



# BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 51 (March 2008)

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## Editorial

*Apologies for the late arrival of this newsletter. I hope the phrase “better late than never” applies.*

*In this edition we have coverage of the London Mayoral election – don’t forget to study the candidate’s policies and cast your vote on May 1<sup>st</sup>. This is a real opportunity for Londoners to have a decisive say in the future of London over the next few years.*

*Do you want more of Livingstone’s presidential, one might even say “dictatorial”, style or a different leader with a vigorous London Assembly? Now is the time to get who you want to lead us in the future.*

Roger Lawson, Editor

## Mayoral Candidates Policies

With the London Mayoral elections looming in May, it’s worthwhile to ponder on the main candidates for this election and their transport policies. The following is a brief summary:

### Ken Livingstone (Labour)



As head of the Transport for London (TfL) board, Mr Livingstone clearly supports the existing policies for transport and those policies would continue if he was re-elected. So for example TfL consider the London

Congestion Charge to be a success, despite evidence to the contrary, and will persevere with it.

There has been much debate in the press about whether Mr Livingstone would put in place congestion charge schemes for other parts of London – for example some of the regional centres. He continues to deny having any specific plans in that regard. One such area that has been discussed is Greenwich, and although he has ruled out a wide area scheme he has said it is up to the local council to consider any smaller scheme if they wished.

But his general silence on this issue contrasts with the known policies published by TfL which will undoubtedly be progressed if Mr Livingstone is re-elected. For example these are some quotations published by the GLA Transport Committee in the recent “Driving Change” document about TfL’s policies:

*“TfL considers demand management programmes have the potential to contribute in the short-term to contain some localised congestion”.*

*“TfL advocates national road user charging applied London-wide, alongside higher charges for more*

*polluting vehicles in order to incentivise behavioural and modal shift, and influence people to use more fuel-efficient and less polluting vehicles. TfL considers road user charging to be economically efficient as it enables effective allocation of road space and so maximises value from the existing network”.*

*“Smart measures to influence behaviour and achieve emissions-reduction targets will be followed by the introduction of a national road user charging scheme across London”.*

*“road user charging extended to other congestion hot spots across Greater London, for example, town centre”.*

*“more sophisticated congestion charging across the capital, with a variable rate to tackle congestion at peak times, underpinned by intelligent transport systems technologies”.*

Along with the practical trials of wider area road pricing systems they have undertaken, these policies clearly suggest that the Mayor and his government are in favour of more extensive congestion charging and road pricing schemes, even though they are not specifically declared in Mr Livingstone’s manifesto.

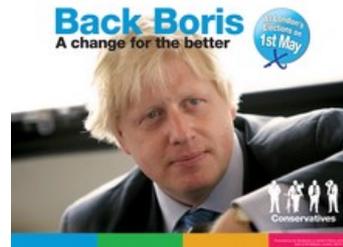
The Mayor’s other transport policies included in his manifesto are:

- An extension of the Freedom Pass concession for elderly and disabled people so they can use it 24 hours a day (currently excludes morning rush hours).
- Implementation of the £25 congestion charge for more polluting vehicles (although as we have pointed out this will have no significant environmental benefit).
- More investment in public transport including improved bus services, the building of Crossrail, tube modernisation and improved overground rail services. But his manifesto is short on specifics here.
- A 20 mph zone across the whole of London, with few exceptions.

In essence Mr Livingstone relies on his track record including a significant shift from private cars to public transport, cycling and walking in the last few years – driven by his draconian

policies against the people he hates and subsidies paid for by London taxpayers and central Government. Nobody doubts that there are more buses on the roads of London, and more freeloaders riding them, but whether this is a rational economic policy is another matter.

### **Boris Johnson (Conservative)**



Mr Johnson’s manifesto is more detailed and can be read in full on his web site at: [www.backboris.com](http://www.backboris.com)

His policies include tackling congestion by ensuring traffic flows by rephasing traffic lights, cracking down on people who dig up the roads and allowing motorcycles into bus lanes. He believes this is the best way to reduce emissions and would scrap the planned £25 congestion charge.

