

# CORAM'S FIELDS - MARQUEE RENTAL

ISSUES IN RELATION TO CORPORATE MARQUEE RENTAL - December 2017

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## Introduction

This CFUG Position Paper discusses the impact on Children and Users of the annual rental to a Corporate Marquee at Coram's Fields.

The Paper will comment on the overall impact from the User perspective.

The Paper will provide Conclusions and Recommendations.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Corporate Marquee

Coram's Fields rents its central and western park sections to a "Corporate Marquee" (The Marquee) - annually, over the Christmas Period.

The Marquee provides Christmas entertainment and parties for small to medium sized companies. It is set up in early November and removed days before Christmas.

The first Marquee rental contract ended in 2016. To the best of our knowledge, this contract has been extended by another three years then. CFUG and the community at large were not privy to the exact detail of the contractual arrangement.

It is noticeable, however, that the Marquee has significantly expanded in 2016 and 2017, with over two thirds of the park area occupied by the Marquee. It now covers the entire western tarmac, the western lawn, central park zone, including the paddling pool and the memorial building and their surroundings - ending at the very edge of the Eastern Lawn.

### Key issues and concerns

The key issues below have been discussed with Coram's Fields representatives over the preceding periods.

The community has raised these issues also at times through local press and with local elected representatives / councillors.

**The key issues** can be categories as follows:

- **Impact on the users over the Winter season period**
- **Diesel Generators - Health and Safety**
- **Structural damage to Coram's Fields**
- **Contractual issues/failures**

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## ANALYSIS OF KEY ISSUES

### 1. IMPACT ON USERS

*Impact: HIGH*

The winter season is a key holiday period for all children and families. Coram's Fields is a well known park, advertised as a worthy visitor attraction. Visitors and tourists with children take time to stop by when visiting central London for a visit to Coram's Fields.

However, visiting Coram's in the winter season period can be deeply disappointing. The reasons are many, and we will attempt to list them here:

- The marquee is very unsightly and takes up a vast amount of space;
- Children are prevented from peacefully roaming the park;
- Many paths are barricaded in a haphazard fashion;
- The path towards the animals is fully blockaded (no access to animals);
- No access to adult toilets (and no signs directing to alternative toilets);
- Early closing times (potentially to accommodate the Marquee operation).
- The marquee is a source of continuous noise and carbon fuel emission;
- The spaces around the marquee / behind the fence are used as a parking lot;
- Over the periods of set-up and dismantling (several days each) the park is full of large, noisy and dirty machinery.

Thus, for the majority of visitors, Coram's Fields at visiting the park is a major let down. CFUG have spoken to a number of visitors during the November and December 2017. Many were severely disappointed, some simply deciding to walk straight in and out of the park.

Furthermore:

- Coram's Fields holds no winter season related activities or winter season themed features that could be attractive to children.
- The opening times are needlessly restrictive, earlier than advertised, restricting access to sports pitches and for parents arriving after school.

Overall, there is a strong impressions of sole focus on the Marquee at Coram's, with the actual park life and winter season experience for children being of tertiary relevance.

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## 2. STRUCTURAL DAMAGE

*Impact: SIGNIFICANT*

The Marquee is a major structure, consisting of several gigantic “mobile buildings”. The Marquee is constructed over several days. This process involves dozens of large pieces of machinery, trucks and men. The constructs then remain in place for several weeks.

Over the entire period, a continuous flow of supply trucks, delivery vans, cars, diesel fuel tankers are moving in and out of Coram’s. Certain areas are used for permanent parking of cars and vans (including in front of the childrens nursery). Equipment includes at least two Diesel generators with 2900 litres capacity each.

This heavy duty and intensive operation is causing damage to Coram’s Fields. These are the particular areas we witnessed and documented (evidence collected on 23.12.17):

### 1. **Damage to concrete:**

- 1.1. A number of new holes or expanded pre-existing holes in the area in between the Memorial house and the Flying Fox. Pieces of concrete lie about around freshly created holes.
- 1.2. Over ***20 freshly bored deep holes (1.5 inch wide)***, in tarmac. The holes appear to have been bored to support the Marquee structures. This major direct damage will cause significant further damage over longer term. It was an unpleasant surprise to discover evidence of such direct destruction.

It seems necessary Fields to carry out an *Impact Assessment* of the possible long term structural effects on the tarmac and sensitive surrounding buildings.

### 2. **Grass area:**

The lawn area becomes a sight of devastation - a clean sweep of uncovered earth each year:

- 2.1. The western “lawn area” remains behind fence and off limits for children use due to mud/poor grass, for many months up until early May.
- 2.2. Over the last few years we have witnessed no serious attempt to reseed the lawn in any competent way. Consequently, what appears instead is a patchwork medley of unrelated greenery and weed, not usable in any normal sense (for ball games or for picnics). The last returfing of the lawn (est: 5 years ago), was excellent, but this practice was clearly abandoned.

