqua club interested in affiliation, and some local schools would be delighted to use the facility.
26. This bold proposal is not without precedence. The Hampton Pool in Richmond was due for demolition in 1983 and was saved by a group of keen users. This is leased by the users as a Charitable Trust for a peppercorn rent. Richmond Council also gives a grant of £32,000 p.a. for the pool. In the past 6 years the attendance has improved from 12,000 per year to 70,000. While the subsidy has come down from £3 per swim to 60p. It has a permanent manager and calls in staff only when required in the summer season. It is also used by schools. The users have installed heating for the water that extends the season for the pool at a cost of only £5,000 a year and introduced many other improvements.
27. We Hackney residents are confident that we can do anything that Richmond can, and do it better.

### **CONCLUSION**

28. This report aims to show that the London Fields Users Group has seriously considered all possibilities for extending the use of this facility. We require a FEASIBILITY STUDY on the various proposals and it is imperative that initial funding for this be provided by the Council.

## ***Appendix C***



# "SwimTime @ London Fields" on Saturday 12 July 2003

## REPORT

### Summary of Aims & Objectives of the event:

- a) To involve the local community at all levels - from children to adults and community leaders.
- b) To show and explain current plans for the site to local residents, schools and park-users.
- c) For the partners to meet with residents and users and to show what the partnership is producing.
- d) To provide the opportunity for feedback on the proposals from the local community.
- e) To provide a fun day out in the park for everyone.

### Summary of Activity:

On Monday 7 July a discussion was held with **class 4P** at **London Fields School** about access to sports and swimming facilities with a presentation of ideas for the Lido. A workshop was held, looking at the Olympics and exploring the ideas for an Olympic Flag for Hackney. The images produced in the class were used as a decorative banner for the event

### On Saturday 12th of July, the day itself:

**A flag competition** was held for local children to celebrating sport and the Olympics. Three local artists and designers (Barbara Borret, Jenny McKenzie and Sonja Khan), formed a team of judges to award prizes donated by Argun Stationers.

**Football matches** were held, organised between local youngsters by local resident and football coach Marcel Matthews, a keen supporter of the user group.

**Guided tours of the Lido site** were held. Five visits, a total of 160 visitors, led by members of the London Fields User Group and the Environment Trust.

**London Fields Cricket Club** celebrating over 200 years of cricket on London Fields.

**A Foods Stall** supplied refreshments made by Noreen Matthews, local resident and LFUG volunteer.

**Haggerston Pool** and other members of the **London Pools Campaign** had a stall - promoting swimming needs in Hackney and all across London - where dozens of pool and Lidos have been reduced in size, closed or destroyed since the closure of the GLC.

Jon Aldenton of the **Environment Trust** and Matthew Lloyd of **Matthew Lloyd Architects** presented a model of the design ideas for the Lido.

'SwimTime' **fancy dress race for children** was held. They were wearing swimming equipment supplied by Jill, lifesaver and swimming instructor at Ironmonger Row Baths. There was a wet obstacle course for children with equipment supplied by London Fields Primary School and The Pub on the Park. Tables and chairs were loaned by Gayhurst School.

## Summary of Comments & Feedback:

Visitors were asked to give their thoughts on the plans :

- **Over one thousand people turned up** to find out more about the London Fields User Group and the plans for the London Fields Lido.
- **97% of those who wrote comments supported plans to reopen the Lido.**
- **None** of the comments **were opposed** to the redevelopment and reopening of the Lido.
- Specific comments concerned ensuring wide use for children, giving it a retractable roof, want open air pool, the importance of security for the premises, remove parking from site and wide access to the grass and tree shade on the site.
- People also supported the reopening and **development of other facilities**, the cricket pavilion, the toilets and the existing tennis courts and football facilities. Also to include new tennis courts and all-weather five-a-side football pitches.
- A total of 23 people wanted to be directly involved with supporting the proposal and 73 comments were given on the day. A few are shown below:

**A selection of some of the quotes given:**

- **"Great. Let's have it as soon as possible. I loved the old Lido and have missed it greatly"** – L Fry, Mapledene Road, E8.
- **"This would be fantastic for Hackney community. Hope it can get enough funding to go ahead. Great opportunities for all."** - M Lill, Greenwood Road, E8.
- **"Looks & sounds great! Would be happy to help."** - M Davies, Navarino Road, E8.
- **"I think this is the best plan for Hackney - London Fields needs this pool. It already exists - lets get this operating NOW - there is huge support for this!"** - Anon.
- **"I remember swimming here as a child. It would be wonderful if my children could have this facility restored and enhanced. Thank you for all the work so far."** - I Benjamin, Albion Drive, E8.

