

THE VICTORIA PARK PROJECT

Newsletter – February 2012



UPDATE

The contractors have been on site in Victoria Park for approximately 12 months. The overarching project is made up of many different pieces of work, and progression of these different areas has varied.

Many of the site fences that were erected at the start of the project have been removed, because vehicle movements have decreased.

Most of the works will be complete by the end of February, although some works (such as planting and seeding) will follow on and the intricate work of restoring the Burdett-Coutts Fountain will also continue beyond February.

Both the main Hub building and the Victoria and Alexandra shelter are nearing completion, and will be great for local community use.

The Hub sits in the middle of East Park and adjacent to the restored pools playground area and wheel park. The combination of these features will bring a new focus to this area of the park.

New benches and bins have been installed all around the park.

PROJECT PROGRESS

Lakes, Bridges and Features

The main works to both lakes is complete and the water levels are slowly rising again. The water in the future will come from a natural source supplied from underground bore holes instead of metered water and will automatically maintain the correct level. The East Lake has been extended and a new island has been created, providing a new wildlife habitat and a refuge for fish. On the East Lake new platforms have been created and some existing ones will be adapted to make them more accessible to all. A new pond dipping platform will also be available to use.

The new Rustic Bridge is almost complete, however, the final infill panels to the balustrade are still outstanding.



Pennethorne's Chinese Bridge is well underway; the next stages of cladding the steelwork with decorative timber work will take several weeks to complete. The restored cascade has now been completed and is presently waiting for the power to be installed. Once in operation, it will provide a flow of water throughout the West Lake, improving oxygen levels in the water, and making the lake healthier. The Pagoda is now clearly visible, standing proudly on the island with its new ornate zinc roof and eight decorative Chinese dragons. Cladding the structure with ornate timber is now underway, but will take some time to complete.

The Rustic Shelter will enjoy an extensive restoration programme, including new seating, timber structure, roof and tiled floor.



Playgrounds

The Victoria and Alexandra play area is open and being well used. It is three times bigger than the original play area. Some areas are currently fenced off and will be seeded in the spring. All of the new water play features have been installed, tested and will be turned on once the warmer weather arrives. The new play area features provide a more creative type of play and incorporate a new planting scheme and mounding to informally enclose the area.



The Pools Playground in the East Park is well underway. Most of the underground works including the installation of water tanks and pipe works for the new water play features are complete. The play sand has been delivered for many of the new play areas and the footpath layout has now been started.

The new dynamic wheel park is complete and will be officially opened in February. It has a history of being well used by locals, but when word got around that this was the only wheel park in London with a full cradle, skaters travelled from far and wide to visit this state of the art attraction.

Burdett-Coutts Fountain

The Burdett-Coutts Fountain is part way through its restoration. The roof and guttering have been fully restored making the building weather tight. Much of the heavily weathered stone has been cut back and new carved features installed. Missing marble features have been added to the cherubs. The four new reflective pools have been constructed and lined with granite. When complete, York Stone cladding will be added to

the tops and sides of the walls. This will match the new York Stone paving that surrounds the fountain.

Old English Garden

The area that used to be the old deer park has now been landscaped and will link to the Old English Garden with new footpaths. The garden itself has had much of the original stone relaid and, where the garden has been extended, new crazy paved York Stone is being used. The Old English Garden was almost completely cleared of planting at the beginning of the project. The existing planting had become very overgrown and lost much of its original glory. The new planting will be more herbaceous in nature with many more flowers, so although it will look a little stark in the beginning it will quickly develop into a floral ornamental area.

Entrances

All of the entrance gates have now been repaired and repainted, old barriers have been removed and new paving added allowing easier access. St Mark's public car park entrance has been fitted with new columns and at Grove Road two new sets of gates provide a safer crossing point from the East side to the West side of the park. A public consultation exercise was carried out to name these gates and the people's choice was Jubilee Gates.

The Bonner Bridge, which crosses the Regent's Canal by Bonner Gate, is fully restored to its former glory. Many of the balustrades are completely new and were cast from the original panels. All the granite coping stones were removed and reset with new secure fixings once all the brickwork had been repaired.

