

News in brief

Staccato reports from the cultural typeface

Edition number 45; dateline 3 December 2010

Ten minutes activism for the arts

Labour MP for Wirral South, Alison McGovern, has introduced a bill under the 10-minute rule proposing that local authorities be obliged to provide a cultural service, just as they are required to provide libraries. McGovern – who formerly worked for the charity the Art Fund and was a trustee of the South London Gallery while a local councillor in Camberwell – said her concern was that “not just cuts but total withdrawal of funding for cultural services” was very much on the cards. She cited Somerset and Bedfordshire councils who have respectively cut arts grants and their music service, and argues that culture should be kept available to all, not just the moneyed and the middle class. Her bill was unanimously accepted and will receive a second reading on 17 June, before being thrown out.

Three Ps for Olympic legacy: paltry, parochial and pointless

In a flurry of forced enthusiasm the “Olympic and Paralympic stakeholders” finally launched their plans for a “mass participation legacy” from 2012. It falls to Sport England to ensure that Seb Coe is not proved a liar, as he himself said at the glittering launch event: “When we bid for the Games in Singapore in 2005 we said we would use the power of the Games to inspire young people to take up sport.” Having lodged the responsibility firmly with Jennie Price’s agency, and pointedly ignored the rest of the UK, sports minister Hugh Robertson will doubtless have been impressed by the catchy labelling of the programme, “Places People Play”, and the impressive numbers being bandied: 1,000 buildings refurbished, 40,000 sport leaders recruited and “a nationwide campaign that will capture the excitement of sport, providing opportunities for teenagers and young adults to receive six weeks of coaching in the sport of their choice and guiding them into regular participation within their community”. This in a nation of 60 million souls with the greatest sports show on earth available as a catalyst. Cue tumbleweed.

Sport for AIDS’ sake

Staff from the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia have recently created a social campaign group called S’porting Lives and immediately taken it on tour with football matches arranged against the staff associations of both Oxbridge universities, a parliamentary team and the Trades Union Congress. The tour was intended to raise awareness of World Aids Day on 1 December and focused on eradicating the stigma for people living with HIV/AIDS and playing sports.

Literary accolades in Cottonopolis

The Portico Prize for Literature celebrated its 25th anniversary with an awards dinner at Manchester Town Hall with broadcaster and writer Stuart Maconie offering his post-prandial thoughts for the edification of the 250-strong audience. Winner of the non-fiction prize was Madeleine Bunting for *The Plot - A Biography of an English Acre*, while Sarah Hall

WOMEN IN COACHING IN SCOTLAND: The first year report on SportScotland’s Women in Coaching programme shows that the pilot is “achieving to some extent” with 20% of the original cohort of coaches dropping out and structural problems hindering the efficacy of the intervention. While coaches valued the support of mentors, a “lack of accountability” for those mentors led to “relationship breakdown” and loss of mentors altogether. Key to the challenge for the scheme managers will be squaring the needs of the coaches and the needs of the scheme as coaches’ individualised plans “allow for personal targets and therefore do not enable the programme to agree on one single definition of success”. Whether any of this is gender-specific remains moot.

took the fiction prize for *How to Paint a Dead Man*. For the first time the Portico also ran a competition for young writers in which contributor to *The Leisure Review* Helen Owen picked up a “commended” in the prose section and won the poetry prize for her poem *The Globe* which judge Mandy Coe described as “demanding to win”.

Fields for a queen

SITA Trust and Fields in Trust have launched the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge to mark the Queen’s diamond jubilee in 2012 and to protect outdoor recreational spaces in communities all across the country as a permanent living legacy of this milestone. Once an area has been designated a Queen Elizabeth II Field an application can be made to SITA Trust’s £1 million fund for improvements. There are two strands to the scheme: the QEII Fields Volunteer Support Fund will award up to a maximum of £5,000 for projects where it can be demonstrated that volunteers will be extensively involved in the delivery of a project and the QEII Major Works Fund will award up to a maximum of £25,000 for projects that also focus on delivery by volunteers, but will allow major works to be carried out by contractors.

Dire warning on primary swim skills

The Royal Life Saving Society Australia are warning that as many as one in five children will leave primary school this year unable to swim even one length of an Olympic pool. Chief executive Rob Bradley calls the issue a “ticking time bomb” and warns: “One of the emerging issues is that some schools find the costs of providing swimming lessons too expensive and complex, pool entry, bus fares all place pressure on schools and parents. The growth in private swimming centres and their reach to children prior to school is a fantastic thing, but it often means schools and parents assume this vital education happens elsewhere, and there there’s been a real drop off in children learning water safety and lifesaving skills. This has to be turned around before large sections of our community miss out on the skills that we all remember from our school days, swimming in clothes, diving for bricks, and learning the swimming survival strokes.”

Bude Pool under threat

As *The Leisure Review* went to press a full meeting of Cornwall Council was considering the fate of Bude Sea Pool a part natural, part man-made feature of Summerleaze beach which costs the council some £30,000 per annum to run. The proposition that the pool should be closed is being fought through a variety of channels including a Facebook page on which a number of contributors have made the point that the council are quite happy to blame the Labour party and spend millions of pounds moving the reception area in its one Truro base.

The Leisure Review, December/January 2010/11

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