## The Way Forward:

- Following up the bid to the London Development Agency with the Bridge House Trust, Community Fund and Sport England bids.
- Further discussions and consultation with stakeholders.
- Establishing a local advisory group.

## Who to Contact for Further Information:

Mike Martin, Chair, London Fields User Group. E-mail: <[mike101.martin@virgin.net](mailto:mike101.martin@virgin.net)>

Robert Spender, The Environment Trust. Tel: 020 7264 4660. E-mail: <[robert@envirottrust.org](mailto:robert@envirottrust.org)>

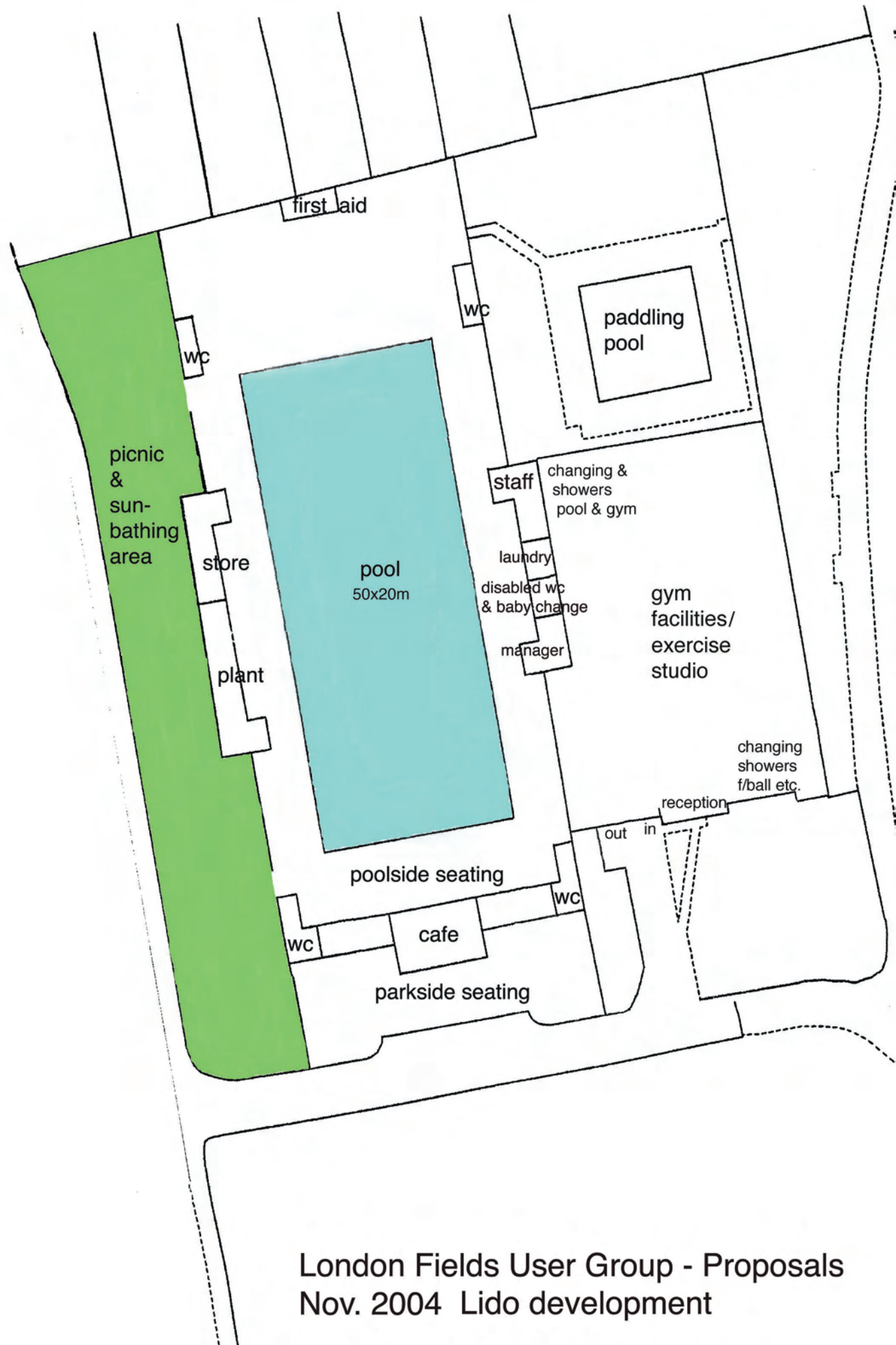
## *Appendix D*

*This is a locked 32 page analytical document for the Lido that can't be attached to this pdf.*

