

# BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 13 (January 2002)

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In this edition, as usual, we have the latest news on activities in Bromley, plus some more general articles on transport matters that may be of interest to members.

As a New Year is just commencing, it seems a good idea to review and re-state the policies of BBRAG. The association was formed initially from strong opposition to a traffic calming scheme on Watts Lane and Manor Park Road in Chislehurst. There were a large number of people who thought it was unnecessary, inappropriate and a waste of money. They still do. Other people objected because of the discomfort the speed bumps cause, if not outright pain to people with existing medical conditions.

It was clear that traffic management policy in Bromley was more determined by theoretical concepts than practical reality,

with little recognition of local circumstances or public opinion. BBRAG was formed to try and change that.

Certainly we have had some effect. For example, the council now concentrates expenditure on accident black spots. But, they still propose schemes such as the closure of the lower section of Kemnal Road in Chislehurst which would cause major problems for many residents, and which incidentally is still under consideration.

Speed bumps are still being put in place on many roads despite public opposition. New bus lanes are put in place at enormous cost, which often cause more congestion while not speeding up bus times significantly. Speed limits are introduced on roads which are unrealistic and therefore simply get ignored by most road users. Road users are still not consulted about traffic schemes, only local residents, who usually have a strong motivation to move the traffic elsewhere (which of course typically just transfers the noise and pollution to someone else).

In general terms, when policies are being formulated they are generally anti car without any justification. For example, refer to previous articles on Bromley's Integrated Transport Strategy, the Bromley UDP, the LA21 Policy Document, the Bromley Town Centre Parking Plan and the GLA Transport Strategy.

Despite the fact that in Bromley private cars are the most used means of transport, they are discriminated against.

There is also very poor integration of transport facilities in the borough so that public transport use is discouraged.

As a result, as you can see from the later article in this newsletter, Bromley suffers from the same problems as the rest of the UK. Namely excessive traffic jams, excessive atmospheric pollution (often a consequence of the traffic jams), and very expensive public transport that is of poor quality and under utilised.

There is almost no expenditure in Bromley on improving the road transport system or trying to remove congestion points. Policies are often designed simply to reduce car use by penalties such as removing parking spaces, which will not work (at least not unless you consider driving businesses and residents elsewhere would be a successful result).

BBRAG also has a major objective to improve road accident statistics and we don't believe this can be done by spending money on silly schemes. Clearly separating traffic from residential areas and pedestrians can both improve the quality of the environment and improve safety, but little is done in this area. Expenditure on separate cycle paths could also assist and encourage this mode of transport.

We have published several articles on environmental pollution issues associated with transport, and again it is clear that encouraging use of lower polluting vehicles is the main priority here (particularly in respect of heavy polluters such as buses and HGVs). Attempting to cut pollution significantly by discouraging private car use is very unlikely to be effective. However improving the flow of traffic (and removing speed bumps which actually makes pollution worse), would have some benefit.

I hope the above is clear but if you would like more information on the formal objectives and constitution of BBRAG then please contact me.

Best wishes for the New Year to all our members and supporters.

Roger Lawson, Editor

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### **Darul Uloom School, Chislehurst**

A planning application has been made for a substantial expansion of the Darul Uloom School in Chislehurst. This school is a private school which provides a Muslim education and is located in Foxbury Avenue, off Perry Street.

A local resident who appears to want to remain anonymous has been circulating leaflets opposing it on a number of grounds. The Chislehurst Society has also opposed it on grounds of infringement of the Green Belt, low architectural merit of the existing and proposed buildings in a Conservation Area, and concerns about a possible increase in number of pupils and addition of a "place of worship" that could be used by other people.

B.B.R.A.G. has also objected to this proposal on the grounds that it would likely increase the traffic volumes on the A222 Perry Street. We have previously expressed concern about the proposals for developments in Bickley on the same grounds and we oppose any additional developments on the Sidcup to Bromley road until something is done about existing traffic congestion on that route. Although in the case of the Darul Uloom school, any additional traffic may be relatively small, clearly any agreed infringement of the green belt would set a dangerous precedent for the proposals in Bickley.

Note that the relevant planning application was actually rejected at a Planning

Committee Meeting on December 6<sup>th</sup>. (your editor spoke against the proposal). As there is likely to be an appeal or an amended re-application, if you wish to object to this proposal then contact the Chief Planner at Bromley Council, Stockwell Close, Bromley BR1 3UH, quoting reference DC/01/01853.

