



Friends of Wimbledon Park

Draft 04 Wimbledon Park; Its Assets and Finances

Preamble

At this stage of enquiry this paper is a simplistic overview of the assets and finances of the public section of Wimbledon Park. On the 3rd April 2014 a Freedom of Information request (FOI F3714) was sent to Merton Council (LBM) concerning funding and structures. What follows is an edited version of the replies received.

It should be borne in mind that management of green spaces operate on what can be called a pooling of resources so that separate cost centres aren't generally held and costs are aggregated because that is the way the service is delivered. The service as a whole is subsidised. Also due to reduction in resources available necessary improvements can't go ahead or will be delayed. There isn't a business plan for Wimbledon Park. Commercial confidentiality prevents Merton from giving a complete picture of income received for Wimbledon Park. Water sports¹ are part of a different line management.

Finances

We're told that Wimbledon Park comprises some 6.9% of the total 380 hectares of open space (excluding Mitcham Common) managed by LBM. The costs are higher and include more than 5 full time equivalent staff working within the park. If we round the costs² up to 10% of the total spent to account for this greater expense a ball park figure can be calculated.

Financial year	Total expenditure on Greenspace management & maintenance*.	Estimated cost of running Wimbledon Park at 10% of total
2012/13	£3087000	£308700
2013/14	£2937000	£293700
2014/15	£2897510	£289751

*Including overheads/corporate support, but excluding cemeteries.

2012/2013		2013/2014		2014/2015	
Event	Income	Event	Income	Event	Income
Fireworks	105607.00	Fireworks	124533.00	Fireworks	
Tennis parking	89947.00	Tennis parking	84841.00	Tennis parking	
Tennis	91103.00	Tennis	110942.00	Tennis	
Mini-golf	24352.00	Mini-golf	23386.00	Mini-golf	
Beach volleyball	517.00	Beach volleyball	3798.00	Beach volleyball	
Athletics track	18904.00	Athletics track	17358.00	Athletics track	
Water sports*	319458.00	Water sports*	314851	Water sports*	
Cafe	Not disclosed	Cafe	Not disclosed	Cafe	
Private residence	Not disclosed	Private residence	Not disclosed	Private residence	
Totals	330430.00		364858.00		

- Water sports section has a different line management.

Some activities generate substantial sums annually, but these are also those that generally have the greatest capital costs over their lifetime. Mini-golf is clearly a net earner, but the athletics track is



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heavily subsidised owing to the very substantial maintenance and investment costs required to support it. Notwithstanding this Wimbledon Park presents itself as a net earner³.

Total income for 2014/2015 is anticipated to be similar to previous years. A small inflationary increase in fees and charges, averaging 2.75% is applied so income should rise marginally. Much of the income is weather dependent, tennis and mini-golf particularly.

Events

Events can also raise money. Two events illustrate this;

- 1) Car parking is provided during Wimbledon Fortnight and whilst it deprives park users of space it raises significant cash.
- 2) Firework display is also a cash raising event and also provides enjoyment for thousands of park users.
- 3) Other smaller events occur during the year.

Assets

1) Structures

- a) Stadium and athletics track
 - i) There has been substantial investment in the last 12 month period with repairs to the track and grandstand. In the medium term the track will need to be relaid. The only active development proposals are those concerning the Wimbledon Club's ambitious plans.
- b) Water sports centre
 - i) A business case to replace the existing Wimbledon Park Watersports Centre in the vicinity of the current one in the medium to long term is to be made but this is only at an embryonic stage. There is no preferred location, size and design for any new building at this time.
 - ii) Number of people engaged in watersports between April 2013 and March 2014 was 133,032.
 - iii) The Watersports Centre has a maximum of 250 persons at any one time therefore 250 people could be being coached in any one hour and that would be for a maximum of how ever many hours the centre was open for operation on any one day and there were customers wishing to access activities. Provided there is enough staffing to cover all the activities.
 - iv) The Watersports centre will be delivering various qualifications in conjunction with Merton Adult Education Institute.
 - (1) BTEC levels 2 & 3 during the day.
 - (2) Navigation, Sea Survival, First Aid, Professional Practice & Responsibility and Yachtmaster primarily in the evening.
 - (3) First BTEC course now being advertised.
- c) Water craft storage area
 - i) The future of this is linked to the water sports centre.
- d) Tennis pavilion and tennis courts.
 - i) 10 of the 20 courts were renovated in the winter of 2012/2013 at a cost in the region of £200,000. No current plans for any further works.
 - ii) The current leaseholder carried out a substantial renovation of the internal fabric and fittings of the café earlier this year. No further investment plans beyond routine & necessary repairs and maintenance. There is a 10 year lease, negotiated in 2012, the income isn't disclosed. It's a private business and there is no profit share.
- e) Bowling pavilion and the curtilage behind.
 - i) A substantial investment was made this year including works to the roof, new windows and doors, designed to ensure the building remains water tight as far as possible. On that basis then it's almost certainly a heavily subsidised facility.



