



# BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 36 (October 2005)

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## *Editorial*

*This edition has been somewhat delayed due to personal holidays, the lack of news, and by awaiting developments on the Old Hill traffic calming issue (see article on page 7). As readers will no doubt recall this is a scheme with the most horrendous speed humps that are definitely contrary to government guidelines. And if you still think that speed humps are a good idea, go the following story of the man paralysed by riding over such a hump in a bus.*

*Congestion charging is covered in several articles, and even the topical subject of hurricane Katrina – yes even natural disasters can be used to highlight transport issues.*  
*Roger Lawson, Editor*

## **"Star" Letter in Newsshopper**



The following letter from BBRAG Chairman Roger Lawson was published recently in the local free newspaper and was awarded the editor's "star" prize. It followed a number of letters from previous correspondents criticising Bromley Council and Councillors for alleged failings in reducing road accidents.

"Your correspondents who claimed that Bromley has a worse record at reducing road accidents based on the latest statistics, are simply wrong. Transport for London (TfL) have recently published a report that shows how the various London boroughs compare over the "baseline" of 1994/1998 to last year. This provides a much sounder basis for comparison than taking one year in isolation due to the random variations that affect any one year.

On the longer term basis, Bromley was almost spot on the average for all London boroughs, and was better for example than similar boroughs such as Lewisham, Harrow, Haringey and Enfield. Compare it with Lewisham for example who are advocates of the use of speed humps and speed cameras, but whose record is worse. The only boroughs who seem to do significantly better are those that spend a lot more money and as Bromley depends on TfL for most of its road safety improvement funding, perhaps your correspondents should be complaining to them rather than to Bromley Councillors.

As regards the comments about 20 mph speed limits outside schools, and only introducing road safety measures after there have been some accidents, the current policies are exceedingly rational given the limited funding available.

It's better to tackle road accidents where you know they occur, than try to guess where they might occur. And unfortunately the vast majority of road accidents to school children do not take place outside schools, so measures at schools alone are unlikely to be of great benefit. In summary, if you want to reduce accidents, first study the facts, then follow a rational policy and we will get somewhere. But using rhetoric to harass responsible councillors and council staff over their imagined failings will not help."

### **Postscript**

Just to show how easy it is "prove" whatever argument you wish to espouse, here are some figures from the latest accident statistics for the first quarter of 2005. Fatal accidents in Bromley fell by 50% and Serious Injuries fell by 57%.

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## **Local Government Ombudsman Under Scrutiny**



The Local Government Ombudsman Watch Association (LGOWATCH) held its first national conference in August.

LGOWATCH represents people who have been frustrated by their attempts to get remedies for maladministration by local authorities from the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). A number of sad cases were reviewed, many of which showed similar injustices to our own complaint about the Old Hill traffic calming scheme (see last edition).

The complaints tend to fall into the following categories:

- A complete inability to follow what might be termed "natural justice" and bias in favour of Local Authorities.
- No clear procedural rules, and no definition of what is "maladministration", resulting in decisions that seem perverse, yet which are difficult to challenge. And often the LGO avoids publishing its reports on cases, even though it accepts that maladministration has taken place.

- No independent appeal system other than asking for a "judicial review" when judges are reluctant to interfere in a process which clearly gives the Ombudsman wide discretion.

- Most of the senior LGO staff are former employees of Local Authorities so they are not independent and, for example, tend to accept statements from Local Authority staff as being unbiased and accurate when they are often later proved to be otherwise.

These problems were highlighted in recent evidence submitted to a committee of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, before the general election, but it now seems unlikely that any action will be taken. LGOWATCH is pushing for reform of this institution which is clearly not achieving what it was set up to do.

Note that many of the complaints deal with far more serious matters than our own, where people's lives have been blighted, their health affected, and major financial losses incurred. Unfortunately the people who should benefit most from the LGO (those who cannot afford legal advice and don't understand Local Authority procedures) are often most prejudiced by failures of the LGO.

For more information go to the LGOWATCH web site at <http://www.ombudsmanwatch.org>.

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## **Car Usage and Hurricane Deaths**



Randall O'Toole of the Thoreau Institute, who is a strong supporter of automobile use, has pointed out that the deaths in the USA from hurricanes have followed the pattern below:

1900-1919:	10,000
1920-1939:	3,751
1940-1959:	1,119
1960-1979:	453
1980-1999:	57

He attributes this reduction to the fact that evacuation of residents is much faster when they almost all have automobiles, rather than having to rely on public transport.