He would also reintroduce the Blackwall Tunnel tidal flow system and oppose increases in the Dartford crossing tolls.

As regards the London Congestion Charge he would undertake a new consultation on the Western extension and act on the result (this almost certainly means it would be scrapped of course). Otherwise he would reform the Charge by making it easier to pay and by using an automatic “account-based” system with direct debits. This would of course do away with the massive numbers of penalties paid and potentially fatally undermine the economics of the system. He also suggests the system used in Stockholm is much better and wants to reduce the administration cost very substantially (he claims it consumes 65% of the revenue which may be an under estimate).

Other proposals are for more orbital bus routes, and the invention of a new “Routemaster” that would have conductors and run on “green” fuel. These would replace the hated “bendy” buses that would be sold off to some other suckers. Mr Livingstone has questioned the economic viability of these ideas.

Mr Johnson is of course keen on promoting cycling, as are all the main candidates, so he promises a cycle hire scheme as in Paris, and lots more secure cycle parking.

### **Brian Paddick (Liberal/Democrat)**



Mr Paddick would scrap the £25 congestion charge and the Western extension, but he is proposing a £10 charge for everyone who drives into the Greater London area from outside. So any of your

country cousins would get charged every time they visited you in London. And people commuting from outside the London area into the outer fringes would also pay it. It is difficult to see the logic in this when most of those trips may not have any impact on the major congestion hot spots within London at all.

Otherwise like Mr Johnson he would reform the operation of the Congestion Charge system (he likes the Oslo version) to reduce the administration cost. He also likes rephrasing of traffic lights and limits on road works.

He is keen to promote cycling and walking (including the provision of “walking timetables at bus, tube and train stops” – whatever they are).

In summary, a few new detailed ideas, but no revolutionary changes, and clearly this is not a policy area that Mr Paddick has a great grip on, his background being in the police force of course, so tackling crime is a prime theme.

### **Gerald Batten (UKIP)**

Mr Batten would definitely scrap the London congestion charge. His web site is at: [www.batten4londonmayor.com/transport.html](http://www.batten4londonmayor.com/transport.html) (note though that I had difficulty accessing it when others do not for some unknown reason).

### **Other Candidates**

Note that other candidates who were going to stand for Mayor and who definitely would scrap the charge or phase it out – Chris Prior of Stop the Congestion Charging Party and Damien

Hockney of One London – have apparently decided to drop out and stand for the Assembly instead. With little chance of success and limited funding, that is probably a sensible move. Note that both these candidates are now standing for the London Assembly so you can still vote for them in that role.

There are of course quite a number of other candidates standing, but they have little hope of gaining significant votes (for example the BNP candidate wishes to abolish both the congestion zone and speed cameras). A complete list of all the Mayoral and London Assembly candidates including their key policies and links to their own web sites is given on this web site:

[www.londonelects.org.uk](http://www.londonelects.org.uk). Or if you want some more populist style reporting go to the Evening Standard's web site at:

[www.thisislondon.co.uk:80/standard-mayor](http://www.thisislondon.co.uk:80/standard-mayor)

Only Livingstone or Johnson seem to have much chance of winning and are running fairly close in the polls with Johnson in more or less of a lead at the time of writing.

Mud slinging has commenced between the two with allegations of dirty tricks by Johnson and Livingstone having to confess he had produced five different children by three different “partners” to avoid it leaking out. (*Editor: I knew Livingstone wanted to expand the population of London from reading his “London Plan” but I didn't realise he intended to accomplish it single handed*).

### **How to Vote? – Tactics are the Key**

This publication is not going to advise you who to vote for – we are a strictly apolitical organisation and never back any one political party. But if you are dissatisfied with the attacks on car owners, the poor quality of public transport, the congestion on main line and underground trains, the wasteful economics of current transport policies and the current Mayor's dictatorial style of leadership then clearly you should vote for “anyone but Ken”.

Because of the second transferable vote system in use for the Mayoral election, you have the ability to vote for your favourite candidate as first choice. But if you wish to ensure the defeat of Mr Livingstone, then you probably need to use your “second choice” vote for the candidate most likely to beat him – namely Mr Johnson. Or as one of the candidates said, for

your second choice vote you should vote for the candidate with a chance of winning who you least dislike.

