

## NOGOE NEWSLETTER - JUNE 2010



### PROBLEMS MOUNT UP FOR LOCOG

Although LOCOG may have received planning permission, subject to more than 40 conditions, there are numerous problems to overcome before the Olympic equestrian events can go ahead in Greenwich Park. NOGOE has therefore decided to continue its campaign to have these events moved. We were extremely disappointed that Greenwich Council ignored planning objections made on environmental and loss of amenity grounds, and granted permission on non-planning, emotional grounds of “inspiring young people” and “putting equestrian at the heart of the Games”. However, NOGOE remains optimistic that LOCOG will be forced to re-evaluate its decision in the face of mounting problems, 10 of which we feature below.

1. Budget Cuts. The new government is looking to make savings and has been alerted by NOGOE that it is wholly unacceptable in the current financial climate to spend £40m on temporary facilities. LOCOG maintains the venue is “cost effective”, but that doesn’t mean it is the cheapest and clearly it isn’t.
2. Legal Challenge. Although planning permission, subject to conditions, has been granted, LOCOG has still to obtain the formal licences and approvals necessary both to use the Park/Circus Field and to run the events. NOGOE continues to keep the prospect of legal action under review with its solicitors.
3. Ecology and Archaeology. The Royal Parks has confirmed – most recently at a meeting in May between representatives of NOGOE and the Chief Executive of The Royal Parks – that LOCOG must not strip off and store the acid grassland. However, there is no certainty that the treatment now proposed will in fact preserve the grassland; or, if it does, it will provide the “good to soft” going that LOCOG requires. Something will almost certainly have to give and, unless attitudes change, it will be the Park, not the event, if LOCOG has its way.
4. Arena Construction. It is understood that no decision on the method of construction for the field of play for jumping and dressage will be made until late this year as a decision on the method of construction is awaited from the FEI. We are told that many international riders are not keen on riding on a platform, which means that, if they have their way, 30,000 to 40,000 tonnes of compacted soil would have to be trucked in and out of the Park; far more than LOCOG implies in its planning application.
5. Test Event. In whatever way the field of play was constructed for the test

- event in 2011, it is unlikely that the area in front of the Queen's House would be open to the public until early 2013. If the ground has to be built up with compacted soil, it would be an enormous eyesore during that period..
6. The 42 Conditions. A consultative body is to be set up to ensure that the onerous conditions placed on the grant of planning permission are strictly adhered to. NOGOE should be fully involved in this process.
  7. Health & Safety. It is unclear which authority would issue a Safety Certificate for use of the Park. NOGOE has briefed the relevant bodies of the threats to public safety posed by the underground conduits.
  8. Security. Olympic security costs always escalate (in Vancouver it jumped 6-fold to \$1b). NOGOE has written to the security chief to make him aware of the extra costs of making secure a public park in a densely populated area with houses backing onto it on three sides.
  9. Irrigation. An enormous amount of water would be required to achieve a cross-country course of the required softness. As there is no plumbed-in system in place, water can only be distributed from bowsers spread across the Park, with irrigation starting this summer. The thousands of additional lorry movements over the grass, however well it is protected, would place even greater stress on our precious heritage
  10. Thames Water. It has come to light that the planning officers omitted to bring to the attention of the planning board that a statutory consultee, Thames Water, was concerned about not knowing the water requirements for the proposed development, and had serious reservations about the existing infrastructure being able to cope with the waste from these events - a situation that could lead to sewage flooding. One local resident has complained both to the Planning Inspectorate and to the Mayor of London; a formal complaint was made to the Local Government Ombudsman, and we await further developments.

The problems that remain are huge and potentially insoluble, except at vast expense and at the risk of permanent damage to the Park. It is not too late for LOCOG to move these events to a more suitable venue: one which would cost less and leave a legacy for the sport. We urge all those who can influence a decision to change, not least the public, who remain appalled at the plans, to do so. Please continue to lobby and make your views known: see <http://www.nogoe2012.com/what-can-i-do.html>.

In the meantime we ask all users of the Park to be extra vigilant and e-mail NOGOE ([reply@nogoe2012.com](mailto:reply@nogoe2012.com)) with details of any activity which seems unusual so that we can check whether it is in accordance with the planning conditions. We know that new electricity cables are being laid across the Park for a new housing development near the river. If you're wondering why the route is across the Park rather than around it, here's a clue: some of the new cores are allegedly for the construction of, and use by, the proposed stadium in front of Queens House. You will have noticed the two-tone tarmac along the paths of a World Heritage Site and how the memorial benches have had to be moved during the digging. This is a foretaste of things to come, unless -----.

NOGOE  
June 2010