



BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 32 (February 2005)

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Editorial

This edition covers several articles on how Ken Livingstone is increasingly influencing the lives of Londoners. With more congestion charging, more speed cameras, more centralised control of the road network, new cycling policies and new taxi regulations - and only the last one really seems to be of much benefit to your editor. Note also that where he could have done some good by rejecting the proposed Tesco development in Orpington, he has chosen not to do so because it was in general agreement with the "London Plan". It even has indirect impacts where local boroughs are increasingly relying on parking charges to raise money for transport improvements because they can't get funding from TfL, and the rise in the GLA precept is inhibiting sorely needed local expenditure.

Unfortunately, and as previously covered in this Newsletter, Ken's big idea for London is more people, more business, more transport, more housing, more shops - in fact more of everything.

But even local councillors are now starting to say that you can't do things like rapidly increasing new house construction without improving the supporting infrastructure. If you do then the environment is significantly eroded with more pollution, worse traffic congestion, overcrowded public transport, inadequate medical facilities, and lots of other problems.

In fact, London residents are experiencing these problems more and more, and Bromley residents are seeing erosion of open space and their quality of life as the area becomes more like one of the inner London boroughs.

Is that what London residents voted for when they elected Ken Livingstone? I doubt it. But the crunch is coming as the Greater London Assembly has threatened to reject Ken's budget for the next financial year (which would result in a further increase of over 7% in his "precept" leading to a significant increase in council taxes). It's good to see that at last some democratic control over the Mayor's financial profligacy is being exercised.

Roger Lawson, Editor

Congestion Charge Rising to £8



Ken Livingstone has announced that he is proposing to increase the London Congestion Charge from £5 to £8 per day.

Despite the apparent success of the scheme in reducing traffic (it fell more than expected), which clearly indicates the £5 charge is deterring drivers, he desires to increase it by 60%. His justification was "I am proposing one large increase in this Mayoral term to maintain the effectiveness of the charge and raise additional revenues to further reduce congestion as part of Transport for London's £10 billion, 5 year investment programme".

If you are wondering what that means, you should bear in mind that the scheme is now only generating about £60 million in net revenue when it was originally forecast to generate over £200 million. Basically it's too expensive to collect the money with operating costs much higher than expected (Capita, the operators have had to be bribed with extra cash). Also the cut in visitors has reduced the income from the charge and has hurt businesses such as retailers in the capital, while evasion has been worse than expected. The price increase will generate an extra £50 to £60 million on TfL forecasts.

Ken's Only Tax

In fact, the Congestion Charge is the sole tax over which the Mayor has control. But as reported in our last edition, he has just raised £3 billion in loans to fund transport schemes. However these debts are not guaranteed by the government, so the credit worthiness of these loans depends on Congestion Charge Revenue. In other words, he needs a profitable Congestion Charge "Tax" to obtain the loans.

There are some minor discounts introduced with the new charge, but no major improvements which many people wanted to see such as reduced hours, and concessions for certain groups of people and occasional trips.

Consultation in Name Only Again?

The change will go to public consultation, but if it's like the proposed extension to West London, any negative feedback will be ignored.

(Editor's Comments: Ken Livingstone is welching on his previous promise to keep the charge at a reasonable level and it's more apparent than ever that this is simply a tax to fund more of Ken's lunatic policies than a sound economic strategy. London streets are already crowded with buses that run mostly empty which results in a deficit of £1 billion per annum, while visitors and businesses are being driven out of the capital. This is not a way to solve London's transport problems, more a way of pouring money down the drain. And now all Londoners will be in hock to international financiers for many years to come as a result of his policies.)

Note that Ken Livingstone will be appearing before a Greater London Assembly Transport Committee meeting on the 8th February (for which there will be a live "webcast") and you can submit suggested questions to danny.myers@london.gov.uk. You can also submit comments before the end of February directly to the consultation process by emailing to: CChargeConsultation@tfl.gov.uk. Please make sure you do so!

