

The Public Realm in and around the Barbican Estate

Summary

Residents are concerned about the poor state of the public realm in and around the Barbican Estate. The City has delegated responsibility for maintaining the public realm to the Barbican Estate Office (BEO). The budget for this maintenance, including drain maintenance is around £300,000 pa, Given the extent of the challenge, it is surprising how well the BEO does with this limited budget.

Contrast this with the £35 million project to waterproof and replace all the podium areas around the Estate. Beech Gardens Phase 1 was the first stage of this work. It cost over £4 million, is of questionable utility and is already showing signs of dilapidation caused by inadequately funded maintenance, poor initial design and project implementation.

Residents don't want the City to spend more on maintaining the public realm around the Barbican. On the contrary, we want the City to spend less, but more effectively.

Resolution

- The RCC ask that the BRC acknowledge the reasonable concerns of residents and that
- The BRC ask those responsible for the funding and implementation of maintenance programmes for the public realm in and around the Barbican Estate to look for a new approach for upgrading and maintenance

The unrefurbished public realm

The dilapidated condition of the public areas of the Estate is a surprise to many visitors. This dilapidation is worrying, not just from an aesthetic viewpoint, but more importantly from the "stitch in time" consequences of poor maintenance. This dilapidation concerns residents but the impact on visitors is surely more significant. The City has launched its challenging initiative "Culture Mile", which will attract international attention. However, visitors to and participants in Culture Mile encounter filth and dilapidation as they make their way across the podiums and along Beech Street. Currently 1.5 million people visit the Barbican Centre each year. This number will rise significantly when Culture Mile gets fully under way. To these numbers we need to add City workers and visitors to the City who use the Barbican as a thoroughfare, soon to substantially increase when Crossrail finally arrives.

To the casual observer, The City seems to be more interested in shiny new projects, whilst neglecting what it already has. The remaining £30 million to be spent on the highwalks is a clear example of this approach. This expenditure represents one hundred times the current annual maintenance budget. The replacement programme is extravagant, wasteful and unsustainable.

Financing Constraints

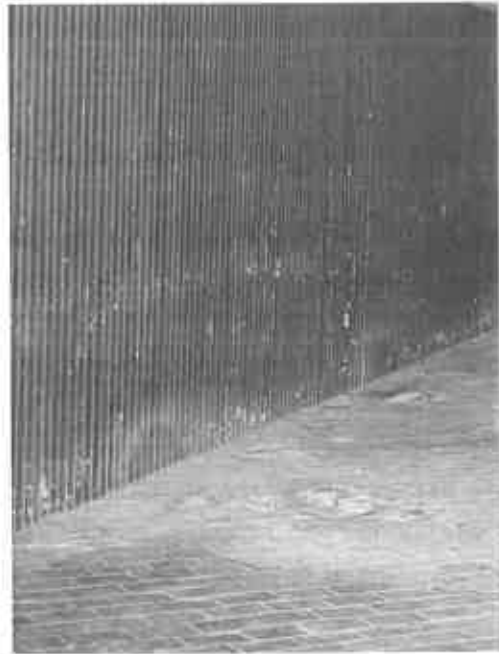
Members of the RCC are fully aware of the constraints that surround some of the sources of money used to maintain and renew the City's infrastructure. However, the City has demonstrated its ability to use creative financing and legal structure to overcome these constraints.

Examples

On the following pages are some examples from around the Barbican These are not isolated occurrences; it is difficult to walk more than a few metres without observing dilapidation.



Corroded fixings on steps up to Beech Highwalk from Lauderdale Place



Railings unpainted for at least 20 years and 20 mm thick calcination on Defoe Place



Door to the Estate from Beech street



Paving on the Sculpture Court



Flooding on the new Beech Gardens Highwalk



Plants in mortar joints on Cromwell Highwalk



Calcination on a bench on new Beech Gardens Highwalk



Grass growing out of a drain on Beech Gardens Highwalk

TO: BARBICAN RESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE
16TH September 2019

FROM: BARBICAN RESIDENTS CONSULTATION COMMITTEE
2ND September 2019

13. THE PUBLIC REALM AROUND THE BARBICAN ESTATE

Members received a report of the Deputy Chairman which expressed some disappointment at the City Corporation's approach to maintenance of the public realm in and around the Barbican Estate. This report sought a resolution to the BRC to support this, on behalf of residents, and for the benefit of visitors to the City.

In response to a question about the fountains, Members noted that this was on the next BA Agenda, when there would be feedback from the Arts Centre.

Members discussed the general footfall through the Podium and how this was likely to increase in the wake of Culture Mile. Members also noted that the City had been conducting Architecture Tours. In concluding, the Chairman and Members thanked the Deputy Chairman for the strong messaging in the report and the Chairman of the BA confirmed their endorsement.

On being put to a vote, 20 voted for, with one abstention and it was therefore **RESOLVED**, that:

1. The RCC ask that the BRC acknowledge the reasonable concerns of residents and on behalf of visitors;
2. The BRC ask those responsible for the funding and implementation of maintenance programmes for the public realm, in and around the Barbican Estate, to look for a new approach for upgrading and maintenance.

