

THROWING OUT THE BABY WITH THE BATHWATER!

THREAT TO LONDON'S MOST FAMOUS PUBLIC GOLF COURSE.

Lewisham Council plan to close the public golf course at Beckenham Place Park. The 107 year old course is one of the most famous public golf courses in the UK – recorded for several years as the ‘most played public course in Europe’ by the Guinness Book of Records. Since inheriting the course from the GLC the Council, having initially enjoyed a considerable financial windfall from its green fee income, has failed adequately to manage the course and now proposes to deprive the community of inner London’s only public 18-hole golf course.

Following what has widely been described as a flawed consultation process in January/February 2014, Lewisham obtained the offer of some £5 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards improvements to the park. This initiative was applauded as park users had for many years been only too aware of the Council’s virtual neglect of this wonderful park. General dismay followed, however, when it was disclosed that the Council’s bid (details of which were not disclosed to the Beckenham Place Park Working Party prior to submission – as requested) included the closure of the golf course.

The proposed redevelopment of the park includes restoration of elements of the ‘historic 18th century landscape’, together with the creation of a large lake and an ‘events area’. These proposals, described by many as ‘a vanity project on the part of the Council’, have succeeded in uniting park users (dog walkers, nature lovers, local residents as well as golfers) in opposition to the closure of the golf course. ‘Having golfers around when we use the park makes us feel safe’ was a view shared by many.

During the next few months Lewisham Council must conduct a second, more comprehensive public consultation before submitting more detailed plans to the HLF. Campaigners hope that their efforts will allow the golf course to be retained within those plans.

PHOTO : Golfers mix celebrations for Braeside Golf Club Championship with protest at Lewisham Council’s proposal to close the golf course.

