



# BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 34 (June 2005)

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## *Editorial*

*This edition contains an interesting contribution from one of our members who is a police officer. Otherwise we have more information on speed cameras, and their lack of effectiveness in cutting road deaths, plus our first article is on the alternative (SIDs) to cut traffic speed without penalizing sensible members of the public.*

*We have a final report on the long drawn out, and expensive, saga of the Bromley Unitary Development plan. But the first of no doubt many reports on the public inquiry into the Thames Gateway bridge - it will also surely be a long and expensive exercise. As always we invite comments from readers for future publication in our "letters" section.*

*Roger Lawson, Editor*

## **Speed Indicator Devices in Bromley**



Bromley has been relatively quick to adopt the use of Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) - above is a picture of a mobile one placed on Leeson Hill. The latest published Road Safety Plan for Bromley contains an interesting analysis of research into their effectiveness.

The effect of using a SID at three locations (Bourne Lane, Hayes Lane and Wickham Road - all known accident black spots) was monitored. Although the average traffic speed reductions were quite small, the percentage exceeding the 30 mph speed limit fell by 6%, 23% and 12% respectively in the three locations.

The impact on Hayes Lane was particularly good with the number of vehicles exceeding 35 mph falling by 50% (the road is wide enough that people possibly needed the reminder that it is not a 40 mph zone).

A survey of local residents and council staff also confirmed that most motorists appear to slow down and drivers confirmed that mainly they did so although there was a feeling that the effect wore off over time (but data on this was not collected and DfT research suggests otherwise).

*(Editor's Comment: Clearly a worthwhile and relatively low cost measure that should be continued with).*

### **TV Appearance by George Taylor**



Councillor George Taylor appeared on BBC local television on the 30<sup>th</sup> March expounding the merits of SIDs versus speed cameras. Chris Lines, Head of Road Safety at TfL also appeared criticising Bromley for blocking the installation of more speed cameras.

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### **Speed Camera Fines Rise**



According to recently published Home Office statistics, speed camera fines in the UK rose by 44% to 1.8 million in 2003. This compares with a rise in road deaths from 3408 to 3431.

At the same time, the number of breath tests fell in 2003 to its lowest figure for a decade, while the number of people who died in drink-related accidents was the highest for seven years at 560.

The latter statistic is a symptom of the fact that traffic police are being reduced, with increasing reliance being placed on speed cameras to improve road safety and driver behaviour. In reality, driver behaviour seems to be getting worse. Whereas pedestrian accidents are falling, driver and motorcyclist accidents are rising.

*(Editor's Comment: This highlights quite plainly that the enormous investment put into enforcing speed limits is simply being wasted. It is obvious from this and other statistics that reducing accidents is not about simplistic solutions and targeting one aspect of driver behaviour is a not a panacea. But the Government bureaucrats, and particularly politicians who like simple arguments, are still not taking this evidence on board).*

### **The First Large Public Protest Against Speed Cameras**

As evidence of the increasing annoyance by the general public against this random and pointless criminalisation of drivers, the first large public protest against speed cameras took place on the M4 on Saturday April 30<sup>th</sup>. Some four hundred vehicles drove along a stretch of the M4 where mobile speed cameras are being deployed for the first time.

The organiser was Robin Sumerhill, a 52-year-old housing consultant from Wiltshire who has never been fined for speeding in his 37 years of motoring. He has also never been involved in protest action before, but feels that the M4 cameras are the last straw. It seems he simply wanted to let the authorities know that these cameras do not have the support of the public that they think they have.

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### **FOI Data and Speed Cameras**



Our last edition discussed some information obtained under the new Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. All

public bodies are required to have a "Publication Scheme" that shows what information is available, and many are putting information online as a result. One example is the London Safety Camera Partnership (LSCP) - one of their mobile vans is pictured above - and they now have quite a lot of data present at:

<http://www.lscp.org.uk/documents.asp>

For example, their audited accounts for March 2003 are there, which shows they spent £4.5 million, but raised £5.1 million from fines.

### **Low Enforcement Rate of NIPs**

It also shows that only 45% of "Notices of Intended Prosecution" (NIPs) actually turned into Fixed Penalty Notices, which suggests that there were a large number of people untraceable, or unidentifiable. And only 85% of Fixed Penalty Notices were actually paid.

