

Chair's Report for 2017-18

The Broomfield House Partnership Board has met twice since the last AGM, in October 2017 and January 2018 under its new Chair, Councillor Dinah Barry.

In pursuit of issues raised at the last AGM we sought meetings outside the formal Board's process but these were delayed until August. Detailed discussions were held on the proposed way ahead. Also in August I as Chair met with Cllr Barry to explain the Trust's detailed position on Broomfield House and its relationship to the Board's stated objectives. In this we registered the concerns raised under the first motion adopted at the 2017 AGM face to face rather than by a single formal letter. These points were also raised at subsequent Board meetings.

It has been made clear that the council is concerned about the Health & Safety risks posed by the structure and its scaffolding should anyone enter the enclosure. The council commissioned updating reports from Conisbee Consulting Engineers on the condition of the structure which essentially repeated earlier ones which concluded that demolition could not be justified on structural grounds. A film taken by an internal drone flight shows the internal condition. In the council's eyes this showed how little was left of the internal structure, but there has been no substantial change since the last fire in 1994, and the two surveys do not in our view diminish the case for rebuilding and restoration.

A number of options for the House have been discussed. These include demolition, a preserved ruin, and two different options for rebuilding on half the footprint and phased options including a partly refitted shell of the complete envelope. None of these (apart from demolition) have possible funding identified.

Attempts by the Trust to explore alternative support, for example from the Spitalfields Trust, Capel Manor, and a commercial developer with a track record of resurrecting listed buildings (with HLF investment) have not been successful.

As suggested by Historic England the council proposed that it would conduct a marketing exercise to seek expressions of interest in the House and Stableyard from a commercial partner. There were a number of preparatory steps the council needed to undertake before submitting its planning statement to the commercial agents. The original intention was for the marketing to begin in April, but the work is still underway.

The Trust has consistently argued for greater stress on public/community access in any commercial scheme and argued for consideration of staged rebuilding of the House. We had some success in modifying the draft marketing brief but standard procedures and legal advice were argued against some of our suggestions.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has closed its grant giving programme for 2018, and it is uncertain how it might resume, some sectoral grants, for example Parks for People, have been closed and applications folded in to the wider Heritage grant system. The London grant ceiling seems to have been halved to £1m which has serious implications for funding work on the House and Stableyard. This reduces the grant element to cover the conservation deficit which any commercial proposal might need.

Following the April 2017 fire in the stable buildings discussed at the last AGM we raised concerns with council officers and at the Board. Additional CCTV has been installed at the rear of the cottages, and additional hoarding erected. Some repairs have been made to the roofing and the structure made safer with some material removed for storage against future reinstatement.

Our Heritage grant/The Lanscroon Murals

Trustees decided that given the complexity of the grant application, and the overall costs of our original thinking, that this should be abandoned. Instead, with the aid of a substantial grant from The Enfield Society, we would focus on restoration of a section of the Lanscroon murals. This has coincided with a very welcome new approach from the Museum of Enfield removing the need for the Trust to fund the wider exhibition. We concluded that this made the second motion passed at the AGM unnecessary. The outcome is the exhibition to be opened in the Dugdale Centre on 27 July, *Hidden Treasures: Revealing Broomfield House and Park*. Trustees have been heavily involved in preparing material for the exhibition.

The other significant development has been the creation of a Facebook page by a volunteer which has helped with publicity though it has proved disappointing as a fundraising scheme even though the Trust now has Gift Aid status.

Colin Younger
Chair, Broomfield House Trust

24 May 2018