*It is available separately to order.*

## ***Appendix E***





London Fields User Group - Proposals  
Nov. 2004 Lido development

## ***Appendix F***

# London Fields User Group

Chair: Mike Martin    mobile phone: 0775 2833 487    fax: 020 7241 3373    e-mail: [londonfieldchair@onetel.com](mailto:londonfieldchair@onetel.com)

## LONDON FIELDS LIDO PROPOSALS Nov. 2004

Further to the new council proposal to rebuild the London Fields Lido and bring this valuable facility, with a 50 m pool, back into use - we are delighted. We, as a user group, have been involved in calling for its reopening since its original closure in 1988 (**16 years ago**) and have campaigned for this ever since - saving it from destruction by bulldozer in 1990.

For everyone able to download pictures we enclose as an attachment a plan of **our proposals** for the **LIDO** using the **original buildings and layout**. We find the proposals for returning to the 1931 plans except for heating the water, anachronistic and not in keeping with the 21st century requirements.

The council talks of the "original Lido feel". This may not comply with **EC swimming legislation** and further more, with the heating, is likely to be **less economic** than the original pool. We do approve of heating the pool but without a pool blanket this would be like **radiating heat and cash** into the air.

It is imperative that we have **an economically efficient facility** and are concerned that, with a change in economic climate and further cutbacks (as in the 1980's and 90's), it could be closed again. Our proposals will assist in bring in greater use for the facility and create a unity with the rest of London Fields and its other facilities.

### We propose that:

a) A gym with exercise studio be incorporated in the complex, sharing indoor changing facilities with showers and clothes lockers for the pool. The old, crude outdoor changing facilities will not be acceptable these days (particularly for some ethnic women's groups), or during the colder periods. The gym will bring considerable year round income, increasing the viability of the whole complex and making it a unified keep fit and sports training centre. This could bring in considerable capital funding from Sport England.

b) 2 changing facility with showers and clothes lockers to be incorporated for opposing teams for parkside football, cricket, etc. This can also be used on weekdays for school swimming changing facilities. The existing park changing facilities are of very poor quality, lack security and have been rarely used since they were built.

c) That the Lido reception covers bookings and payment for all pitches and other facilities on the park, making for simplicity and efficiency with a computerised booking system. Doing away with the cumbersome character of the existing system.

d) That a café be opened at the existing front entrance to the Lido, to cater for both the Lido side and the park side. This can be let out to tender to an efficient caterer, bringing in considerable income and be of great benefit to the park.

e) That the grass strip under shady trees to the west of the Lido be incorporated and used for sun bathing and picnicking, with picnic tables for use by the café customers and self-catering Lido users.

f) That the WC's within the café parkside area are available to all park users. We consider that with WC's within a confined, widely used public area, they will be far safer and more secure.

The existing toilet facilities in the park are no longer functioning. Because they were not under surveillance they suffered from constant vandalism. They were being destroyed as soon as they were repaired or units replaced. There were also problems with "cottaging".

g) We also look for a retractable covered area over the pool as widely used in Europe and many other places. This would enable the pool to be used 12 months a year, save heat loss, making for a much more economically viable facility. This would also be vitally important for school use. Without this the schools would only have a limited use and be unable to fulfil the national curriculum, which requires that children are taught swimming.

h) We consider that advanced water treatment and heating would be of great value to its long term economy. Chlorine treatment is widely disliked by swimmers with its skin irritation, asthma irritation, nauseous smell and other effects. Modern water sterilisation makes this unnecessary. Using a heat pump can reduce heating energy. While heat recovery by recycling air and wastewater and considerable insulation within the facility would increase the economy. We would like to the buildings as an example of ecological and environmental excellence.

i) We are very concerned about the security of the facility. The perimeter would require a climb proof fence for this. The fence used at the front of the paddling pool and at the Stratford rail terminal is excellent. This selfcoloured fence has a long service life (much superior to the chain fence on the new tennis courts) and is made by Bekaert Fencing Systems of Sheffield.

j) All modern facilities require perimeter lighting and surveillance cameras. And as with all lighting in the facility this should be of the high efficiency, low wattage type. This would make further saving in energy use.

k) Lastly, and possibly most important, is the management of swimming facilities. We have no confidence in Leisure Connection, the existing Hackney management of leisure facilities. They use poorly trained service personnel. Their premises lack basic cleanliness, while some suffer from vermin infestation. They have a poor record for water cleanliness and many people will no longer use facilities like Kings Hall because of this.