*(Editor's Comment: It seems likely that only the law abiding citizens actually bother to pay these fines, and the rest avoid them).*

### **Brunel Survey of London Drivers**

Also on this web site is a report of a survey of London driver's attitudes to speeding and speed cameras undertaken by Brunel University in 2003. Interesting data included is:

- Only 18% of drivers who were interviewed wanted more speed cameras installed, whereas 41% wanted fewer. *(Editor: so much for the widely promoted view that people support the use of speed cameras. In fact Safety Camera Partnerships often claim public support based on asking "leading" questions but when asked a simple, unbiased question like the above, the answer is clear).*

- Those most doubtful of the official purpose of speed cameras tended to be older and travelled over 20,000 miles per year (which suggests the older, wiser and more experienced drivers are the least in favour).

- 35% of drivers admitted to slowing down only when passing speed cameras, or ignoring them altogether.

- 47% of vehicles exceeded the 30 mph speed limit (based on actual measurements near speed camera sites). *(Editor: when the law is clearly being ignored by so many people, it surely suggests there is something wrong with the law. Either that or 47% of the population are ignorant and incompetent, which I simply do not believe).*

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### **Low Enforcement of Parking Penalties**



As with speed camera penalties, there is a similar low enforcement rate for parking charges. In Bromley only 66% of Penalty Charges are actually recovered, although this is slightly better than the London average of 65%.

If a Penalty Charge Notice is not paid, it is passed to bailiffs to try and recover the debt, but that rarely happens. Bromley is however looking at new "performance based" contracts with new bailiff companies to try and improve on that.

Bromley is also looking at photographing infringements to prove that a valid parking ticket was not displayed, as currently 300 penalty charges per month are written off when the motorist subsequently submits a valid parking ticket.

*(Editor's Comment: Clearly the way to avoid both speeding fines and parking penalties is simply not to respond to notices, don't notify a change of address to licensing authorities, and in a rare case when a bailiff does turn up at your house, simply don't answer the door. The chance of any effort being put in to trace you is remote).*

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### **Kengestion Charge Rising to £8**



The London Congestion Charge (commonly renamed Kengestion after the Mayor) is to rise to £8 in July. Ken Livingstone decided to increase it despite public consultation showing almost everyone was opposed to such a large increase (details below). But it seems he needs the money to bail out his failing transport strategy where there have been massive increases in subsidies to public transport, particular bus services, with insufficient revenue to cover them.

Lynne Featherstone, Liberal Democrat transport spokesperson on the Greater London Assembly said "Traffic levels in central London are still falling, yet our Labour mayor slams a 60% hike on congestion charges". Strong words coming from a party that previously supported the congestion charge.

### **Two Fingers to Public Consultation**

There was of course widespread "public consultation" on the charge increase, but unfortunately the Mayor simply took no notice of the results. The full details can be seen at: [http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/downloads/pdf/congestion-charging/v05/VO5\\_RTM.pdf](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/downloads/pdf/congestion-charging/v05/VO5_RTM.pdf) but here's a brief summary:

- 1007 members of the public responded and 76% opposed the increase, versus 13% in favour.

- 46 "stakeholders" responded with 75% opposed and 23% in favour.

- 84 businesses responded with 89% opposing and 2% in favour.

- 16 "other organisations" responded with 56% opposed and 18% supporting.

*(Editor's Comment: This blatant disregard of democracy is absolutely astonishing. In fact, to get such a one-sided response on any issue is exceedingly rare, and the excuses put forward by the Mayor and Transport for London for ignoring the result are breathtaking in their arrogance. There was absolutely no need to increase the charge to maintain the effectiveness of the system. Anyone who has driven in London recently knows that there are few private vehicles now within the congestion zone. So it is plain that the increase is simply to raise more tax revenue, and to conceal the appalling economics of the congestion charging system to begin with.*

*Is it any wonder that Edinburgh residents voted against such a scheme recently when they saw what has happened in London. With the scheme now being used simply as a means to raise tax, and the economics clearly so poor, why would anyone vote for such a system. It is of course one of the few taxes where the vast majority of the revenue raised is spent on collecting the tax. What we need in London is a referendum on the whole project, but the only way we will get that is to throw Ken Livingstone and his loony policies out at the next election in 2008.*

*Or will we see a rerun of history if the Conservatives get back into power nationally, with them deciding to scrap an undemocratic and loony London authority (lead by Ken Livingstone in both cases) for a second time.).*

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## **Kengestion Charge Extended West**

Mayor Ken Livingstone proposed an extension of the London Congestion Charge to the west last year. In practice this would cover most of Kensington, Westminster and Chelsea - see Newsletter 30 for details.