It is possible the Darul Uloom applicants may feel somewhat discriminated against as there are two other applications to build new secondary schools on Green Belt land within the borough, one of which is actually a Church of England sponsored school. These are in Crown Lane and Magpie Hall Lane. One or the other is likely to get approval apparently. Unfortunately the council themselves are one of the big infringers of green belt areas.

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## London Congestion Charging

Newsletter Number 11 provided some information on the proposed congestion charging scheme for central London. The map below shows the likely boundaries of the scheme.



There have been some recent changes to the proposed scheme, but they are relatively minor. See the web site at [www.streetmanagement.org.uk](http://www.streetmanagement.org.uk) which contains the details - this site is the main Transport for London site and contains

other useful information. They are asking for comments on the latest proposals which can be sent to Transport for London (Congestion Charging Scheme Order Consultation), Freepost LON17507, London, SW1H 0YZ, or by email to [ccs@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:ccs@tfl.gov.uk).

Several newspapers have reported that government ministers are very concerned that the scheme could be a great disaster. With very few of the improvements to public transport likely to be in place before the scheme is implemented, as originally promised in Ken Livingstone's platform for election as mayor, it could be a major political problem if it does not work. For example, residents and businesses near the edge of the zone, could actually suffer major costs and yet also suffer from worse congestion.

In an interview with the Financial Times, transport minister John Spellar suggested that the government may veto the scheme. He said "There will be a proposal put up by the mayor..... The department has to sign off on the question of where the money that arises from the congestion scheme is spent..... There is a power. That is an option we have."

Rumour is that there will likely be a deal whereby the mayor gets his way on funding and control of the Underground, and drops the road charging scheme. For those people who object to paying the £5 congestion charge, there is a new "Stop Ken" web site at [www.stop-ken.com](http://www.stop-ken.com) which enables you to sign a petition.

*Editors Comments: Congestion charging is a good idea in theory, but the practicalities of implementing it in London would be enormously difficult.. Most of the revenue it generates could be consumed in operating costs, with very little benefit resulting.*

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## Bromley Young Driver Training

The Borough of Bromley spends more than many boroughs on the training of young drivers. About 33% of those in the target age group get such training, mainly in Bromley schools.

In fact, from other statistics it is known that young drivers are involved in a disproportionate number of accidents. However Bromley Borough has seen a greater reduction in accident numbers for this category of road user than other boroughs which could well explain why the Boroughs accident statistics have been improving, especially in comparison with others.

As a result the Environmental Services (Ops) Committee recently decided to continue with this investment.

*Editors Comments: A sensible policy, as it's one of the few explanations I have seen why Bromley's accident statistics are improving.*

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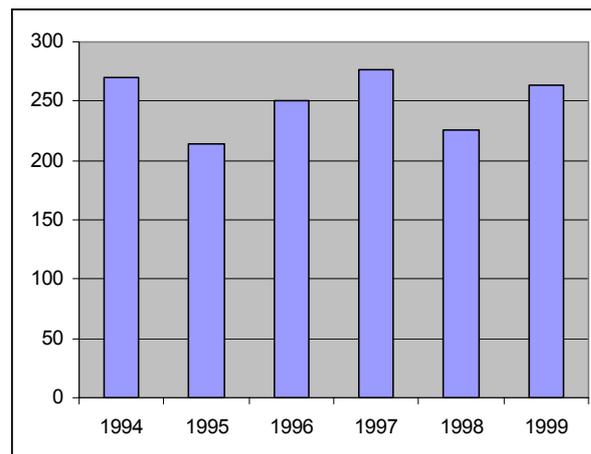
## Speed Camera Update

Following previous articles on the subject of speed cameras, new rules have been published by the Department of Transport regarding their use. John Speller, transport Minister (or "the motorists friend" as he is known according to the Financial Times, not to be confused with Stephen Byers, Secretary of State, who does not drive) said the new rules were to ensure that motorists were "not caught by surprise".

The new rules state they must be visible from 60 yards in lower speed zones, to 100 yards in higher speed zones. All camera housings should be painted bright yellow (unless there are reasons to do otherwise).

The following chart shows the number of fatal accidents in London from 1994 to 1999. The fall from 276 in 1997, to 226 in 1998 is often attributed to the introduction of speed cameras. However, as you can see, this is either a statistically random effect, or if there was an impact, it soon wore off.