Congestion Charging for Bromley?

London Transport supremo, Bob Kiley, has revealed a plan to extend congestion charging over a much wider area of London, using new technology. The plan is to issue drivers with an electronic tag for their car which identifies their vehicle, and charge them when they pass a beacon which picks up a signal from the tag.

This would enable more flexible charging on certain roads or only at certain hours, and be cheaper to operate, but would of course need backing up by a camera system to cover evasion, or those not registered with the system.

TfL staff have already been experimenting with such a system on the edge of the existing Congestion Charging zone.

The London Evening Standard ran this story as if congestion charging was to be extended from "Bromley to Brent Cross", but whether that is the intention or not is unclear. Ken Livingstone has previously explicitly denied such proposals were on the agenda.

(Editor's Comments: Technically this scheme may be an improvement on the existing system which is horrendously expensive to operate and totally inflexible. However more details are needed, particularly on the proposed area coverage, before a considered opinion can be given. There seems little justification for a congestion charging scheme in any part of Bromley, where congestion only occurs at peak hours and on certain roads - and charging on those roads alone would simply divert traffic down back roads).

London Taxi Clean-Up



Mayor Ken Livingstone has announced new regulations that will require London's "black" cabs to meet new

emission standards by 2007. Taxis are responsible for 24% of fine particulate pollution and 12% of nitrogen dioxide in central London. Taxis will require to be modified to meet the new standards and fares will rise by 20 pence to cover those costs.

Note that fine particulates (PM10s) are known to be a serious health hazard as they exacerbate existing respiratory problems and can cause cancer.

(Editor's Comments: It seems likely that with the number of taxis and buses rising in central London following the introduction of the Congestion Charge, that this problem has actually worsened of late. Unfortunately we are still awaiting some full data on pollution changes from the Mayor which seem to have been deliberately delayed. However, the improvement to taxis is well overdue and is a welcome change, when few people will begrudge the cost. Note that this scheme is part of the proposed "Low Emission Zone" for central London which your Editor welcomes. It has been known for a long time that much of the pollution in central London comes from commercial vehicles such as taxis, buses, HGVs and LGVs whereas the private motorist usually wrongly gets the blame. Private cars have vastly improved in terms of pollution in the last few years, but commercial vehicles have been lagging behind. A particular problem with taxis and buses is that they are run for many years, ie. their life is often longer than that of private cars, with the result that there are many old, grossly polluting vehicles on London's roads that do not meet the emission standards for new taxis.)

More Speed Cameras Rejected



Councillor George Taylor turned down proposals from Transport for London (TfL) for several more speed cameras on Bromley roads.

Mr Taylor is the cabinet member for the Environment and his responsibilities include traffic and road safety issues. TfL and the London Safety Camera Partnership (LSCP) proposed 30 sites for consideration which local council staff reduced to 5 after studying the accident data (mainly because exceeding the speed limit "was not the major factor in accident causation"). However George Taylor rejected even those 5.

The report to Mr Taylor contained the usual erroneous information that there is a link between speed cameras and accident reduction. In addition it claimed there was widespread public support for speed cameras, which is simply not true (the results of surveys on this subject by safety camera partnerships almost always ask a grossly "leading" question).

Red, Amber, Green or White?

One interesting note in the report is that existing speed camera sites are categorised as red, amber, green or white. The red sites, where most accidents are still occurring, have their films replaced most regularly. White sites may not have a camera in them at all, but just a dummy flasher unit. Clearly the fact that there are red sites rather suggests that speed cameras are not the panacea claimed, or there would not be any accidents of course. And the white sites - clearly they do not need speed cameras because they don't have them at present!

George Taylor was quoted in the local papers as saying "The original purpose of speed cameras has been eroded by the fact that too often they have been used for raising cash from drivers rather than preventing accidents. Indeed, across the country road deaths have increased, despite the now widespread use of speed cameras, according to Department of Transport statistics".