Don't forget to choose the best candidates for the Greater London Assembly – they do have some power, and there is more variety of choice there. Do look at the policies of the people you are voting for (and bear in mind that the Green Party have been able to exercise significant influence on Livingstone's policies due to their two Assembly seats in the last few years despite a very low share of the vote so your choice is important here also).

But whatever you do make sure you vote. This election is likely to be closer than in past years and turn-out is all important bearing in mind the general low level in London elections.

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## Petition Against Speed Humps in Chislehurst



Back in 1998, the Bromley Borough Roads Action Group (BBRAG) was formed to oppose the proposed installation of speed humps in Manor Park Road and Watts Lane, Chislehurst. This scheme consisted of 5 round-top humps (photograph above) and 7 speed cushions in what was a relatively quiet road for most of the day. Although there is a large school nearby, school run traffic actually slows vehicles so no schoolchildren had been injured on the road in recent years.

Most residents thought it was a total waste of money (cost of £40,000) and did not want the humps, but the scheme was unfortunately at the time supported by councillors and council staff and gained marginal support from residents by the use of a biased consultation leaflet. This was of course long before the disadvantages of humps had become widely known and such evidence promoted

internationally by the future BBRAG Chairman (see the BBRAG web site for more information at [www.bromleytransport.org.uk/Humps.htm](http://www.bromleytransport.org.uk/Humps.htm) ).

In 2006 an analysis of the impact of the humps on accidents in the roads was done. In essence it showed that there was no statistical evidence of any improvement in the accident rate. See [www.bromleytransport.org.uk/Speed\\_humps\\_effect.htm](http://www.bromleytransport.org.uk/Speed_humps_effect.htm) for details.

So recently we launched a petition among local residents to have them removed. This was done by house-to-house canvassing of immediately adjacent streets and a leaflet drop to a wider area (that used in the original consultation).

The results were 258 signatures obtained in support (that compares with only 85 people who responded to the original council consultation). That implies that 76% of people who were personally approached (63 out of 83) signed the petition, clear evidence of the strength of support for removing the humps.

The petition has now been submitted to Environment Portfolio Holder Councillor Colin Smith. We await a response, but note that we asked for alternative traffic calming measures to be installed to replace the humps.

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## A Personal Story of Speed Camera Persecution by Roger Lawson

I have been prosecuted twice for alleged motoring offences in over 30 years of driving. Twenty years ago I was accused of overtaking on a zebra crossing in Sevenoaks, defended myself in court and was found not guilty.

In October 2005 I received a Notice of Intended Prosecution (NIP) for an alleged speeding offence on the A500 in Stoke picked up by a laser camera van. They alleged I was doing 42 mph in a temporary 30 mph limit where road works existed. You can actually see the complaints prompted by 5500 other drivers who collected speeding tickets in these road works on the ABD's web site at: <http://www.abd.org.uk/local/staffordshire.htm>

I completed and returned the NIP with a covering letter, indicating I was the driver and

refusing the fixed penalty offer. Two offences were subsequently listed for trial: failing to complete the NIP (obviously a nonsense which they persisted with even though I pointed out their error) and exceeding the speed limit. Bearing in mind this odd response, I decided to hire a lawyer to represent me.

It finally was listed for trial in Stafford in November 2006. I expected the trial to last about 20 minutes. The prosecution immediately offered no evidence on the failure to complete the NIP. I gave evidence that so far as I was concerned I was driving reasonably and probably within the speed limit and maintained my not guilty stance (I had of course no specific recollection of the incident as I did not see the camera van). The camera operator confirmed a few details but when cross examined by my barrister said that the speed signage was no concern of his and he had not checked it. In his closing statement my barrister said that as there was no evidence presented by the prosecution on the signage, then the case could not be proved.

