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Events Office
London Borough of Lambeth

21 January 2018

Proposed events in Brockwell Park, June/July 2018

The Herne Hill Society opposes the applications to hold the Lovebox/Citadel and Field Day events in Brockwell Park in June and July 2018 for the following reasons:

1. If large events are to be held in the Park they must be sustainable. The benefits must outweigh the detriments. Short-term goals should not harm long-term values.
2. We appreciate that Lambeth is placed in a difficult position through cuts not of its making and therefore have to think of means of using assets under its control in ways that produce a financial return, something that the Brockwell Park events are clearly capable of doing. However, sustainability depends on more than a bare financial calculation because the disadvantages are not measurable in purely financial terms.
3. The Park, by virtue of its size, natural character and history, is not suited to mass events such as those proposed. It is a traditional metropolitan park, open to all free of charge, used in daylight hours by walkers, runners, cyclists, young and old, and, more generally, by local people seeking a tranquil green space in a busy, noisy and - as we are becoming increasingly aware - polluted urban environment. The events proposed are diametrically opposed to this essential role played by the Park.
4. It is of course accepted that there will be occasions when there will be some disruption to that role. In particular there is the two-day Lambeth Country Show, a long-established and very popular event. And there are events such as funfairs and dog shows. No such event entails closing off any part of the Park, let alone doing so for a prolonged period. In any case, with the single exception of the Country Show, they only cover a very limited area.
5. The proposed events would be on a scale that is unprecedented. The Lambeth Country Show is not a precedent, because
 - (i) it is a free event
 - (ii) it encourages the participation of local businesses and local voluntary groups
 - (iii) it does not shut off any part of the Park

- (iv) it closes down early in the evening
- (v) visitors come and go at all times, which avoids large numbers entering or exiting all at the same time
- (vi) it provides entertainment to people of all ages and backgrounds and is not aimed at any particular demographic.

If the holding of the Sunfall festival in 2017 is regarded as a precedent, it is an unfortunate one. The experience for local people and for the Park itself was far from happy, with extensive disruption and damage to the Park.

6. The holding of the proposed events would result in a substantial part of the Park being wholly or partly out of action for 40 (or more) days during the summer. Even if other parts of the Park can continue to be accessed in this period, enjoyment of the Park would be seriously compromised. The essential character of the Park is as one harmonious space. The construction work involved in building and taking down the stages and other structures and the creation of impregnable barriers during the events - and for a period before and after - will be severely detrimental to the overall character of the Park and its enjoyment by the thousands who use it.

7. Brockwell Park is not a piece of agricultural land. It is a relatively confined area of 125 acres that, through the efforts of the council itself and local people over the last century and more, comprises a sensitive eco-system with valued biodiversity. People coming together in volumes of up to 40,000 per day over the two three-day periods proposed will place too great a burden on the Park's vulnerable environment, especially with another large event, the Lambeth Country Show, also taking place in the summer. Of particular concern is the potential effect of wet weather and the additional damage that could be caused through the movement of heavy vehicles and equipment. The concern is all the greater, given the wish of the event organisers - and, it is thought, Lambeth itself - to establish a long-term home for these events in the Park. This could see the Park coming under unsustainable and incremental pressure year after year.

8. The nature of the proposed events involves loud music. It has to be accepted that loud amplified music is the norm for open air events. However, the effect of such events would be to inflict on local residents high noise levels on no fewer than six days in the summer (in addition to the more limited noise generated by the Lambeth Country Show). That is an excessive burden.

9. The events are, understandably, planned for the height of the summer. But this is also the time when the Park is likely to see its greatest number of visitors, seeking an undisturbed spot for exercise or relaxation. How are they to be compensated for their loss?

10. The numbers attending the proposed events will place a huge strain on public transport. It is understood that Herne Hill Station will be closed because of safety concerns if thousands of people were to be thronging the station platforms. This will create even further strain with the danger of social disorder and threats to public safety.

11. The concerns expressed above are all matters which require the most careful consideration. In the view of the Herne Hill Society the process that Lambeth has undertaken to date to assess the suitability of the two proposed events for the Park has been inadequate and insufficiently transparent. This view was reinforced by the often

less than convincing explanations proffered at the public meeting arranged by the Herne Hill Forum and held on 18 January. The exceptionally large attendance at the meeting is in itself an indication of the strength of feeling locally. It is also striking that this opportunity for Lambeth to gauge local opinion was taken at the very last minute. It coincides with a widely-held fear that the decision whether to approve the applications is a foregone conclusion.

12. Inherent in the decision-making process by Lambeth is a potential conflict of interest. Lambeth has a significant financial interest in the outcome. It is therefore all the more important that there be full transparency with regard to the assessment of these applications. Now that Lambeth has had an opportunity to hear the many voices raised against these proposed events, we trust that those voices will not be ignored.

Colin Wight
Chair
The Herne Hill Society