To view the Victoria Park Masterplan and to find out more about the regeneration project visit www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/park





This really is a fantastic opportunity to increase your knowledge of the park's wildlife, enjoy the company of other bird enthusiasts as well as people with a passing interest. David Lambert said "The barmy bird walks have been a massive success. Last summer's walks displayed the huge diversity of breeding species in the park. Autumn displayed the impressive bird migrations that stream through our capital with flocks of Swallows over head. The winter and spring look very promising".

Community cheer the New Year's here!

As the winter is now upon us there are still many exciting activities to get involved with for all the family. The Community Park Ranger led Healthy Walks offer a fantastic opportunity to get out into the fresh air, meet new people and shed those festive pounds. The walks meet every Wednesday at the Pavilion Café, departing at 1.00pm.

There are also new 'Don't Be a Stranger Meet a Ranger' monthly walks which provide opportunities to see the recent improvements to the park, meet park staff, and ask questions about the benefits that the investment project will have for future generations.

The walks are on the first Wednesday of every month at 1.00pm, meeting at the Green Flag mast, Crown Gate on the West side of the park.

January saw the first session of our Bird Barmy Army club run by ornithologist David Lambert. The ever increasing popularity of this event is in no small part down to the expertise and enthusiasm David demonstrates towards our feathered friends living in Victoria Park.

Forty five species of bird have been recorded so far, including rare birds such as Spotted Flycatchers. Come along and enjoy the bird life or learn a song or two.

Our creative users are being given the opportunity to make cards and gifts for their loved ones Valentine's Day – 14 February 2012. Look out for more details in the local papers and in our parks notice boards.

The Bird Box Making Event on Saturday 17 March brings our winter programme to an end. This annual event was enjoyed by all of those who attended last year and has proved a great success for families wishing to gain quality family time together whilst building and decorating bird boxes to brighten up the park or for use in their garden at home. As with many of our events, this is guaranteed to be fun for all the family.

The whole Victoria Park Team would like to take this opportunity to thank the community for their continued support at all our events. If it wasn't for the great spirit shown by all our visitors, our events wouldn't be as enjoyable or successful as they are. We look forward to seeing you all throughout our winter/spring programme.

Vicky voted best park in London



Victoria Park competed against all of the UK's 1,290 Green Flag open spaces and was voted by the community the capital's favourite park in this year's prestigious People's Choice Award (September 21st).

Despite being only part way through a multi-million pound restoration project, which will see the park returned to its 1840s splendour, Victoria Park came top in London and eighth in the country in the annual poll.

David Hime (Community Development Officer) said "we benefit massively from strong community support in the Borough of Tower Hamlets as demonstrated by us being voted London's Best Park in the recent Green Flag People's Choice awards. The support from the community as a whole during this project has been marvellous".

Victoria Park Friends Group (VPFG)

The park has seen some great Friends Group activities over recent months. Our Peek at The Park saw the Park Rangers lead tours around the park, whilst The Bethnal Green Big Band did a fantastic job in entertaining us.

Our public meetings were well attended and allowed Friends Group supporters, residents and park users to voice opinions on the park development, the Olympic Live Site and other summer events in the park.

Going forward, the Group is hosting a reception in the new Hub building to thank the key workers from the Victoria Park Project for their work and to celebrate the achievement of completing the project.

The VPFG Gardening Club is a new project to actively work on gardening projects in the park, people interested can contact gardening@victoriaparkfriendsgroup.co.uk

The Group has nearly 200 people on its Facebook page www.facebook.com/groups/312918256358/

We look forward to the park reopening event and hope all its users will join us in celebrating this great space for the people of east London.

We would welcome you joining the 500 people already on our mailing list:
richarddesmond@victoriaparkfriendsgroup.co.uk

People interested in volunteering at in the park are now able to sign up by completing an online registration form at:
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/victoriapark



NEED MORE INFORMATION?

More information is posted on park noticeboards, inside the Pavilion Café, Ranger Stations, in Idea Stores and libraries across the borough and on the council website.
www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/victoriapark or email the Victoria Park – Parks Development Officer (Community) david.hime@towerhamlets.gov.uk

This document can be made available in translated formats if required.

