



**QUEEN'S PARK ARENA LTD.**  
**4<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL REPORT 2015**  
**13 June 2015**

This report covers the period April 2014 – 31 May 2015.

Our vision back in 2009 was to consult local people on their views and explore the viability of renovating the former bandstand site, to carry this through on the basis of the very positive indications of support we received, and then to manage the site as a community venue available for hire by a wide range of users. It appears that QPA is almost unique as a voluntary group operating an outdoor site and, as such, we are, to some extent, pioneers in experiencing the joys and pitfalls of such an undertaking.

2014-15 marked the end of the main capital works and the beginning of its operation as a venue.



**Canopy and facilities block under construction, 2014**

The capital works to construct the canopied performance area and enlarge and renovate the facilities building next to the Arena were completed during spring 2014. The brief to ZM Architecture was to design durable, utilitarian but good looking structures offering performance flexibility, basic facilities (2 WCs, 2 changing rooms, kiosk for light refreshment sales) sufficient to accommodate the needs of many community and smaller scale events and activities while offering good value for hire. We believe this has been achieved.

The Arena has the potential and need for additional space for pop-up facilities to service and complement medium and large scale events. However, GCC geo-technical advisers consider all areas in the immediate vicinity of the Arena (though not the Arena itself) vulnerable to mining subsidence and refuse to permit any peripheral activities, however light-weight, for safety reasons although there are no restrictions upon park users. This is seriously limiting flexibility and is a definite disincentive to hirers. We have also received advance notification from Scottish Water that the massive new Shieldhall Tunnel, to be constructed 2015-16, will run deep under the edge of the Arena and the two approach paths. Preliminary works commencing 31 August will entail the fencing off of the Arena and approaches and prevent further events during the autumn with a consequent loss of potential income and the re-routing of Moira's Run which was to have used the Arena and other Park areas in October. We are also informed that re-seeding of the affected areas will not take place until spring 2016 and these will be fenced off to protect re-growth, which may have consequences for the 2016 season. However, an important consequential benefit of the project is that the ground flanking approach paths will be stabilised which should enable pop-ups, marquees etc. for events.

The Board can envisage further smaller scale enhancements, such as temporary staging, additional lighting and some storage, which will be revisited at a future date. In the meantime snagging and finishing issues are being tackled. Thanks to the volunteer efforts of Tim Mitchell the interior of the facilities block is being decorated. B&Q supplied help-in-kind with the provision of some materials at cost. Graffiti has appeared on the rear wall and the Facilities Block but there was no vandalism on site, which is encouraging. A mural with anti-graffiti finish is being considered for the rear wall. Thanks to Area Partnership support a secure poster case was installed near the Victoria Road gate to provide information about the Arena. To complement the Event programme and develop the Arena as a venue of

interest to other Park users we were pleased that Soul Sisters operated the kiosk as a small café from May – September 2014 attracting an increasingly enthusiastic regular clientele and that the Glad Café are operating it from June to end August this year.

The website was re-designed by Keith Hawley to reflect the changing function of the site as an events venue rather than a community-led renovation project. Thanks to Marie Davidson, a self-employed events professional, volunteer Jacqueline Prewett and Board member Keith Hawley, webmaster, several events were negotiated, developed and publicised using the website and social media. Events were well attended with 200-400 typically present for each event and a cumulative total attendance estimated at around 5,700, excluding casual informal use for exercise, picnics and children’s play. Well directed social media (Facebook and Twitter) proved very effective in reaching target audiences though many park users were attracted by the sound and sight of an event in progress. Images highlight the diversity of the audiences with young and old, cyclists, dog walkers, families with prams and young children, wheelchair users were all able to access the space and enjoy the events. This was especially noted by Scottish Opera whose outreach performances of pop-up *A Little Bit of Madama Butterfly* (18 May) ventured into an outdoor performance space for the first time. They remarked on the scale, diversity and positive response of the audience (image below) which numbered around 450 for each of the two performances. It was gratifying to discover the excellent acoustic of the site enabled unamplified solo singing and speech with only two accompanying instruments to be heard clearly by the Arena audience.



**Madama Butterfly**

The season opened on 8 April with visiting American performer, *the Space Lady*, as part of the Counterflows Festival, with a good audience who had been reached almost entirely by social media and the Festival publicity. Scottish Opera staged their event on 18 May.



