



Proposal to the Alexandra Park & Palace Trust Board

That the APPTB, with support from London Borough of Haringey, should apply for **UNESCO World Heritage Site recognition** for the South-East wing of Alexandra Palace. To include the BBC television studios, control rooms, dressing & transmitter rooms, telecine area, tower offices & transmission tower

Features, benefits & advantages

1 Totem ■ AP is a huge, sprawling and eccentric building on a hill. It has disparate parts and a diffuse image. It is hard to brand, categorise or characterise

It has suffered from an uncertain purpose and has lacked focus and a focal point

■ AP would benefit from a **symbol** and a main **theme**, meaningful both nationally and internationally

■ a long-range strategic goal that would **sustain interest** and **survive changes** in personnel, trading-performance, trusteeship or form-of-governance

■ AP will remain the most important building in Haringey Borough: ideally, an appropriate goal should be something that **unites** our Trust and the Council in a project in common purpose

■ ideally, we should have a goal that is **broad enough** at the beginning in order to gain wide support. A goal not attempting to be described in minutiae at the outset;

The main UNESCO requirement

2 Trust ■ There has not always been full confidence in the council's intentions over the future of Alexandra Palace

■ the above Proposal conforms with our Trust's **charitable status** and both the letter and spirit of the remit. The Charity Commission is unlikely to have issues with this proposal

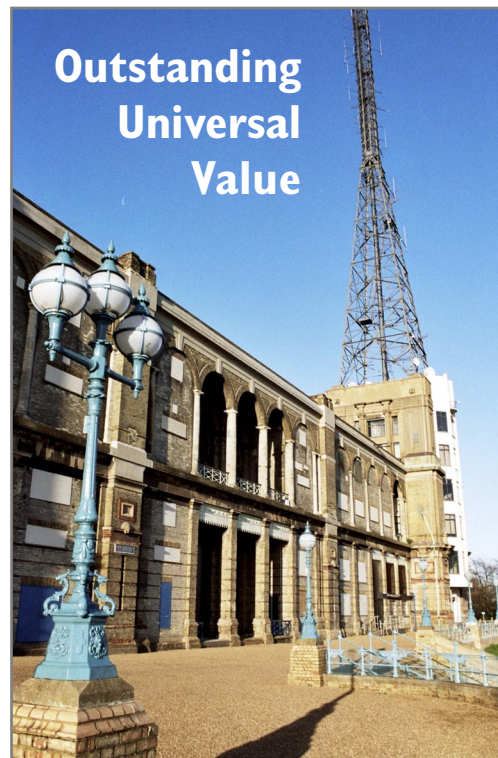
■ it is an **apolitical** goal, likely to **unify** different interests and attract a spectrum of support

■ would act as a **reassurance** about the future under possible independent status

■ project a **positive image** for AP & signal a fresh start & a new chapter for our Charity. **Signal** to all, that LBH is serious about AP; a signal not just about the Studios & not just to the BBC

■ Application to UN Heritage Committee is within the power and **control** of the Trustee. Would not require negotiations with a lessee nor developer; nor incur huge legal costs

■ our charity and the council could collaborate on a **common goal**, likely to result in side-benefits for the Borough of Haringey ...



- if **confidence** could be re-built with respect to the Studios, then this could lead to its original contents and other exhibits – currently held elsewhere – returning to their **home** (e.g. from the Bradford museum, BBC heritage and EMI archives)

- **support** from individuals and groups willing to contribute the time and effort needed towards filling the requirements of UNESCO Heritage status (see Appendix)

- has the potential to speed up progress on governance and help pull the other threads together;

3 Target ■ A clear goal that Londoners would be proud to see and support

- provides a **strategic** aim, a transparent objective and offers long-term continuity. This goal posits a big prize, equal to the building's size and importance

- this ambition aims not higher, but **highest**. It would boost morale and lift everyone's sights

- a goal that is **independent** of the form of governance or the composition of the Trustees

- if achieved, **global awareness**.