**Fatal Accidents in London**



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## Bromley Web Sites

There are now a number of Internet Web Sites that cover aspects of the Borough of Bromley. These include:

[www.bromley.gov.uk](http://www.bromley.gov.uk) The web site for Bromley Council. Fairly comprehensive but not always to be relied on. Incidentally it includes reference to a series of public meetings in January entitled "What do you really want?" where people can tell councillors how they should spend your money - look under "P" for public meetings.

[www.bromley.net.co.uk](http://www.bromley.net.co.uk) Directory of businesses, shops, local services, community information, etc, in Bromley.

[www.thisislocallondon.co.uk/local\\_london/bromley](http://www.thisislocallondon.co.uk/local_london/bromley) Another information or portal site operated by the News Shopper. Also includes local news stories.

[www.beckenham.net](http://www.beckenham.net) Similar to above but covers Beckenham primarily.

<http://rands.holman.org> A site dedicated to Chislehurst called the "Chislehurst Guide". Includes items of local interest, restaurant and pub reviews, etc. Run by local resident Rob Holman on a voluntary basis. Includes a web camera picture of what looks like his back garden if you ever get homesick for a view of Chislehurst while away from home. Lots of other items of interest for Chislehurst residents.

Apparently the Chislehurst Society is also planning to announce their own web site in the near future. Watch this space as they say.

If any readers know of any other relevant web sites then please advise the editor for inclusion in future articles.

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### **Orpington Car Park**

Apparently the multi-story car park on Station Road, Orpington (near the war memorial end of the High St) is likely to be redeveloped, ie. demolished and replaced by something else. Whether it will have less parking capacity than at present (if any) is not clear. There is likely to be more on this in a future edition but if anyone has an interest in this matter please contact the Editor for up-to-date information.

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### **UK Transport "Worst in Europe"**

Yes it's official - the UK now has the worst transport network in Europe. A report recently published by the UK Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT) shows that British people spend longer commuting to work than anyone else, and that we have the worst road congestion. We also have some of the worst quality and most expensive public transport.

To quote from the report: "The evidence ...is a clear but stark demonstration of two generations of neglect, of a transport network starved of investment for half a century. A situation that forced people into their cars whether they wanted to or not. Here in the UK we have fallen a generation behind the best in Europe in planning transport in a holistic way."

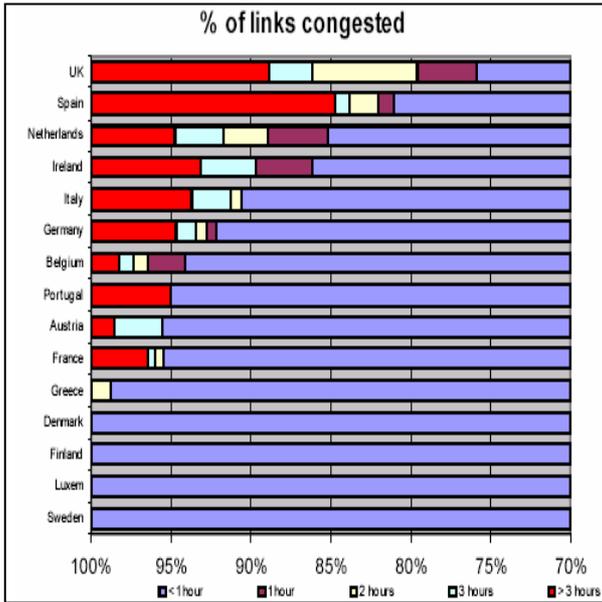
If you are wondering who the CfIT are then see below for more background information. The report is called "European Best Practice in Delivering Integrated Transport".

A few statistics from the report follow. The average UK employee now spends 46 minutes a day commuting - and in the London area it's no doubt considerably higher than the average. A typical bus or rail journey in Britain costs 15% more than in Germany, 60% more than in France and three times as much as in Holland!

On transport investment, Britain spends less than average and much less than France and Germany. As a result, our roads have higher traffic densities than any country other than Spain.

