

BOST response

Further to your email and the recent stakeholder meeting we have now had chance to consider this issue.

As far as Cathedral Square is concerned we fully support the residents and stakeholders in the area in their desire to improve the quality of the open space.

It was interesting to note that the meeting was attended by several residents from different parts of Bankside who all had their own examples of night-time anti-social behaviour. This is not an issue peculiar to Cathedral Square. As a grass roots organisation BOST has also become increasingly aware that this is becoming a pressing issue in the area.

The solution to a problem that is prevalent in the many hotspots in the area is surely sensitive policing, better security measures, signage and 24hr toilets. It would seem to be impractical, to say the least, to consider fencing off all the areas affected. Other areas of London that have very active night time economies in residential areas are managing to deal with this issue with a partnership approach, perhaps we should be researching best practice in this regard.

The frustration voiced by several attendees at the meeting was that there was no one to call after 6pm and the police response to anti-social behaviour is always after the incident has taken place.

There are several stakeholders in this area who have wardens or private security, Better Bankside, Borough Market, Glaziers, Minerva House, The Cathedral and so on. These stakeholders working in partnership with the Local Authority, Licensing, the Neighbourhood Wardens and the Police should be able to provide the surveillance and facilities necessary to significantly reduce the anti-social behaviour that the residents are experiencing.

I understand that other boroughs and areas in the country have used the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme to train existing security guards to take on additional duties. This reduces the insurance impact which is usually quoted as the reason why this sort of warden policing cannot be implemented.

Nearby BOST have been working extremely hard with English Heritage and the Council to make a beautiful garden within the ruins of Winchester House. This project was initiated by a local resident. There is no doubt that the scheme once completed will add significant capital value to the surrounding properties, the current site is somewhat of an eyesore. Applying this methodology to Cathedral Square will enhance the capital values of the properties surrounding the square. It follows that the residents and commercial occupiers who will benefit from this could contribute a proportion of an enhanced service charge to ensure that there is a warden presence.

I hope that some of these ideas can contribute positively to the debate around this issue.