



Newsletter

Forest Fields Independent Residents Group March 2001

Swimming in Forest Fields- The Future

It seems clear that the City Council has little or no hope of building its Leisure Pool anywhere, let alone on the Forest. Our information suggests that the current estimate for the cost of the Centre has increased by 50% to £18 million and, having had a Lottery bid turned down, the Council has no hopes of raising the money. Whilst this is good news for those of us who want to keep Noel Street open and the Forest free from development, we have never opposed the concept of a Water Leisure Centre in Nottingham. Perhaps if the Council had tried to work with the people rather than try to bulldoze the scheme through despite the opposition a better response might have come from the Lottery Board. The major concern now must be for the future of the Noel Street Pool. It needs repairs and upgrading and we must apply pressure to ensure that the pool does not die from neglect. We intend to monitor the care and maintenance of the Pool and are looking for regular users who can help in this. Please telephone 8410457 if you are prepared to put in a little work.

Dog toilet for Hyson Green/Forest Fields.

Those of you fed up with treading in dog mess during your walks around the area might be pleased to know that a dog toilet has been created- unfortunately the toilet is otherwise known as the Gladstone Street Children's Playground!

Surely dog owners must know how offensive and dangerous to the health of small children dog shit is.

Any ideas about what we should do?



Don't blame me-I'm the one who's supposed to be the dumb animal!

400 oppose the nazi National Front

400 anti-fascists turned up to oppose the National Front demonstration outside Nottingham Prison on Saturday 3rd March. 15 counter demonstrators were arrested by the police, who were thought by many, including local councillors, to have behaved aggressively. This is the second time in 8 months the NF have demonstrated outside the prison in an attempt to exploit some very serious local concerns about the paedophile unit at the prison. On both occasions, the National Front had the protection of the local police. That the police protect organised racists marching in multi-racial areas is bad enough: that they stop local people from effectively protesting against their unwanted presence is intolerable.

Public Meeting

- SUNDAY 18th MARCH
- 3pm
- Forest Fields Community Centre, Sturton St.

To discuss plans and concerns about the new Rainbow Centre/ Beech Ave Social Club.
(see later articles)

For more information telephone

The Rainbow Centre

The Rainbow Centre's plan to move from Mansfield Road to the old Ukrainian social club on Beech Avenue has caused some debate amongst local people. Here the Rainbow Centre outline what they want to do at the social club, whilst a member of the FFIRG highlights some local concerns.

The Rainbow Centre is relocating, expanding its services & resources and changing its name. After 16 years the Rainbow Centre has outgrown its rented Mansfield Road premises. Volunteers have worked hard over 5 months to raise the deposit to buy a permanent new home at the former Sitch Ukrainian Club on Beech Avenue and Gladstone Street, in Forest Fields/New Basford.

*The many complications of property purchase have delayed the intended meeting for the local neighbourhood. Everything is now reaching completion in a rush. A meeting has therefore been arranged for **SUNDAY 18th MARCH** at 3pm at the Forest Fields Community Centre on Sturton Street. We hope that as many members of the local community as possible will come along. If you have any time or skills to offer, if you have any advice or ideas to contribute, or if you wish to raise concerns about any of the suggestions, we look forward to seeing you on the 18th. Refreshments will be provided.*

The Centre was originally opened in 1984 by members of Nottingham CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) & FoE (Friends of the Earth) as a single office and shop. Rainbow has since provided resources to many individuals, groups and campaigns working for social change. It exists to promote the causes of social justice, animal welfare, conservation, co-operation, mutual aid and community spirit. Rainbow is a non-hierarchical organisation where all volunteers get an equal say.

As well as the café, library, information exchange, internet & computer access, offices and meeting facilities offered at the current centre, new projects will also be possible. Veggie cookery classes; social club venue for local performers; video evenings, urban permaculture gardening and workshop space for artists and local co-operatives may be available in due course.

We are still raising funds. If you are able to help with the costs of the project cheques made out to "Rainbow Centre Moving-On" can be sent to the address below. We are also pleased to discuss offers of loans, on which we can offer interest.