But note that three cameras will still be installed in the borough on Bromley Common (near Hook Farm Road) and on Tweedy Road as these are TfL controlled roads over which the local council has no say.

(Editor's Comments: Hurrah for common sense and congratulations to Mr Taylor for standing up to criticism from those people whose prejudices overwhelm their sight of the facts. One only has to study the accident statistics for the 9 existing cameras in Bromley to see that they are a total waste of money. There is no evidence that they have reduced accidents by a statistically significant extent, and the money wasted on these devices would have been much better spent elsewhere. In fact, one reason why Bromley has a better record on road safety improvement than many other London boroughs is because it now chooses to spend the scarce funds that are available on sensible and practical road safety measures rather than rely on the unscientific claims of a small minority that speed cameras work.

Speed cameras do not work which is why road deaths went up in the UK last year despite millions of pounds of expenditure in building them, and the costs of convicting motorists who are innocent of any real crime. As one of the few drivers who has never collected any penalty points, I suspect it won't be long before I do so from this random, pseudo-tax on otherwise law abiding citizens. Let's spend the money on something useful instead I say.)

Recognition in the Local Press

Incidentally your editor received a prize for the "star letter" on this subject in the Newsshopper in the December 29th issue. The text was as above.

It is also worth pointing out that some subsequent correspondents claimed there was "independent" proof in a report published by University College London (UCL) that speed cameras save lives. Firstly that report was hardly independent as it was commissioned and published by the Department for Transport, after they had already decided that speed cameras were a good idea. Secondly anyone who has studied the report who knows much about statistics and the scientific method will have realised that the evidence on which it is based is hogwash as it contains numerous mistakes).

TfL Takeover Bid for Bromley Roads

Another proposal from Transport for London (TfL) that was rejected by Councillor George Taylor was the inclusion of certain Bromley roads in a "strategic road network". This would mean that responsibility for those roads would transfer to TfL from the London Borough of Bromley.

TfL already control such roads as the A21, but they wish to assume responsibility for many more roads in London under the Traffic Management Act, but most local authorities in London oppose this extension of centralised control and tend to see it as yet another example of Ken Livingstone's empire building.

Roads proposed for transfer were those such as the A212 Crystal Palace Parade and A224 Sevenoaks Way/Orpington ByPass. But as TfL seem to have a poor record of consulting local authorities in the past about their roads, such a change is opposed by local traffic engineering staff.

(Editor's Comments: Again Mr Taylor is to be supported on this decision as transferring control to TfL would undermine democracy. TfL are a centralised bureaucracy who seem immune to public comment, and rarely take notice of public consultation even when they do it. They lack local knowledge and are democratically unaccountable and organisationally opaque. TfL should work with local boroughs to establish a strategic network, not try and take it over).

Bromley Parking Charges



Bromley has undertaken an annual review of parking charges. It is proposed to apply a small increase to "The Hill" car park in the town centre and make other minor adjustments elsewhere. The large car

park at the rear of shops in Burnt Ash Lane which is currently free will now become a "pay and display" one. It seems that although there is normally spare space, there have been some complaints that employees of the Toyota garage are now parking there all day.

(Editor's Comments: Of course this is the direct result of the fact that a permit parking scheme was introduced in the roads to the rear of the garage where they previously parked, which just demonstrates that all permit parking schemes do is to move the parking problems elsewhere).

Another proposal is to introduce parking enforcement by television cameras in Bromley Market Square. Currently people park in an area reserved for goods vehicle unloading or in bus stop bays, thus creating problems. It seems that on average 8 vehicles an hour stop there for a short period. By introducing such cameras and the automatic issue of penalty notices, income of £72,000 per annum is expected.

It is also intended to enforce the bus lane in St. Mary Cray with CCTV - net revenue estimated to be £110,500 (although there was no apparent evidence of excessive infringement).