In their effort to maximise profit they obviously economise by using low waged staff, do the minimum of training and cut corners wherever possible. This has been found to be their general attitude throughout their leisure empire.

There is a need to make any management responsible to the public who use these facilities and therefore community groups should be involved with continuous assessment. Inspection should also be made of other outlets that prospective management already run before choosing them.

Since receiving invitations to the Stakeholder Consultation Event we have continued discussion with others, including the London Pools Campaign, representatives from other Hackney pools, swimming representatives, the disabled, other community groups and various experts, etc. We propose **a consultative committee** consisting of all the interested parties. By using community consultation and going for the full fitness and training centre design, to complete these proposals; we consider that there would be funding available from various sources. We hope that this can be accepted at the meeting.

## ***Appendix G***



REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY & LEISURE		
<b>LONDON FIELDS LIDO RE-DEVELOPMENT</b> <b>[FP No. 03.03]</b>  <b>Cabinet - 29th March 2005</b>	<b>Classification</b>  <b>Public</b>	<b>Enclosure</b>  <b>None</b>
	<b>Ward(s) affected</b>  <b>All</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM</b> <b>NO.</b>  <b>24</b>

## REASON FOR LATENESS

The report needed to be fully consulted upon prior to submission and key consultees were unable to review the document within the time frame.

## 1. INTRODUCTION BY CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY & LEISURE

- 1.1 London Fields Lido dates back to 1932 and is one of only a handful of Lidos remaining in London. For the last 16 years the Lido has fallen into a high degree of disrepair. I am delighted to be able to commend this report presenting the opportunity to refurbish and reinstate outdoor swimming provision at London Fields Lido and look forward to seeing people making full use of this aspirational facility.

## 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents a costed plan to refurbish and reopen the London Fields Lido. The results of a broad consultation exercise are summarised, and ideas and suggestions have been incorporated where feasible into the design. In particular, there have been significant levels of public interest in reopening the Lido as soon as possible and extending use of the Lido beyond the summer months, and provision is made within the design for a seasonal roof to be added to the Lido in 2007, which will permit year-round use of the facility.

## 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 3.1 **Approve the re-development of the London Fields Lido, at an estimated maximum project cost of £2.50M, with the intention of re-opening the facility to the public in the spring of 2006.**

- 3.2 **Authorise Officers to develop a separate proposal to be brought to Cabinet in July 2005 for the provision of a seasonal roof for the Lido, to be fitted for the spring of 2007.**

### 3 RELATED DECISIONS

- 3.1 A report outlining the various options for redevelopment of the Lido was presented to and approved by Cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

### 4 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The estimated cost of the project is set out below, and variations to the level projected in the October 2004 cabinet report are briefly explained. Further explanation can be found in the later sections of this report.

#### CAPITAL costs

##### Item

**Current Cost estimate**  
**£000**  
**Cost Estimate Oct'04**  
**£000**

##### Explanation for change

##### Capital Works

1,880

1,790

Oct'04 figures were current costs at the time. These have been reworked to assume inflation in the interim, and projected forward over the duration of the project to give an out-turn works cost.

##### Additional works

145

This sum is a provision to reconstruct parts of the original structure, which have been irretrievably damaged by the fire in November 2004.

##### Contingency

60

A risk assessment of the project leads to the recommendation that contingency provisions are increased from 7.5% to 10% (This £60k is the 2.5% incremental amount to the contingency sum already provided for in the Capital Works cost of £1,880k above).

##### Professional fees

215

215

#### SubTotal

**2,300**

2,005

Roof enabling costs  
200

n/a

Preparatory 'future-proofing' works elements (foundations etc.) to be carried out as part of the works programme to enable the seasonal roof to be fitted in 2007. A consistent feature of the consultation was the need to have year –round swimming and this is in direct response to those comments

**Total**

2,450

2,005

The Council approved £2 million for redevelopment of the Lido as part of the capital programme included in the 2005/06 budget setting report on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005. The estimated capital costs set out above exceed this budget by £500K. It is intended that this will be funded from an existing Community & Leisure provision set aside in the Authority's accounts from previous years.

