



WHOSE LEGACY?

What is the legacy from the Olympics and Paralympics now that the circus has left town? Will it mean benefits for a few whilst the rest of us continue to be excluded from the 'lane of privilege'?

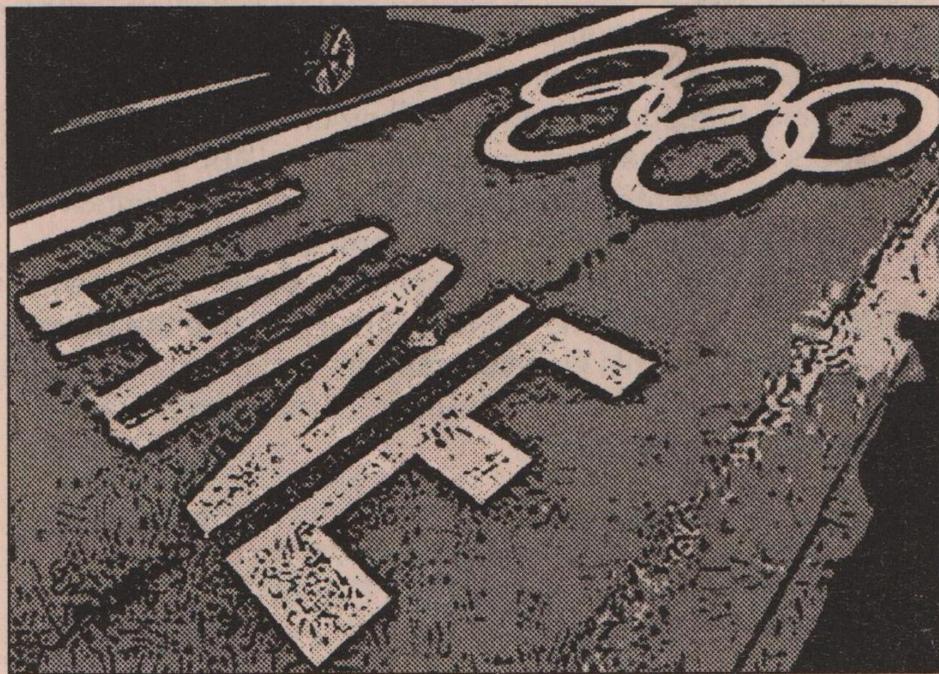
Despite many local people saying they enjoyed the Games, this does not change the fact that the event cost taxpayers £13 billion. The focus was meant to be on sport, but many were sickened by the high profile given to corporate sponsors such as MacDonaldis and Coca Cola. We now have to seriously consider what is going to happen now. Money has been drained from grassroots sports and recreation, with swimming pools and football fields closed, and promises of free or subsidised access reneged on. Parks and open spaces have been spoilt -with Greenwich Park in a terrible state many weeks after the events and parts of Leyton Marshes in a similar condition- all at the expense of the majority of their everyday users.

The £300 million Olympic Park is set to contain 10,000 new homes, schools, businesses and 'open green spaces'. How many of these new homes will be affordable? The Park will not be open until at least 2014 and will be under private rather than community control, largely sanitised and sterile rather than well managed for people and wildlife, like Walthamstow Marshes further up the Lea Valley.

The Games are also a cover for a roving international land grab. The circus always ends up somewhere new. Another place to 'develop' and with little chance of return to places that have already lived through the 'Olympic experience'. The poor and the homeless are chased away- 300 people of the Clays Cross estate community and the on-going attack on the Carpenters Estate. Their housing and land goes to the better off in a classic example of gentrification and social cleansing.

The 'temporary' encroachment of the Olympics on to green and brownfield sites such as Wanstead Flats and Leyton Marshes is a large boot wedged in the door. It sets a precedent for future 'development' like a permanent security base as at Wanstead Flats, upmarket housing and elite sports facilities and parking. This is why special Olympics legislation was passed, which automatically overruled all existing legislation. An example of this was that which was meant to have compelled the Corporation of London to preserve and protect Wanstead Flats as part of Epping Forest, for public use for ever.

The Olympics also promoted and celebrated nationalism-being British and "all in it together". But we're not all in it together with bosses, politicians, landlords and the Royals. We're struggling to make ends meet and are being hit with the cuts that are being imposed to bail out the near melt-down of their economic system. The latest "feelgood" idea is to spend £60 million commemorating the joys of the



mass slaughter of the First World War. If our rulers can rewrite history they hope they can persuade us to fight and support their austerity measures and their wars.