UN World Heritage Sites are not ten-a-penny

- if an Application fell at the last hurdle (i.e. at the Paris Committee stage) it would not be a failure, because much good work, especially the forming of partnerships, would have happened in order to advance it to that point;

4 Tone ■ The goal of a UNESCO World Heritage 'gift of inscription' would set the tone: positive and prestigious

- a **virtuous circle**: likely to attract **high profile** and **influential Trustees** to a reformed Board

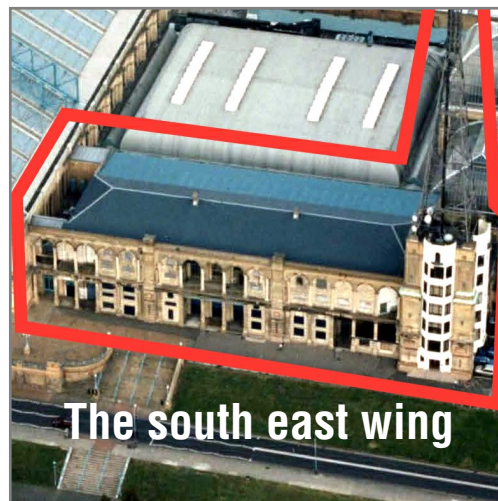
- attract the most prestigious **corporate sponsors** – but more likely if the municipal connection can be loosened

- attract **publicity** and attention to Ally Pally – for all the right reasons

- act as an **impetus** to get things done; enthuses and galvanise others

- **Catalyst** – most physical parts of the palace depend for *their* amelioration, on improvement in *other* parts of the building and in the palace as a whole. The palace needs an over-arching metaphysical goal that acts as a *catalyst*

- **Halo** – UNESCO world heritage is a goal or status that comes with an inevitable halo effect. The Studios are inseparable from the Palace.



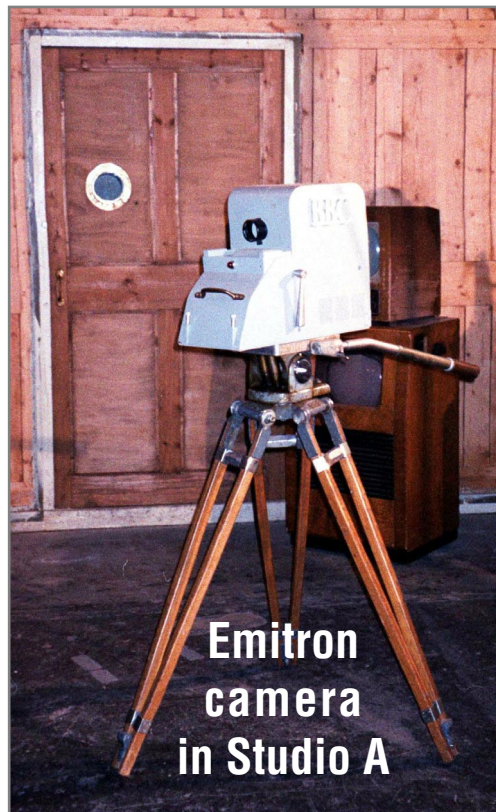
5 Territory ■ The site at Alexandra Palace is world-unique, surviving mainly because the abandoned studios have been left undisturbed for so long

■ In Britain, there were earlier studios (Baird's) at Crystal Palace and at 133 Long Acre. But in 1936 at AP, all the elements needed for (relatively) high-definition, regular, scheduled public television broadcasting came together for the first time

■ Abroad, the only other surviving early television premises are probably those in St. Petersburg, which date from a similar time. However it would seem that they have been extensively remodelled over the ensuing years and very little of the original remains in a recognisable form. In the USA, the original studios at Schenectady and Farnsworth's San Francisco operation are long gone

The Berlin studio pre-dated the AP studios, but was destroyed in the closing days of WWII. Unfortunately they were associated with Nazi propaganda

The S.E. wing at AP: the world's oldest surviving television studios and station site



■ would lead to the Studios being brought up to the needed standard, with cost spread over time

■ BBC studios A & B have the strongest claim to be the birthplace of public TV broadcasting in the UK – on 2nd November 1936 – and a strong claim for global significance;

■ the case for boosting the status of The London Television Station has been already been set out in detail by the former Head of BBC Heritage Robin Reynolds and others (see Appendix);

7 Terms ■ The World Heritage Committee annually confers UN World Heritage status on cultural, natural & 'mixed' sites deemed worthy

■ the relevant UNESCO cultural criteria are,

"to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius"

"exhibits an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in ... technology ..."

