

***RBKC's agenda after May elections:
Grenfell community support,
and a backlog of other urgent work***

The new Borough Council to be elected on 3 May will immediately be tasked with carrying on the enormous work of supporting and rehousing victims of the Grenfell Tower tragedy last June. The new Council will have to tackle this while coping with a further massive challenge. In the immediate aftermath of the fire RBKC resources of both people and finance had to be diverted and many projects put on hold. Together with a shortage of staff and election uncertainties this has led to stagnation in several areas and a backlog of urgent work.

Last Spring the Council submitted its Local Plan for developments across the Borough to the Planning Inspectorate. This included the Warwick Road Estate development, one of the largest and most complex RBKC redevelopment and regeneration projects for decades. Consultations were in a late stage with at least the possibility of a final council decision last summer. That was ruled out very shortly after Grenfell. In August, Planning Hearings about the Local Plan were postponed. The Council then made clear that all projects involving Council estates such as Warwick Road were on hold. In October the Council modified the Local Plan in order to deal with other urgent policy areas and a much reduced Plan is currently being considered. One example is the Local Plan proposals for development of the High Street which ESSA has long argued should be regarded as our 'Town Centre' and managed to ensure its vitality.

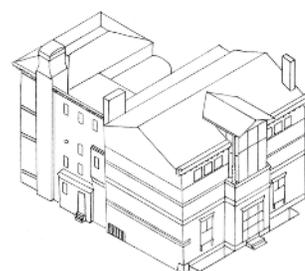
Other less urgent projects such as the appraisal of Conservation Areas have also been delayed. The ESSA conservation area was expected to be reviewed by the end of last year. ESSA had made substantial proposals for the scope and boundaries of the Conservation Area which have been submitted to the planners but which will now be the last area to be reviewed.

The Council has taken other initiatives to review its processes. The Localism Act of 2011 paves the way for all local government to review and improve access and accountability for residents and local communities. RBKC recently commissioned surveys to establish public attitudes. These surveys have been conducted over the last few months by the Centre for Public Scrutiny together with the Democratic Society. Responses were more significant and detailed than had been expected and prompted the organisers together with the Kensington

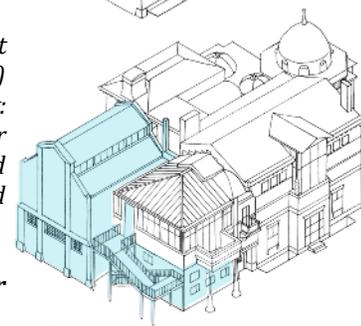
Society and including ESSA to arrange working sessions to develop a consensus response for consideration by RBKC. From the working sessions it became clear that there was considerable agreement on the lack of transparency in governance, with a failure to engage with the community in ways which allow aspirations and needs to be met.

Another development flowing from the Localism Act has been the concept of neighbourhood planning. This was seen as giving the opportunity for local communities to be more closely integrated into the decision making process.

A number of RBKC councillors are backing Neighbourhood Plans to express local concerns and needs, especially where housing provision is proposed. There are, though, considerable constraints as any neighbourhood plan has to comply with the adopted Local Plan.



Frederick Leighton the eminent Victorian artist and (top right) the house he built in 1866. Right: how it appeared post-War after Leighton's many extensions and with the 1920s Perrin Wing and in-fill (in blue).



See Page 2 for what's next for Leighton House Museum.

The CfPS and DS report on community participation has now been delivered to the Council and offers a number of tests and recommendations for greater transparency and accountability in the borough. You can see the report at:

<https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/newsroom/all-council-statements/centre-public-scrutiny-%E2%80%93-independent-review-governance>

***Plans for Leighton House will be presented by Daniel Robbins, the Museum Curator,
at the ESSA AGM at 6.30 for 6.45 pm on 15 May 2018 at Leighton House
Drinks afterwards in the Leighton House garden for our members***

Update your membership with the form on the back. New members are welcome and may join at the door.



A section through Leighton House showing the proposed extensions and new access and facilities designed by architects BDP.
Image: BDP

Leighton House: from temple to the arts to modern museum

Frederick Leighton acquired the land for his house in 1864 and, two years later, he moved in. Leighton House became the centre of a colony of eminent painters. Leighton, a much travelled collector as well as artist, was later President of the Royal Academy. The building, in Holland Park Road, is listed grade II* for its architectural and historical significance. With its eclectic contents, it is a treasure.

Significant changes are now planned, not for the first time in its history. These include building a dedicated Drawings Gallery for the display of the museum's collection of over 700 drawings by Leighton, creating dedicated suites of rooms to provide learning opportunities for all, providing a new easily accessible reception room and shop and, significantly for many of us, recovering and restoring the original house which had become overwhelmed by the later additions.

Frederick Leighton was born in December 1830 and he died in January 1896. He was knighted in 1878 and became a baronet eight years later. He was the first painter to be given a peerage in the 1896 New Year Honours, the patent being issued on 24 January in that year but sadly he died the next day of angina pectoris.

Leighton House Museum is growing, with comprehensive plans to extend the building and its facilities and broaden the range of activities that it hosts. ANTHONY WALKER looks at the history of this treasure house in Kensington.

In 1866 his house was ready for him to move in. By 1869 he had added a canvas store and loggia on the eastern side. 1877 saw the dramatic Arab Hall on the western side which is probably one of the most significant additions. Twelve years later he added the winter studio to the east which was raised on piloti to be directly accessible from the main studio. This is where we hold our ESSA AGM each year so members will have another opportunity to see it on 15 May, when the curator Daniel Robbins explain the proposals.