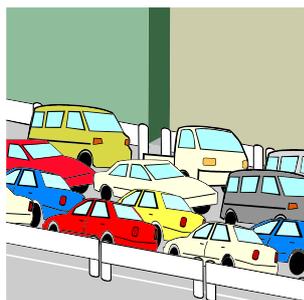
He suggests that the recent high death toll from Katrina in New Orleans is due to the fact that this is one of the few US cities where many people do not own a car. A third of the residents of New Orleans did not, whereas less than 10% do not nationwide.

*(Editor's Comments: I was in New Orleans when the last big hurricane just missed the town – hurricane Andrew some years ago. A lot of people who could do so left town, leaving the city almost deserted, although my party decided to stay based on advice from a local resident. We might make a different decision next time I think. Clearly the recent events in New Orleans highlight the lack of alternative evacuation arrangements for the poorer residents though.*

*For those readers interested in history, a good book on the subject of the Battle of New Orleans – part of the war of 1812 between England and the USA in which the British burnt down the White House – was recently published. Written by Robert Remini it chronicles how several crack British regiments, fresh from the Napoleonic wars, were defeated by a rag-tag army of American volunteers. An episode in history that is unsurprisingly overlooked by British schoolrooms with the result that British historians tend to know nothing about it).*

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## Bexley Congestion Charge?



Bexley Council have been objecting to the new Thames Gateway bridge on the basis that it will worsen the existing traffic congestion in Bexley town centre.

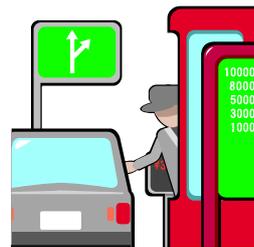
Although Transport for London suggest that it will only have a minor impact, Mayor Ken Livingstone has written to the council saying "Given the concerns Bexley clearly has about its local traffic congestion, I suggest you could consider a Bexley Congestion Charging Scheme. Such a scheme could be the most effective way to reducing traffic flows to protect local residents and, in principle, I would be glad to support such a proposal."

Darren Johnson, leader of the Green Party on the London Assembly, said "It is absurd to put one scheme in that will boost traffic and then to suggest another in the form of congestion charging to control it again". *(Editor: he has a good point there, but in reality the bridge might relieve congestion elsewhere such as at the Blackwell Tunnel and Dartford crossings, and the tolls will be so high that overall traffic might not be boosted at all. Unfortunately the potential problem is partly the result of providing an inadequate supporting road network).*

But Bexley council leader, Chris Ball, has rejected the idea of a congestion charge as it would defeat the "regeneration" aspect of the bridge. He said "A congestion charge would be a major disincentive to investment both inside and on the edge of any zone."

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## National Alliance Against Tolls



A new organisation has been formed from individual groups campaigning against road tolls called the National Alliance Against Tolls. Members have been active on the Mersey

Tunnel tolls and also against the Edinburgh Congestion Charging scheme (readers probably do not need reminding that this was soundly voted down by local residents).

Their web site at <http://www.notolls.org.uk> has some useful information on the history of tolls, which are effectively a tax on road or bridge usage. As one of the founders, John McGoldrick, has pointed out, the London Congestion Charge scheme is in practice a toll (ie. a tax on road usage), but was called something different to try and make it more acceptable.

*(Editor: If you ever telephone to pay the London "Kengestion Charge" I suggest you always say that you wish to pay the "Tax" – if enough people do this then Ken might get the message).*

In general terms, most tolls are very expensive to collect, and long overlive their usefulness. For example, the Dartford Crossing Toll has paid for the construction of the crossing in full, and it was promised it would be dropped when it had, but the charge is now being used as a tax collecting device. As pointed out in our last newsletter when discussing general "road pricing" proposals, most such systems end up with enormous costs to collect relatively little in net revenue – just like the London "Toll" of course.

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### London Toll Zone to be Extended



As most people predicted would happen, Mayor Ken Livingstone decided to ignore the results of the public consultation on the proposed extension of the

Congestion Charging Zone. It will be extended to cover Kensington and Chelsea, effectively doubling it in size, as from February 2007.