It is also proposed to introduce new "Pay and Display" schemes near the railway stations at Rectory Road, Beckenham and Upper Elmers End Road, Elmers End to improve "turnover of parking spaces". In total all the above changes will increase council net income (ie. after operating costs) by £428,000 per annum. Set up costs will be £104,000.

(Editor's Comments: These changes may sound relatively trivial, but in summary it adds up to almost half a million pounds a year being taken out of the pockets of Bromley residents, with no obvious benefits as a result. The charges being made do not simply cover the cost of operating the schemes and providing enforcement, but generate a substantial profit for the council. It's a fairly typical example of how and why parking charges across London are increasing rapidly).

Permanent Park & Ride for Bromley?

A temporary "park & ride" bus service over the Christmas period has been operated from Norman Park to Bromley town centre for the last few years. It is now being considered whether a permanent similar service could be operated from north of the town centre in Downham, in partnership with the borough of Lewisham.

Suitable sites are being considered. If it was a success then introducing a permanent site to the south of Bromley might also be looked at.

(Editor's Comments: It seems a good idea so as to relieve traffic congestion so long as it can cover its costs. However the report proposing this idea also states that it would require a "comprehensive access strategy including parking restraints in the town centre, bus priority on approach roads and extensive promotion". BBRAG is certainly likely to oppose any further reduction in town centre parking as we believe that the "stick" rather than the "carrot" approach is a bad idea and it would of course affect everyone who uses the town centre, not just those people who live to the north. BBRAG has objected repeatedly to the consistent advocacy of parking reduction in Bromley by council staff and this is yet another example of trying to introduce such policies without public consultation and without public support).

Driving is Good For You

According to a recent research report published by the Medical Research Council, driving is good for you. Researcher Anne Ellaway reported that car owners have better general health and increased psychological well-being, than people who use public transport.

Now you may jump to the conclusion that this result is not surprising because car owners are presumably more wealthy than public transport users, and the wealthier are known to be healthier and to live longer. But Ms Ellaway found her results were true even after she had adjusted for the effects of age, social class and income.

It seems that the effects result from women having more security and sense of control of their lives, and in men from having more self-esteem. To quote from the comments of Ms Ellaway who intends to continue the research: "It showed that there is something about cars that is fundamentally good for people's health and we should know more about that".

Gated Communities and Private Roads



Residents of Chislehurst may have noticed that the gates at the top of Camden Park Road (picture above) have now been closed to vehicular traffic, so that access can only be obtained by residents. Gates were constructed at either end of the road in 2001, and initially were subject to a planning permission condition that they must remain open, but that condition was subsequently dropped on legal grounds.

However, there have been numerous objections to the closure as many people argue that there was a long established use of the road as a public highway. However, like many roads in the borough, it is an "unadopted" private road, ie. residents maintain the road at their own cost rather than the council.

Mr Hucklesby of Camden Park Estate Ltd (the resident's maintenance company) claims that the council have taken legal advice, and that the Chief Executive wrote to him saying that on those grounds they could close the gates. However, it seems that the council may now be undertaking a further legal review of this case (it is a complex legal area).

Mr Hucklesby has also argued that the road has experienced several accidents, burglaries and other "anti-social" behaviour, but of course this is a complaint that many other residents of Bromley have of late. He has also suggested to your editor that the council wishes to turn it into a bus route, although that seems rather unlikely.

There was a previous example of the closure of a private road to form a "gated community" in nearby Raggleswood (off Old Hill). Clearly this

approach could spread to other private roads if not controlled.

(Editor's Comments: Without wishing to prejudge the legal merits of this case, it does seem to me that this road is very different to Raggleswood, which is a cul-de-sac and has a public house near the exit, and that Camden Park Road should be maintained as a public highway for vehicles. For example, it inconveniences users of the golf club, trades people who have to take a circuitous route, and others. In any case, there are arguments against the establishment of private "gated communities" in general which can be socially divisive. It would seem to me that if the council wishes to put a stop to this trend then they should simply use their compulsory powers to "adopt" the road, or threaten to do so.)