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- ii) The main users are a martial arts group and the bowlers, plus whatever activities the sailing base do (and plan to do) there.
- iii) A new marine college is planned here this summer.
- iv) The future of this will probably be linked to the water activities centre.
- v) Aspirations to reconfigure and upgrade the internal toilet and changing facilities but these are unfunded.
- vi) The routine costs are utilities and cleaning costs. The former would be almost impossible to unravel for the bowls pavilion alone as some onsite facilities share some meters.
- f) Private residence over bowling pavilion.
 - i) This is occupied by a member of staff in the Greenspaces team. This is a service tenancy agreement, not a lease. Custom and practice is now that this tenancy will end when the member of staff leaves the employ of the authority. There is a small income.
- g) White pavilion
 - i) Currently on a ten year lease to the police which ends December 2016. There is no income.
 - ii) No current plans in the short or long term for this building.
- h) Public conveniences
 - i) Internal fabric and fittings were comprehensively improved in 2010. No further plans to upgrade.
- i) Playgrounds
 - i) Additional investment in play equipment in 2013 in both playgrounds to the tune of £50,000. No further plans beyond replacement of individual play units as they reach the end of their serviceable life.
- 2) Grasslands
 - a) The park is predominantly amenity grassland which is cut on a 10 day cycle between late March and early autumn.
 - b) Several annual wildflower beds, introduced within the last 2 years, are managed appropriately to preserve their vigour.
- 3) Woodlands & trees
 - a) Dave Dawson (retired environmental scientist) and Dave Lofthouse (Merton Tree Officer) to refresh the management plan⁴ for Horse Close Wood.
 - b) Trees are managed according to good arboricultural practice and inspected on a regular basis with works commissioned on the basis of those inspections.
- 4) Lake
 - a) No specific plans to restore the lake.
- 5) Lake as a reservoir
 - a) The Environment Agency is the statutory enforcement authority and commissions inspections of all reservoirs at standard intervals measured in years. LBM is the local flood authority and conducts more regular inspections of the lake and deals with any issues wearing either its flood defence hat or as landowner in response to the inspections reports. Much of the lake shore and some of the infrastructure are not on LBM land. There is a not a management plan as such, more a series of recommendations/actions arising from inspection reports.
 - b) With regard to contingency plans and insurance if the dam failed; the Emergency Planning Officer and Risk & Insurance Manager sit on the borough flood risk management steering group and both are aware of the lake as it's a big issue in that context. The Borough risk register has assessed failure as high on impact but low on likelihood.

Funding

- 1) Capital funding is important and it comes with grant conditions.
 - a. There is no simple rule on grant conditions. Each will be bespoke to the funder and determined by the funder and their specific needs and in some cases specific to the project too. They are contracts between LBM and another party.



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- b. One of the common conditions is to provide user data post-investment in order to gauge success. This applies to most Sport England grants, for example.
 - c. If there are material changes to the original project then repayment of the grant in whole or in part is commonly demanded by funding organisations, but there will commonly be a negotiation to be undertaken if that is the case.
- 2) Watersports Centre.
 - a. The Water Sports received £49,875 from the Big Lottery Fund.
 - b. The funding offer was accepted by the council on 5th April 2004
 - c. The grant conditions are now spent as the asset liability period completed on 5th April 2014
 - 3) Club House in the stadium.
 - a. The main external funders were £100k from LMT and £60k from Sport England. This is linked to a 25 year licence for access to Hercules WAC that was only signed off in 2013. Project agreed in 2009 and completed in 2010.
 - 4) Security fence around the stadium.
 - a. The security fence around the stadium £40k not yet received from SITA Trust. Agreed March this year. Payment upon completion.
 - 5) Beach volleyball courts.
 - a. From 2012. £60k from LMT and £37k agreed from Sport England.
 - 6) Donations:
 - a. Wimbledon Fortnight left luggage donates £4 from camping deposits to improvements in Wimbledon Park. This is in the range of £5-10k used on infrastructure improvement projects agreed between LBM and AELTC (lighting for example).

Notes

¹ Wimbledon Park Watersports Centre:

Summary financial review on marginal budgets at cost centre level: 2012-15

Ref		Budget 2012-13	Actual 2012-13	Budget 2013-14	Actual 2013-14	Budget 2014-15
A	Employees	259,510	258,210	267,620	248,670	252,450
B	Premises	11,560	3,186	3,500	3,289	3,270
C	Transport	1,000	590	520	832	420
D	General Supplies	54,650	54,613	65,850	60,847	56,970
E	Payments to 3 rd Parties	0	0	0	0	0
F	Transfer Payments	10,000	1,270	4,660	0	3,700
G	Overheads	NOT INCLUDED AT COST CENTRE LEVEL				
H	Depreciation	NOT INCLUDED WITHIN THIS COST CENTRE BUDGETS				
	Total Expenditure	336,720	317,869	342,150	313,638	316,810
P	Grant Funding	0	0	0	0	0
Q	Contributions	0	0	0	0	0
R	Fees & Charges	-358,960	-319,458	-375,660	-314,851	-367,000
	Total Income	-358,960	-319,458	-375,660	-314,851	-367,000
	Net Budget	-22,240	-1,589	-33,510	-1,213	-50,190

² This rounding up can be regarded as speculative so should be treated with caution. It has a value by providing a starting point.

³ In addition James McGinlay (Head of Sustainable Communities Division) at a meeting on 13th November 2013 said that Wimbledon Park (WP) was an important part of Greenspaces as it provided income for the whole group, some of which produced no income at all. Commercial returns from events in WP are important.

⁴ This will lead to a wider consultation including Jane Plant (Merton Tree Warden) and Pat Langley (Wandsworth Tree Officer).