The new zone will cost £125 million to set up and £60 million per annum to operate. As previously reported, the response to the consultation on this matter by residents, business, "stakeholders" and other parties was overwhelmingly opposed. The Mayor even points out in the document announcing the decision that only 24% of the public responses to the consultation were in favour, but he does not explain why he simply ignored the results of the consultation. He also rejects the call for a Public Inquiry, as demanded by many respondents to the consultation. The Mayor's full decision statement can be seen at:

<http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/congest/docs/mayor-statement-092005.pdf>

*(Editors Comments: This is another blatant example of ignoring public opinion by Ken Livingstone. He seems to have simply no understanding of what should happen in a democracy. If people clearly express their views on a matter, he should not ignore them.*

*Unfortunately Ken, like most dictators, thinks he knows what is best for you. And under the Greater London Authority constitution there is no effective way to veto the actions of any eccentric who just happens to have been elected Mayor because he had a popular platform at the time and weak and divided opposition. Surely it is time to revisit the issue of the institutions that control London so as to introduce more democratic control.*

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### Another Fare Rise in London Transport



Fares on London Transport for the Underground and Buses are rising by a substantial amount for cash users in January. A one-stop trip on the Underground will

rise from £2 to £3, and Bus Fares will similarly rise from £1.20 to £1.50. As Ken Livingstone admitted when making the announcement, this will probably make London tube fares the most expensive in the world.

However, if you use an electronic Oyster card the fares will not increase. Although the fare rises are expected to raise an additional £130 million to partly fill the previously reported gap in his transport budget, it is also intended to persuade people to move to using the Oyster card system. This reduces the cost of processing cash and cuts queues. Mr Livingstone was reported as saying that it was "bizarre" that people were buying tickets with cash.

There was widespread criticism of the move from people representing tourists and other "casual" users, and from people who use national rail to get into London (who would have to buy an Oyster card in advance somehow as they are not available at most rail stations). In reality, it's a way of almost forcing people to obtain a "pre-pay" Oyster card on which credit balances will sit for a long time, thus providing an additional one-off subsidy to TfL.

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## Low Emission Zone Coming to London



Earlier this year, Transport for London (TfL) published a Strategic Review of a proposed Low

Emission Zone for London (see <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/downloads/pdf/lez/3-LEZ-strategic-Review-Report-250205.pdf> for the full details).

It is proposed that this would cover all the London boroughs. Any goods vehicles over 3.5 tonnes and all buses would have to comply with strict emission standards or they would have to pay a substantial fee to enter the zone (Ed: rumours published in the press suggest this might be as high as £200 per trip).

The proposal is to implement this charge by the use of the same technology as used in the London Toll (ie. the existing "Congestion Charge" scheme), by putting cameras on all routes. However most buses would meet the new standards anyway by the time this scheme could be introduced which is no earlier than 2008.

Although the scheme would substantially reduce particulates (PM10s) and nitrogen dioxide emissions, TfL concede that the scheme "offers poor value for money", and yet they are keen to go ahead. Although TfL claim that goods vehicle and bus operators support the scheme, the Freight Transport Association has already said they will oppose it.

The cost of implementing the scheme is estimated to be £10 million in capital expenditure and £7 million per annum running costs. Fleet operators would incur up to £332 million in vehicle upgrade costs to meet the requirements, or up to £412 million if LGVs are included which is planned for a later date.

*(Editors Comments: As with most of Ken Livingstone's plans, financial probity seems to have been ignored, and this proposal is a sledgehammer to crack a nut. It is certainly a good idea to introduce*

*a low emission zone in those parts of London that are badly affected by pollution from such vehicles, but such areas are relatively small. For example, Bromley has minimal problems in that regard. But to introduce the proposed scheme over the whole of London will be enormously expensive for vehicle operators.*

*Of course there could be another reason why Ken and TfL are so scheme on this scheme. Once the cameras have been installed over the whole of London, introducing a London wide "congestion charging" scheme would be trivial.)*

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## National Travel Survey



The National Travel Survey for 2004 has just been published by the Office of National Statistics. This survey shows the trends in personal travel based on diaries kept for a week by over 8000 households.

And what does it tell us? Primarily that the vast majority of trips are made by car, car availability is still rising, and that modal shift, with a few exceptions, is a mirage.

