

PRESTON PARK & HALL SCRUTINY REVIEW

Monitoring - 28 November 2007

Park & Hall Masterplan:

Working with external consultants *Bureau Veritas*, a Park & Hall Masterplan has been produced (November 2007), which addresses the issues identified during the Scrutiny process (see accompanying), and will enable a stage 1 funding application to the Lottery's *Parks for People* initiative in March 2008. Public consultation on the Park Masterplan was carried out across the Borough, via *Stockton News*, in August 2007.

Additionally, a stage 1 application for £3.4M was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop the Hall in September 2007, and the result of the stage one application is expected in March 2008. Stockton Borough Council has committed financial support to enable both bids to proceed. In advance of any successful funding, work has been carried out to improve the facility: such improvements include - building condition surveys, disability audits and action planning for Park & Hall, improved signage in the Hall, collections' rationalisation planning, re-display of galleries to focus on Stockton themes, major re-display of Armoury collection and re-display of the dice players.

Greater collaboration between Museum Service, Events and Community:

The Museum Strategy, accepted Summer 2005, laid down the foundations for greater partnership working across the Community. A rationalisation of facilities – with the transfer of the former Green Dragon Studios to another cultural organisation in Stockton - and an annual uplift of £60,000 has enabled the Museum Service to use resources to operate a *Museums on the Move* community outreach programme across the Borough. Using a dedicated van, the Service has visited schools, community centres, libraries, university, and other venues across the Borough, delivering partnership projects, object handling sessions, exhibitions, events, talks and loan boxes. Since this programme began, some 18 months ago, outreach numbers have totalled 7,848, with an additional 1,582 schools' outreach (to September 2007).

Neighbourhood Representation on Park Management Group:

Since Scrutiny, many new ways of involving the community in the use and running of Preston Park have been devised and implemented. Ward and Parish Councillors have now been invited to participate in, and have joined, the Park Management Group, which meets regularly to discuss current and future Park operational matters.

Additionally, substantial public involvement and consultation – including a household survey, on-site and focus groups – took place as part of the work preparing the Park & Hall Masterplan over Summer 2007. A new Park & Hall supporters' group is being developed. The new suggested overall Park management structure (see below) will also encourage the involvement and

representative of user and stakeholder groups in the running and management of the Park.

Entrance Fee:

The current entrance fee to the Museum, £1.30 for adults and 60p for children & concessions represents good value. It enables the visitor to return to the Museum as many times as they wish over the following year. Recent new attractions at the Museum include the re-display of the armoury and Clephan bequest and a new temporary exhibition about every six weeks. These – and the forthcoming re-opening of the newly-furbished Winter Garden, the opening of the Kirklevington Stones Viking Exhibition and the new Made in Stockton display (Winter/Spring 2008) give visitors a reason for return visits to the Museum. This is all reflected in our visitor figures, with 9,702 repeat visits since the scheme (and printed tickets) was launched in July 2006. Overall this financial year has demonstrated a clear rise in popularity and use of the Museum, with visitor figures April to September of 67,216 (against 72,000 over the entire 2006-7 FY).

Review of Park & Hall Management:

The Management of Preston Park facility is currently being reviewed, as part of the current overall Park & Hall Development initiative. A new management model is currently being developed, with the emphasis on effective and efficient communication and operation, and best use of all resources. A new post of Park Manager is central to this new proposed structure, and this is included in the funding bid for five years.

With the minimum of disruption across the Council's areas of Service responsibility, management and operations, elements of the Park and its operations will be grouped over three main areas: activities, facilities and landscape. Effective routes for management, liaison and consultation will be clearly set out within the new structure. It is expected that the new management structure will be introduced from early 2008.