



Thursday 27th March 2025

STATEMENT FROM LIVING UNDER ONE SUN

Thank you all who attended LUOS's 20th anniversary celebration, thanks giving, and for the amazing solidarity messages from those who could not make the event. More than 500 residents and representatives from local groups shared their stories of what LUOS and a community-led hub run like LUOS meant to them: "a safe place, warm & welcoming, Love (repeated so many times), inclusive, fun, respect, family, friendship, food, free services, access to vital hard to reach services, land to grow & be close to Nature, skills, qualifications, training, social enterprise, jobs and paid opportunities, references for jobs, arts & crafts making, creating hope, cycling, sewing, sports, for all ages, partnerships and funding, resources, a place for group meetings and working". . all spoken or written loudly and clearly.

We hope the next stage of the park's development will be as empowering. We have an independent national organisation to facilitate community meetings after the Easter holiday to find out how you wish to share our experience and resources. We hope the Council will work with us positively to create this practical opportunity to pass the torch on to others.

You helped us to shine and proved community strength can provide solutions to many problems in our neighbourhood. Rightly so, we are all in state of disbelief and asking "if this can happen to LUOS what will happen to others"! Clearly our

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LUOS Community Hub, inside Down Lane Park, Park View Road, Tottenham, N17 9EX*



efforts were not respected, our questions were not answered, and our contributions to the well-being of Down Lane Park and our community have been side stepped, despite financially contributing to the local economy and community wealth building.

Against all the odds for a frontline community-led organisation - providing free services and challenging discrimination, racism and a hostile environment - we've been privileged and honoured to meet and work alongside so many of you. Together we've learnt, created and delivered - showcasing how much the community's strength, vision, skills, knowledge, ideas and commitment helps our neighbourhood be a better place to live, work, study and plan futures.

In just a few years LUOS transformed a disused run-down space into a vital community hub and asset; contributing an estimated £4.030 million worth of investment, in kind funding and social value, including employment and enterprise. Alongside establishing partnerships with residents and community groups, we've created partnerships with the NHS, schools, colleges, universities, local businesses, the Council and the Mayor of London.

Our CEO has given us an extra 2 years of her expertise, dedication and dynamism. With patience and perseverance, she has worked tirelessly and successfully to achieve positive outcomes with funders and partners – all to realise the vision of a much needed, welcoming, inclusive and permanent community hub. The goal, and outcome, has been to share skills, ideas and bring people together from all backgrounds in the heart of the park and our neighbourhood, the everchanging and ever challenging Tottenham Hale.

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As you will know, we have been working with residents, the Council and partners on plans for a new hub and, despite the fact that we were more than happy to revamp and sustain the current hub and gardens, to avoid high build costs, we worked with the Council's preferred option.

For more than 2 years LUOS hosted and supported meetings of the Community Design Group working on the park improvements plan, visiting other parks, public consultation meetings, the Park User and Community Forum, set up and supported the Young Peoples's Forum, contributed to the Park's Green Flag Award – and partnered the Council in its £750,000 successful bid to the Mayor's Green and Resilient Spaces Fund in 2022 and 2023.

With enormous efforts in time and resources from LUOS working with the Council, the scheme progressed:

- in July 2023 the Council's Cabinet approving £9.1million for improvements to Down Lane Park, including a new purpose built community hub, estimated at the time to cost £2.5 million.
- the Council's Planning Committee approving planning permission for the new Hub
- working with the Council to ensure the design of the new Hub and garden were fit for purpose
- the LUOS's 7 year Business Plan being accepted and passed by the Council
- negotiations progressing with the Council on a 20 year lease for LUOS for the new Hub over the summer
- the Council having a contractor ready to be appointed in October and start on site in January 2025.



However, despite all these commitments and promises, from last September the Council stopped communicating with us, despite our request for meetings and an explanation and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to share information. Finally, at the end of January the Council met with us, and at our request again in March, but only to say that the funding for Down Lane Park would be cut and we would need to start again, and any new hub would have to compete with the new playground, multi-use games area and landscaping for any funds left. The LUOS Business Plan was effectively 'in the bin', along with the previous funding approvals, the planning permission, and design work.

The Council has broken its commitments and promises to the community, and has still put none of this in writing to LUOS, or sent any minutes of the two meetings we recently had.

All these delays, uncertainty and sheer lack of communication significantly impacted on our charity's future plans: we've not been able to recruit staff and advertise services, and we couldn't fundraise for the new hub and have lost out on corporate offers of in kind support to furnish it. This has consumed and drained the trustees and team, who have all worked so hard and given their resources, time and expertise to running the current hub and all its activities.

Added to this, the Council has downgraded the park withdrawing it from the Green Flag Scheme, and we've had to cope with the nursery closing, parts of the park being closed off for months, reducing footfall by 75-80%, reductions in park staffing and several ongoing safety, security and maintenance issues including heating, hot water, lighting, blocked drainage and water leaks from the nursery's garden – the Council has not co-ordinated and managed effective action.



After broken promises and several months with no clear direction or process for the future from the Council trustees feel strongly we are not able to continue at the Hub. Despite our best intentions and efforts, trust in the Council has been lost, and LUOS will not be renewing our lease. But, as we close this chapter after 20 years, we've got experience and resources, plus the support of independent national organisation Locality, and are committed to working with you, the community and the Council to find the best option for the future of the park, albeit without Living Under One Sun.

With love and best wishes!

LUOS Trustees

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