6 Technical ■ Recognition is overdue that the Studios – widely known as the birthplace of modern television – are of the highest, international historical importance

■ Unique Selling Point – the television history is one of the few aspects for which Alexandra Palace is known internationally and the only aspect that is unique

"bears a unique or exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared"

■ In general, outstanding universal value

■ Under certain conditions, listed sites can obtain funds from the World Heritage Fund. It is considered in the international community's interests to preserve each site;

PTO



8 Touchstone ■ The precedent for UNESCO Heritage listing of the London Television Station, is the Grimeton Radio Station, a little inland from Varberg, Sweden

■ it comprises six masts and dates from 1924. It met Cultural Criteria [ii] & [iv] (below) and it was added to the UN World Heritage list in 2004 –

■ *Criterion (ii):* The Varberg radio station at Grimeton is an **outstanding monument representing the process of development of communication technology** in the period following the First World War

■ *Criterion (iv):* The Varberg radio station is an exceptionally well-preserved **example of a type of telecommunication centre**, representing the technological achievements by the early 1920s, as well as documenting the further development over some three decades

“[UNESCO also] Encourages the State Party [i.e. Sweden] to collaborate with other States Parties in considering a possible transboundary serial extension of similar properties [The 1936 London Television Station?!]



GLC plaque on the BBC Tower wall

■ this proposal will come to the attention of central government and it is possible that material support would follow. Governments around the globe recognise the impact and benefit of such recognition;

10 Teaching ■ Education is one of the BBC Studios' strongest suits

■ UN World Heritage status would come to the notice of educators globally

■ **inspiration:** a history lesson combined with London's finest views. A vision for visitors of all ages and not least for the budding engineers amongst the Borough's school children

■ **stimulation:** possible interactive displays for class visits, children & families

■ Middlesex University in 2004 proposed a Media Campus on this site

■ **encouragement:** it calls attention to a paradigm of towering electronic engineering achievement

9 Tourism ■ UNESCO World Heritage Site status would boost attention and interest among potential international visitors

■ status would fit well with a tourist **hotel**

■ **co-branding** with **Bletchley Park?**

■ would leverage Alexandra Palace's natural advantages: arguably the best panoramic view of London from a hill, atop a park

■ **innovation:** co-branding with the underplayed regular exhibitor, the *Inventions Show*

■ **understanding:** One of the things that is so important about what remains at AP, is the understanding it gives us about **how the technology developed** and how the whole operation was conceived and operated. Studios cannot operate in a vacuum, they need scenery shops, dressing rooms, makeup areas, canteen, offices as well as all the technical areas – most of this evidence still exists at AP.

PTO



1 Tower ■ The corporate logo of the London Borough of Haringey (first page, top left corner) celebrates the first signals radiating from possibly the first purpose-built television tower in 1936

■ the transmission tower is physically far the tallest structure of the palace, visible from all over the Borough, from much of London and beyond. Moreover, it can be seen from the main trains bringing people into London from the north. It is far more noticeable than the studios and literally a high-profile and permanent reminder of the building's history and pioneering work

■ the Borough logo [↘] also features prominently on the shield on the coat of arms. Can the council return to its past pride in AP's history?

