

# The Society of FRIENDS OF BOWRING PARK Founded 1989

BOWRING PARK VISITORS CENTRE, Coach House c/o Golf Shop, Bowring Park, Roby Road, Roby L364 HD

## SPECIAL BULLETIN @ 15 NOVEMBER 2010

As Founder Chair of The Society of Friends of Bowring Park in March 1989, I feel I can no longer represent the Society at meetings of the Independent Board due to several conflicts of interest explained below. To understand my difficulties, see extract overleaf from our governing document's aims and objectives, based on Civic Trust Model Constitution, and please let me have your views by visit, telephone call or letter.

The Independent Board was set up by the Trustees, KMBC Project Team in response to advice from the Charity Commission to broaden the scope of public consultation about Council proposals to invite tenders for the private Management and Development of Bowring Park and Golf Course, which would also include a contract to lease the land and buildings. A lease represents disposal which would require a Public Notice and a plan approved by the Charity Commission, subject to the nature of response to the Public Notice.

The Independent Board set up by the Project Manager Jonathan Roberts includes one rep from each of the Stakeholders KMBC, FOBP and BGC (golf club) and none of these can vote on issues which involve a conflict of interest, in our case the occupation of the Coach House. Independent members have been drawn from Knowsley Community College, NHS Knowsley, Mersey Partnership, and a local resident. Their four votes will decide the final outcomes, 50% present (ie 2) make a quorum. On 8 November, Members were required to return their signed declaration of conflict of interest. This clarified for me that my conflict of interest lay not with the future use of the coach house, which was always intended for public use anyway, but the conflict the whole process causes me by forcing me into a position which conflicted with some of the aims attached, eg: The confidentiality of the Procurement process and the legal restriction on what I am allowed to include in FOBP Bulletins and reports to meetings, conflicts with the duty of the Society to inform and educate public opinion. The forthcoming selection of a private leaseholder of charity land is a conflict of interest and my integrity, which is greater than that involving the future use of the coach house.

When I attended the first meeting of the Independent Board, the Agenda included a decision on whether or not to carry on with the Procurement process. I made it known I would have difficulty continuing as a Stakeholder rep if the process was to lead to selecting a private company which would LEASE as well as manage and operate this charity estate. A KMBC advisor advised that the outcome would not necessarily include a lease with the Management contract, so I stayed on the Board. However, it was made clear at the next meeting that the two were inseparable under the procurement process. The issue of conflict of interest made me very aware of where my own conflict of interest lay, *with the lease*, ie: disposal of charity land.

I have to add that the Project Team has modified its stance about the 'long' lease it had offered, and its plan for Bowring Park is very much in keeping with ideals expressed by FOBP since its inception. However, much detail about golf course proposals had been inadvertently omitted from Detailed Specifications presented for the meeting of 8 Nov. This does not enhance confidence in the overall plan for future management.

It could be argued that we can safely leave all decisions in the hands of the Charity Commission which will only agree to the 'disposal' if it complies with charity law. It cannot be involved at all until Trustees comply with completing outstanding annual charity returns. The 1989 'disposal' of 13.8 acres (park) may have been approved if the public had not strongly objected. The 2011 'disposal' may (or may not) meet with public approval if it is perceived as a means of rescuing Bowring Park and Golf Course, improved maintenance, but the issue will arise again when the lease period expires, and the charity land returns to the Council. By then the public may be unaware that this is charity land, so in my opinion its future remains uncertain despite the best intentions of current council members and officials. I believe the only longterm solution is for Trustees to activate the existing Bowring Park Charity c.1906, reg no **1017017**, and put it under the supervision of a Bowring Park Charity Board drawn up on similar lines to the Independent Board which is monitoring its 'disposal' which I cannot accept. Could a Charity Board monitor income and expenditure, invite donations, bequests, grants to secure solutions to identified needs, and involve the community in its park and golf course? Friends of Bowring Park to continue its support in activities and fundraising events. Could a selected private Management Company also be co-opted on to the Charity Board for liaison purposes and offer public spirited financial support to specific objectives, on similar lines to the generous Bowring family which has donated over £100,000 to FOBP endeavours in the Coach House and community events?

I need your views, Members, so please visit, write or telephone to Bowring Park Visitors Centre. *A Wilson*  
\*\* Keep a close look out for the Public Notice of Disposal if you wish to study its contents and respond.

FOBP tel: 0151 482 1116 / Email: [friendsofbowringpark@googlemail.com](mailto:friendsofbowringpark@googlemail.com) / [www.bowringpark.co.uk](http://www.bowringpark.co.uk)

**The Society of FRIENDS OF BOWRING PARK Founded 1989**  
BOWRING PARK VISITORS CENTRE, Coach House c/o Golf Shop, Bowring Park, Roby Road, Roby L364 HD

*I ask members to let me have their views asap, by visits, telephone or letter to address above. AW*