One difference is London where from 1998/2000 to 2004, car availability actually fell and bus usage rose when the contrary is true in the rest of the country. Clearly Ken Livingstone's massive subsidies to public transport and his anti-car policies are having some effect, but where people have more choice, the trend to private car use is continuing. Bus usage is also rising in the elderly as they now get free travel, whereas it is falling in the rest of the population, so again subsidies and "social engineering" are having an effect.

One interesting point to note though is the fact that despite increasing complaints of congested roads, and delays on public transport, the average time people spend on travelling has remained remarkably constant at about one hour per day over the last few years.

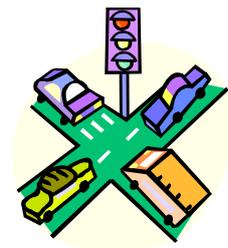
The number of trips made by walking continues to fall (down by 20% since 1994), which of course helps to explain the reduction in pedestrian fatalities in the last few years, particularly bearing in mind that a good part of that reduction is obtained from schoolchildren being taken on the "school run".

As previously reported, the proportion of young driving license holders has decreased sharply in recent years. Only 26% of those aged 17-20 now hold a driving licence, compared to 48% in 1992/1994. Possible explanations of this that are given are the difficulty of passing the driving test, more expensive insurance, and more young people as students who cannot afford cars. This of course might also help to explain some of the recent reductions in road accident figures as it is well known that such young drivers are much more likely to be involved in accidents.

But the number of women drivers, particularly older ones, continues to increase – your editor will not attempt to comment on whether that is advantageous or not in terms of road safety. As a result, the length of shopping related trips has gone up, as more frequent trips on foot are replaced by longer, less frequent trips by car.

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### Traffic Calming: A Scientific Study



Does traffic calming work? Whether by using road engineering, speed humps, cameras, psychologic tricks or what have you, there seems to be some doubt because despite the massive expenditure in the

UK in recent years, the reduction in personal injury accidents has been relatively small, and the reduction in deaths negligible. In fact most of the changes could easily be attributed to better in-car safety and changes in habits, ie. more use of cars which are safer per mile, and less walking and cycling.

Professor Gerald Wilde of Kingston, Ontario has suggested that the reason for the small impact is because drivers unconsciously maintain a certain risk level. This theory he christened "Risk Homeostasis".

He deduced the theory from looking at the annual distance travelled by motor vehicles and the accident rate per distance driven. Although the distance travelled rose (and the average speed), the accident rate fell. The product of the two remained remarkably constant from 1923 to 1996.

He suggests that traffic calming measures which slow drivers down therefore have no effect, because a reduction in accident risk from that will be compensated for by riskier behaviour elsewhere on the same trips or by other behavioural aberrations. He also suggests that introducing more in-car safety measures such as seat-belts also has little effect for the same reasons – people simply "compensate" in other ways. In fact the introduction of more safety measures simply encourages people to drive further and faster.

Another conclusion he drew from the data he analysed is that one of the major impacts on the accident rate is the general state of the economy. His explanation is that when the economy is in recession, the benefits expected from risky behaviour are reduced, because time is worth less money.

*(Editors Comments: This is an interesting study which could explain many of the problems with most traffic calming schemes. Go to: <http://www.drivers.com/article/303> for a fuller article on this subject.)*

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## Old Hill Consultation Agreed



As most readers are no doubt well aware, BBRAG has been supporting the complaints of residents about the Old Hill traffic calming scheme over the last two years (picture above). After some pressure from us, including a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman about certain aspects of how it had been handled by council staff, we obtained agreement to a "review" of the scheme by council staff. Most such schemes get reviewed anyway after a period of time, to ensure they are a success and are not creating unforeseen problems.

Such a review was completed by council staff and a report prepared for submission to the meeting held on the 31<sup>st</sup> August by Environment Portfolio holder George Taylor. But it was withdrawn at the last minute, to enable more traffic data to be obtained (at least that was the given reason).

### ***What did the report say?***

Fortunately we did manage to see this report before it was "suspended". It contains a number of inaccuracies, but the key points are:

1. No changes are proposed to most of the scheme, including the notorious single "cushions" on the lower part of the hill. These clearly exceed the recommended government maximum width of 2 metres but no mention of this is contained in the report.
2. Clearly no attempt has been made to talk to local residents about their complaints concerning

noise and vibration from the humps. Why was no investigation done of these complaints?

