

# ***Report to the Council***

**Date: 17 February 2015**

**Joint Arrangements and External Organisations: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority**

**Council Representatives: Councillor Sartin and Councillor Stavrou**

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At this point in time the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority is going through considerable change for the first time since its inception in 1967. As an Authority it was very much part of the Olympic legacy dream. As councillors will be aware, the White Water Centre was built on LVRP land near Waltham Abbey and was the only venue completed and brought into use ahead of the Olympic Games. Following its use during the Olympics it was the first venue handed back to the Authority to be run as a water sports centre.

Since 2012 the Velodrome site and the Hockey and Tennis Centre which were built on land at the southern end of the Park have now been handed over to the Authority to be run as public access venues. With these venues coming under the control of the Authority came large Business Rate bills. These would have been a huge burden on the Authority and brought into question its viability to continue in its original form.

Various ways of overcoming this problem were investigated but the best way forward was seen to be the setting up of a trust to run the sporting and other leisure venues. This will mean that reduced Business rates will be payable for each of the venues which are placed within the trust and will enable them to be run on a sound financial footing.

The Trust was established on 1 October 2014 and will come into full operation on 1 April 2015. The venues coming under the trust's umbrella will include the White Water Centre, the Velopark, the Hockey and Tennis Centre at Eton Manor, the Athletics Centre at Picketts Lock, campsites at Sewardstone and Dobbs Weir, the Riding Centre and Ice Rink in Lea Bridge Road, three marinas and Hayes Hill Farm.

Adverts were placed for trustees and following interviews Del Goddard, a former leader of Enfield Borough Council, was appointed Chairman of the trust alongside seven other trustee appointees. A corporate director of the LVRPA, has been appointed Managing Director and other staff will be TUPEed across from the Authority to the Trust.

The LVRPA will continue to be responsible for all parklands and open spaces. Within these areas are many miles of country walks and habitats for a wide variety of animals and birdlife which are maintained by the Authority. Within the Epping Forest District sits the Gunpowder Park which has been opened up to provide a large area for walkers and cyclists to enjoy. There are also 25 venues for angling and coarse fishing, twelve of which are directly managed by the Authority's fishing team with the rest being run by local clubs. Similarly, several sailing clubs operate on waters within the Park.

Cllr Jon Whitehouse at the last Council meeting raised the question of the Judicial Review triggered by the decision of EFDC to grant planning permission for the extension of glasshouses within the LVRP. The Authority very rarely makes use of these powers but has within the statutes of the Act under which it was set up the ability to do so if it decides that decisions made by a Local authority are in conflict with the remit of 1966 Act. On this occasion the decision was taken to proceed with a request for a Judicial Review which the

High Court has agreed can go forward. To suggest that this puts the Council and the Park Authority at loggerheads is perhaps unfortunate as both are carrying out their legislative role in the way that they both see is correct at the time of decisions being made.