Transport Watch Web Site



A new web site called Transport Watch has recently been set up by Paul Withrington. He is a former transport planner for

Northamptonshire County Council. The site (see <http://www.transport-watch.co.uk>), primarily compares road versus rail and gives lots of hard facts and data that explain why rail transport has been oversold.

For example, it shows that rail transport safety is a misnomer (this was covered in one of our previous Newsletters, but the data Mr Withrington supplies is even more comprehensive and he has clearly studied the issue in a lot more depth).

The site also covers the comparative costs of road versus rail, and points out that on rail, a London to Birmingham round trip is subsidised by the taxpayer at between £64 and £132, and still costs the passenger between £20 and £44, whereas an express coach fare costs as little as £3.

Replace Rail Tracks by Roads?

In fact Mr Withrington goes so far as to argue that all rail tracks should be dug up and replaced by dedicated bus lanes as they would be cheaper to operate and have higher capacity.

(Editor's Comments: This web site is well worth a visit, and it's good to see that someone has taken on the job of educating the public more widely about the gross distortions in transport economics in the UK caused by the promoters of rail transport).

South Eastern Trains

A good example of the poor economics of railway transport is of course that of London commuter lines which typically have customers with no practical alternative means of transport and where fare rises consistently beat inflation, but which still lose money. London commuters are probably well aware that Connex Southeast were sacked due to poor performance. The publicly owned company that replaced them has just produced its first set of accounts that show that it required £50.7m in subsidy in the first five months of operation, ie. about £10m per month. That compares with a subsidy of about £6m per month paid to Connex. Staff numbers have apparently gone up by 18% with a similar hike in the wage bill. But more trains now run on time.

Cycling in London



The title above would have been a good name for a report just published by Transport for London (TfL) but instead they chose to call it a "Review of Procedures Associated with the Development and Delivery of

Measures Designed to Improve Safety and Convenience for Cyclists". In fact the whole report, all 140 pages of it including covering notes, is one of the worst examples of indigestible and long winded civil service verbiage. But the following is a condensed summary of what it says.

The report was written by TRL Ltd and its commissioning seems to have been prompted by the death of cyclist Vicki McCreery on Blackfriars Bridge last year.

In this case she was in a new cycle lane which runs between two lanes of traffic (the left hand lane turning off to the left) which has been criticised for being dangerous. She was hit by a vehicle changing lanes.

Although clearly one should not downplay such a tragic accident, there are in fact at least five other sites in London where such cycle lanes are present to the right of traffic lanes. These schemes were introduced over 15 years ago and TRL found no evidence that there appeared to be any exceptional numbers or types of accidents at those sites.

In addition, this accident was the only fatal casualty on any London bridge between 2000 and 2003.

Speed of Traffic on Bridges No Problem

Road traffic speed was also measured on all the London Bridges and was found to be less than 30 mph in all cases, and indeed less than 20 mph except on Waterloo Bridge, although it was typically higher than surrounding London roads where it is now only 9.4 mph (congestion occurs on approaches to bridges whereas the bridges themselves are often free flowing). Tower Bridge already has a 20 mph speed limit imposed.

But the lack of evidence of any pervasive problem hasn't stopped TRL recommending, and TfL considering, a blanket 20 mph speed limit on all London bridges.

Road Hierarchy to be Reconsidered?

TRL also suggested that the proposed road hierarchy categories for the strategic road network be reconsidered as they might disfavour cyclists on strategic routes (which include the London bridges of course). At present strategic routes are presumed to be primarily for "distribution" whereas other roads are more for "access and amenity". As a result the policy is now "being reconsidered in favour of an approach which will instead adopt a 'hierarchy of consideration' recognising the sustainability and vulnerability of different modes.". *(Editor's Comments: What this means and what the implications are, I have no idea).*

Cycle Lanes Have No Obvious Benefit

One thing that TRL did was to review the effectiveness of different road engineering measures that are used to protect cyclists. There was no statistically significant evidence that the cycle lanes studied in London had any safety benefit whatsoever. But there was a suggestion in the report that there is such evidence from elsewhere.