3. There is a suggestion to repaint the cushions, to make them clearer, but as the markings wore off so quickly before, what is the point?

4. There are some proposals to restrict parking alongside some of the cushions (this already went out to public consultation). BBRAG is not opposed to that but it does not tackle our major complaints.

In summary in our view this report was a "whitewash" as it clearly ignored key facts and evidence, and neither had much effort apparently been put into it.

Interestingly, it shows a substantial reduction in road traffic volumes, presumably because people hate driving over these humps, as traffic volumes on most other borough roads have not fallen. Also it points out that Old Hill was never an accident black spot. There were only two "slight" injury accidents in the three years before the scheme was introduced, and one in the 22 months afterwards. This enabled the report writer to claim a 50% reduction in accidents which is a curious way to interpret statistics, particularly bearing in mind the traffic reduction. *(Editor: another example of someone who should know better quoting a statistically insignificant item of data to justify a spurious argument, which happens all the time in the road safety field. In reality the accidents in Old Hill never justified the costly expenditure on this traffic calming scheme, and the original council consultation leaflet was grossly misleading in that regard).*

### ***Subsequent Events***

After BBRAG pointed out the errors in the report and proposed to hold a public meeting so that residents could voice their own views on this subject, it has now been agreed that the council will undertake a consultation exercise to get the views of residents. *(Editor: this is quite an achievement as it does involve the council spending some money which is always a bone of contention. George Taylor is always ready to point out that council budgets are constantly overstretched, and he has little under his own control – you may think that because your council taxes keep on going up, that there is money to spare but that is not the case).*

The results of this consultation will be taken into account in a revised report before it is reconsidered by Mr Taylor. Clearly though this will take some time to complete, ie. possibly some months.

BBBRAG encourages all members who are affected by this scheme to make their feelings known and we will be in touch at a later date about how to do that and what we suggest you might say.

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### Man Paralysed by Speed Hump

We have previously reported on the injuries suffered by people from driving over speed humps – see our web site for past cases. The latest case is that of Neil Price, a 53 year old electrical retailer from Kendal, Cumbria.

He was travelling at the back of a bus in Dalton-on-Furness when it went over a speed hump, which caused him to jump into the air. When he landed it caused two broken vertebrae in his back and damage to his spinal cord. As a result he is currently paralysed and in hospital.

The bus company (Stagecoach) denied that the bus was travelling too fast.

*(Editors Comments: this is the first case of this kind that I have seen reported in the UK, although it is very similar to the one previously noted in Norway. Clearly bus drivers are not always the careful and prudent people that the designers of speed humps expect.)*

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### Ravensbourne College and Sira Sites

Bromley residents may be aware of the proposed redevelopment of the Ravensbourne College site, and the nearby Sira site, for housing. The original outline planning applications proposed 251 and 75 dwellings on those sites. A number of local residents formed a group to oppose these plans, under the title "The Chislehurst Action Group" which is also supported by the Chislehurst Society.

To quote Chislehurst Society Chairman, Reg Parry: "One sometimes feels that there are dark

*forces at work seeking to spoil the character of Chislehurst and turn it into one vast, overcrowded and not very attractive housing estate, with inadequate roads and public services".*

After the original planning application for the Ravensbourne site was deferred by the Development Control Committee, a revised application for only 229 houses was submitted which will be considered on the 18<sup>th</sup> October. But residents still feel that it is too dense a development.

*(Editors Comments: these proposals are part of the strong pressure from central government and the Mayor of London to build more houses. If it's not John Prescott telling us what is good for us, it's Ken Livingstone. This includes proposals for green belt and "metropolitan open land" sites which most residents of Bromley think should be protected. Although people are aware that there is a housing shortage in London and the South East, they don't see why such developments should negatively impact the environment, and be constructed without adequate infrastructure and facilities. As in other areas, the democratic views of the people are being overridden by central and London government, but local councillors are at least fighting to stop some of the worst excesses of these policies).*

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### Orpington Parking Arrangements



Readers will no doubt be aware of the major problems that will be created by the redevelopment of the Orpington multi-storey car park (picture above) to become a new Tesco superstore. Apart from the fact that general parking provision after the store has been completed will be inadequate for local businesses

and shoppers, the period of up to two years while the site is redeveloped was anticipated to be an absolute nightmare. The council have recently published their proposals for the interim period.