The Rainbow Centre, 180-188 Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG1 3HW ('till 24th March)

From 19th March : **253 Gladstone St, Nottm NG7 6HX**

New Phone: 0845 458 9595 e-mail: rainbow@veggies.

Too often in areas like this, outside organisations – councils, private businesses, sometimes environmental collectives – think they know best what local people need, and slap the words 'community' and 'resource' on decisions already made. Although local people shouldn't always have a right of veto, local consultation right from the start is essential.

When the Rainbow Centre said they wanted to move to Beech Avenue, I welcomed the idea. The Rainbow Centre might not be everyone's cup of tea, but it has a history of supporting community campaigning.

For a long time little was heard, apart from rumours about mortgage problems. Then just before Christmas, the Rainbow Centre applied for a drinks license. Now a resource centre is one thing, but a licensed club is something else. With one pub already on Beech Avenue, people were concerned about the effects a second pub might have.

In particular, they were worried about: noise – from music at the club and people coming and going at night; parking on Beech Avenue – at the time the plan was to turn the car park into a garden and the Beech Avenue entrance into the main entrance; the lack of information – about what was apparently to be a local community resource.

Given this lack of information, some people wrote to the Magistrate's licensing committee raising possible objections. In response, the Rainbow Centre asked the Forest Fields and Sherwood Rise residents' groups for letters of support. *But support for what exactly?* Both residents' groups recognised that the plans lacked detail and that the collective hadn't tried to initiate any dialogue with local people. It was also unclear whether the plans they did have – e.g. the Thursday to Sunday bar – were open to any negotiation.

There were other issues: - would the club really be a local community resource or a city wide resource for environmental activists? - how would the needs of these different groups be reconciled? - did Forest Fields need another pub in addition to the nine in walking distance of Beech Avenue, three of which regularly featured live music? - how precisely were the Rainbow Centre going to control noise levels effectively? - was a residential area an appropriate site for a licensed social club? - would there be regular late night gigs? - how would local people influence what happened at the club? - what if they didn't have the time to get or didn't feel comfortable getting involved?

The public meeting is late but welcome. There are issues to be resolved, because the road to (community) ill-feeling is paved with good (community) intentions and if things go wrong it's no use saying 'that's not what we intended'.

Rob

THE TRAM IS COMING - AT WHAT COST?

Just what is the Private Finance Initiative (PFI)? Our economics correspondent explains just how private business stands to benefit at our expense.

The Tram, or NET, was supposed to cost £167 million - This is the amount the Government granted the NET Consortium for the Project in January 2000 and, be clear, they will not give a penny more.

The problem is that, according to a press release by the NET Consortium released in May 2000, it's going to cost £180 Million.

But, it doesn't stop there. A later press release, issued in June 2000, put the Cost at £200 Million.

And, maybe significantly, maybe not, there has not been any reference to the cost in any subsequent press release by NET since June 2000.

So, a rise in the cost of £33 Million in just five months, what is going on?

Well, the answer lies in how the Tram is being funded.

Welcome to the Private Finance Initiative, or PFI - If you haven't heard of this Tory legacy left on by New Labour yet, believe me, you will soon.

Basically, it is a way of building major capital projects, such as hospitals and schools and works likes this:

The Government gives a PFI credit, in this case, £167 Million for a Tram, to a consortium of private businesses to build and design and, in some cases, run the project.

Here, it's an unholy alliance of Carillion, Transdev and Adtranz.

This credit is then used to raise funds from banks and venture capitalists to build the project.

So far so good.

But, private firms do not build trams and hospitals without expecting some kind of payback and given, that in theory at least, it should be difficult to make a profit out of a hospital for example, they expect payback for their time effort and money.

So, the Tram, when built, will be leased back to the NET consortium, who are basically our two local councils and Nottingham City Transport. They then pay a rent or lease to the private companies for the next 27 years, after which the Government will hand over the £167 Million promised.