Almost 70% of the public expressed opposition in the resulting consultation process. But that didn't stop Ken from proceeding although he has now come up with a slight variation to the original proposals, which again has been put out for public consultation. For example, there is now a small area outside the zone on the west where residents can obtain the normal zone residents discount.

Details are on the London Mayors web site at: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/cc-ex/> or phone 0800-028-5470 for a printed copy. BBRAG encourages you to make your voice heard before the deadline of the 15<sup>th</sup> July!

As a sop to restaurants and theatres, the congestion charging time is now to finish at 6.0 pm rather than 6.30 pm. TfL predict that the extension will raise a net £30-£50 million per year for public transport, but if it's like their earlier predictions of congestion charging revenue, you may want to take that with a pinch of salt.

Even congestion charging supporters seemed to oppose this extension because the new areas cover many residential zones, so it is likely that people living there will now travel much more frequently into the existing zone, thus reducing its effectiveness.

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## **Congestion System in the Dock**



Liberal Democrat peer Baroness Walmsley recently won a High Court action against the Congestion Charging system. She paid the congestion charge but

unfortunately misquoted her car registration number. Her appeal to the Parking and Traffic Appeals Service (PTAS) was rejected, but the judge said she was entitled to have her case reconsidered. *(Editor: presumably this was a "judicial review" which is well beyond the means of most people).* PTAS complained they would now have to redraw the rules, to effectively permit more discretion and be less slavish in adherence to the rules.

*(Editor: It seems that more sensible rules are being introduced as a friend of mine was issued with a penalty notice but claimed he had paid. Initially they refused to believe him as he could not quote a receipt number, and only when he threatened to take it to PTAS did they relent. But it shows yet again how persistent you have to be to get justice from the existing system).*

### **Letter in the Financial Times**

Your editor recently managed to get a letter published in the Financial Times on the subject of congestion charging. It read:

*"Geoff Goddin said in his letter to the weekend FT that 'Motorists inflict costs of congestion on other road users, commerce, taxis and bus users by choosing to drive on scarce road space at certain times and places'. I would put it another way: "Taxis and bus users inflict costs on private car users by using road space inefficiently and cause additional congestion by frequent stops, obstructing traffic and generally slowing its movement".*

*We all have a point of view, but arguing that one type of vehicle or another creates congestion costs is downright silly - they all do. His comments are just another example of the unreasonable prejudice against private car users that is all too prevalent of late.*

### **Learning from History**

Information has recently been released that shows that Prime Minister Edward Heath considered a London congestion charge back in the 1960s. His civil service advisors told him it would be too expensive to collect the tolls so it was not pursued.

*(Editor: It's a pity that Ken Livingstone did not heed the same advice because it's certainly turned out to be true).*

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## **Air Pollution and Congestion Charging: Fiddling the Figures**



Transport for London (TfL) recently published their third annual report on the Congestion Charging Scheme. All 162 pages of it are present on their web site at:

[http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/cc/london/cc\\_monitoring.shtml](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/cc/london/cc_monitoring.shtml)

Needless to say that the report is generally positive with traffic still 30% less than it was before the scheme, and £90 million being contributed to public transport in the form of bus subsidies primarily (although that is of course much less than originally anticipated).

No claims were originally made by TfL for reduced air pollution, even though the Mayor and other people repeatedly hinted that might be one effect, and the latest report says: *"Air quality measurements for the case study area closely follow those for the rest of London and are not indicative of any specific or detrimental effects..* in other words, it's no worse.

This is apparently based on a report published by the London Air Quality Network and produced by Messrs Beevers and Carslaw of Kings College, London. One would have thought that it was an easy job to compare pollution before and after introduction of the scheme, but the authors did not do this. In fact they claimed that exceptional weather conditions distorted the results so instead they based their report on estimates of pollution from known vehicle volumes and speeds.

They also took into account that the bus fleet has been fitted with particulate traps, or have had new engines fitted. Needless to say, with reduced traffic and higher traffic speeds, they estimate pollution has decreased (e.g. NOx by 12%). Mr Beevers was quoted in the Telegraph as saying *"If you had made a simple comparison, you'd come to the conclusion that the effect of congestion charging was to make air pollution worse - that's clearly nonsense"* (Editor: Well it seems we are not going to get some unbiased and unvarnished figures that we can make our own judgements upon).