The Paralympics took place in the middle of the biggest attack on disabled people in the last thirty years. Benefits are being slashed and people forced to undergo rigged tests to show that they are able to work. People who can scarcely get out of their homes are declared fit- unsurprisingly many of those who do appeal these decisions win. Disabled people are heroes if they are top athletes but scroungers if they are on benefits.

Did we see the funding and development of sports facilities rooted in the local communities? Did we see the renovation of green spaces to provide better air and to give us better physical and mental health? In fact all these facilities were eroded by the vanity project of the Olympics games that centred itself on certain areas of London, to the neglect of other London boroughs, let alone the rest of the United Kingdom. Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education, approved the sell-off of 21 school playing fields in early August at the height of the Olympics.

We have to fight to make sporting facilities created by the Olympics turned over to the local communities and under the control of local communities for their benefit. We have to fight to make as much housing in the Olympics Park area not expensive enclaves for the rich but social housing for the benefit of the mass of Londoners.

In this issue of The Howler, we examine the real legacy of the Olympics- the one behind the rhetoric and posturing of politicians and bureaucrats. Their aim is to turn east London into a site for 'regeneration' and development, at the expense of the local community. However, the grassroots campaigns and community groups highlighted in this issue are showing the way to building a mass campaign of resistance against these plans.

Olympic Legacy: Social Cleansing - The Carpenters Estate

These are excerpts from an article in the Evening Standard (August 8, 2012)...

- The most exhilarating show on earth is just 200 yards away on the other side of the DLR tracks, but instead of a contact high, Mr Williams and other residents of the Carpenter's Estate say they feel "excluded and betrayed" by the Olympic organisers and by Newham council.
- The 23-acre Carpenter's Estate, with its trio of 22-storey tower-blocks with giant Gillette adverts running down the side of each, is a distinctive feature of the Olympic park skyline. Indeed, the view is so magnificent that the top floors have been commandeered by the BBC and Al Jazeera, who rented the space from Newham council and built television studios for the Games. But few of the 200,000 people who every day enter the Olympic park, or the millions who tune into the BBC and catch the Olympic stadium from this elevated vantage point, have an inkling of what the Olympics has meant for the hard-pressed residents of this estate.
- It's a story that goes back seven years to the moment London won the Olympic bid in 2005. As the Olympic stadium and Westfield Stratford City shot up, developers snapped up adjacent land and built expensive new offices and apartments. Suddenly the Carpenter's Estate — built in 1969 to replace the Victorian terrace houses for carpenters working in local factories — had become an incongruous eyesore.
- Newham council saw the potential for turning a huge profit, but first it had to relocate the residents, many of whom were families or elderly people who had lived there their entire lives.
- But angry leaseholders and freeholders — as well as a few remaining council tenants — have strenuously resisted the council's plans.
- "I don't want to move, I have one of the best views in London, but Newham council say we all have to go because of an ant infestation. What rubbish! Go back four years, remember Beijing and how Locog said they would never destroy people's houses the way they did in China to make way for the Olympics. Well, it has happened here, just in a different way — by stealth, and led by Newham council. Yes, the Olympics has been a triumph for Team GB, but for us on the Carpenter's, it's a disaster."
- Back then the Stratford DLR station had an entrance that went directly from the platform down to the estate. Today that entrance is barred and shut by a 15-foot iron gate. Mr Williams said: "They want everyone to go into the Olympics via Westfield and would like to pretend we don't exist. We're living under threat of compulsory purchase. Every month, another person is moved out and another flat is boarded up. It's social cleansing. This was not what the Olympic legacy was meant to be about."

When even the Evening Standard has noticed the injustice being done to the residents of the Carpenters Estate, things must be bad!

Residents continue to campaign (Carpenters Against Regeneration Plans- CARP), but they are getting little co-operation from the London Legacy Development Corporation. They were meant

to have a meeting on September 14th to discuss the proposal to turn the estate into a University of London (UCL) campus. But when the chair Mr. Moylan was moved to a new role by Boris Johnson, this was used as an excuse to cancel the meeting.

Meanwhile, UCL continues to develop their proposal for putting a campus on the site. They have produced a report, outlining all the 'benefits for local residents. They are holding out the carrot of creating jobs as a way of avoiding the fact that they are going to force people out of their homes.