The Silk Room was added beside the Arab Hall in 1894 and finally, long after his death, a new wing was added in 1929 on the south side at the eastern end. This was named the Perrin Wing in recognition of the family who funded the work. Later, after the war, an infill was built under the Winter Studio.

As many will know, access and amenities have never been ideal and although there is a grand staircase to the first floor there is no lift.

These proposals will address this in providing a new lift to the Winter Gallery and thus to the first floor, new lavatories, and the new main entrance in the Perrin Wing.

The space under the Winter Studio will be restored, as will the views out from there over the garden to the north.

The existing lower ground floor will be extended to provide a new care suite for the collection and the existing lower ground floor area will be used as a space dedicated to education.

The benefit of all this will be the addition of much needed specialist spaces, service facilities, staff accommodation and substantially improved visitor facilities and access.

These works have been very carefully considered in order to ensure that they enhance both the appearance and the understanding of the historic fabric. We believe that this will constitute a substantial amenity for the local community, providing wider benefits and helping with the regeneration of this end of Kensington High Street.

Look what's coming to Holland House and the Park

Holland House, its ancillary buildings and its setting are well known to us all and highly valued. Over this winter a lot has been going on in the park, and it started the day after Opera Holland Park had cleared their site on the terrace in front of Holland House. There are several different areas of work going on. The first concerns a plan to improve the area in front of the house used by Opera Holland Park so that permanent services can be available. These will include electrical supplies, water storage for the canopy run-off, and other facilities that will reduce the time needed to put up the OHP staging and canopy. There will also be a new traffic route into the site which will lessen the separation of the Holland Park Café from its outside seating area.



A visualisation of the new café yard and vehicular access being constructed in front of Holland House with a new access ramp behind the wall on the eastern side of the house and in front of the hostel.

Image: Camlin Lonsdale

Secondly, the Stable Yard buildings have been deteriorating for some time and have had basic essential repairs. We now understand that there are aspirations to upgrade the lavatories along the southern side. The Belvedere has undergone extensive roof and masonry repairs, together with the complete replacement of the plant on the roof. This has considerably improved the appearance. The toddlers' play area has also had a makeover and there are studies in process for repairs and conservation of the historic fabric of Holland House itself. All these, with the exception of the children's play area, are within the curtilage of the grade I listed Holland House and great care has been taken to enhance and conserve the architectural and historic interest.

The Friends of Holland Park organised an interesting talk on 'Landscape in the Making' by the architect Xanthe Quayle of Camlin Lonsdale, Landscape Architects, describing the work on site. The key objectives of the work are to improve the safety of the area around the café, to reduce the impact of the Opera Canopy and buildings on the Park and the House, and to enhance the function of the café for the benefit of Park users. Planning was granted in March 2017 and the first phase, which started as soon as Opera Holland Park had cleared the site last autumn, is due for completion in March 2018. The second phase, which includes the new café terrace, is due for completion in May 2018 in time of the 2018 Opera season. Something which visitors will not be aware of however is the extent of the challenges which the design team and the contractors encountered below ground level. Although these

are hidden from sight, they are of great interest and possibly of historical significance.

The upper terrace was created in the 1850's on land through which water had permeated for many years, causing erosion of the footings and the support for some of

the perimeter walls which had subsided and developed a substantial bulge. The surface of the terrace has to support some considerable loads from the cranes used to erect the canopy for OHP but these can be restricted to limited areas. Plans showing the details of what loading would be required were

devised and the required underlying structure was developed accordingly. The surface levels were fixed by their relationship with the historic fabric; the existing drainage runs were found to be too shallow to be accommodated and therefore had to be replaced.

In the course of this work a large rectangular grill was uncovered on the western side. Investigations showed that it led to a deep brick tunnel, large enough for a person to walk through. This ran down the western side of the terrace to the lower level and then ran on as a smaller pipe across the playing fields. It is thought that this was a private sewer for the house, probably also constructed in the mid-nineteenth century. One of the supports for the canopy fixing plates passed through this void which is clearly of historic interest but this will no longer be visible. It is proposed to show these findings in an exhibition.

To overcome flooding from heavy rainfall, an attenuation tank with an 80 cubic meter capacity has been installed to collect all the rain which will subsequently be allowed to drain slowly into the soil. This will be of considerable benefit not just in the immediate area but as part of wider, more sustainable drainage provision for the site. For the materials to be used the architects went back to their original studies of surface qualities, colour palette and the patina of ageing. There is a wide use of Porphyry which is not quarried in the UK but is a very robust igneous rock containing quartz crystals and is very resistant to staining.

Anthony Walker

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NOTICE OF THE ESSA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 15 May at 6.30 for 6.45 pm at Leighton House 12 Holland Park Road

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the ESSA AGM held on 6 June 2017
2. Matters arising from the minutes
3. Chairman’s Report: Anthony Walker
4. Treasurer’s Report: Alexander Galitzine
5. Election of Trustees: All members of the Committee, *Suzy Anderson, Andrew Colville, Alex Fairbairn, Alexander Galitzine, Vanessa Gordon, Maha Jacob, Barry Munday, Lloyd North, Alan Huw Smith, Jacqui Tucker, and Anthony Walker*, are presenting themselves for re-election. Any proposals for additional Trustees should be sent in writing to the Chairman with the names of proposers and seconders prior to the meeting.
6. Any Other Business

GUEST SPEAKER

Daniel Robbins, RBKC Senior Curator, Museums

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Signed Date