## London Residents Don't Think Changes Have Been for the Better

The TfL report also includes a survey of residents views. It reported: "When asked to 'rate' a list of transport and environmental attributes in their local area, more inner London respondents felt that the availability of parking, congestion, pollution, noise and sense of safety had deteriorated, than felt that these had improved. However, these changes are unlikely to have been brought about by the scheme." It is not clear why the report contains the last comment.

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## Local Government Ombudsman



Our last edition covered some of the defects in the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) service, bearing in mind our experience with its

operations. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has now produced a report containing evidence submitted to the committee examining the effectiveness of the service. It can be seen on the internet at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmodpm/458/458.pdf>

It contains some scathing criticisms of the activities of the LGO and its failure to follow principles of natural justice. It's well worth reading.

In fact there are so many complaints about the results of submissions to the LGO (typically rejections that are considered unfair), that an organisation has been set up to campaign for a revolution - see LGOWatch on the internet at:

<http://www.ombudsmanwatch.org/index.html>

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## Thames Gateway Bridge



The public inquiry on the Thames Gateway Bridge starts on the 7<sup>th</sup> June at Charlton Athletic Football Ground. The first "Pre-Inquiry" meeting to discuss arrangements was disrupted by people opposed to the bridge, apparently on the grounds that the Inspector had refused to delay the start of the Inquiry. They were taking time to get organised and were of the view that they needed more time to spend the £50,000 they had recently been given by Ken Livingstone. As a great believer in democracy, the Mayor was effectively spending several millions of pounds to promote the scheme but considered it was also necessary to finance the opposition. (*Editor: another peculiar, if not downright irrational, decision from our Mayor*).

There were also objections from people that it was difficult to get to the venue from such distant parts of London as Bexley.

The second "Pre-Inquiry" meeting was also extended because of objections from various groups about the inspector, and the date and location of the inquiry. Numerous obscure legal points were raised by Mr Goodman, a lawyer representing Transport 2000.

Note that the originally appointed Inspector decided to quit after it transpired that he had been employed by one of the contractors 15 years ago. The deputy inspector had taken his place, but was objected to also, on grounds that were not at all clear. To ensure he did not give the wrong impression, he also felt it necessary to declare that he was having lunch with his wife that day, and not one side or the other.

AGAB (Action Group Against the Bridge), led by a Mrs Jacqui Wise, complained about the cost of documents from TfL and also requested a crèche be provided. The meeting finally finished at 10.25 pm.

A web site has been set up where all documents and minutes of the inquiry will be placed. It is at:

<http://www.persona.uk.com/thamesgateway/index.htm> .

The objectors also have a web site at

<http://www.pvr.co.uk> .

*(Editor's Comment: Looks like it will be the usual bun fight between the advocates of transport infrastructure improvements and environmental groups looking at the list of objectors - this includes Friends of the Earth, Friends of Danson Park, Bexley Natural Environmental Focus Group, Woolwich and District Antiquarian Society, The Green Party, Road Bloc and wildlife groups. Note that several local residents groups do have serious objections to the scheme based on the fact that the supporting road infrastructure has not been well designed, but this is mainly as a result of the ill-conceived idea that usage of the bridge can somehow be restricted to local traffic.*

*Note: if any of our members have a particular interest in this development and would like to monitor this subject and report back to our members then please let me know - Editor).*

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## Inspectors Report on UDP Published

Some 18 months ago, members of your Executive Committee spent a lot of time submitting representations to the Inspector appointed to review the council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP). This laid down many land development policies that could affect such matters as the transport network for many years to come, so it was an important document. The draft prepared by council staff contained many defects in our view, with the usual over-emphasis on public transport and adherence to dogmatic policies that do not reflect local conditions. The results of our submissions are given below:

1. We asked that as well as seeking improvements to public transport, that traffic congestion and air pollution also be tackled by improvements to the road network. The Inspector's answer was:

*"The commitment to expanding or improving the road network as a solution to traffic congestion would not reflect Government advice and would run counter to the general emphasis on encouraging*

*other forms of transport and reducing the need to travel."*

2. We also suggested that the use of parking policies to artificially limit demand was short sighted, would not achieve its objectives and was not laid down by any national policy. The answer was:

*"There is a general concern that LBB's policies of restraining and inhibiting transport demand, rather than improving transport capacity, do not take account of the Borough's particular circumstances. While displaying problems similar to other London Boroughs, it is said that there are also clear differences that justify flexible policies. Objectors maintain that the Council should not seek to inhibit travel by car or impose limitation on parking, as such an approach would lead to a further decline in local employment, shopping and leisure opportunities that are already subject to increasing competition from car-dependent developments outside the Borough.*

*In my view, the objectives are correctly reflecting the thrust of national and London-wide policies that seek to encourage modes of transport other than the private car. This is essentially and fundamentally the right approach, even for Bromley with its characteristics of affluence and high car ownership. Focussing developments to areas where modal shift is achievable is just one of a number of measures used to reduce car dependence. This type of locational policy is workable only where transport provision is in place or likely to be in place. Detailed policies will ensure that developments take account of existing conditions and allow for improvements where appropriate. I agree that car restraint is not specifically mentioned in either PPG13 or the London Plan. What is more, level of car use cannot be controlled through planning policies. To reflect the link between land use planning and transport policies, I suggest that the objective should instead seek to create the right conditions to encourage the modal shift intended."*

3. We objected to the inclusion of a shortened restatement of PPG13 that suggested parking policies alone could be used to "promote sustainable transport choices and reduce reliance on the car". The Inspector agreed that it should be reworded to reflect the full PPG13 wording in the form "Parking policies are used alongside other packages of measures to promote sustainable transport choices and reduce reliance on the car.". This is a small but important victory.

4. We objected to Transport Policy T3 in relation to off-street parking standards. The Inspector has reworded the policy to allow more flexibility in respect of town centre parking for retail and leisure developments.

5. We objected to Policies T4, T5 and T6 which related to "On-Street Parking Controls" and "Commuter and Town Centre Parking". The Inspector has requested these be removed altogether as not being relevant to planning and spatial development. She also suggested they are best covered in the LIP document (*Editor's Comment: Well she nicely ducked those issues.*)

### ***The Impact of Government Policy***

*Editor's Summary: Well we achieved some minor victories in this process, but of course it is well worth noting that the Inspector made absolutely clear Government policy when it is rarely made apparent to the public. In essence this policy is that the Government does not believe in improving the road network. In fact the only solution the Government has is to make life more difficult for the motorist by reducing parking standards, spending your taxes on public transport provision and even simply advising you not to travel.*

### ***The UDP Is Already Obsolescent***

It is worth pointing out that the UDP, which must have cost several hundreds of thousands of pounds to produce, is already being subverted and replaced. To begin with the Mayor of London's policies as embodied in the "London Plan" already take precedence and can be used to override local decisions and policies. The intention is that a "Local Development Framework" will replace the UDP and public consultation has already started to take place on a "new-style Area Action Plan" for Bromley town centre. Consultants EDAW have already been hired to commence work on proposals for the town centre.

Apparently the Local Development Framework will also have to go to an independent Planning Inspector, but in future their decision will be binding on the council rather than simply advisory.

*(Editor's Comment: Yet more planning bureaucracy with decisions being determined by professional planners rather than local people, ie. even less democracy than at present! It was of course to be*

*expected that at the first "consultation meeting" on the town centre, the planners spent almost the whole time presenting their preconceived points of view to the audience, rather than listening to the ideas of the invited local attendees. When planners talk about "consultation" what they typically mean is the delivery of a PR exercise, following by them listening but not paying much attention.)*

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### **Road Deaths Down 21% in London**

Accident statistics for Greater London in 2004 have recently been published. Fatal accidents were down 21%, "serious" accidents were down 19% and "slight" accidents were down 9%.

As there has been a major emphasis on reducing fatal and serious accidents, with less effort put into slight accidents, to some extent it seems the policy is working. Slight accidents are often quite trivial, but under-reporting of slight accidents might also be distorting the figures. These numbers mean that we may be able to reach the national target of a reduction of 40% in killed and seriously injured by 2010.

### ***Bromley Accidents Match the Trend***

Figures for the Borough of Bromley were similar for fatal accidents (down 23% to 10 in number), but serious accidents only fell 7% and slight accidents actually rose by 6%. But this may not be significantly different to the London wide trend.