At that point the Clerk of the Court interrupted and said that this was an “ambush” by the defence as this had not been raised before and therefore she was “aborting” the trial. My lawyer said it had come out in the cross examination (which the prosecuting counsel subsequently agreed), and that he did not recognise the word “abort” as a legal term. Two hours later, after lengthy debate on these legal issues, the case was “adjourned” to enable more evidence on the signage to be produced.

We applied for a Judicial Review of this case to the High Court on the basis that it was wrong to adjourn a case after closing statements had commenced, that it was unfair on me to have to travel again to Stafford for such a trivial case, that the court had abandoned its impartiality and a few other grounds. But in October 2007 the High Court rejected our arguments (it seems they expect the defence to do the prosecutions job for them now by pointing out the errors in their work in advance).

So it was back to the Stafford magistrate’s court in April 2008. I maintained my not guilty plea because there seemed little evidence still of the nature of the speed signage on this road. Indeed I had taken some photographs of the

scene some weeks later when I next travelled the road which you can see below – the camera van was parked on the flyover you can see in the second photograph. But there is no evidence of any speed signs for the 1000 metres of this road or any warnings of speed camera usage (both probably required as this was a temporary limit due to road works).



But when we arrived in court, it was clear that the key prosecution witness had not turned up and nobody knew where he was.

The prosecution asked for another adjournment which the magistrates refused. He then asked for the written evidence of the signage by the witness to be allowed as “hearsay” evidence which they also refused. He then withdrew the case. Costs were awarded to me.

What an enormous waste of public money and my time, on a prosecution that was questionable to begin with. But the key message for readers is that you should always plead not guilty to traffic offences unless you really feel that you are guilty of a moral crime. If necessary you should defend yourself in court if you cannot afford legal representation. Regrettably most people pay the fixed penalty

notice fine rather than dispute such offences. That is a mistake, because you'll find them totting up if you are simply unlucky with a subsequent risk of disqualification. Also large numbers of points cost you extra on your car insurance.

Of course if every motorist disputed every trivial prosecution for speeding, then the whole system would collapse as the legal system would become overloaded. But that might be a good thing in my view. It is clearly pernicious that innocent people, who are not guilty of either any moral or technical offence, have to go through this expensive process at considerable risk to establish their virtue. And there is of course no good evidence that the millions of speed camera fines that have been issued have had any effect on road accident casualty figures.

Note that my legal advisor was David Sonn of Sonn Macmillan Walker, Tel: 020-7377-8889, email: [dsonn@smw-law.co.uk](mailto:dsonn@smw-law.co.uk)

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### Croydon Tramlink Takeover by TfL



Transport for London have announced that they plan to pay £98 million to acquire the Croydon Tramlink. The deal is expected to be completed by this summer, and will enable the Mayor to expand the service – he has consistently criticised the operators for failing to invest in additional trams or more frequent services.

*(Editors Comments: The operators refused to invest because they could see that it would simply increase their existing losses. In fact the company which was set up under a PFI deal has consistently lost money even after massive public operating*

*subsidies and was effectively bankrupt. So this can be seen as a defensive measure by the Mayor against the major embarrassment of it going into administration or even liquidation. But all that it means is that the losses will now fall on London taxpayers.)*

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### £25 Congestion Charge Challenge



Porsche have announced that they are applying for a judicial review of the proposed £25 London Congestion Charge for vehicles with higher levels of emissions. This would apply to almost all the vehicles sold by the company, and would obviously seriously impact their sales in the London area.

They have set up a web site (photo above is from it) at: [www.porschjudicialreview.co.uk](http://www.porschjudicialreview.co.uk) and to quote from it:

“Porsche believes this will be bad for London and intends to take legal action in the form of a Judicial Review to stop this. This is yet another tax on London and the motorist.

**It is a disproportionately large, unfair increase.**

- The over 200 per cent increase for non-residents is disproportionately large– it is a huge jump in one go that looks more like a political stunt to raise revenue for an inefficient system than considered action.
- The jump for people who actually live in the congestion zone is even higher. People who currently pay just 80p a day will now have to pay £25.00 a day – a massive and unexpected increase of over 3000 percent.

- This increase will hit a large proportion of families that drive people carriers – the sort of people who use one large car, rather than driving a series of smaller ones.

