



■ **HIGH-PROFILE SUPPORTER:** Heavyweight boxer Audley Harrison during his visit to Stonebridge Adventure Playground recently

Contributed

A defeated Audley keeps his promise

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MILLIONS of boxing fans saw Olympic gold medallist Audley Harrison's big-hitting campaign to save an adventure playground in Brent – when he highlighted its plight in his heavyweight showdown on Saturday.

Last week, the boxer visited the Stonebridge Adventure Playground after hearing the funding it receives from The Big Lottery Fund is to be cut next February.

Those cuts could force the playground to close after 40 years and Harrison, who played at the site as a child in the early 1980s, got on board to throw his weight behind a campaign to save it.

Before and after his failed title bid against heavyweight

champion David Haye, Harrison wore a T-shirt with the slogan 'Keep Stonebridge Playground open', much to the delight of those associated with the site.

Douglas Lee, the manager of the charity that runs it, Brent Play Association, heaped praise on the 39-year-old for his continued support.

He said: "The commitment Audley has shown to us is absolutely outstanding and we are over the moon with the support he has given us.

"He has been treated absolutely despicably in my view and we are 100 per cent behind him because he kept his promise to us.

"He said he would wear the T-shirt before the fight, but to put it on afterwards, when he was being unfairly jeered by a full stadium, was an incredible thing for him to do for us.

"He enjoyed his time here. He was popular and made a lot of friends and he wanted to help give other children in the area the opportunity to experience something like that."

The fight, which was shown on Sky box office to more than 700,000 subscribers, has bought much-needed attention to the plight of the playground and Mr Lee added that he is hopeful a meeting today (Thursday) will provide some good news for the site.

He added: "It has definitely had an effect and there are forums on the internet trying to find out what his message meant, so hopefully it can rally support for us.

"We are having a meeting with senior officers at Brent council today to discuss keeping it open and his efforts have certainly shone a spotlight on the issue."