

Minutes from British Library Readers' Group Monday 29 January 2007 6pm, Café

Present

Heather Brooke
Dr Carolyn Clarke
Mark McCrum
Nigel Cliff
John Simons
Wanda Wyporska
Sean-Michael Robinson

Apologies

Matt Salisbury, Phil Sutcliffe, J. Vaughan, Judy Jackson, Hugh Baron, Carla Lord, Pauline Halford, D. Lane, M. Wandor, P. Earl, B. McKenzie, N. Murray, R. Hayman-Joyce

New Business

1. Funding Cuts

The group met in the café despite signs earlier in the day stating it would be shut. We discussed the proposed cuts in funding to the British Library laid out in various Parliamentary debates and covered in the media.

See:

<http://books.guardian.co.uk/news/articles/0,,2000822,00.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/01/29/nbritlib29.xml>

The cuts could mean even shorter opening hours and a further reduction of readers' services. The group discussed what action to take and decided to write a letter to the editor of the Guardian and to the Chief Executive of the British Library. We are opposed to the cuts but believe the Library's case for public funding would be stronger if its meetings were open and if readers were involved in the decision-making process.

2. Publicity

The group discussed continued efforts to hand out fliers and publicise our existence. We will approach those readers named in the various articles. Also, J. Simons and C. Clarke said they would be attending the annual general meeting of the British Library Friends and would tell them about our group.

3. Land north of the British Library

In response to a request from a reader at the last meeting, H. Brooke said she had found out some information. The land to the north of the British Library St. Pancras was professionally revalued at £26.6million as at 31 March 2006. The whole of the site of the former Somers Town Goods Yard was acquired for the original 1970s design of the British Library. The revised design of the Library completed in 1997 left the land to the north undeveloped.

The southern part of the site is currently leased to the British Library Board for car parking. The northern part of this site has been subject to a planning block under the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Act 1996, and has been under temporary possession by CTRL as a working site for construction of the adjacent St. Pancras International terminal. The valuation takes account of this planning block.

See: <http://tinyurl.com/2jf39x>

Next meeting

The group did not set a meeting but decided to agree on a date via email.