



22.4.18

With much regret the Directors of Redbridge Green Fair Association (RGFA) have taken the decision to cancel the 2018 Green Fair which was scheduled to take place in Melbourne Field, Valentines Park on Saturday 23 June this year. The decision has been made reluctantly and for a combination of financial and organisational reasons.

Most significantly, the group's energy, optimism and financial capacity to proceed with the event this year has been undermined by the intransigence of Redbridge Council and their Leisure Provider, Vision Redbridge Culture & Leisure (RCL), and their refusal to constructively consider and address two important issues

- The exorbitant charge of £3000+ made to the Association for use of Melbourne Field, this issue raised consistently and robustly with no effect
- The persistent refusal to review and resolve the unjustifiable exclusion of the Redbridge Green Fair from the list of community events supported with Council funding that is managed by Vision, following the abolition of the Area Committees in 2014.

RGFA has been frustrated by the failure of the Council to address the unfair and inequitable treatment of the Green Fair in comparison to other community events such as Wanstead Festival, Woodford Festival, Fairlop Fair, 'Our Community Festival' in Goodmayes, amongst others. The Council has failed to recognise and acknowledge our well-established, grass-roots, community organisation as a respected and valued not-for-profit community partner, whose events have continually promoted and enhanced the borough, its facilities, services, policy objectives and programmes through our past events. This is despite our provision of significant community engagement opportunities for the Council with local residents, in pursuing their important environmental, public health and social inclusion objectives at all the past Green Fairs. We were indebted to Mont Rose College for the very generous business sponsorship that enabled the 2016 fair to go ahead.

RGFA cannot currently envisage another Green Fair taking place in its established 'home' in Melbourne Field Valentines Park, despite its suitability for the scale and diversity of all the popular elements of the event, without a change of Council policy, commitment and treatment of the organisation and the event.

We do appreciate the indicative offer of a degree of future support from the current Labour leader in Redbridge as we approach the Council elections, but until we receive tangible support comparable to, and equitable with, the other local Vision and community-led events, the Green Fair remains under threat.

The additional issue affecting our decision is an organisational weakness, common to many community groups, of reliance on too few individuals. In recognition of this weakness we have been working over the past few months, with the support of a Prince 2 trained committee member, to reorganise and re-structure the event management and organisational systems, including setting up a CRM database. We have a skilled committee but are not confident that we can run the fair without undue pressure on our usual event manager who has difficult personal circumstances and significant caring duties this year. Had our energy been able to focus on the green fair rather than the fruitless negotiations with the Council and Vision, it is likely we could have mitigated this organisational issue in time.

We apologise to the unpaid and dedicated team of people who give their time, energy, enthusiasm and

skills to organising and running the Green Fair. These people include the committee, subcommittees, those helping to shape the arts, children and environmental attractions, those who would have stewarded on the day and many, many more. We are proud of the 1000+ volunteer hours that go into the fair by local people committed to the volunteering ethos and philosophy of the Green Fair.

We apologise to the 120+ community groups and other stall-holders, the 50+ diverse live music and performance acts and to the 1000s of residents who attend. They tell us time after time what wonderful atmosphere the fair has and their appreciation of the environmental information, workshops and tasters on low carbon lifestyle choices, participating in arts, the all day entertainment and the rich community connections they can make.

As Directors of RGFA we are sad to be making this decision which we recognise is a loss to the Borough of a major cultural and environmental event that is well loved and unique. Our primary objective is to seek an early dialogue after 3 May with the newly elected key Councillors and senior officers regarding the financial and partnership issues referred to above.

We hope that we can run a Green Fair in 2019 in the Borough's flagship park, and we will continue to prepare organisationally, awaiting the Council's response.

Olcay Aniker, Ros Southern, Steve Collins
Directors, Redbridge Green Fair

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