**REVENUE costs**

As set out in the October 2004 Cabinet report, the typical running costs for comparable lidos are in the region of £200,000 p.a. for a 50m pool (for 6 months usage), and this has been included in the Council's Medium Term Financial Forecast as part of prudential financial planning for future years.

Further work will be done on the business plan to consider the revenue implications of operating the Lido as a year-round facility as part of the roof proposals, and will be the subject of a further report to Cabinet in July 2005.

**6 COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**

- 6.1 The Cabinet is asked to approve the redevelopment of the London Fields Lido at a maximum estimated project cost of cost of £2.50M .The authority of Cabinet is also sought to develop a separate proposal for the provision of a roof for the Lido.
- 6.2 The report seeks approval to commence the project and to procure a construction contractor to carry out the building works. Designers are already working on the project. The construction element is below the EU threshold (£3,834.411) for works contracts. The role of the designer has developed from the earlier feasibility work and it is assumed the costs of the detailed design element will not infringe EU thresholds (£153,376) for construction services.
- 6.3 The tender of and award of a contract will be progressed in line with the Gateway process, and Council's Principal Lawyer Procurement is working with the Project Manager to develop the tender documents.
- 6.4 There are no further legal or propriety issues to the report at this time.

## **7 BACKGROUND**

### **7.1** The Lido facility was last operated nearly 20 years ago, and has remained closed since then.

A project to re-open the Lido commenced in April 2004 with the appointment of a design team. Following the development of a strategic options appraisal, including a series of outline design options, a report was brought to Cabinet in October 2004, which recommended the development of a design and project proposal to redevelop the facility to strengthen the Borough's swimming options.

[This proposal very much supports the delivery of the Council's Sports & Physical Activity Strategy and Parks Action Plan and is in line with the wider programme of improvements within our parks and open spaces.](#) This improvement programme has already seen the paddling pools re-open at Clissold Park and London Fields, refurbished tennis courts and multi-use games areas as well as increased numbers of parks rangers as part of budget provision for 2005/6, to build on the existing staff numbers which are already welcomed by parks users.

A fire in November 2004 severely weakened some parts of the existing structure, which were originally intended to be incorporated within the design, with only cosmetic refinishing. A structural engineer was commissioned to investigate the extent of the damage, and the resulting report leads to the conclusion that the potential risk and complexity of repairing the fire damage more than outweighs the cost of demolishing and rebuilding this part of the structure.

A public consultation exercise involving LBH residents, Sport England, the Amateur Swimming Association, the Muslim and Orthodox Jewish communities, Disability Hackney and other key stakeholders was held in late 2004 / early 2005, and the key outcomes integrated into the design. A significant number of the ideas proposed during the consultation process have been incorporated within the proposed project design.

The design team were reappointed under Directorate authority (value below £100k) to refine the design and lead the tendering process, subject to the approval of this report.

### **7.2 OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

This has been addressed in the earlier Cabinet Report, dated 28th October 2004

### **7.3 CONSULTATION**

The public consultation exercise resulted in approx. 250 responses, the majority being strongly in favour of reopening the facility, and believing it to be an excellent idea and a benefit to the local community.

A key and consistent element of the consultation feedback was residents' desire for extended use of the Lido beyond the summer months by the provision of a roof.

The incorporation of the key desired outcomes as determined by the consultation

Stakeholders group- early involvement in programme planning	Yes	A User Group will be established- first meeting in summer '05
Concern over current management arrangements at other LBH facilities, and that lessons learned are incorporated at the Lido	These will be addressed by the operational management specification	

## 7.4 DESIGN

The key design features of the proposed project are as follows:

- The overall architectural design and appearance of the original Lido are retained wherever possible.
- In response to high levels of demand expressed in the public consultation feedback, the design will include provision for a roof (which will be subject to a separate proposal for implementation in early 2007).
- The roof design is planned to cover the pool and changing areas, and to be a pneumatic lightweight structure which will be erected at the end of the summer and stay in place over the winter months, thus enabling swimming all year round. This arrangement will require the support of and close cooperation with Planning Officers, a process which has already started.
- This report does not propose the provision of the roof from the onset, as this would delay the opening of the Lido by one season due to increased procurement and build timescales, with associated inflationary increases in build costs. It should be emphasised that the completed facility should be considered to be a swimming pool with a seasonal roof, rather than a leisure centre swimming pool.
- The pool's current design size will be 50mx17m, sufficient width for up to 8 swimming lanes, in accordance with ASA guidelines. The pool depth profile is
  - 25m at 1.0m depth
  - next 20m sloping from 1.0m to 2.0m
  - final 5m rising to 1.8m
- The pool will be heated to encourage use in cooler weather with water temperature adjustable up to a maximum of 30°C, (in line with similar outdoor facilities operating at around 26'-28')
- The pool may be accessed by a ramp, in compliance with DDA requirements
- Changing facilities have been developed in consultation with Sport England and ASA, and provision will be made for family and disabled changing
- Although use will be made of existing above-ground structures to preserve the original architecture and appearance as far as possible, the pool tank, surface finishes, filtration and plumbing facilities will all be completely renewed in line with current industry standards.

## 7.5 OPERATION AND USAGE

The intended operating parameters of the Lido are as follows:

- Usage to be 'dawn until dusk', 7 days a week from about 1<sup>st</sup> April – 31<sup>st</sup> October. The anticipated provision of a roof in 2007 will extend this to year round usage with poolside lighting further enabling early morning and evening swimming.
- Programme of users to include for lessons, schools usage, clubs and



community use with the enclosed roof also facilitating targeted programming for particular community groups.

- The pool will not normally be used for competitions, but should be of a standard sufficient for club training

A user group will be established to ensure that customer and stakeholder views are properly understood.

It is intended that the Lido facility will be operated by LBH's contracted Leisure Operator, following a competitive tendering exercise

## 7.6 PROCUREMENT SYSTEM / RISK ANALYSIS

a) A 'Traditional' contractual arrangement will achieve the optimum blend of project cost, speed, quality and risk. The architects will head up the design team, and act as lead consultant.

b) Improved understanding of the project design and risks via the design development process suggests that the original level of contingency (7.5% of project cost) is understated, and this is recommended to be increased to 10%.

c) The value of the Works contract will fall under the EU threshold for Works, so no OJEU procurement timescales or process requirements will apply.

## 7.7 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- An external design team managed by a Lead Consultant has been appointed. An indicative timetable has been prepared with implementation commencing (works start onsite) in July 2005, and this is currently under review. Although timing is very tight, it is anticipated that the facility will be ready for opening in the spring of 2006.
- An LBH Project Working Group is being assembled, reporting to the Director of Community and Leisure, in her role as project sponsor. With terms of reference matching those of similar scale capital projects, this group will manage risk on behalf of the Council and monitor project execution and cost.

**Councillor Nargis Khan**  
Cabinet Member for Community & Leisure

**Kim Wright**  
Director of Community & Leisure

Reporting Originating Officer:	Jon Markovic	020 8356 3620
Financial considerations:	Deirdre Worrell	020 8356 7350
Monitoring officer comments:	Bob Abbott	020 8356 2042

### Background papers

The following documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

Description of document	Location	Date
Strategic Brief for the Redevelopment of the London Fields Lido (prepared by S&P Architects)	Director's Office	January 2005
Fire Damage report (prepared by S&P)	Director's Office	January

programme are as follows:

Consultation feedback key points	Incorporated within design?	Comment
<b>General</b>		
Feedback received was highly supportive of reopening the Lido facility as soon as possible.		
<b>Design</b>		
Year round usage, via provision of a roof	Yes	The design of the Lido will permit year-round swimming via the provision of a seasonal roof, which may be fitted from spring 2007, subject to approval of a separate proposal to Cabinet.
Grassy (not concrete) spaces for relaxing Hard pool sides slippery and burn feet	Not currently planned, but will be considered	
Design of changing facilities Hygienic, safe, variety of designs to allow for family etc.	Will be taken into account in detailed designs.	
<b>Programming</b>		
Opening hours to enable swimming in the early mornings and evenings	Yes	A system of poolside lighting will be included within the design of the roof
Programming should enable schools use and swimming lessons	Programming issues will be incorporated within the operational management specification	Programming will enable early morning and evening swimming
Adult swimming need consideration		
Affordability of entrance fees		LBH are undertaking a review of fees and charges, and the results of this study will apply to the Lido.
<b>Facilities</b>		
Café facilities	Designs include a kiosk by the sun terrace	Depending on interest and usage levels, an improved refreshments facility could be developed in due course
<b>Maintenance</b>		
Hygiene issues- e.g. No dogs Scheduled cleaning programmes Rubbish disposal facilities	Maintenance issues will be incorporated within the operational management specification	
<b>Security</b>		
Provision of cycle equipment storage	Will be provided	
Personal security concerns	High level wall-top perimeter fencing will be provided.  Gate security will be provided by leisure operator	Additionally, park rangers will support and complement the operation of the Lido.
<b>Management</b>		

