

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes following which one Member of the Council, nominated by the Mayor, may speak in response. It shall then be moved by the Mayor and voted on without discussion that the deputation be thanked for attending and its subject matter noted.

Notification of one Deputation has been received. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

**(a) Deputation concerning The Level
Mr Adrian Morris (Spokesperson)**

The Level is in the Valley Gardens Conservation Area. The northern section is an iconic community resource that must be preserved from development, as a place for congregating, recreation, holding community events, festivals and fairs.

This northern part is the only remaining open green space as laid out from 1791 as a formal ground and later gifted to the townspeople of Brighton in 1822. In the southern section, there are a few remaining features from Bertie Maclaren's 1927 design of the children's playground. At that time the railings were removed as part of Maclaren's "valley vistas" scheme and the northern section remains free to this day of any obstruction.

Whereas the southern section is an area for designated activities, the north, separated by the hedging and planting of the Rose Walk, is a free space for a wide variety of users. It's an open space that is unimpeded by buildings, which will be lost if this awkward chunk is taken out of it for the skate park. It's a green space for many who see it as their back garden and where there's opportunity for peace and relaxation in a busy and highly polluted area.

The engagement of relevant community groups is listed as one of the five Heritage Lottery Fund requirements when submitting a bid. The two groups named by the council in their bid are Friends of The Level and The Triangle Community Group and we both fully support the other aspects of the bid. Full consultation with these groups is essential to the success of the HLF bid, together with an ongoing contribution to ensure that The Level is a popular and well-maintained open space in the very heart of the City.

But we have been devalued and dismissed constantly. Getting hold of information from the council officers has been more difficult than juggling with jelly. In August last year we were incorrectly told that the final bid had to be submitted by end of February 2011, otherwise the money would be lost. Constantly we were fobbed off with "that matter will be dealt with at a later stage". Questions such as the needs of dog walkers, lighting of the skate park, health and safety, fencing were never answered or addressed. And they are still being fudged. In a draft report, which we saw only fifteen days ago, the plan of

the skate park shows no lighting, five pages on it's briefly mentioned in the text and four pages later there's a photograph of the type of lighting to be used. The Health and Safety report just released, after months of us asking endless questions, has more fudging, with misleading out-of-scale illustrations.

We are all merely custodians of our heritage to pass on to future generations. But you, as councillors, carry the even further burden of being the protectors of our heritage too. We don't want to see any more of the disastrous past planning decisions that have scarred our City. And this needs to be looked at as a planning issue – remember The Level is in a conservation area.

No amount of planting and trees will plaster over this gaping wound on an old friend. The skate park will not be able to hide, as if in shame, behind the proposed raised banks that are to be added to its perimeter. Yes raised banks in the middle of an open green space that is called The Level.

We totally oppose any building on the northern end of The Level and believe that this will set a dangerous precedent. It could be said that it's a brave Green councillor who will authorise this concreting over of part of an open green space. But it would be more courageous for all parties to join together and reject this lamentable proposal before it's too late.

Councillor West, Cabinet Member for Environment & Sustainability, will respond.