- It will cost nearly £6,000 per year for those people, whether resident or not, to drive in London every day. This is a massive additional cost that people would not have known they were going to have to face when they bought their car.

- Motorists in Britain already pay very high levels of fuel tax and road tax. This is yet a further increase which will squeeze them even further.

### **It won't benefit the environment.**

- Despite Mr Livingstone's claims, the increased charge won't make any meaningful difference to the environment. The CO2 saved in a whole year is the equivalent, at most, to just a few hours of emissions from Heathrow Airport.

- It risks just putting more cars on the road as families move from one large car to two or more smaller ones.

- The increased charge will not be dependent on actual usage. A person driving a few hundred yards in one of the affected cars would have to pay £25.00 a day, whilst someone driving a slightly smaller car all day long would get away with paying just £8.00, or just 80p if they are a resident.”

*(Editor's Comments: I pointed out in a previous edition that this proposal had no merit. It clearly will not have any significant environmental benefit and therefore is just a gesture which impacts a small minority of people – these of course include a lot of wealthy people who drive luxury cars so it smacks of the politics of envy, a typical attack of the left wing socialists of which Mr Livingstone has never been able to conceal his membership. Please support the Porsche campaign by going to their web site and contacting them*

*Note that I submitted some Freedom of Information Act requests some months ago to obtain more information about the public consultation performed by TfL and the subsequent public survey they performed. My requests are currently being obstructed by TfL on spurious grounds, which just shows how politics rules in Transport for London these days.. In addition the*

*Information Commissioner who is supposed to enforce the law in this area seems unwilling to do so. More information will follow in due course as I will not accept this obstruction of my legal rights..).*

### **Ordinary Vehicles Affected**

Note that many people think this tax will only affect large 4x4s (“Chelsea tractors”) and luxury brands. This is not the case. My sisters Renault Espace will be included as well as such vehicles as a Volkswagen Passat (233 gm/km of CO2 thus exceeding the 225 limit), a 2 litre Vauxhall Zafira (228 gm/km), Vauxhall Vectra Estate 2.8i, Honda Accord 2.4, Volvo V70 2.5T, Peugeot 207 2.7 and Golf 3.2.

### **Study Suggests Pollution Will be Worse**

The Daily Mail reported more recently that according to a study by Kings College researchers (who monitor pollution in London) the £25 congestion charge will actually worsen pollution over the London area as a whole. This is because more polluting vehicles will simply drive around the congestion charge zone, and hence emit even more CO2.

This report was sent to TfL in January but has only just come to light as a result of the Porsche action. TfL have contested the figures and are asking Kings College to review their figures (Kings College is dependent on funds from TfL for a lot of their research).

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### **Motorbikes in Bus Lanes**



Transport for London undertook some research into the effects of allowing motorbikes into bus lanes last year. A draft report was

produced which said that accident rates to powered two-wheelers were reduced at the trial sites, and there also seemed to be no increase in accidents to cyclists and pedestrians as a result. In other words there was a clear safety benefit and obviously it would assist motorcyclists if they could use bus lanes.

It seems that Mayor Livingstone did not like the recommendations however. What exactly happened last September is not clear, but the

report was subsequently extensively revised. It shrank to half the size, and the recommendations were revised totally to imply that there was no benefit in such a change.

People have alleged that the Mayor had been got at by the cycling lobby who seem to have a strong presence in TfL. Cyclists have opposed this change because they believe it might increase the risks to themselves.

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## Deaths & Air Pollution

Councillor Phil Taylor in Ealing has a very informative web site on the government of Mayor Livingstone (see <http://philtaylor.org.uk>). One of his more recent comments was on the claim by Livingstone that poor air quality in London causes 1,000 premature deaths each year. This is what he has to say:

“The Mayor’s 265 PR staff are not silly. They know that some dumb journalist is going to get the wrong end of the stick and write this up as the Mayor saving 1,000 lives a year. Sure enough the BBC oblige with the comment in their piece this morning that says ‘It is a measure aimed at saving up to 1,000 lives a year’. The Transport for London background document tells a much more modest story – it says ‘The Defra methodology estimates that the proposed LEZ scheme would prevent .... 86 hospital admissions and roughly 40 deaths brought forward would be avoided’.