TO: STREETS AND WALKWAYS SUB COMMITTEE
15TH October 2019

FROM: BARBICAN RESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE
16th September 2019

6. A RESOLUTION FROM THE BARBICAN RESIDENTS CONSULTATION COMMITTEE IN RESPECT OF THE PUBLIC REALM AROUND THE BARBICAN ESTATE

At their meeting on 2nd September 2019, Members of the Barbican Residents Consultation Committee received a report of their Deputy Chairman which expressed disappointment at the City Corporation's approach to maintenance of the public realm in and around the Barbican Estate. The report sought a resolution to the BRC to support this, on behalf of residents, and for the benefit of visitors to the City. The Barbican Association had also endorsed the resolution. The report of the Deputy Chairman of the RCC had been emailed to BRC Members ahead of this meeting and laid around the table.

Members of the RCC had discussed the general footfall through the Podium and how this was likely to increase in the wake of Culture Mile. Members of the BRC felt that Crossrail footfall would be more significant. Officers advised that, historically, the Estate Office had been left with a minimal amount of budget and resources for the public realm.

It was moved by Jeremy Mayhew, seconded by Mark Wheatley and RESOLVED, that:

1. The Streets and Walkways Sub Committee acknowledge the reasonable concerns of Barbican residents and on behalf of visitors, as set out in the report appended to this Resolution;
2. The Streets and Walkways Sub Committee ask those responsible for the funding and implementation of maintenance programmes for the public realm, in and around the Barbican Estate, to look for a new approach for upgrading and maintaining the public realm in and around the Barbican Estate.

TO: COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
7th November 2019

FROM: STREETS AND WALKWAYS SUB COMMITTEE
15th October 2019

10. RESOLUTION OF THE BARBICAN RESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE

The Sub-Committee considered a resolution from the Barbican Residential Committee regarding public realm in and around the Barbican Estate. The Chairman advised that following consultation with officers, it had become apparent that the resolution was not within the remit of the Sub-Committee and therefore the Sub-Committee had limited power to discuss it.

The Director of the Built Environment confirmed that this was the case and advised that officers would confer to redirect the resolution as appropriate, before outlining the Department of the Built Environment's (DBE) position. Whilst City of London walkways were under the remit of the Streets & Walkways Sub-Committee, a review previously undertaken in respect of the Barbican Estate had resulted in a rationalisation of roles and responsibilities. As part of this rationalisation, responsibility for inspecting and maintaining the highwalk surface, drainage, wayfinding and signage had transferred from the DBE to the Department of Community and Children's Services. As part of this handover, a review of funding was undertaken, and a budget fully transferred from DBE to the Department of Community and Children's Services.

The Director of the Built Environment advised that DBE continued to ensure the Department of Community & Children's Services had access to use the City's term maintenance contractor for undertaking their minor works, also funded by the Department of Community and Children's Services, and highwalk lighting, which was part of the City of London's integrated street lighting system and was currently being upgraded as part of the City-wide lighting strategy by DBE. Major projects relating to the Estate were delivered by the City Surveyor's Department on behalf of the Department of Community and Children's Services.

Members agreed that whilst the resolution was not within the remit of the Streets & Walkways Sub-Committee, it raised important points and concerns that should be acknowledged. The Sub-Committee was supportive of officers redirecting the resolution as appropriate and suggested the resolution be forwarded to the Department of Community and Children's Services.

RESOLVED – That the Streets & Walkways Sub-Committee:

1. Acknowledge the reasonable concerns of Barbican residents and on behalf of visitors, as set out in the report appended to the resolution; and
2. Instruct officers to redirect the resolution as appropriate and forward the resolution to the Community and Children's Services Committee.

FROM: COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
7TH NOVEMBER 2019

TO: BARBICAN RESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE
16TH DECEMBER 2019

15. RESOLUTION FROM THE STREETS AND WALKWAYS SUB COMMITTEE

Members received a resolution from the Barbican Residential Committee in respect of the public realm in and around the Barbican Estate. Members noted that, 10 years ago, a budget of £50,000 was transferred to the Director of Community and Children's Services but this was rapidly subsumed into the landlord account and had not been uplifted since. Furthermore, a project to resurface the podium had been put on hold due to the City Corporation's Fundamental Review.

There was some discussion as to whether the Barbican Centre, Culture Mile Project and the Girls School should form a collective bid to address deferred maintenance and, therefore, the resolution should be referred to the Corporate Asset Sub Committee, to consider adding it to the Cyclical Works Programme. Members also noted that the forthcoming Governance Review might seek to redress this. Whilst accepting that there had been some historic deficit in respect of budgetary provision for maintenance works, Members also noted that the Barbican Estate was 50 years old and there had been issues with the structure in recent years.

RESOLVED, that – the Barbican Residential Committee note Members' comments as set out above and suggestions as to their next options.

