



Mr-Jaxed.

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

Prime Minister

Mr Jenkin advises that it is not possible for MDC to take over the Festival site immediately without putting themselves in the wrong vis à vis the City Council. MDC and Mr Jenkin propose an announcement indicating a readiness for MDC to take over if Liverpool Council do not take up the existing agreement.

Agree, subject to Mr Jenkin and Mr Rees reaching an understanding on how the £2 million will be found?

Yes not

AT
11/10



PRIME MINISTER

FUTURE OF THE LIVERPOOL GARDEN FESTIVAL SITE

1. During your visit to the Garden Festival in Liverpool last week, you voiced concern (which I share) about the uncertain future of the site. There are two issues; how many of the formal gardens might be retained, and who should manage the whole site in future.

2. The Merseyside Development Corporation (MDC) in November 1982 published their plans, after widespread consultation, on the use of the site after the Festival itself ends this Sunday. These provide for the development of about half the site for housing and high quality industry, and the retention of the Festival Hall, the Arena and some 45 acres of parkland and gardens as permanent public open space. A legal agreement was signed with the then Liberal-run Liverpool City Council in December 1982, whereby the City Council would take over the retained parkland areas in January 1985 and convert the Festival Hall for sports use.

3. As you know, the outstanding success of the Festival has led to considerable pressure from Liverpoolians and visitors for the whole site to be retained intact. This is not possible, for a range of legal and practical reasons. The 45-acre parkland is, of course, secure. The only issue there is who should manage it (see paras 4 - 6 below). On the other issue, I discussed with Sir Leslie Young in July how far it might also be possible to retain many of the best gardens, national and international. We agreed that the first priority was to go ahead with planned development where a clear demand existed. It now appears that it will be possible, while meeting the immediate demand for housing sites, to retain most of the best gardens for next summer at least. With my encouragement, MDC have explored this possibility with the sponsors of those gardens, and I am pleased to say that they are



now ready to announce that, in addition to the 45 of acres parkland, large parts of the rest of the site will be open next year. I should add that this course of action is bound to involve MDC in up to £2m extra cost which, without extra resources, would mean cutting back on other high priority projects such as the Albert Dock development. I have a bid in for a small addition to the resources for the Urban Development Corporations next year and if this is accepted, MDC's proposal could be accommodated.

4. The other area of uncertainty has been caused by the attitude of the present administration of the Liverpool City Council. We have been trying for some time to find out whether they will honour their December 1982 agreement with the MDC. It became clear early last month that the Council intend to use the Garden Festival as a political bargaining counter; they say that if I meet in full the wildly unrealistic bids they have made for Rate Support Grant and capital allocations for 1985/86, then they will honour their agreement on the Garden Festival site, but that if I do not, their other and higher priorities would prevent them from taking on the Festival site. The City Council openly admit the difficulties which this stance is causing for MDC's efforts to plan the future of this part of the site, but have stated quite blatantly that they are not prepared to co-operate in any way to relieve those difficulties (having met the Council's leaders you will recognise their style!).

5. Faced with this attitude, I have considered carefully, with MDC, the options that are available. We would have dearly liked to end the uncertainty forthwith by removing the City Council from any involvement with the Festival site, but MDC advise me that they could not defend in court abrogating the legal agreement unilaterally, as the City Council have not yet defaulted on their obligations under it. Such action would also enable the City Council to claim that they



3

were being prevented from managing the site "on behalf of the people of Liverpool" (a phrase they are constantly parading). The only other way in which we could resolve the uncertainty now would be for me to accede to the City Council's budgetary demands; but these are clearly unacceptable. I therefore concluded that the best that could be done was to limit the damage being caused by the City Council, by setting a deadline at the end of December for them to decide whether or not they intend to honour their agreement with MDC. By that time the Council should know the 1985/86 RSG settlement and the bulk of their capital allocations, and will no longer be able to use that excuse to defer a decision on the Festival. Perhaps more importantly, that is also the time when the Council are due to take on their obligations, and MDC would therefore have a much stronger legal case if the Council continued to refuse to make a decision. I therefore issued a statement setting the end-December deadline when I visited Liverpool on 6 September (attached at A).

6. Liverpool City Council leaders publicly interpreted my statement as meaning that I was not going to meet their financial demands (which is of course quite correct). I think, and MDC agree, that this paves the way for MDC now to make a statement about what they would intend to do if the City Council withdrew from the agreement, while avoiding the impression of anticipating such a decision. As is already widely known the whole site has to be closed over the winter to enable some essential dismantling and conversion work to be carried out. Once this is completed, MDC would intend to open to the public the part of the site which the City Council were to take over, while at the same time marketing it for operation by a private sector firm, as a leisure and recreational facility for the longer term. This seems to me a very acceptable approach.

/ 7. I attach at B a draft of the statement which MDC intend to make,



covering both their intention to retain and open to the public next summer some of the gardens in areas scheduled for eventual development, and their intention to open to the public the permanent parkland areas if the City Council fail to honour their agreement. This statement will go a long way to reassure the people of Liverpool that they will continue to be able to enjoy the gardens that they have so taken to their hearts this year. That, I am certain, is the most important assurance that needs to be given if the respect of local people for this site, and the hope it has given them, is to be retained. It would be highly desirable for this statement to coincide with the closing of the Festival (The last day being Sunday, 14 October).

