

Lydiard Park Heritage Trust

Press Release

When Swindon Borough Council announced in 2015 that, due to financial constraints, they intended to outsource Lydiard House and Park, we had a choice. We could have sat back and watch Lydiard fall into the hands of the profit orientated private sector with all the inherent risks to Heritage and public good, OR we could attempt to win hearts, minds and a competitive bidding process with our own vision.

Support from around ten thousand people through the change.org and other petitions and a huge turnout at a public meeting at Lydiard Park Academy suggested the local community were with us. Encouraging support in the local media followed and slowly but surely our vision was translated into a compelling and financially sustainable bid, which has today found favour with those charged with decisions over the future of Lydiard.

And so with great pride, and acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead, we are delighted to be chosen as the Council's preferred bidder. We have never believed there was a need or public support for radical change at Lydiard, but we are convinced that there are a number of opportunities for improving the overall experience for visitors. Our plans are focused on Heritage with exciting programmes for education, conservation, wellbeing and leisure, while crucially retaining the current level of public access to the Park.

We anticipate signing a long lease with the Council and we look forward to working in a constructive and progressive partnership with them. Both parties recognise that there is additional due diligence and legal requirements to be concluded, including important consultations with staff.

We look forward to making good progress on all these matters and hope to be in a position to take management and operational responsibility for Lydiard in 2018.

Quotes

Trust Chair Mike Bowden said

"We are of course delighted by the decision and I can assure both the council and local people that the hard work of all our Trustees will continue; complacency will not be an issue. It has been a real pleasure to work on such an important community project with such a talented and experienced group of trustees, and I thank them for their unwavering commitment over the last 16 months. We are grateful for the widespread support we have received from the local community and we look forward to working with our recently formed advisory group over the coming months. We have never seen the process in party political terms and we have reason to thank members of the Conservative administration and the Labour and Lib Dem parties for their support and contributions. The preservation of Swindon's rich heritage is so important and I hope we have persuaded many that a well organised charitable trust may be a useful template for other heritage challenges in Swindon."

Registered Office: Wood Farm House, Swindon Road, Wroughton, Wiltshire SN4 9BZ

Registered Company No: 10192530

Patrons: Robert Buckland MP and Anthony St. John

Trustees: Gary Bond; Mike Bowden (Chair); Sarah Finch-Crisp; Kevin Fisher; Richard Howroyd; Daniel Rose; Per-Axel Warensjo (Vice Chair)

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South Swindon MP and Trust patron Robert Buckland said

"This cabinet decision is another important milestone in the transfer of management control from SBC to The Lydiard Park Heritage Trust. I know local people will join me in commending councillors for identifying heritage related experience and expertise as one of the key reasons for making their selection after a comprehensive and competitive bid process "

Trustee Kevin Fisher said

"Lydiard continues to face external threats and we anticipate further applications for planning consent that would have a detrimental impact on the House, Park and St Mary's Church. We will continue to offer leadership and coordinate well informed objections to any such proposed development."

Rev Canon Alastair Stevenson, recently appointed Chair of the Friends of Lydiard Park said

"The Friends of Lydiard Park championed the development of the Lydiard Park Heritage Trust and we are delighted that Swindon Council have chosen them to be the preferred bidder to take on Lydiard House and Park. We have been proud to support the Trust's bid and to provide both advice and financial assistance at this critical time".

Anthony St. John, Patron of the Lydiard Park Heritage Trust writes:

"I am immensely glad to hear of the council's decision. My family owned Lydiard Park for over 500 years up until 1943 when the then Swindon Corporation made the enlightened decision to purchase Lydiard House and Park for local people. I congratulate the Lydiard Park Heritage Trust on winning the bid to help secure Lydiard's future and Swindon Council for making another forward thinking decision".

Trustee Profiles

Mike Bowden (Chair): A lawyer and former FTSE 100 Managing Director, currently CEO of Swindon Speedway and trustee of the Friends of Lydiard Park, which he chaired 2011 – 2017, and Phoenix Enterprises in Swindon. Previous positions include Chair of Swindon's Economic Development & Enterprise Partnership, Board Member of Swindon Regeneration Advisory Group & Swindon Cultural Partnership & Chairman of the Science Museum Campaign Team.

Per-Axel Warensjo (Vice Chair): With a university degree in Economics & Business Administration from Uppsala, Sweden Per-Axel moved to Swindon in 1992. He has worked as the Finance and HR Director within the Technology sector where he worked for nearly 30 years. During the last 4 years he has supported local businesses with financial advice. Currently he is a local Parish chairman, CFO of Swindon Speedway and has recently been appointed as a Magistrate.

Sarah Finch-Crisp: Former Director of Chiswick House & Gardens Trust and prior to that Head of Heritage at Swindon Borough Council, Sarah has a background in museum curatorship and heritage development. She was responsible for Lydiard House for over 20 years and led the park restoration project 2004-7, attracting major funding, business partnership investment and widespread community participation.

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Kevin Fisher: As a former senior executive of a multinational technology company where he worked for 30 years, Kevin has an electronics engineering and ICT background and has lived in Swindon since 1962. As the chair of West Swindon's Shaw Residents' Association and the Lydiard Heritage Action Group, he has strong community ties right across Swindon.

Daniel Rose: An active and well known member of Swindon's voluntary and community sector for many years. In his professional life until 2016 he worked for The National Trust in several national roles focusing on community engagement, volunteering, fundraising and consumer research. Daniel is currently the Director of the Mechanics' Institution Trust and also acts as a consultant to The Architectural Heritage Fund with a particular focus on supporting the rescue and re-use of historic properties in London.

Richard Howroyd: A Chartered Accountant by profession, Richard is the Head of Strategic Procurement & Commissioning for Bath & North East Somerset Council. Bath is a UNESCO World Heritage site (the only City in the UK to have the status) and Richard's role includes supporting the City's key tourist attractions (the Roman Baths, the Fashion Museum and Royal Victoria Park to name a few) as well other Council services.

Gary Bond: Managing Director of McArthurGlen, Gary was responsible for the development of retail space across Europe and Canada. Before that he was responsible for the Swindon Railway works redevelopment and creation of Swindon's designer outlet centre, one of the largest regeneration projects in the UK. This role, together with his work at McArthurGlen, has involved extensive work with listed buildings.

Social media and Website addresses

Lydiard Park Heritage Trust

- website: www.lydiardtrust.org.uk
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/lydiardparkheritagetrust
- Twitter: twitter.com/LPHT16

The friends of Lydiard Park website: www.lydiardparkfriends.org.uk

Lydiard Park website: www.lydiardpark.org.uk

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