The report points out that peak usage of the existing car park is about 600 vehicles, although the average is more like 530. The temporary arrangements will provide 526 spaces.

The 200 leaseholders of parking spaces are expected to move to the Walnuts car park, although an arrangement with the owners of that car park has yet to be concluded (*Editor: they could probably name their own price as they have the council over the barrel surely*).

Another 50 on-street and off street parking spaces are currently underutilised, and it is planned to create 246 on-street parking spaces in the roads surrounding the town centre. At present most of these roads have parking restrictions to prevent commuter parking which will effectively be relaxed for the duration of the construction period. A few months after the new building is finished, they will likely revert to the present status.

### ***Redevelopment of Priory Gardens***

Finally a new 44 space car park will be created as part of a major landscape improvement programme for Priory Gardens, giving an additional 30 spaces, albeit that they are at the other end of the High Street.

### ***VMS and Cashless Parking***

Other measures to assist will the provision of a Variable Message System (VMS) to indicate where there are spare spaces, and a new "Cashless" parking system to make life easier for parkers. The latter will involve the use of an electronic card that is placed in the vehicle and which permits the owner to use any parking space. It can be "topped up" remotely.

The total cost of all the above is about £210,000 in capital expenditure for the temporary parking spaces, plus £205,000 for the Priory Gardens scheme.

Of course there will be substantial loss of net income from parking fees from the loss of the existing car park (about £230,000 per annum), and the income from the temporary arrangements will only partly offset that.

*(Editors Comments: clearly council staff have put in substantial effort to devise these proposals and on the whole they seem to have made the best of a bad job. But the temporary spaces provided will in many cases be far distant from the High Street and require people to walk long distances. Also residents will be inconvenienced by all day parking. For example, the residents of Mayfield Avenue who have complained for several years about parkers obstructing the road by parking on both sides, may be dismayed to see that on the proposed plan, the whole of that road will be turned into parking bays on both sides. If readers have any comments or questions on these proposals, please contact the editor).*

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## **Rumble Strips in Pratts Bottom**



Above is a picture of a new traffic calming measure on Rushmore Hill, in the quaintly named village of Pratts Bottom. It consists of five sets of "rumble strips". This is road with a 30 mph speed limit, but on which traffic often exceeds that limit.

Unfortunately some of the rumble strips are actually very close to houses, if not immediately outside them. Local residents have complained including Tony Lavelle who said in the Newsshopper that "*exasperated residents are reduced to tears by the sudden bursts of sound similar to machine-gun fire every few seconds*".

*(Editors Comments: From visiting the site, the noise generated certainly seems to be excessive and the strips were having no obvious impact on traffic speeds. In fact, in my vehicle, it was quieter inside the vehicle riding over the strips, than outside standing on the kerb. And with a modern car with a good suspension, such strips are barely noticeable. It is also clearly contrary to government guidelines to put rumble strips in close proximity to houses.*

*It was interesting to see the use of rumble strips on a recent visit to North Yorkshire where they are installed before almost every village, or on entering built-up areas (ie. where a 30 mph zone is being entered).. I think they can be effective in warning goods vehicles, where the sound and vibration they cause would be more noticeable, to slow down or to at least wake drivers from their dreams. But they certainly are not installed within built-up areas. I suggest they should be removed from Rushmore Hill except just before the 30 mph zone is entered coming down the hill.)*

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## **No Go Roads for Traffic Wardens**

Parking on a pavement is generally illegal, and parking wardens should issue penalty notices when they see it. Exceptions are where there are specific signs indicating that you can park with one wheel on the pavement, which tends to be where the road is very narrow and the pavement wide.

But there are many roads in the borough of Bromley where people park in this way, but there are no such signs or official approval. An example is White Horse Hill in Chislehurst. The council has previously classified such roads as "No Go" streets for parking attendants on the basis that ticketing vehicles in these roads "may lead to considerable and unwanted aggravation" as the council report on this subject put it. This is because it has become the norm to park there in that way, and residents consider it normal and safe practice to do so. However, other residents also complain about obstruction of the footpath.

To resolve this anomaly, in future Bromley intends to review all such streets, and after consultation with residents, either formally permit such parking, or enforce a ban.