<http://www.newham.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/1FF3C7EB-A04E-4735-BF37-4C847C3F6973/0/UCLStratfordInfoforCarpentersresidents.pdf>

However, residents are not taken in by the promises of benefits. A well-attended public meeting on September 27 showed this. From a report by <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/>

Furious residents have demanded that one of the UK's most prestigious universities pulls out of a £1 billion plan to redevelop a housing state which borders the Olympic Park.

Roughly 100 angry residents from Newham's Carpenter's estate attended a standing room only meeting in Stratford on Monday evening to call on University College London to abandon its proposals.

The residents' main concern is that the UCL's 'vision' is likely to involve the complete demolition of the estate — with no guarantees that any of them will ever be able to return to the area. They are angry about the implications for them but also that Newham Council may press ahead with the scheme at a time when it is so short of social housing that it has contacted housing providers as far away as Stoke to rehouse people who have approached the council for assistance.

A Cabinet Meeting of Newham Council will be making a decision on UCL's proposal on October 25th at 5 pm. Action East End calls on people to support CARP with their protests at this meeting.

Olympic Legacy: Dealing with oppressive policing



From the blog: <http://www.nmp.org.uk/>

Newham Monitoring Project (NMP) is an independent community-based anti-racist organisation, which was set up in 1980. We are based in the East London borough of Newham in England.

NMP works with members of the black community suffering racial discrimination / violence, police misconduct and civil rights issues. We monitor the response of statutory organisations - such as the police, the council and housing services - to the black community, in order to advocate for fair treatment and access to justice where this is not being met.

During the Olympic Games, the NMP organised a group of 88 people from the local community to act as volunteer legal observers. They report that this initiative was an enormous success. The public welcomed their presence, whilst the police did not! Some comments from the blog:

- *Community Legal Observers were frequently told by members of the public that their activities were 'exactly what is needed'. One CLO told us: "no-one ever responded negatively, about 50% with curiosity ... many with delight".*
- *The attitude of officers changed from amused to antagonistic as it became clear we were not going away and as a result of the consistent quality and commitment of CLOs. There were attempts to intimidate and insult our volunteers but thankfully no threats of arrest.*
- *We received statements from people who had been arrested that our rights cards were taken from them upon arrest and they were not allowed to call NMP from custody.*
- *Feedback from people who gave up their time to become CLOs for what was often a demanding role told us how much they enjoyed taking part, saying they felt "empowered ... discovering there were actions they could take... and an organisation to support them"*

The NMP is in the process of producing a report on the experience of community legal observers which can serve as a resource for young people and others dealing with police intimidation.

Olympic Legacy: 'Regeneration'

Newham Council has been using the idea of 'the Olympic Legacy' to pursue various 'regeneration' plans. In addition to the plans for the Carpenters Estate (see article in this issue), it also seems to have renewed its attack on Queen's Market, a traditional East London market in Upton Park. Friends of Queen's Market has been consistently campaigning against the continual threat by Newham Council to close the market and use the site for more 'lucrative' activities- often disguised as 'regeneration'. They have already managed to protect the market from threats by developers St. Modwen. However, new threats have recently emerged. According to Friends of Queen's Market:

Earlier this year we were told that 'With regards to the future management of the market, we can confirm that the Council is looking at options which could include contracting with a business and that could be a social enterprise.' (reply to Freedom of Information question)

We have now learned that the handover of the management of Queens Market to a 'social enterprise' is due to be completed by 1 April 2013.

A social enterprise could be a thoroughly democratic co-operative but it could also be a stitch-up (the most extreme example is A4e the company providing 'work placements' to the unemployed with a director getting

paid £8.6million)

From what we know of Newham Council it's more likely to go for the 'stitch-up' model and that would explain why they won't talk about it. The threat is that the chosen social enterprise will have even less accountability and transparency than does the current market management team and may indeed be planning to open the door to a private developer. There are alarming rumours....

Keep watching <http://www.friendsofqueensmarket.org.uk> for the latest news and ideas of how you can support the campaign.

Olympic Legacy: Airports

According to Moylan, Boris Johnson's newly appointed head of the Aviation Policy Unit, building a new hub airport to the east of London would "be the greatest legacy we could create". However, there are already concerns that East London, as well as London as a whole, is suffering the ill effects of air traffic. According to a press release from HACAN EAST (Heathrow Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise East), set up to campaign against traffic noise in East London:

East London has become an 'M25 for Aircraft Traffic' while residents underneath suffer from increased noise. The cumulative effects of London City Airport and Heathrow means Tower Hamlets residents are living under the constant drone of aircraft noise.