**Space Lady**

The single largest event was QPA's own *Southside Shindig* on 21 June (of which more below). Common Guild held a Phil Collins Workshop at the Arena on Saturday 5 July in connection with the showing of Phil Collins' locally inspired film piece, *Tomorrow is Always Too Long*, in Queen's Park on 19 July (subsequently screened at GFT, BRT, London, Museum of Modern Art, New York and at the Munich Film Festival, among other venues). The Queen's Baton Relay changed hands in the Arena on 19 July. Two charity events were the Richmond Fellowship's 'TRFS in the Park' on 13 August and Moira's Run which started and finished in the Arena on Sunday 19 October.

### **Southside Shindig**

In the run-up to the Commonwealth Games with track and field events taking place nearby at Hampden Park, and Queen's Park designated by the City Council to have an Asian theme for the Games, QPA and specifically Marie Davidson and Bob Marshall, raised funds and organised the *Southside Shindig* (21 June). Conceived as a fusion of Asian and Scottish culture the day featured *Glaschu Ekikaran Ikhtay*, a cross-cultural musical commissioned especially for the event from a group of local musicians, performances by a range of groups and number of food demonstrations and tasters; it was attended by about 3,500 people. The event was made possible by support from the Big Lottery's Celebration, Glasgow Life Arts Development and Vibrancy Funds and Glasgow City Council Area Partnership. So successful was it that a second Shindig has just taken place (6 June 2015) supported by Glasgow Life, Glasgow City Council Vibrancy Fund and Area Committees (Langside, Southside Central

and Pollokshields) and the Big Lottery. Poor weather reduced attendance to around 2,000 but the event went well and there was good feedback from participants and attenders.

Forthcoming events include a school event, a private wedding, a Dear Green Festival on 25 July and the Richmond Fellowship event (29 August) and a youth musical event is under discussion. Moira's Run, which would have used the Arena as its start and finish point, is being re-routed and unfortunately, any opportunity for events linked to the Turner Prize exhibition at Tramway during the autumn will be lost.

The costs and work required for the Shindigs have made it clear that QPA's own capacity to organise events is at most one or two a year, dependent upon a paid event organiser. Regular use of the Arena and its sustainability will rest primarily on community and other users hiring the space and organising their own events, with QPA (or a partner or agency acting on QPA's behalf) acting in a contractual, facilitative and monitoring role. Some preliminary discussions have taken place with local community bodies and a commercial events company examined the site but with no partnership outcome to date. A number of enquiries were received from potential users, some of which lapsed when potential users were unable to pay even a modest hire charge, while other events proved incompatible with the Arena's scale. Some recurrent development funding is needed to employ part-time someone to develop community engagement, including event coordination and marketing.

Membership of QPA increased by three with The Glad Café, Queen's Park Baptist Church and the Mackintosh Choir joining. Three Directors' meetings ( 2 December, 3 February, 5 May) have taken place during the year and the steering group has met three times (13 May, 4 June, 5 August ) as well as participating in a working session on site (27 May). Les Rice became the Director representing Mt Florida Community Council; the position representing Shawlands and Strathbungo continues vacant for the second year. Bruce Wood has decided not to stand for re-election to the Board. We thank him for the business and university contacts he has helped with. It has proved difficult to ensure a quorum for Directors' meetings. Consideration is, therefore, being given to amending the company constitution to remove the requirement for each of the four originating community councils to provide one ex-officio partner director, and to increase the number of directors who may be co-opted for their skills and interests. To date the company has had no difficulty in maintaining the community-based membership that was part of its founding ethos.

The company has joined the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations. We are particularly grateful to Bob Marshall whose support enabled company meetings and Marie Davidson's office to be sited at the Community Regeneration office until the end of 2014, and to Evelyn Silber for the hospitality of her home subsequently. Thanks are due to all the Directors and members of the steering group for their valued time, advice and volunteer participation during events.

Operationally the Arena has got off to a slower start than anticipated. Certain areas requiring legal agreement with Glasgow City Council have required extremely protracted negotiation, notably the lease terms which remain near completion but not finalised. We acknowledge with thanks the support of Jobs and Business Glasgow in funding legal support for the lease negotiation. The negotiation of insurances required by the lease have also proved problematic because of the high annual costs quoted for this outdoor venue which, for most of the time, is open and unsupervised, thus functioning as part of the Park and an informal venue, and which has structures unlike those of conventional enclosed premises. Income from events is not yet covering basic operating costs. It would be unrealistic not to acknowledge that the Arena needs within the next year to put in place resources to enable capacity to be enhanced, and usage and income increased in order to achieve long term viability. We are optimistic that these issues will be surmounted and pleased that the venue has demonstrated its physical resilience, flexibility and ability to attract substantial and very varied audiences in an atmosphere of sociable, relaxed, family-friendly enjoyment.

Evelyn Silber, Chair