**SoWN response to Lambeth’s Parks and Open Spaces Strategic Plan and Parks Investment Plan.**

Address jointly to

Cllr Sonia Winifred, Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture.

And

Cllr Matthew Bennett, Cabinet Member for Planning, Investment & New Homes, with special reponsibilty for Waterloo.

We are writing as the South Bank and Waterloo Neighbourhood Forum (SoWN) to respond the Lambeth's recently published Open Spaces Strategic Plan and the Council’s Parks Investment Strategy.

We note and endorse the strategic aims set out in the Open Spaces Strategic Plan but are concerned

1. that some key South Bank and Waterloo green open spaces not owned/managed by Lambeth do not get the focus they need.
2. that the Strategy and Investment Plan do not fully respond to the particular needs of the South Bank and Waterloo neighbourhood in relation to green open space, nor to the prioirity accorded to green open space in the adopted South Bank and Waterloo Neighbourhood Plan.

To provide a context for the Council’s consideration of the issues raised in this letter and to inofrm the further engagement we seek with you, we have developed a matrix showing the ownrship and maanagement structure, roles of friends groups, capital and revenue prioirites and any other issues for each of the green spaces - it is attached. We have also attached the updated version of the Neighbourhood Plan Projects List which was submitted to the Council earlier this year.

As the Council is aware, the three busiest green spaces in South Bank and Waterloo (Jubilee Gardens, Bernie Spain Gardens, and Waterloo Millennium Green) are not included, presumably because they are not owned or managed by the Council. Actually, in the case of Bernie Spain Gardens and Waterloo Millennium Green the Council owns the freehold, but the long leaseholders, Coin Street Community Builders and Waterloo Green Trust/BOST respectively are wholly responsible for management and maintenance. We think any strategic approach to Lambeth Parks and Open Spaces should take account of this particular feature of Lambeth’s key cultural, tourist and business neighbourhood with its ever growing residential population.

The Strategic Plan includes a commitment to 'complete the implementation of the Parks Investment Plan’. It is understood that this applies only to Lambeth Parks, and so exlcudes the three key open green spaces above. However, even noting this point, and even including Emma Cons Gardens (which is primarily a hard landscape) the Lambeth funding allocated to South Bank and Waterloo green spaces amounts to £242,000, 1.3% out of a total of £18.25m.

We would therefore welcome a full discussion as soon as possible of the priority needs for capital investment in South Bank and Waterloo parks and open spaces, both for Lambeth and non-Lambeth owned spaces with a view to developing an agreed, inclusive strategic approach.

At the same time we would like to emphasise that in a number of cases management and maintenance issues are more pressing than capital investment and these also need to be the subject of discussion. This is notably the case with Jubilee Gardens, but also, for example,with St John's Churchyard, where management is effectively devolved to St John's Church, but on a very short term and underfunded basis.

The enclosed matrix highlights these issues across all the spaces.

There are a number of urgent considerations arising from the impact of Covid. Clearly there has been a significant change in footfall, but we must work on the assumption that visitors and workers will return and will again be major users of the area’s open green spaces. Indeed a number of major developments are proceeding despite the pandemic, including Elizabeth House, the former ITV site, Royal Street and many others just across the Southwark boundary, which will continue to increase pressure on the limited open green psace in the neighbourhood.

The priority rightly given to climate emergency, biodiversity, air quality, public health and exercse, particularly for people with support needs, in other key Council strategies also underpins the need for green space investment in this area, which has experienced so much densification in the last 20 years, a process which Council policies continue to support and which will undoubtedly continue.

However, Covid has above all highlighted the need for high quality public green open space in urban areas to benefit residents, a key issue in the South Bank and Waterloo neighbourhood where the availability of private open green space available to residents is very low. Figures by Centre for Cities [https://www.citymetric.com/fabric/covid-19-highlighting-cities-unequal-access-green-space-5168](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.citymetric.com%2Ffabric%2Fcovid-19-highlighting-cities-unequal-access-green-space-5168&data=01%7C01%7Cpaula.carney%40carneysweeney.co.uk%7Cba3b5bee7add4dfcb07b08d86b88b694%7Caec7daa12ef247e5ac09593d1381b4e1%7C0&sdata=kqKOmWo0pVQJD4qdDuvVCf91VzuQWxRsjs%2BiLglEaHI%3D&reserved=0) show that in Bishop’s Ward only 27% of all homes have access to a private garden (compared to 88% in England, and 75% in Lambeth as a whole) and only 21% of flats have access to private space (compared to 65% in England and 68% in Lambeth).

This shows a remarkable disparity across the borough and we would ask that the importance of this context is fully recognised in the discussion we seek with members and senior officers about the investment needs, capital and revenue, of green spaces at the northern end of the borough.

We look forward to hearing from you and to a full discussion of all these points .