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Press Release

February will see Lambeth celebrating its first Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans History (LGBT) Month

An exciting month of events is planned for February to celebrate the important history of Lambeth's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans population.

'LGBT History Month' was introduced to the United Kingdom by 'Schools Out!' in 2005. Behind its inception was that for us to understand our present and imagine our future we must first gain insight into our past. This is true of us as individuals; it is also true of societies. LGBT History Month is a time when we can explore and share some hidden aspects of our country's past, both recent and distant. This hidden history belongs to all of us; it is part of our inheritance.

Lambeth's LGBT history is unique in the UK and for many years, as since the latter half of the 1980s, Lambeth has been the location of some key historical events in this country's LGBT history.

Events such as Pride celebrations, and Summer Rights have been held in Kennington Park, Brockwell Park and Clapham Common. In addition, many LGBT organisations have been based in the borough, including a number of charities in Brixton's Eurolink Centre, such as the Pride office. GMFA, originally Gay Men's Fighting AIDS, and the BIG –UP group (a sexual health organisation by and for Black men) Group at GMFA is still based in the centre. Railton Rd, Brixton, was the location of both the Gay Liberation Front and the infamous Brixton Fairies, a number of squats, which now continue as a housing association. On Railton Road there is also Rotimi Fani-Kayode House, named after the internationally acclaimed African gay photographer Rotimi Fani-Kayode (1955-1989).

During the late seventies several of Andrew Logan's 'Alternative Miss World' competitions were held in vast marquees on the Lambeth side of Clapham Common. Such events were attended by the likes of Debbie Harry, Divine, Amanda Lear, Zandra Rhodes and Gerlinda (of Kinky Gerlinky fame) and were filmed over three consecutive years by Thames TV. Lambeth in the 1980s was a site of political activism with the election of openly LGBT politician Linda Bellos who was elected leader of Lambeth Council in 1986.

However, queer history in Lambeth goes back further than just the 1970s and 1980s. Brixton was famed for its theatrical community for over a hundred years until the 1950s, which attracted large numbers of LGBT actors, dancers, magicians and entertainers. The writer, composer, actor and wit, Noel Coward was for several years resident in Clapham.

In addition, Lambeth boasts the oldest continually run gay Public House in the UK, The Royal Vauxhall Tavern (RVT). From the time it was built, in the 1800s, the RVT has had a core of queer customers but it was not until after the Second World War that it became an exclusively LGBT venue.

LGBT History Month presents an opportunity for Lambeth's vast LGBT History LGBT to be acknowledged.

Amy Donovan, the Lambeth LGBT Coordinator at the Lambeth Crime Prevention Trust commented: "This month presents a significant opportunity for the lives of LGBT people, both past and present, to be recognized and celebrated. LGBT people have historically been invisible, its time for our histories and identities to receive the acknowledgement that they deserve".

Councillor Peter Truesdale, Leader of the London Borough of Lambeth, remarked: With history nobody must be left out. Everybody must tell their story. That is why we are so pleased that Lambeth is participating in LGBT history month. We value the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and we want their history to be recorded, their experience of and contribution to Lambeth.

The programme of events has been developed in conjunction with Lambeth Metropolitan Police, Lambeth libraries, Positive Activities for Young People, Victim Support, Transport for London and the Lambeth LGBT Forum. Daniel Fitzgerald, one of the organisers of the month, commented: "This borough has some amazing history which I feel has been invisible for some years now. It's a credit to the LGBT Forum that Lambeth will be celebrating its First LGBT History Month".

To obtain a hard copy of the LGBT History Month programme outlining all the events taking place during this month, please contact Tatiana on 020 7926 9499 or email tatavwigho@lambeth.gov.uk. Copies will also be available from Lambeth libraries and downloadable from the Lambeth LGB forum website www.lambethLGBTforum.org.uk

Ends

Note to the editor

LGBT History Month was conceived by School's Out!, a campaigning organisation of LGBT people involved in education. They took their inspiration partly from the US, where LGBT History Month has been celebrated since 1994. They also make respectful acknowledgement to the example set by Black History Month.