“ In other words, the LEZ scheme would only delay relatively few deaths for a few days at most, and at enormous cost. The money invested in this scheme would be much better applied to other health improvement schemes, particularly as we know that the LEZ will only have a very temporary benefit (improved vehicle technology and the turnover in the transport fleet means that the additional benefits of the LEZ will disappear in a few years time).

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## “Driving Change” Seminar

On the 12th February your editor attended a meeting hosted by the Greater London Assembly (GLA) at City Hall which was billed as an “exploration of solutions to traffic congestion in London”. Below is the letter I wrote afterwards to the Chairman of this meeting (Roger Evans, who is Chairman of the GLA Transport Committee):

Dear Mr Evans,

I am writing to tell you how disappointed I was with the "Driving Change" seminar I attended earlier this week. It was billed to be an open exploration of solutions for traffic congestion in London, but in reality it was nothing of the kind. My detail comments are:

1. The first two sessions were simply a sales pitch for congestion charging. David Quarmby is a former board member of TfL and attempted to justify their past and current policies with a presentation that was grossly misleading. In addition he is of course a director of Colin Buchanan and Partners, who like many consultancies in the transport sector are now raking in large fees for advising on congestion charging projects. Hardly an independent and unbiased observer!

Quarmby even said that bus journey times had improved after implementation of the congestion charge which is very misleading - they have consistently fallen since it was introduced - see [http://www.freedomfordrivers.org/London\\_Congestion\\_Charge\\_Report\\_July2007.pdf](http://www.freedomfordrivers.org/London_Congestion_Charge_Report_July2007.pdf) for the evidence. At least he admitted that congestion is almost back to where it was before the charge was introduced but repeated the erroneous claims of TfL that this is due to road works - this is a claim based on no substantive evidence and one I believe to be untrue - there were numerous road works in London in the year before the charge was introduced - indeed many people claim the immediate improvement in traffic thereafter was simply because there were fewer road works.

2. Tim Hockney of London First also promoted congestion charging, but apparently on the principle that this would enable goods vehicles that supply the businesses which his organisation represents to move more freely.

In other words he advocates that goods transport vehicles should gain priority over other road users by paying for it. Again simply a promotion of a vested interest.

3. The questions invited from the audience (which of course were used as an opportunity to make speeches by some) were almost all from the typical "environmental activists" who are on TfL's mailing list (and hence got an invite to the meeting), and of course are the sort of people who typically don't have any gainful employment and hence can afford to spend a half day at this kind of meeting. Hardly a representative section of the community!

Needless to say I tried to get a question in, but was not called, and unfortunately I had to leave before the end of the meeting so missed the session from Dr Kunst, but I doubt the remainder of the meeting was any different in its emphasis.

In summary, there was no balance, no representation of the views of people opposed to congestion charging, no criticism of the existing London congestion charge, and no attempt to examine other solutions to congestion. Next time I suggest you invite a speaker from the ABD, and I would be happy to come along and demolish all the spurious claims about the benefits of congestion charging. Could I suggest that you call another seminar with a proper, unbiased agenda and ensure that it is promoted to a wider section of the population.

Roger Lawson

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### Elmstead Lane Campaign



The Bromley Extra newspaper is campaigning for improved road safety measures in Elmstead Lane (photo above) following the recent fatal accident in the road - a teenager was hit by a car overtaking a bus from which he had just alighted.

There was also another fatal accident not long ago to a scooter rider. Supporters of this campaign and many local residents are asking for rapid action, including measures to tackle speeding in the road which they blame for the accidents, without any real evidence to support those claims.

Even the police have joined in with a speed cameras blitz on Elmstead Lane in early April (12 speeding tickets issued on the 4<sup>th</sup> April alone they claim, although they don't indicate what percentage of motorists were exceeding the speed limit which may have been quite low in reality).

Readers may recall that BBRAG opposed speed humps vigourously when the issue of traffic calming measures for the road was last raised in 2002. The public supported our view at the time, and voted against the humps, with the result that alternative measures were installed.

