

KENWOOD CONCERTS

Roy Fletcher reports:

As a follow-up to the consultative meeting reported on by Signwriter in the last Buzz, English Heritage arranged a public meeting in May.

Several of those present described how much they enjoyed these concerts, urging that a way be found to resume them from 2008; others insisted that this should not be done at the expense of residents exposed to noise intrusion, reminding the meeting that this issue was resolved by the licence granted to EH by Camden in 2006, and subsequently confirmed by the Court.

IMG (who run the concerts for EH) stated again that the latter did not provide a viable framework for their operation at Kenwood, causing them to abandon the 2007 season. They claim costs are 25% higher than their other London venues. No information on costs has been offered to support this.

They said that if the existing concert location were retained, it would be necessary to continue to use the floating stage (which would however be moved out of sight between events) and increase the number of concerts from 8 to 10. The maximum permitted attendance would need to rise from 8,000 to 10,000. This is of course the proposal which was, rightly, refused by Camden and the Court in 2006 and there is no reason to believe that it would be accepted now.

Alternatively, and IMG's preference, the concerts could take place in the 'Pasture Ground' on a stage erected in front of Wood Pond, with the audience on the slope leading up to the Henry Moore statue. In this case no increase in concert numbers would be requested, and the season would be compressed into 7½ weeks, although the stage would remain in situ for the whole of that time. The audience ceiling would need to be raised as mentioned above, but IMG would undertake to arrange more public transport to ease traffic/parking problems. Preliminary study has indicated that sound levels at most neighbouring properties would be somewhat reduced, but this is by no means assured and IMG has not indicated that they would propose a lower noise limit.

All concerned wish to find a basis which will provide a stable future for concerts, while respecting the interests of visitors to Kenwood and residents in the neighbourhood. Further consultation will take place in conjunction with Camden before IMG submit an application for a revised licence.

Although the proposed new concert location has some advantages, the Society will wish to assess the impact of the stage and related equipment on the landscape. Data to assist in this should be available shortly.

One factor which does not seem to be considered is the nature of the concerts: English Heritage seems wedded to having highly amplified, mass audience events. It may be that the only solution to the problem will be to change this position.

IMG's proposals are displayed at Mansion Cottage at Kenwood) and on EH's website (www.english-heritage.org.uk)