■ it makes sense to build (metaphorically) on this already **listed** structure. A UN World Heritage accolade (a 'gift of inscription') would represent the highest flag on the flagship of a rejuvenated Alexandra Palace

■ AP was the first and last time that a broadcaster tried to co-site a set of television studios next to high power transmitters and aerials

(that was done because at the planning stage it was not technically feasible to send the television signals more than a few hundred feet from the studio without degradation. Engineers had to cope with the problems caused by having a high radio frequency electric field in the studios

Even in the canteen it was possible to draw sparks by touching metal cutlery together whenever the transmitters were on! All subsequent studios were built some distance (often many miles) from the transmitter using the coaxial television cable developed by EMI in time for the 1937 coronation);

12 Timing ■ Now is the right time to begin planning for the lengthy process of an Application

■ last year, 2010, marked the end of the long-held policy of sale of Ally Pally to a property developer, that had led to uncertainty about the BBC Studios

■ this year, 2011, marks the **75th Anniversary** of the birth of television at Alexandra Palace

■ the proposal **looks beyond** the current cash cut-backs, trustees and governance structure

■ the BBC will be moving from White City shortly

■ while funding is at its tightest for the next couple of years, the envisaged public statement of intent *requires little expenditure* in the short term

■ *reinforces* and may even requires, **governance reform**. One criterion for the UNESCO World Heritage Committee is assuring themselves of the **sound stewardship and governance** of candidate sites

■ the BBC staff at the Studios shortly before and after the war will now be in their 80s or 90s. It would be good to have their input while they are still able to contribute

■ 2012 is year of the **Olympic Games**, which will be televised from north east London to a global audience. A relatively short distance away and 54 years earlier, the Olympics Games of 1948 were broadcast to London from the birthplace of television – another possible tie-in;



Borough
Coat of Arms:
Previous pride
in progress

**Overleaf:
Texts and
Testimony**



Texts ■ Appendix; bibliography, references and credits:

- *The Costs and Benefits of World Heritage Site Status in the UK* (Price Waterhouse Coopers). A major study commissioned by the DCMS (2007)
- CIVIX – Media Campus Feasibility Study (2004 – August)
- AP Building Survey – the studio portions: costings from the Schedule of Developer Shell Repairs / Approximate Costs and 20-year Forward Forecast maintenance costs
- *Historical Survey of Television at Alexandra Palace* Simon Vaughan, APTS Archivist (2003 – February)
- Mr John Trenouth, former television curator, *National Museum of Photography, Film & Television, Bradford*
- Front facade elevation credit: part of a thesis on AP by the Italian architect *Massimo Moscato*

Relevant submissions to English Heritage (for Grade II STAR status for the whole palace):

- Alexandra Palace – Listing Review – ‘BBC Studios’, page 3 (Mortimer MacSweeney; Design and Conservation Team; L.B.H. (2007-01-26))
- *The Television Studios at Alexandra Palace – the case for preservation*. Robin Reynolds, head of BBC Heritage (2007-01-22)

Testimony ■ This proposal is endorsed by groups and individuals:

- UN World Heritage site, the 1924 Varberg Radio Station, Sweden
CEO: *Dr. Lars Johansson*
- The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage TICCIIH, Secretary: *Stuart Smith*
- IET – Institution of Engineering and Technology, formerly the Institution of Electrical Engineers (contact: *Alan Berry*)
- The MP for Hornsey & Wood Green, Government Minister *Lynne Featherstone*
- British Heritage Television group
Chair: *Martin Allen*
- AP Television Group
Chair: *John Thompson*
- AP Television Society
Chair: *Simon Vaughan*
- Hornsey Historical Society
Chair: *Keith Fawkes*



Risks – The Application would:

- probably take years to gain approval; ■ not be a complete solution to AP's problems;
 - need council staff attention; ■ not progress easily without reform in finance and governance; ■ require long-term commitment by Haringey Council to prosecute
- probably need national & international lobbying; ■ once awarded, UNESCO World Heritage Site status can be withdrawn if the site is not looked after

2011, January ~ Proposal to Alexandra Palace Trust Board:
application for UNESCO World Heritage Site status

contact: C D Carter
clive.carter@gmail.com ~ 020 8341-3652

~ Notes ~