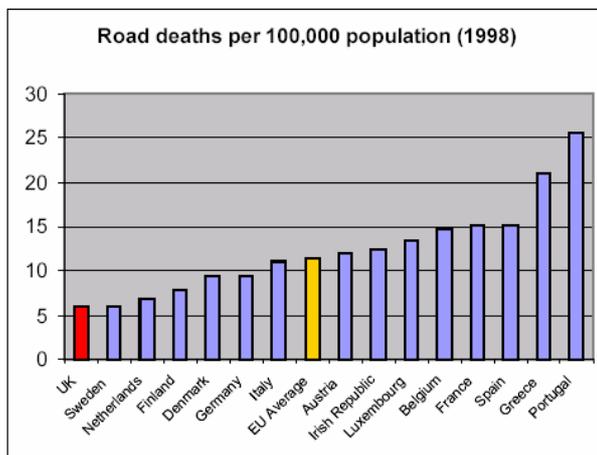
There is one piece of good news though.. The UK has the lowest death toll in the European Union, less than half that of France and Italy.

Let's look at some more details in this report. Firstly take road congestion. The following chart shows the number of well used road links that suffered delays. You can see that the UK was by far the worst with almost a quarter of our roads suffering delays of more than an hour. Countries such as Sweden, Finland or Denmark had no delays at all.



One cause of this high congestion level is that British people make more use of cars than any other European country. A result is the high commuting times mentioned above.

However, road safety in the UK is high as can be seen in the following chart.

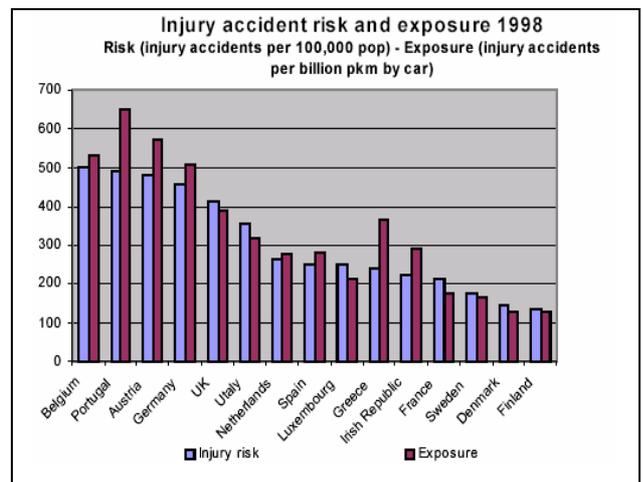


You are less likely to die on the roads in the UK than anywhere else in Europe except Sweden (which is only marginally better). In fact you could drive for 8.1 billion kilometres on average before being killed. The report does not attempt to fully explain our advantage but it mentions policies such as those on seatbelts and drunk driving and strong national political

leadership as reasons (*Editors comment: you can maybe tell this commission was appointed by the government from this statement*).

However, before we all start patting ourselves on the back, you should bear in mind that our record on pedestrians and cyclists is not so good, and you are more than twice as likely to be killed on UK roads than in Sweden or Holland if you are a pedestrian. *Editors comments: part of the reason here is probably accounted for by street drunkenness which, as pointed out in our previous newsletter, is a major cause of accidents involving pedestrians. This is much more rife in the UK than in Sweden for example where the price of alcohol is much higher (more than £5 for a beer on a recent visit I made). Also the separation of pedestrians and cyclists from motor traffic is one of the factors where Holland is probably much better than the UK. Cultural differences to life, and hence driving styles, may also explain some of the differences in road accident statistics as the Swedes are very restrained but the French are notoriously prone to take risks as anyone who has driven in France will tell you.*

The UK is also not particularly good for injury accidents as you can see from the following chart.

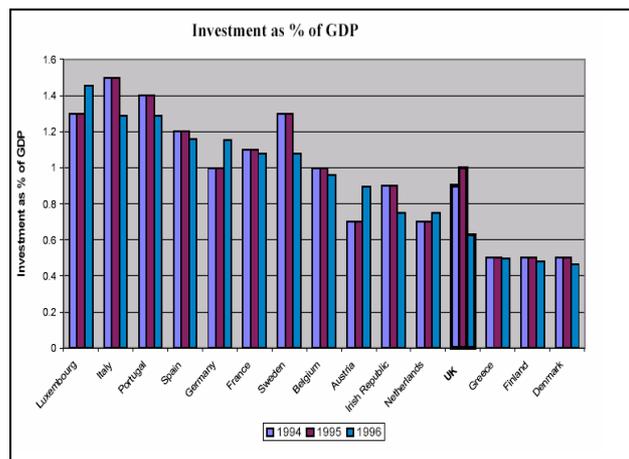


Incidentally, Portugal, which as you can see from the above has one of the worst

safety records, has recently introduced much tougher drink driving laws. Where traditionally the Portuguese consumption of wine was 52 litres per head per year, it has now dropped by 30% leading to major unrest from small farmers who produce the wine (at the previous consumption level most of the population for most of the time must have exceeded the new alcohol limits which are similar to Swedens).