But other measures such as signalised crossings, as at Hyde Park Corner were shown to be effective. But the report also pointed out that as no measurements of cycle traffic flow had been taken, that these statistics were in effect useless and could not be relied upon to draw any conclusion. (*Editor's Comments: I suggest you do the same*).

More Money to be Spent Anyway

Despite the lack of any obvious problem highlighted by the Blackfriars case, and the lack of sound evidence that any cycle road safety measures had any benefit, the Mayor is proposing to spend 40% more in 2005/6 on improving the safety and convenience of cycling in London.

Comments on Consultation

Note though that the proposals will at least include improvements to public consultation processes on cycle schemes. As the TRL report says "*Consultation with stakeholders is made more difficult by what is consistently considered by key stakeholders to be the impenetrable structure of Surface Transport.*" (*Editor's Comments: To put it more succinctly, you simply can't figure out who is responsible for what at TfL and letters or emails to TfL are repeatedly lost or simply ignored*).

Oh and incidentally the reports writers consulted the usual anti-car pressure groups like Transport 2000 and Friends of the Earth but no motorists groups, which is pretty typical of the general approach by TfL of late.

Blackfriars Bridge Cycle Lane

It is good to see that the Blackfriars Bridge cycle lane is to be reviewed and probably changed as it seems likely that the accident there was caused by the particular design that was used or is otherwise "site specific".

The full TfL report can be downloaded from the TfL web site at www.tfl.gov.uk

Bromley Common and Consultation



Transport for London (TfL) are proposing to reduce the speed limit from 40 mph to 30 mph on Bromley Common, past Bromley College (see picture above). They give no reason, although this is now bracketed by 30 mph zones and has poor accident record. However, BBRAg believes that the new limit will not be adhered to and that such unrealistic limits should not be set. This is the final step of the creeping reduction of speeds on a major route into Bromley (the A21). It would have been better to revert the Hastings Road stretch to 40 mph and properly enforce that. As it is, the new 30 mph limit will have to be enforced by speed cameras which just shows that nobody believes people will stick to it.

Outrageous Ignoring of Public Consultation

A particular outrageous aspect of this proposal is that the new limit has been imposed even before the public consultation has been completed. New signs indicating the 30 mph zone have been installed and the previous 40 mph signs covered up as shown in the photographs below (taken on 29/1/2005).

This surely demonstrates that TfL have no intention of paying any attention whatsoever to the results of the public consultation. Yet another example of their undemocratic attitude.



If you wish to object to this change, send a letter to Transport for London, Street Management, Windsor House, 42-50 Victoria St, London SW1H 0TL before the 17th February, quoting reference TASS/AD/SF-TO, GLA/2005/009.



News Snapshots

Sundry news in the last few weeks that is worth a mention is as follows:

+ Correction: In our last edition in the article on "New Ideas for Setting Speed Limits" it referred to "directors" when it should have said "drivers". There is no presumption that company directors have any more knowledge of what is a reasonable speed than anyone else!

+ Note that at the BBRAG AGM held before Christmas, Peter Appleby stood down as Chairman but remains on the Executive Committee. Roger Lawson takes over the role of Chairman, but has relinquished the role of Secretary to Malcolm Stilwell. Des Andrews was also elected to the Executive Committee. Our thanks go to Peter for his work as Chairman over the last few years.

+ An extensive speed hump scheme in Port Talbot is being removed after a campaign by local residents (no legal issues in doing so apparently!) and a prospective scheme of almost 100 humps in South Walney, Cumbria has been abandoned due to local opposition. Just two recent examples of democracy killing off speed humps.