In our case, this rent was originally estimated at £30 Million, or £1 Million for the next 27 YEARS (No, I don't understand the maths either), based on the cost being £167 Million. Incidentally, Nottingham City Council has already forked out £12 Million for this Tram, against the measly £100,00 put up by Carillion and Transdev to secure the contracts.

Well, given that PFI agreements require interest payments of some 5% above the base rate of interest, currently about 5%, I would suggest not.

Coun Taylor is not very forthcoming on these issues as he apparently believes that PFI is just too complicated for the likes of us to understand, but maybe, just maybe, next time you see him in the pub or on the street, you might like to ask him just how much this project is going to cost not just you, but the next generation of Tax payers as well. Because, put simply, every time the costs of this Project rise, which they will continue to do, it is the Council Tax payers who have meet these increases.

**Material sourced from NET's own website!
Check out Corporate Watch for info on Carillion
etc (www.corporatewatch.org)**



Not Entirely Transparent

Tram works causes increase in car use through Forest Fields

There has been a significant increase in the number of cars driving through Forest Fields as a result of the tram-works. Almost overnight, Mount Street and Gladstone Street have become major roads, especially between 8.30 and 9.00 when our children are walking to school. At a public meeting on the tram last year, Radford Councillor Phil Spear was asked how exactly the tram would contribute to the regeneration of the area. He said that this would be as a result of people commuting through the area. Presumably, as far as Cllr. Spear is concerned, the more motorists taking a short cut into the City through Forest Fields the more rapidly the area will be regenerated.

Nottingham Police in Partnership Council take-over bid

Readers of the Partnership Council's 'One Sheet' will have noticed that a P.C. Vacancy now occupies six of the seats on the Partnership Council Forum. No one would question the local constabulary's commitment to democratic participation, but P.C. Vacancy's excessive enthusiasm strikes us as . . . well, excessive.

FOREST FIELDS ADVICE CENTRE - USE IT OR LOSE IT.

The following describes the work done at the Advice Centre which faces funding difficulties

"The largest part of our work at the centre is around income maximisation. This is work ensuring all our clients take up any benefits they are entitled to, also through debt counselling/money advice, encouraging responsible budgeting and work closely with Fair Goose Credit Union. We offer a warm and friendly environment in which anybody can bring any query or concern, to discuss them or seek advice, in absolute confidence and assurance that the help we offer will be of a quality the residents of Forest Fields may expect from any professional service. We make every effort to ensure The Centre meets the needs of Asian language speakers and can deliver advice in Urdu, Punjabi or Mirpuri.

A considerable amount of our work is very simple but extremely important to individuals who do not have English as their first language or may have difficulties reading or writing, helping with forms and interpreting official correspondence. We try to offer assistance while encouraging our client's involvement in the process, so building confidence and an understanding that will help in managing in the future.

The Centre holds a wide range of Benefits Agency, council tax/housing benefit forms. We work closely with a number of local groups and have information about many more, including services delivered by Nottingham City Council. We host computer 'taster' courses ran by First Data and hope to have an Internet Access Point for any one to use in the near future, our photocopier, fax and rooms are also available for local people or groups to use.

The advice sessions are on Wednesday and Thursdays between 10am and 2pm. These are by appointment but callers are always welcome at any time on these days. Our management committee is largely made up of local people who help in shaping and developing The Centre. We do though want to speak to you, the people of Forest Fields. We want to you to have a say in what you may expect or would or would like to see at The Centre. We are particularly interested in speaking to any one interested in getting involved and supporting your community resource. For example, The Centre's management committee is looking to recruit new members, particularly from the Asian community, as it is this community represents more than half of our clients.

JUST ANOTHER POINTLESS SUBCULTURE.

PEPE

BeneFit

PROTESTERS FINES!

FROM 7PM - LATE WITH DOG ON A ROPE

THE CHOICE IS YOURS!

Light Vear

THURSDAY 29TH MARCH

AT THE PALM TREE

GLADSTONE STREET
FOREST FIELDS
NOTTINGHAM

VAMPIRES

UNDER PANTS

DUB SKA D&B DJ's

£3.00