### ***Brian Coleman Claims the Post of Traffic Tsar***



Greater London Assembly member Brian Coleman who removed speed humps from his borough of Barnet, claimed the success of his policies was reflected in the latest figures. Barnet had a 40% fall in fatalities, a 19% fall in serious accidents but only a 3% fall in slight injuries. He said " *This is a huge vindication of the work we have been doing on hump removal. I am quite prepared to be the traffic tsar for London.*"

*(Editor's Comment: Well one year's data may not be that significant, but it certainly shows that the disasters forecast in Barnet by Mayor Ken Livingstone and Transport for London failed to materialise. Looking at the figures for different boroughs, it is clear that there is no obvious extra improvement to the accident figures in the boroughs who are the aggressive installers of speed humps and speed cameras, as opposed to boroughs such as Barnet and Bromley who have used other measures.. As usual the claims made for the benefits of such devices are not demonstrated in reality.)*

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## Letters

Dear BRAGG,

Maybe you will be able to answer this question for me. Who is qualified to improve road safety?

I have been a subscriber to BBAG for a couple of years now and very informative it is too. However as I sit in my comfy armchair reading the latest issue, a glaring fault in our highways and transport system has slowly been illuminated, issue after issue and that is the question at the top of this article.

Correct me if I am wrong, but the roads on which we travel are maintained and adapted to improve safety, by our local councils. They employ a group of people who assess statistics on traffic flow, collision types and deaths etc. They then consult a menu of regulations and laws which gives them methods that they can use to try and solve the alleged traffic problems. How does this qualify them to judge on what is the best method to use, to improve road safety on a specific road? Yes they may have a degree in traffic management. Yes they can consult their local Traffic police, but they are not obliged to act on this information and as we know they often do not accept this advice.

The role that these people are performing is a role that can result in the increase or decrease in the deaths on our highways. If I want to go and fit gas fires I have to be especially trained to a certain standard, so I don't go blowing up the neighbourhood and killing local residents. Just because I can read the instruction manual on how to fit a gas fire does not make me a gas

fitter. Likewise it should be the same for council employees deciding on traffic matters. I appreciate that the council employees may have a degree of training, but not for what is required in this matter.

The only person who is qualified in these matters is a Traffic Accident Investigator. (They like to be called Collision Investigators nowadays). Where do you find these guys and girls? Either in the police or the insurance industry, the latter generally being ex police officers. They are normally both advanced motorcyclists and drivers. They generally have umpteen years experience in traffic collision matters and what they don't know is often not worth knowing. They have a full understanding of traffic flow and driving/riding conditions and are in my eyes the only persons suitably qualified to decide on how road safety can be improved.

Since the motor vehicle has been invented and man has tried to make them go faster, the populace has been indoctrinated with that phrase of "speed kills!". I have yet to speak to an accident investigator who agrees with that. Just remember astronauts travel around the world at 17,000 mph on a regular basis, that seems a pretty high speed to me and it does not kill them. Yet the employees at our local council are from our population, having been indoctrinated with this phrase, hence their decision making is influenced by this. I doubt very few of them have received any kind of driver training that makes them appreciate how vehicles handle, that is if they drive at all, or can even begin to comprehend what actually caused the accidents that sit in statistics on a sheet of paper laid before them.

If organisations like BBAG were to unite and attempt to get the support of their MPs to restructure the way councils make decisions on road safety, i.e. bring in legislation forcing them to consult with and act on advice from police traffic collision investigators, many of the demands of BBAG and other motoring/residents organisations would be met.

Likewise this could extend to traffic calming methods and speed enforcement where required.

However the law would have to be changed that so no proceeds from fines went to the police so that sound, structured decision making prevailed over financial reward.

I am a police officer and I watch in dismay at some of the appalling decisions that have been made by Bromley council with regard to road safety matters, knowing that they will not make one jot of difference to the safety of the specific roads that they have targeted. I have had enough of picking dead bodies up off of the road. Let's target the real problems. Let's start trying to educate the right people, so that they can make the right decisions.

If I was really cynical I would say that all the decisions were made purely for financial and political gain but I'm sure that is not the case.

Please note that these opinions are mine and not that of the Metropolitan Police.

Now I'm off to fit a gas fire.