+ The Association of British Drivers (ABD) has called for an end to "Britain's self inflicted parking nightmare". They claim that anti-car pressure groups have persuaded the government to make parking progressively more inconvenient and expensive. For example Transport 2000, a campaign group largely funded by bus companies, have stated that if you "take away the parking space at the end of the journey, you take away the car journey". Changes in planning policy and decriminalised parking enforcement that enable local authorities to make a profit from parking are the ways these policies are being implemented. The ABD complains that government policy is deliberately making life more difficult for the electorate, rather than improving it.

(Editor's Comments: I wholeheartedly agree. There is no justification for this persecution of motorists which typically does not change car user's behaviour but just causes them more expense and inconvenience. Less "social engineering" and more attention to what people want is what this country needs. If the electorate was asked to vote for the existing policies, they wouldn't do so, but they were never consulted).

+ An initial report from the Unitary Development Plan Inspector has been produced and is available on the Bromley Council web site. It only covers housing and green belt issues (transport, where BBAG made a number of submissions, will not be available for another three months). The main point that inspector Mrs Ava Wood seemed to make was that new housing completions in Bromley are running well behind those laid down by the Mayor's London Plan (about 600 per year instead of 1000 per year) and that the UDP proposals were unlikely to change matters. She wanted stronger commitment to locate and develop new sites, and as Bromley has few "brownfield" sites this might require a more flexible attitude to "Metropolitan Open Space" or "Major Developed Sites" within green belt. These recommendations are relevant to the Ravensbourne College site for example.

(Editor's Comments: Of course there is no provision in the UDP for any improvement in the transport facilities or other infrastructure to support the additional housing, but she brushed that issue aside. She also seemed to consider that long standing and prudent planning regulations that prevent inappropriate development and which are one reason why Bromley is falling behind housing targets should be overridden).

+ Council tax may increase by over 10% in 2005/2006, based on outline budgets. This follows above inflation increases for many prior years. What's the excuse this time? Simple cost inflation adds 3.1% but increased staff pension contributions add 0.5%, and increased education funding dictated by central government adds 1.5%. The final outcome depends on the level of central government funding, and Bromley looks like it will get no increase to support general inflation, unlike most other councils.

Note that the increase in the cost of London Transport fares (see last Newsletter) also results in a 0.4% increase in Bromley's budgets. The reason for this is because local authorities pay for "Freedom Passes" granted to their residents. Freedom Passes provide free travel to the over 60s and disabled people, but if the fares go up, then the subsidy by the local council goes up also.

+ The City of Kingston-upon-Hull, who have been covered in a previous Newsletter for their false claims on the benefits of their traffic calming schemes, have just come bottom of the governments council performance ratings. In fact they were the only council rated "poor" overall in 2004 out of 150 and only scored 3 out of 5 for their Environment department. This city contains the constituency of Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott of course.

(Editor's Comments: Perhaps if they stopped wasting enormous amounts of money on ineffective speed hump schemes, they could improve matters elsewhere).

+ London Transport Commissioner Bob Kiley, has been awarded a new contract that may be worth up to £600,000 per year including bonuses, for the next 4 years. He also occupies a rent free home in Belgravia which is worth £2 million. Mr Kiley is already well past normal retiring age at 69, but Ken Livingstone seems to think he is doing a good job.

+ The Thames Gateway Bridge has been given planning permission, but environmental activists under the heading of "Action Group Against the Bridge" led by a Mr and Mrs Wise have called for a public inquiry. Their major complaint seems to be that it will not be pleasant to walk or cycle over the bridge according to a letter to the local Newshopper paper.