Why did we oppose humps at the time? One reason was because when the recorded accidents in the road were examined in detail, there was little evidence that speeding was the main cause (indeed I am not aware of any evidence that excessive speed was the prime cause of the two recent fatal accidents).

Elmstead Lane is certainly known to be a road with a bad accident record, and clearly the measures that were taken in 2002 don't seem to have helped much – more funding for additional road safety measures was recently obtained from TfL as a result. Unfortunately it is a road that used effectively to be a country lane but now handles a large volume of traffic. It is narrow and winding, with poor sight lines, a very poor road surface in many areas, and undulating in some stretches. More recently parking on the road has increased which has made certain stretches more dangerous. Lighting is also poor, and pavements are absent from some stretches. Crossing the road by pedestrians is often not easy either.

The nature of the accidents that do occur in the road are varied and although there is some concentration around the junctions, they are relatively widely spread out. In essence, the problem is complex and the solution probably expensive.

Therefore it would be wrong for the council to rush into ill considered measures as a result of public clamour.

In essence, our view is that the road needs comprehensively improving to enable it to cope with the higher volumes of traffic. Anti-speed measures alone are not going to make this road safer.

Straightening the road, resurfacing it, minor limits to parking, improved lighting, the installation of pavements, more pedestrian refuges, clearer crossing points (perhaps even a zebra crossing), speed warning signs and other similar measures particularly at the junctions are probably the answer. In essence it probably needs a lot more spending on it than the existing road safety budget – but the cost of a fatal accident is so enormous that such expenditure can probably be justified.

However, one cannot remove all accidents, particularly those that are caused by the mistaken behaviour of the people who died as seems to apply in the recent cases.

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### **Crown Lane Improvement**

Crown Lane in Bromley has been a problem in respect of traffic congestion for some years. Inconsiderate parking on the whole length of the north side results in traffic being squeezed into one lane. When it is busy then traffic can be blocked for some minutes. As this is also a bus route, buses can also be substantially delayed.

Proposals have been put out to public consultation that will increase the amount of off-street parking and/or rearrange the on-street parking to free up the road. Even slight widening of the road is being suggested in one option.

*(Editor: Having been stuck in a jam here for several minutes only recently, I welcome these proposals. It is unfortunate that these kind of road improvements are not considered more widely and it requires the justification of delays to buses to get such changes made).*

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### **Bromley's Congestion Working Group**

Bromley Councillors set up a Congestion Charge Working Group in 2007 to consider the issue of traffic congestion. This was in response to a survey of Bromley's residents that showed that traffic congestion was the third highest priority for civic action.

It has recently produced a report (for the full report see :

<http://sharepoint.bromley.gov.uk/Public%20PDF/item%205%20appx-elph0804.pdf> )

Bromley has the third highest car ownership of all London boroughs with an average of 0.5 cars per person. Some 31% of Bromley households have two or more cars.

Under the London Mayor's "London Plan", households in Bromley are forecast to expand from 127,000 in 2004 to 149,000 by 2016 which is likely to lead to even more cars and possibly more traffic congestion.

Their conclusions were:

- Controlled parking zones are a valuable method to control congestion and regulate parking *(Editor: not obvious to me at all how they control congestion, but at least they agreed that charges should not increase for second cars or be based on car size).*
- Parking in town centres is important to their vitality and commercial success, but a park and ride scheme for Bromley town centre would be desirable. *(Editor: yes but where to site the parking has always been the problem).*
- Station "Access Plans" should be encouraged to reduce car travel to stations and "parking should be provided for travel to the closest stations rather than encourage drivers to go further afield for better parking or cheaper fares". *(Editor a laudable objective but how to confound the behaviour of rational people and economic practicality is not clear).* But they concede that off-street parking could be increased at some stations and possible parking provided over the rail tracks. Car travel to stations (in terms of time of day) does not appear to clash with other road users. *(Editor: A good point!)*

- The school run problem provoked the usual responses with an emphasis on “School Travel Plans”, possible use of school buses, the encouragement of schools drawing pupils from local catchment areas and similar ideas.
- Promotion of car clubs, cycling and “modal shift” may help reduce congestion.
- Road improvement schemes should be directed to reducing bottlenecks that cause queuing on traffic routes. *(Editor, but that is unlikely to happen unless they also “lobby TfL to allow greater local freedom on transport spending” as the report says).*

Councillor Colin Smith accepted the report with some additional comments:

- Council officers should discourage school age drivers from bringing their vehicles to school.
- Officers should put forward proposals to tackle parking problems around some stations.