Because of the high dependence on motorised transport, the UK also has a fairly poor atmospheric pollution record.

Households in the UK spend on average 15% of their total expenditure on transport, the third highest in the EU, but our public investment in transport infrastructure is low. As you can see from the following chart, we spent only 0.6% of GDP on transport investment, whereas it was 1.10% in France and 1.15% in Germany.



The UK also comes bottom of the league in respect of public subsidies to bus operators, with the result that bus fares in the UK are the most expensive. One consequence of this is that bus travel has been falling in the UK (at least until very recently) whereas it grew by up to 80% in the rest of Europe over the last 20 years.

Cycle use is also very low in the UK, but it is also declining in most of Europe. Walking distance per capita in the UK was only better than one other country (Greece) and on a par with Spain and Ireland. Interestingly there is evidence that people in wealthier countries walk more (*Ed: maybe they have more time*) but that doesn't include the UK.

One of the key reasons why other countries appear to have cheaper transport with less dependence on the motor car is a more co-ordinated planning policy. For example, development of high density commercial and housing developments with improved street environments that encourage walking. This is an interesting area which the report unfortunately only skates over and does not spell out the key differences.

However it is certainly the case in the UK that there is little area development that is led by local authorities such that transport infrastructure and needs are taken into account at the planning stage. In the UK, most building developments are commercially led and such developers often try to ignore transport issues or minimise the cost or impact of them. One only has to look at Bromley where several developments on the Bromley/Sidcup route are being proposed (see articles in this edition and previous ones) and no account has been taken of the fact that the road transport network is already overloaded.

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### Commission for Integrated Transport

The report described above was published by CfIT and can be obtained in full from their web site at [www.cfit.gov.uk](http://www.cfit.gov.uk). This commission is a quango that was set up a couple of years ago to advise the government on integrated transport.

It also has a brief to review the achievement of objectives set out in the Integrated Transport White Paper and the government's 10 Year Plan for Transport. It also undertakes research into transport and has published a number of reports on transport matters.

CfIT has also set up a "Motorist's Forum" that advises it on issues likely to affect car drivers.

One of the more interesting reports published by CfIT is on "Public Attitudes to Transport in England". This was based on a survey of the public undertaken by MORI. Needless to say that it shows a clear dissatisfaction with public transport services such as trains, underground and buses.

Are people willing to pay higher taxes for an improved public transport system? There was no clear cut answer. Similarly on the question of direct charging for congestion and motorway tolls. However there was considerable concern about the level of road congestion.

Qualitative research revealed mixed reaction to congestion charging. In London, while some welcomed the bold action to do something about the congestion, others were cynical that it would actually improve the situation and many felt that motorists were already charged enough.

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### **Useful Transport Statistics Source**

A web site that contains a lot of useful statistics on transport (road accidents, traffic volumes, aviation, freight, etc) is the following, courtesy of the Department for Transport: [www.transtat.detr.gov.uk](http://www.transtat.detr.gov.uk)

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### **Heathrow Terminal 5 Decision**



As you may have seen in the press, the Government gave the go ahead for another terminal at Heathrow airport, after a long public enquiry. This was opposed by many people including those campaigning against aircraft noise from that airport (HACAN - see [www.hacan.org.uk](http://www.hacan.org.uk) for more details or telephone 020 8876 0455). These were the main objections:

1. Aircraft noise is already a major problem for many London residents.
2. Atmospheric pollution from aircraft, and the motor vehicle traffic generated by the airport, are major problems.
3. Traffic congestion on the M25 and surrounding roads is a problem.

Residents in the northern part of Bromley are now being woken up in the early morning by night flights heading for Heathrow (this started a couple of years ago when flight paths were altered resulting in more planes over southern London). Whether this will get worse remains to be seen as HACAN recently won a European law case on the nuisance such flights cause but apparently the government is to appeal to a higher court.

Atmospheric pollution from Heathrow affects a wide area of London as you can see from looking at a map of the higher density air pollution areas.