Architects)		2005
Lido Re-development- public consultation report	Director's Office	March 2005

## ***Additional Supplement***

*The children's paddling pool.*

# The London Fields Paddling Pool

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a shallow paddling pool at the south end of the park. The outline can still be seen in front of the concrete statues representing market traders. This became unused for the original purpose and had permanent water with sticklebacks and waterweeds in it. Children would fish and sail toy and model boats in the water. In **1978**, another children's paddling pool was added to the park, joining by a door to make it accessible from the Lido. It had seating for parents and carers, with naturalised bulb areas and trees and shrubs. It was also fenced for security and to control its use, but had access directly on to the park. While the old pool was drained and concrete hillocks placed on it for use as a skateboard or BMX bike area.

By Feb. 2000 there was great concern shown about the **Children's Paddling Pool** (a very popular children's facility) and the fact that it was not fit to open the previous summer. David Dedinger had collected many signatures for the User Group from local mothers and got lots of publicity about the closure printed in the Hackney Gazette. The various cracks and fissures that have been appearing for many years, causing loss of water, had been subject to temporary repaired many times before, at considerable expense. There was a long hot summer in 1999 and the local children had really missed their pool. The Users were also concerned about the quoted cost of renovation. Up to £7,000 when last discussed. A sum that with the loss of Council Budget in 1999, was not available. Could the council afford it?

A number of us, who are experienced in building repair and water retention, suggested that between the regulars of the User Group we could easily repair it ourselves. Direct Action by the Users Group could both expedite its repair and considerably reduce the expense. It would first require exploratory work to determine the extent of the damage and from that assess the quantities and cost of materials. We asked Alan Edwards the park manager for permission to get into the pool and complete the first stage of our enquiry and a few of us turned up on Sat. 4th of March to see if we could find causes for all the problems over the years. Mike, Victor, Paul and Gerry arrived tooled up in order to look behind the cracks.

We found the thin cement render was quite hollow behind, particularly behind the cracks and fissures. We found only a little loose, damp sand between the render and the soil behind it. This problem was quite extensive in the wall of the pool. The render capping on top of the walls was only slightly thicker, just over an inch, but laying directly on soil. Now that the problem was exposed, it was obvious that it was all due to inadequate original construction. We had a short discussion and came to an agreed solution.

Paul, an experienced building estimator, did some pacing out and some calculations (on the back of an envelope) and was later able to get a price quotation of £4000 for completely rebuilding the perimeter wall in reinforced concrete. Alan was pleased with the realistic price and said that he would bring this up with Kevin Crompton (director of Learning & Leisure) to get permission to start the job in the new financial year. The local Councillors, Hettie Peters, Philip Pearson and Mark Williams gave it their full support.

Some delays were caused by the original contractor pulling out at the last minute and a second contractor then having to be found. We also asked for a key for the site to be made available to the contractor for access. The key never was produced. This caused delays every day; they turned up early and had to wait for a Park Ranger to let them in. By September, the Children's Paddling Pool has been rebuilt to price, if not in time for use that year. On drying, Alan Edwards later had it painted by council workers with a special pool paint.

It was later filled with water, in preparation for the opening in Easter 2001, but then the run off was damaged by vandals. This was not repaired until the following year. Then there were concerns from the council bureaucracy that there should be permanent supervision (that they could not afford) for health and safety risk. Further delays resulted when the parks found they could not afford to purchase the cartons of chlorine tablets to sterilise the water. Meanwhile, teenagers were using the pool for vigorous skateboarding, testing the structure to the limit. It came through this with hardly a scratch. In spite of being completed, the paddling pool did not reopen until May 2004. It has been in constant use all through the summers ever since and is now one of the children's favourite summer entertainments.