+ Note that subsequent to writing the above, the Government Office for London has "called in" the planning application which means there will be a public inquiry. This could result in a year or two's delay if not a complete abandonment of the project. *(Editor's Comments: A great shame as this bridge is urgently required, and was indeed promised "soon" to residents of Thamesmead when I lived there 30 years ago).*

+ Residents of Liverpool Road, Islington are demanding that the council tears up the speed humps. Christine Bogdan was reported as saying: *"I agree with slowing the traffic down but the humps are not working. The lorries don't slow down at all, they go over them as if they are not there. Accidents are happening because people haven't got full control of their vehicles. I have seen motorcyclists fall off into the path of oncoming traffic in wet weather."* (Editor's Comments: *The latter problem was the exact cause of a recent fatality in Australia after a motorcyclist hit a speed hump*).

+ The RAC Foundation have recently published a report that suggests that traffic congestion is costing the UK £20 billion per year. This is due to wasted working time, fuel and other costs. With traffic forecast to grow by another 50% by 2031 and the government's apparent "lack of commitment" to improving the road network, they forecast that gridlock will result. More than 90% of all passenger travel is by car, with rail only accounting for 6.5%, and they would like to see the government commit to spending £2bn a year on road improvements.

+ Beckenham resident Greg Algar managed to escape a fine for driving with fog lights on when the police claimed there was no fog. But he had to go to court to get the fixed penalty notice thrown out. (Editor's Comments: *He may have been right in this case, but readers are reminded that using fog lights when there is no fog is illegal. Because fog lights are low set they can easily dazzle on-coming traffic and should not be used when there is no fog.. Fog lights should not be used just because it is night time, or when it is raining, or simply as a "fashion statement" which seems to be the modern trend*).

+ A kerb build-out on Orpington High Street next to the entrance to Priory Park and opposite the office blocks is being proposed. This is being advocated to stop illegal parking, although BBRAG has opposed it on the grounds that it would narrow the road from two lanes to one and cause additional traffic congestion (particularly when traffic backs up from queues further down the High Street as it sometimes does).

+ The Greater London Assembly Scrutiny on Parking in London is actually covered on the

following web site (not that mentioned in our last edition). Please submit your comments to: <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/scrutiny/parking.jsp> There was an interesting article in the Sunday Telegraph on Jan 23rd covering the experiences of residents in Balham (part of the London Borough of Lambeth). Residents voted for a permit parking scheme "because we felt it would reduce traffic". (Editor's Comment: *How wrong can you be?*). They soon discovered the result was harassment by the council's parking contractor, who has a performance based contract (ie. they were penalised if they didn't meet ticket targets). Allegations included being ticketed because vehicles were parked on a white bay line rather than within it, ticketing of people delivering goods, and totally spurious tickets being issued. (Editor's Comments: *As usual, unreasonable behaviour is the result of councils desire to collect as much money as possible*).



BBRAG Background Information

The Bromley Borough Roads Action Group (B.B.R.A.G.) stands for a more democratic and more rational approach to the traffic management problems of the London Borough of Bromley. Our initial formation some years ago was based on opposition to the kind of traffic calming scheme that was being introduced in the borough that simply caused more traffic congestion, and general inconvenience to road users, without any significant benefit in terms of road accident reductions. In fact, the money wasted on such schemes could have been much better spent on actual improvements to road safety in other areas. We now take a more general interest in all transport and associated environmental issues in the borough of Bromley and the greater London area. This includes traffic management schemes, public transport, road safety, parking policies, air pollution, other transport environmental issues such as noise, and associated local and central government policies. Our prime objective is to promote improvements in the transport infrastructure while stopping wasted expenditure on unpopular, ineffective or inappropriate policies.

Contact Information

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B.B.R.A.G. Chairman and Newsletter Editor: Roger Lawson (Tel: 020-8467-2686, fax: 020-8295-0378, Email: roger.lawson@btclick.com). Contact the above for information on the aims and objectives of B.B.R.A.G. or for membership information (membership costs £9.50 per annum for individuals, or £7.50 if you opt to receive our Newsletter via email, 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.

Our internet web address is:

<http://www.bromleytransport.org.uk> . This contains much useful information including articles extracted from our newsletters. It also contains a "News" page which is updated regularly with items of topical interest.

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