Pictures taken today (below) show the extent of the problem with aircraft contrails criss-crossing right across Tower Hamlets. What they don't show is the additional lower flying Heathrow and London City Aircraft which add to the problem. Local campaigner Alan Haughton said "The pictures today are shocking and show how overflowed many part of East London have become. Aircraft noise being forced upon the poorest borough in London, Tower Hamlets. Local kids taking up sports as part of the Olympic Legacy will have aircraft noise as a soundtrack to their lives. Enough is enough".



If there is another airport in the Thames Estuary as Boris Johnson proposes, the situation would be even worse. It seems that the politicians' idea of a legacy is not to benefit the residents of East London, but to line the pockets of investors. The Thames Estuary airport would cost 80 billion pounds and wouldn't be ready until 2030. We have to ask if London really needs another airport. Aren't we supposed to be cutting down on carbon emissions? Aren't London's skies busy enough?

For more information: <http://www.hacan.org.uk/>

<https://twitter.com/StopCityAirport>

Olympic Legacy: destruction of precious green space

The Olympics Committee made many promises about how the Games would leave the area better than before. This certainly doesn't seem the case in Leyton Marsh or in Wanstead Flats.

Leyton Marsh



Read about the campaign to fight for the full restoration of Leyton Marsh, courtesy of the Save Leyton Campaign blog. For more details and to get involved in the campaign go to: <http://saveleytonmarsh.wordpress.com/>

The excavated area on Leyton Marsh that outrageously supported the three-story-high Olympic Games Time Temporary Training basketball courts and tarmac roadway systems was not ready to return to the landowner Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA) by the contracted 15th October. Blaming the recent rainy weather, NUSSLI (the construction contractors) today told Save Leyton Marsh supporters that the reinstatement of the land is still two weeks away. Touring the whole site, SLM could see that there continued to be massive construction problems on this ill-fated project.

During the excavations last spring, far more than the planned depth of land had to be unearthed, because of the presence underneath the meadow surface of thousands of tons of toxic landfill dating back sixty years. Save Leyton Marsh campaigned to have this asbestos-polluted spoil removed safely, but while the waste lay uncovered for weeks on the marsh site it was doing further damage of its own. The parts of the site now presenting the greatest difficulty to reinstate appear to be those that suffered the weight and toxic seepage of the excavated spoil. Contractors spoke of the difficulty in removing surface water, which was quite significant in some patches, from the site that has been subject to deep infill of mineral-based material covered by a membrane and then topped with imported or displaced topsoil. It now awaits the installation of 2000 square metres of thick turf.

Save Leyton Marsh have always pointed out that the whole project was not feasible, and they are now being proved correct. The rainy weather is being used by the ODA and its contractors as a lame excuse for being unable to properly and timely reinstate this unprecedented, appalling and so unnecessary attack on open green land. Waltham Forest was naive to expect that it could be done and connived with the ODA's holding back of environmental evidence hoping that no-one would notice. LVRPA was only in it for the money, but are now presiding over the legacy of damaged land, ruined community relations and an uncertain winter. The ODA is likely to be served with levy damages by the LVRPA for every day that it overruns on the contract – no one will weep any tears over this!

Save Leyton Marsh will be monitoring the reinstatement over the long term, and will also be vigilant in watching out for any further attempt to build in any way on this area of the River Lea marshes, which are so precious to this area of East London.

Wanstead Flats

A section of Wanstead Flats was used by the police as a 'Muster, Deployment and Briefing Centre (MDBC) during the Olympics, despite massive opposition from the local community (documented in Editions Seven and Eight of 'The Howler'). As predicted, it will take months before the site is returned to its previous state and even then there are concerns that the site will be used again in the future as a 'security space'.

Here is a picture of what the destruction looks like (courtesy of <http://www.blowe.org.uk/>).



ABOUT ACTION EAST END



The East End Howler is produced by Action East End. We are a small group of local residents keen to highlight issues not taken up by popular media. All of this, as so much in this life, costs money...and surprise surprise we're not millionaires! So please donate a small amount for each copy of the Howler you take.

If you like what we're doing and feel like doing more, please send an email to: actioneastend@gmail.com

We will add you to our mailing list and keep you informed of our latest activities. Alternatively if supply us with an address we will send you a paper copy of our news letter and a free East End Howler through the post.