/ 8. I am copying this to Peter Rees and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Atk Davis

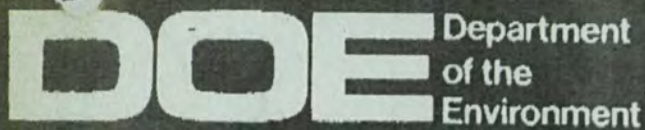
for

P J

11 October 1984

Approved by the SAS and
signed in his absence

A



Press Notice

FAX Pg 1 of 2
Parliamentary

[Handwritten mark]

EMBARGOED: NOT FOR USE BEFORE 1115 HOURS, THURSDAY 6 SEPTEMBER

NW 188/84

6 September 1984

FUTURE OF THE LIVERPOOL INTERNATIONAL GARDEN FESTIVAL SITE

Speaking in Liverpool today, Secretary of State for the Environment Patrick Jenkin made a statement on the future of the Garden Festival site. He said:-

"The Garden Festival has been a great success. Already there have been 2.8 million visitors, and it is clear that the final total will top 3 million. The Festival has captured the hearts of visitors, and particularly of local people, and I can understand why many people wish to see the Festival retained. But the plan has always been that the Festival should be for this one summer only; many of the gardens and exhibits, both British and international, must be returned to their owners; and MDC have entered into commitments for the future development of the site in accordance with the Riverside Development Programme which they published in November 1982 after extensive consultations.

It has always been the intention to retain a substantial part of the site for the public to enjoy, including the Promenade, the Britannia Inn, the Festival Hall, the Arena and some 45 acres of parkland and fine gardens at the southern end of the site. MDC have an agreement with Liverpool City Council for the Council to assume responsibility for much of this area on 1 January 1985. However, the City Council are understandably concerned that they might not be able to afford the expenditure required, in view of the other priorities which they have for spending in the city. In discussions with my officials this week the Council have made it clear that they could not take a decision on the Festival site until after they know their capital allocations and revenue targets for 1985/86.

This continuing uncertainty about the City Council's intentions is making it very difficult for MDC to make proper plans for the future of the site. However, MDC do not intend to take any precipitate action just yet. MDC will continue to make all the necessary preparations to ensure that it will be possible to open this part of the site to the public next year. However, if the City Council do not reach a firm decision to commit the necessary resources to the Festival site by the end of the year, when they are due to assume responsibility, MDC will clearly have to reconsider their position.

more.....

MDC are also considering whether it would be possible to retain and open to the public, for next summer at least, some of the gardens in the parts of the site which are scheduled for development, but which are not immediately required for this purpose.

Press Enquiries:

Eileen Jones or Philip Aylett
Regional Information Officer
Central Office of Information
Sunley Building
Piccadilly Plaza
Manchester M1 4BD
Tel: 061-832 9111 ext 358 or 365

ISSUED BY THE CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION

B



PRESS RELEASE BY MDC

LIVERPOOL INTERNATIONAL GARDEN FESTIVAL: PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

There is obviously a good deal of current speculation about the future of the site of the International Garden Festival and it is now considered appropriate to set out the Development Corporation's position.

The Festival is acknowledged as a success in terms of the enjoyment it has given to over three million visitors and the boost it has provided to the image and tourism potential of Liverpool and Merseyside. We will do everything within our power to ensure that the momentum thus gained is not lost.

It may help to summarise the background to the Festival:

Our development proposals, published in 1981, identified the Riverside site - after reclamation - to be used partly for permanent leisure and recreation and partly for housing and industry.

The Festival was superimposed upon this reclamation as an ideal way of upgrading the reclamation itself and providing wide-ranging short and long term benefits for Merseyside. Much of the Festival was designed for temporary use with specific features such as the Festival Hall designed and constructed on the basis of agreements we had reached on their permanent use.

Commitments were given by the Development Corporation on the long term provision of, for example, road access to the Britannia Inn and the Homes and Gardens area, amongst others.



An agreement was signed in 1982 with Liverpool City Council under which the Council will take over responsibility for maintaining and operating the Festival Hall, the Arena, the Arena Theatre and about 45 acres of parkland at the southern end of the site. This includes the lake and some International Gardens, amongst them those of China, India and Japan, since generously donated by these countries to the people of Liverpool.

The Development Corporation has received no notification that the City Council does not intend to honour this agreement, but in view of the Council's well known financial priorities, it would be unrealistic to assume that there was no uncertainty.

Therefore, as far as the area covered by this agreement is concerned, in case the City Council finds itself unable to implement its agreement with us, we are now making our own contingency plans to open up the area, including the parkland and facilities, to the public next year.

Shortly after the close of the Festival, work will begin to fulfill our commitment to provide road access to both 'ends' of the site. The community theme gardens will be dismantled and the sponsors of many of the international gardens will remove their structures and plant material.

The area of domestic theme gardens is not, however, required for immediate redevelopment and will be retained as far as possible in their present form to be enjoyed by the public next year. This 'bonus' obviously depends upon the willingness of the individual sponsors to retain their gardens, but the initial response is extremely encouraging.

We appreciate and understand Liverpool City Council's position, but it cannot be stressed too strongly that the present uncertainty must be resolved without further delay. In the meantime the area must be



maintained and secured so as to continue to be available for the future leisure and recreational enjoyment of the people of Merseyside. As is already widely known the site will have to be closed to the public this winter, apart from access to the public house and river walkway.

One way or another, many of these superb facilities, which have been enjoyed by millions of people this summer, WILL be open to the public next year.

LEXC ABO *

CHJOLAC P STITHON OC DECTO L JU S LUGA' BICP G COBE TO LUG DE TRO
OU WPA OI BU LUG * LENA OI TBAE OBOE P DECTATTEB' AUTON LGA' PBO

CO CUE OTUR'

MEISEA LUG' S TO STI SDA MCO JA PNOV LUG BIC P TY LSAE A

MEATTE JA OOLE BU LUG LUG OTTI OJLOAN DE BU TU TATOTE E

LUTNI TREG NE OOC LO S BU LO OJ LUG TO DO WART BOTE OI C

11 OCT 1984