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### **3. DIESEL GENERATORS - HEALTH AND SAFETY** *Negative impact: SIGNIFICANT*

The Marquee is powered by at least two large Diesel generators (5800 litres).

The generator units operate throughout the day. They are hidden by decorative fencing, but are placed in the far right corner of the Marquee area - immediately next to the Flying fox, Basketball court, the Football pitches, and the Eastern lawn.

We are informed that Coram's Fields does not monitor the fumes, and no Health and Safety assessments have been conducted now or in the past. Camden Council does not conduct any Health and Safety checks in Coram's Fields. The issue has been raised, however, with the Camden Councillors.

The Generators are refilled by a fuel truck, once or more over this period. Thus, upwards of 12.000 litres of Diesel is used over the period. This equates to approximately at least 200 diesel cars continuously idling in the area. Unlike transport carbon pollution, Diesel Generators do not have to be filtered in any way. Thus, we can assume the generators emmitt the most dangerous kind of toxic Diesel fumes.

The key issues in relation to the Diesel Generators are:

#### **1. Health and Safety:**

- 1.1. Coram's Fields has a primary responsibility towards health and safety of children. This responsibility is not exercised. (It is a matter of major concern and some incredulity that Coram's Fields have never conducted Health and Safety assessment in relation to the generators.)

#### **2. Ground pollution:**

- 2.1. The fumes, soot and dust settling on the ground, grass and plants may contaminate and make them unsafe for play by small and bigger children. Increased ground toxicity will impact the growth of plants and grass.

#### **3. Soot and Dust - Longer term health and safety hazard**

- 3.1. Users of the basketball court reported black balls and black hands. This is likely to have been caused by Diesel generator soot and dust settling; Additionally, clothes worn by children on football pitches in late December are reported as unusually black on key impact areas (knees). The diesel generators soot might be the cause here as well.

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#### 4. CONTRACTUAL ISSUES

*Negative impact: SIGNIFICANT*

CFUG has noted that following the expiry of the contract in 2015/16, Coram's Fields has engaged, somewhat speedily, in renewing this contract by another 3 years.

Coram's Fields Management did not pay heed to the numerous concerns raised by the Users, including by Coram's Fields User Group. No public consultation or brain drive on alternatives was conducted.

We see a number of areas that can be considered against the best long term interests of Coram's Fields. The key areas of concern are:

1. **Grass:** Grass re-turfing by the contractor (or Coram's) was observed early in the contract life. This seems now to have been completely dropped.
2. **Expanded space:** In 2016 and 2017 the Marquee was given a substantially increased area of the park (no public consultation). The entire central area of the park, the paddling pool area, the memorial building are now blockaded, and the access to animals blocked.
3. **Structural damage:** Coram's Fields does not take into account direct damage caused. The direct damage (such as bored holes) requires immediate repairs, to be borne solely by the Marquee operators.
4. **Lack of transparent tendering:** Following the expiry of the initial contract, Coram's Fields did not engage in a transparent tender for a new contract. Instead Coram's have engaged the same contractor in direct negotiation, at a similar price and worse terms (space increase).
5. **Lack of focus on children:** No attempt was made by Coram's Fields to attract an alternative children-oriented event (Pantomime, winter season ballet or plays, ice ricks, winterland parks, ice art, Ice land). We would expect this to have been done as a matter of good practice at a park focused on children.
6. **Electricity grid connection:** Despite being repeatedly told by Coram's Fields that the generators will not be allowed any more, and that the new high capacity grid connection will be a precondition for a new contract, this promise was forgotten and dropped. CFUG are not aware if this was discussed in any serious fashion with the contractor or the electricity grid.

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## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Marquee rental is causing significant damage to Users as well as to Coram's Fields.

The users are prevented from using the Park over the key Winter Season Period.

It is extremely damaging for the reputation of Coram's to continually let down its visitors in such a key period.

Health and safety issues are clear. They are both damaging for health, as well as potentially highly damaging for the reputation of Coram's Fields.

The cost of structural damage caused to Coram's Fields tarmac and buildings may significantly exceed the entire revenue gained by this venture.

### **Recommendations**

Our recommendations are:

1. Coram's Fields should strongly consider canceling the Marquee contract.
2. An urgent Assessment needs to be conducted in relation to direct structural damage to tarmac and buildings.
3. Urgent repairs to be carried out on damaged tarmac, by professional contractors.
4. Request immediate and comprehensive Health and Safety advice, both in terms of the immediate impact and any longer term impacts (e.g. soot and dust).
5. Professional advice in relation to decontamination and cleaning of the ground and play areas.
6. Consider developing an appropriately sized Winter themed event for children.



