*(Editor: In summary my comments on this report are that there are not a lot of new ideas in there and no likely vigorous steps to tackle congestion will result. Yet again it seems that the problem of congestion is too complex and too difficult, or the decisions required to tackle the problems too politically difficult, for any really decisive progress to be made. But at least Councillors did attempt to try).*

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## News Snapshots

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

- + Ken Livingstone and TfL have spent £1 million on producing and promoting a three minute advertisement which promotes considerate behaviour on buses. The film was directed by Mike Figgis and is aimed at people who play loud music or eat smelly food.
- + We have been reliably advised that the speed cameras on the western side of the M25 (between junctions 10 and 15) have been changed to digital ones from the end of February. They replace the previous camera based Gatso models, and the speed at which they are triggered might have been tightened up although it's still likely to be the normal 10% plus

2 mph tolerance, giving you up to 79 mph in practice when the “national speed limit” is displayed.

+ In just one week Ken Livingstone managed to express two totally contradictory positions. On the 18th February visiting the village of Sipson, which will be demolished if the expansion of Heathrow Airport goes ahead, Ken Livingstone said that it was “vital that all airport expansion in London and the South East, including Heathrow is halted now”. But the very next day he published his updated London Plan, which said “the Mayor... recognises that further runway capacity in the South East will be required to meet London’s needs”.

+ David Cameron, a keen cyclist like all politicians it seems these days, was caught flouting traffic laws in London by one newspaper. He was photographed on his way to Westminster, riding the wrong way down a one-way street, going the wrong side of “keep left” sign and crossing ignoring red lights. *(Editor: unfortunately only two typical of all young male cyclists as we pointed out in a previous edition and somewhat disappointing).*

+ The London Borough of Bromley has won the “Transport Borough of the Year” award – this is issued by a group of London organisations.

+ Readers may recall the problem of the speed table at the junction of Worsley Bridge and Copers Code Road which has been going on for many months



(see Newsletter 47 and photo left). This not only caused vehicles to fly off the road into the garden of resident Kerry

Turner but also caused noise and vibration in her property. A partial solution has finally been installed consisting of pedestrian refuges to try and slow traffic on the approach to the junction+. *(Editors Comments: This was a typical example of the delay by councils in responding to genuine and justifiable complaints by residents about speed humps in that it took a very long time and a lot of effort by Ms Turner before anything got done. This was not helped by the apparently obstructive attitude of council Environment Director Gordon*

Hayward who has recently retired. Let us hope that his replacement shows a more responsive attitude to such complaints. In my view the speed table should have been removed as soon as it was apparent that it was causing unacceptable impacts on residents, and replaced by alternative traffic calming measures.)

+ “New York nixes traffic congestion charge”. Yes that was the headline on one US report following the announcement that the proposal from New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg for a London style congestion charge in lower Manhattan had come to a dead stop. Although the city council had approved the idea, following the offer of a \$350m bribe by the Federal Authorities (“no congestion charge, no public funding of transport improvements” as is happening in the UK), the state assembly failed to ratify the measure. *(Editor: at least the “land of the free” believes in freedom of travel, and let us hope they keep it that way).*

+ Less than half the motorists caught by speed cameras in London paid fines in the last year. Some 200,000 escaped prosecution because of false number plates, inaccurate licensing information, incorrect addresses, or simply failure of the courts to progress the cases due to inadequate capacity to deal with the volume of cases it seems. *(Editors Comments: It seems my comments in a separate article apply even more so in London – if you dispute a penalty notice the forces of law and order may simply give up apparently).*

## Contact Information

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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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## 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.