

Clissold Park User Group

Statement on the welfare of animals in Clissold Park

Many park users will be aware of the regrettable deaths of three deer and the rabbits during the construction works in the park apparently caused, directly or indirectly, by repeated failure to secure the temporary enclosure from dogs and foxes. The care of the animals has been discussed at several of our meetings and the Council is well aware of our concerns about their welfare both during this period of disruption and in the future.

There is a wide range of views amongst park users as to whether or not there should be animals in the park with strong views on all sides and this has been reflected in our meetings and our correspondence with park users. The User Group has been involved in the plans for improving the environment that the animals live in since the early stages of the project. Following the most recent incidents in February we have had many conversations with the Council. In our latest correspondence with them, we reluctantly took the view that the deer should be taken off the site during the construction work and until such time as their safety and well-being could be assured. **You can read our letter to the Council at the end of this statement.** We were given verbal reassurances at our meeting on 12 March but we are still awaiting a written response.

An independent deer expert, Peter Green, has been brought in to advise the Council on the care of the deer. He wrote a report in August 2010 and a further report in February 2011 following the latest deaths. **You can access these reports from the homepage of our website.**

It is clear from his reports that there were and are important issues about the safety and welfare of the deer. However, most of his concerns have been or are being addressed. It is worth noting that he says of the plans for the new permanent enclosure: "I continue to believe that the proposed design of new deer enclosure at Clissold Park will provide a first class environment for the deer and will safeguard their welfare." Our greatest concern therefore at the moment is for the welfare of the deer during this crucial period where they are in the temporary enclosure. We hope that the new enclosure will be completed by May at the latest.

Many park users would be very sad to lose the deer and other animals in the park. They are part of a longstanding tradition going back well over a century and they provide a wonderful opportunity for all of us, especially children and young people, to come into contact with animals. When the works are complete, we will see many more opportunities for local people, especially children, to learn about the animals and their welfare through the interpretation and education work which is planned for the park. Nevertheless, it is essential if the animals are to remain in the park in the future that they are secure and well-cared for, with ongoing expert input into their care; that all staff who are responsible for them are fully and appropriately trained and that high standards are set and monitored at all times. We will continue to put pressure on the Council to do all they can to reassure us and to protect the animals in the park, now and in the future.

An independent campaigning group "Clissold Park Zoo Watch" will be holding a picket to have the animals permanently removed from the park on Saturday 19th March at 11am on the South side of the deer pen near the Church Street Gate.

March 2011

Letter to Hackney Council regarding the welfare of animals in Clissold Park

Jonathan McShane

Cc to: Jules Pipe
Kim Wright
John Wade

Tuesday 15th February 2011

Another Animal Death in Clissold Park

We were dismayed and saddened to learn that at some time on Sunday night yet another animal in the Clissold Park animal enclosure had been killed.

We no longer have confidence in the Park Management's ability to protect and care for any of the animals kept in the park and we call for their immediate relocation to suitable place of protection and safety.

After the previous death of first a deer, then of the rabbits kept in the animal enclosure, Park Management gave us various detailed assurances that the physical protection and welfare of the animals would be maintained to high standards by trained staff under the supervision of qualified animal specialists.

We understand that the precise cause of the unfortunate animal's death has not yet been established but that the fencing of the compound was breached by one or more animals and the deer was attacked.

In any case, Park Management must accept full responsibility for this and previous incidents. Irrespective of the presence of contractors undertaking building works in the park, it is entirely for them to maintain the effective oversight and care of the animals, through rigorous and watchful regimes.

The historic presence of the deer and other animals in Clissold Park is a matter of great pride and enjoyment to park users and they had hoped that with good management and training it could continue.

But the safety and welfare of the animals has to come first and Hackney Council's Park management must now act quickly to make sure that they are protected.

Ken Worpole: Chair

Caroline Millar: Vice Chair

John Hudson: Secretary

The Clissold Park User Group

Questions on the death of a deer in Clissold Park on Sunday 13th February 2011

The following questions arise from reading the council officer's briefing paper of February 15th.

1. When the ranger attending the incident on Sunday evening did she look for signs of injury to the deer, which may have been obscured if the deer was lying down? Were there signs of lameness or bleeding?
2. Is the ranger certain that the dead deer was the same one which had been worried by the dog?
3. Will the results of the Post Mortem confirm the cause of the deer's death and what or who attacked it?
4. If the gap under the fencing remained unblocked over night, could other dogs as well as foxes have got into the compound and was there any evidence that this had happened?
5. Why were the gaps in the fence not seen and blocked by rangers or contractors before this?
6. What records are there of inspections and other required actions by the rangers in the animal enclosure?
7. How often does the park manager check these records to ensure that the measures demanded following previous incursions and attacks are being carried out? What records of his checks are there?
8. How is the contractor's compliance to the various protective measures around the animal enclosures recorded and monitored?
9. What is the opinion of the vet about whether the animals may safely continue to be kept in the park?
10. What alternative safe locations might they be sent to?

John Hudson
Secretary
Clissold Park User Group

16.2.11