*Regards Andy Jones*

(Editor: A letter that makes some good points. Incidentally on a related subject, when I queried why Bromley Council's historic road accident data always seem to show more accidents attributed to excessive speed than other national statistics, the answer from John Walton, the Head of Road Safety, was as follows: *"Accident factors are not re-coded by Bromley, but until the end of 2003 were coded directly from the police incident books, in order to ensure greater accuracy and depth of data. Using the police incident books enabled our data inputter to read the accident description and not rely entirely upon often incomplete coding fields."*

This seems to be saying that the accident codings from the STATS19 form (the form used by Police on the spot to report accident data and allocate a cause by selection of the codes), was not used but were in fact "deduced" by council staff from other information. A certain way to introduce bias retrospectively surely? Fortunately it seems this system no longer prevails as council staff no longer have access to the separate police notes but have to rely on the STATS19 data).

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## News Snapshots

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

+ The former Head of Transport Strategy for Bromley Council, Adrian Bell, has left to take up a position with Transport for London. *(Editor's Comment: With TfL expanding its empire so rapidly, they probably need more "generals", or was it a case of Adrian being fed up with trying to persuade Bromley residents to cycle more?).*

+ Figures recently announced show road deaths rose from 304 to 331 in Scotland from 2002 to 2003 - a rise of 9%. Meanwhile the number of speed camera fines rose by 61%. *(Editor's Comment: Clearly a "positive correlation" in statistical terms. Bearing in mind the improvement in road engineering, and in-vehicle safety during that period also, it seems odd that people keep claiming that speed cameras can reduce road deaths. It tends to suggest that the over-emphasis on speed as a factor in road deaths is distracting attention from other road safety measures and diverting expenditure from beneficial programmes).*

+ We previously reported that Transport for London (TfL) were trialling the use of GPS tracking devices as a possible alternative method of congestion charging to the "single cordon" approach currently used. For example it would enable wide area charging or variable rates on different roads and at different times. But it seems the trials have come to the conclusion that GPS is not likely to be viable for some years. Accuracy was hindered by tall buildings, and interference from other sources. *(Editor's Comment: Not a surprising result if you have ever used a GPS system).*

+ Transport for London (TfL), i.e. Ken Livingstone's transport bureaucracy, are planning to force all vehicles in London to have speed limiters fitted that would make them stay within speed limits. The likely first step will be to impose this requirement on public service vehicles such as taxis and buses, where the Mayor already has considerable powers.

*(Editor's Comment: But this would rely on the same GPS technology which was not shown to be reliable in the report above. Also of course the proposal is based on the supposition that excessive speed is the problem when it is not, and that is even more true for taxis and buses which just shows how illogical TfL can be.)*

+ The Road Safety Bill was passing through Parliament when the General Election was called and did not get on the Statute Book as a result. However apparently it will be revived in the new session of parliament. It included more graduated penalties for road traffic offences, and a ban on speed camera radar detection devices.

+ Under the Traffic Management Act, all councils have to appoint a "Traffic Manager". However Bromley Council has decided to nominate Gareth Davies for this role (ie. the existing "Assistant Director (Transportation Planning)" on an interim basis. *(Editor's Comment: But Mr Davies hardly appears to have a lot of spare time at present, so clearly he is going to have some difficulty putting much effort into this new role).*

+ A council in Devon is to review its policy on speed humps after losing a case brought by a pedestrian who tripped over a hump. This happened in Pannier Market in South Molton, where £8000 damages were awarded by a judge in the County Court. A claim from a second "victim" has also been received. The council have put up warning signs and is considering "pedestrianisation" of the market square. . *(Editor's Comment: Clearly according to this judgement, councils should not be installing speed humps where pedestrians are likely to be crossing the road).*

+ The Motorists Defence Union (Muswell Hill Branch) *(Editor's Comment: Who they?)* are reported by the local newspaper to have launched a "honk the hump" campaign. They suggest drivers should sound their horns in protest every time they go over one of the 67 new speed humps around Alexandra Palace.

+ Residents of Chislehurst are objecting to an outline planning application for 251 houses on the existing Ravensbourne College site. They consider it is yet another example of over-development where existing transport and other service infrastructures will be unable to cope. The need to meet the Mayor of London's plans to increase the population of London, and the supporting housing, is leading to increased housing densities, when very little is done in Bromley to improve the supporting infrastructure, including the road network. The Chislehurst Society is supporting the local opposition and if you object please write to Bromley Council quoting reference DC/04/04047/OUT.

## **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](mailto: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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