



European Parliament, Open letter to UK Deputy Prime Minister, 6 January 1999.

European Parliament
Rue Wiertz
1047 Brussels
Belgium

6 January 1999

The Rt. Hon. John Prescott
Deputy Prime Minister
Whitehall
London SW1A 2AS

Re: Thames European Art and Education Project

(Located on board several barges at Battersea, adjacent to the proposed Albion Wharf site development, currently subject to an Article 14 holding directive by the Government Office for London)

Dear John

We are writing to you about an existing permanently moored floating public art museum and cultural centre on several converted Thames barges, also incorporating a new specific 'European Barge' exhibition and education space, located by Albion Wharf Battersea. This non-profit project has been developed on this site over the past 20 years by the Thames-based artist Max Couper and colleagues, and enjoys widespread support from a range of London and continental civic partners.

In the absence of any support whatsoever from the developers and owners of Albion Wharf (Hutchison Whampoa of Hong Kong) we would ask your support in ensuring that this important project is protected from any threat by the developers. We would also like to enquire as to what scope there is for financial support from your department for this project. Furthermore, is there a possibility that enhancement of this riverside amenity could be made a planning condition of development in the Albion Wharf development? This would be a clear planning gain for the River Thames and for the European Union.

This floating art museum is locally and internationally recognised as part of the Thames riverside at Battersea, and the expansion of the European dimension is wholly consistent with the history of the Thames.

Since water is the medium that has always linked cultures in Europe, this project is ideally suited symbolically for helping members of the British public acquire a better understanding of the concept of European citizenship.

Member of the European Parliament for London East

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The key features of this project are:

- A non-profit education and youth programme already linked to a dozen London schools, currently expanding to link with schools in other parts of Europe, and which stresses European democratic ideas, citizenship and shared cultural links.
- An accessible location in central London by the Albert Bridge and Battersea Park.
- A permanent project that will continue into the new millennium beyond the year 2000.
- A unique public and tourist attraction for the Thames and London which can be linked by riverbus and to the 'String of Pearls' Millennium Thames project.
- A project that fits the existing 'Strategic Guidelines for the Thames'; i.e. access to the Thames, preservation of an existing riverside amenity, and creating vitality for the Thames.
- A project that fits the proven power of arts and culture projects to help revitalize a part of a city; i.e. The Tate at St Ives, the new Museum of Modern Art at Southwark, or the Pompidou Centre in Paris.
- Great potential in helping reinvent the Thames as a leisure and cultural asset for the new Millennium.
- Unanimous local support from resident groups, local schools, and the Church.
- Over 100 letters of support for the existing art museum project as a riverside amenity received from the local public and visitors to the floating site.
- Considerable continental support within the European Union from cities, museums, schools, universities, politicians and individuals.
- The new permanently-moored 'European Barge' exhibition, education and event space is 100ft long, 25ft wide, with one room of 1750 ft² floor space. It is converted with a steel roof but requires fitting-out, refurbishment, and revenue funding as an on-going European and Millennium project.
- Initiator Max Couper and colleagues have a long and proven history of pan-European collaboration on a civic, institutional and educational level.
- The entire project is based around the theme of 'water' as a common element between fellow European countries.


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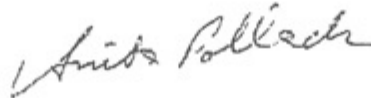
This is a project that has the laudable aims of increasing the use and awareness of the Thames whilst engaging the European debate in a positive and pro-active manner.

We fully support this project and have pleasure bringing it to your attention.

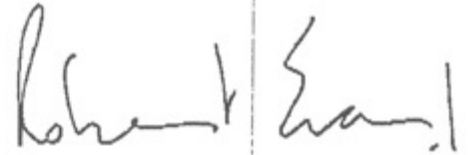
Yours sincerely



Carole Tongue
MEP for London East



Anita Pollack
MEP for London South West



Robert Evans
MEP for London North West

cc: Chris Smith, Minister for Culture and Minister responsible for the Millennium Dome
Nick Raynsford, Minister for London
Martin Linton, MP for Battersea
Tony Belton, Leader of the Labour Group on Wandsworth Council
Mr Rowett, Planning and Transport, Government Office for London

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