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## **Letters**

"Agree with you about the Magpie Hall Lane chicanes. You don't mention the added problem of cars parking in them" .... Councillor Tony Owen. *(Editor: yes the chicanes create ideal "parking bays" which get filled up by local residents thus obstructing the smooth flow of traffic, although most of the parked vehicles in the photographs used in the last edition were actually parked on the pavement. There was also a letter complaining about this scheme in the Newsshopper from a cyclist who also found the narrowing of the road positively dangerous.*

*Chicanes and road narrowing in the form of "pinch points" seem to be the new approaches to tackle excessive traffic speed in Bromley now that speed humps are no longer part of council policy. So for example, the latest proposal is to put those on Beaconsfield Road and Court Farm Road on the Mottingham Estate as part of an extension of the existing nearby 20 mph zone. BBRAG has sent objections to those proposals, but of course the basic problem here is the introduction and attempted enforcement of a 20 mph speed limit on roads such as Court Farm Road on which a 30 mph limit seems more appropriate to road users).*

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## **News Snapshots**

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

+ The London Safety Camera Partnership (ie. the body that operates speed cameras) raised £6.5 million from fines in the 2003/4 financial year. But it managed to spend £7.2 million in operating the cameras and collecting the fines. So unlike in almost all other camera "partnerships", a substantial loss was the result.

+ Your editor has to report the sad death of L.J.K. Setright at the age of 74, eminent motoring journalist and author. He wrote informative articles on many aspects of the motoring scene and motor cars in a clear yet readable style. He could explain technology wonderfully well without boring the reader, and his references to classical and other sources showed his was far from a one-dimensional intellect. His pieces in Car magazine were written before such

publications degenerated into short summaries of manufacturers press releases, and when the readers were apparently willing to do more than simply read comic book style material. One of his last books was Drive On! – a social history of the motor car. He also achieved the distinction of getting an entry in Pseuds Corner in Private Eye for a wonderfully written, but overblown, piece on the merits of motorcycling.

+ A new American web site that contains quite a number of articles and references to the problems of traffic calming schemes is <http://www.secondscount.org> - the title refers to the delay to emergency vehicles caused by traffic calming measures.

+ Readers may have noticed the new "Specs" speed cameras on the M20 where road works are being undertaken. TRL Report 595 was published in 2004 and actually shows that where speed cameras were installed at road works, the risk of personal injury crashes was increased by 55%. Speed cameras were also associated with an increase in accident severity. On the other hand, conventional police patrols reduced the risk of crashes by 27%. More details can be seen on the Safespeed web site – see <http://www.safespeed.org.uk>. (*Editor: this is a pretty good example of where current road safety policies are based more on dogma than facts*).

+ Bromley Council's web site has been revamped. Let us hope that it proves more robust and reliable than in the past. However a quick review did not impress. Try finding details of the Green Waste Collection Service by going from the "Recycling & Waste Management" main tab – it's impossible, although the relevant page is still there.

+ Here's a quote from Chief Constable Richard Brunstrom, a former fan of speed cameras: "*We have 6000 cameras in the UK covering every identifiable hotspot, yet road deaths have gone up. We can't keep on going until there is a camera on each lamp post*". He was commenting on the proposal by the Association of Chief Police Officers to double again the number of speed cameras, and recommended the use of more vehicle activated speed display signs. (*Editor: a good idea and of course widely used in Bromley although I have noticed of late that some appear to have been set to display the speed of all vehicles*).

*They should be set to only display speeds in excess of 30 mph in a 30 mph limit so as to only warn those people exceeding the speed limit, otherwise they simply become a distraction that people will ignore.)*

+ The OECD produced a report on Britain recently. Although on the whole it is pretty positive about the position of the UK on most economic measures, it scores the UK poorly on transport infrastructure. It notes that Britain lags behind other countries by quite a long way and suggests that the low expenditure on strategic roads as a policy stance "should be reconsidered".

+ The Daily Telegraph recently reported on the rise in accidents to cyclists. It contrasted car-centred Milton Keynes (5 serious bicycle casualties last year) to cycle-mad Oxford (43 such accidents). The rise in cycling, particularly in central London is unfortunately likely to have a negative effect on personal injury statistics. They also complained about the number of cyclists riding without lights and claimed to have counted 134 in 28 minutes at 7 pm in London. Apparently prosecutions for riding without lights fell from 1,578 in 1990 to 134 in 2002, the last year when such data was reported.

## **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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