What are the implications for the decision to proceed with Terminal 5? Total terminal capacity will rise by 50% and so will passenger numbers. Although there will be a restriction on number of flights (only slightly higher than the current actual level), the increase will likely be accommodated by using larger capacity aircraft. At least that is the theory, although previous flight number limits have regularly been increased and there will be strong pressure for another runway (comment from Friends of the Earth was "any ceiling of 480,000 flights a year set by Mr Byers was not worth the paper it was written on without a formal legal agreement").

Proposals to widen the M25 were turned down. so clearly traffic congestion is likely to get considerably worse, and the proposed extra car parking spaces at the airport were reduced.

The former seems really astonishing as the 30 mile stretch of the M25 around the western side of London is already a parking lot for over 2 hours each morning and evening.

Who will benefit from the new terminal. Firstly British Airways who will mainly occupy it, and secondly BAA who will operate it. Heathrow will retain its popularity as a European gateway for transit passengers, but unfortunately other than the above commercial organisations, hardly anyone else benefits from their usage of the airport.

*Editors Comments: Air pollution and traffic congestion are already major problems in the area and this decision will simply make matters worse. Aircraft noise will surely also increase as everyone doubts that the*

*government will stick to its promise on numbers of flights. The views of London residents have been overridden primarily in the interests of commercial organisations. Overall a poor decision.*

*It will reinforce the use of Heathrow so that one ends up in the ludicrous situation that to get a direct flight to major European capitals such as Stockholm from Bromley, you have to go to Heathrow rather than use Gatwick or Stansted (yes there used to be direct ones from Stansted but they have been stopped).*

*Longer term it just compounds the problem of having the major London airport close to the centre of London and in the middle of a heavily populated area. Many years ago a scheme to build a new airport on Maplin Sands in Essex was devised - this would have avoided many of the noise, pollution and safety problems because the flight paths were mainly over the North Sea, but was ultimately rejected. A pity because it is by far the best solution to the longer term problem of increased airport capacity for London.*

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## **Freedom of Information Act**

Ever had trouble getting information out of a local council (fortunately Bromley are generally very helpful), central government or the police? Then you should note that last year a law was passed called the Freedom of Information Act which guarantees you access to most information they hold (there are a few exceptions to protect individual confidentiality, etc, but not many).

Now the bad news - this Act has an extended implementation schedule and everyone seems to be dragging their feet on the subject so it's not yet much use. For more information, see the Data Protection Office - web site ([www.dataprotection.gov.uk](http://www.dataprotection.gov.uk)) or the Campaign for Freedom of Information ([www.cfoi.org.uk](http://www.cfoi.org.uk)).

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## Electronic Editions of Newsletter

This newsletter can be supplied in electronic form as a PDF document and on cost grounds we would encourage all recipients to take it in that form in future as it saves BBRAG considerable printing and postage costs. Anyone who can receive email should be able to receive and view the document in this form - a note in the following "Contact Information" section explains how to read PDF documents in case you are not familiar with them.

Not only will you get the newsletter more quickly, but it will also be in colour (our print runs do not yet justify the cost of colour printing but many of the diagrams and pictures are in colour). Internet links are also easier to access as you will no longer need to type them in. You would also be able to easily pass it on to friends (but see the reproduction and forwarding limitations in the next section).

If you would like to receive the BBRAG newsletter via email in future then simply send an email requesting this to [roger.lawson@btclick.com](mailto:roger.lawson@btclick.com)

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## Contact Information

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Contact either of the above for information on the aims and objectives of B.B.R.A.G. or for membership information (membership costs £7.50 per annum for individuals, or £50 for corporate membership). B.B.R.A.G. would be happy to advise or assist anyone who is concerned about any traffic, transport or road safety issues in the borough.

Where this Newsletter is supplied in electronic form (e.g. as a PDF file via email), then you are permitted to pass it on to up to 5 additional readers without charge. In the case of corporate members, the Newsletter may be copied or forwarded to all staff members.

If you would prefer to receive this Newsletter in electronic form (via email as a PDF document which can be read by the free Adobe Acrobat reader), then please contact the Editor on the above email address. Apart from saving B.B.R.A.G. significant costs in printing and postage, you will gain a number of advantages such as seeing the pictures and diagrams in colour and being able to click on the internet links to go directly to the referenced information. The Adobe Acrobat reader can be downloaded from [www.adobe.com/products/acrobat](http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat)

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