

# newsforum

The London Forum - working to protect and improve the quality of life in London



The London Forum of  
Amenity and Civic Societies

Founded 1988

[www.londonforum.org.uk](http://www.londonforum.org.uk)

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## A matter of public concern

### Is the BBC impartial?

Heathrow third runway was championed by a supposedly "impartial" BBC interviewer when interviewing London's Mayor on the newly established Commission on Aviation Capacity. Newsforum editor **Helen Marcus** found the BBC complaints procedure a barrier to communication.

On November 2nd 2012 Radio 4's Today Programme ran an item on the announcement of the Davies Commission on aviation capacity. Evan Davis interviewed three people. He first spoke to MP Julian Huppert, who said that we should make better use of existing infrastructure, and then Jo Valentine of London First, who agreed, and even acknowledged that aircraft noise was a real problem.

However when Evan Davies interviewed Mayor Boris Johnson, far from remaining the disinterested interviewer, his tone became increasingly confrontational and critical. He scarcely allowed Johnson to make his own points but just kept pressing him about the Heathrow third runway, constantly interrupting him, implying that he represented no-one but himself, and putting words into his mouth: "let me just shut you up for one second.... because we know your view on this. ....What you're trying to do is get Heathrow 3rd runway ruled out..... That's your motive. It's just that you don't like that option"

#### Disrespect for the democratic process

When the Mayor tried to point out that he was democratically elected to represent this view on behalf of Londoners, and is supported by "huge numbers of London politicians and the London Assembly across all parties," Evan Davies dismissed this too: "You could say that's democratic but you

*Evan Davis sounded as though he was a lobbyist for the Heathrow 3rd runway and Johnson quite justifiably told him so.*

could say it's inappropriate for a small number of constituencies in this whole country to determine the national infrastructure shape of the nation."

Around 8 million people live in greater London out of the total UK population of about 60 million; hardly a "small number of constituencies"

These remarks show an astonishing contempt, not just for BBC impartiality, but for the people of London, and the whole democratic process. Evan Davis sounded as though he was a lobbyist for the Heathrow 3rd runway and Johnson quite justifiably told him so.

#### Lack of "impartiality" or "balance"

I felt that this interview was so far from the BBC's much vaunted commitment to "impartiality" or "balance", that I should

complain. However when I tried to find a phone number or email address to contact on the BBC website complaints page, it seemed designed to be a barrier to prevent people from complaining or contacting the BBC at all. The complaints web-page is circular – you need to be tech-savvy to decipher it. I managed to bypass it because I found an email address I had used some years ago that still seemed to work. The reply I received was unsatisfactory, and further advised that: "This is sent from an outgoing account only which is not monitored. You cannot reply to this email address but if necessary please contact us via our webform quoting any case number we provided." But If you make your complaint through their webform you have no record of it on your system.

#### A barrier to complaints

A complaints system that dictates to people how they must complain, and says that if they do not do it in the prescribed manner their complaint will be ignored, is no complaints system at all. This is surely unacceptable for an organisation which receives its funds through mandatory contributions from the tax-payer.

It would be interesting to know what other London Forum members think, if they heard that interview.

*(Quoted statements in this text were transcribed from the BBC's play-back facility). ■*

# London Forum AGM 2012

17th October 2012 at The Gallery

A summarised report of the AGM meeting, from notes taken by **Derek Chandler** and others

Chairman Peter Eversden opened the meeting introducing the President of the London Forum, Sir Richard MacCormac, and the Chair of the Planning and Transport Committee of the London Forum, Michael Bach. He welcomed the representatives of the Societies present, especially new members.

## President's welcome

Sir Richard said that the work of the London Forum is of increasing importance, thanks in large part to the commitment of Peter Eversden to the Forum over the past 16 years. The London Forum does not concern itself with politics but with Government proposals and acts, voicing concerns from member societies around London. London Forum now has a recognised importance due in large part to Peter Eversden's commitment to its aims.

Sir Richard continued by commenting on the need for an appropriate density when planning housing developments. High density development, achieved by high rise small apartments, excluded many families due to both cost and lack of space. Such developments led to a transient occupation in buy-to-let properties. This matter would be discussed in more detail during the Open Discussion session.

## Chairman's Report

The Chairman began his report by thanking the Patrons for their support, and Helen Marcus and Peter Pickering for compiling the Annual Report, already circulated, which reflected a great deal of work by many people during the year which was also reported more fully in Newsforum, edited to a very high standard by Helen Marcus. He also referred to Planning in London which he recommended as an important journal on London planning matters and suggested that Societies could subscribe for copies to support the journal in its work.

The Chairman highlighted some of the Main points raised in the Report. Over the past year, the London Forum has been active responding to the Localism Act, the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework, the proposals by Government for Use Classes, Listed Building Consent and permitted development. These have all been serious

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*The work of the London Forum is of increasing importance, thanks in large part to the commitment of Peter Eversden*

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**Sir Richard MacCormac**

issues requiring a lot of interpretation and lobbying. The London Forum has strengthened its relationships with London MPs, Members of the House of Lords, Ministers and Opposition shadow spokesmen to try to influence them to make DCLG and DCMS understand the implications of the suggestions and changes they are making and to achieve input to Parliamentary Select Committee work.

The Mayor's London Plan has had to be revised to take account of the changes the Coalition has introduced, including an 'affordable rent model' which seems to be most unaffordable for London, requiring income of £65,000 annually to qualify. The London Forum has commented upon the alterations to the London Plan and has been invited to participate in the public examination of those changes, to be held in November. This work is still in progress.

The GLA regards the Forum as a "stakeholder group", enabling the Forum to be involved at the draft stage of proposals, which are now focusing on character and context and creating sustainable neighbourhoods. The Chairman had continued with membership of the Outer London Commission and the Final Report was in preparation. The Mayor's Outer London Town Centre Rejuvenation Fund had 43 "special areas", more than the GLA "outline" frameworks.

It is vitally important for societies to ensure their borough's Local Plan was up to date. **Local decision making** would be a very important area for action in future. Without a local plan any planning application is automatically allowable. The London Plan should override this as it is in the form of a local plan. However local case officers have been known to reject the London Plan as a "material issue".

Excessive density of housing, basement developments and BT cabinets are also contentious matters, and some Boroughs have not developed sufficient policies to control these.

**Open Meetings** for members, and any other interested participants, had been held throughout the year, with good attendance and participation[ they had been fully reported in the Newsforum.

The Chairman recorded the Forum's great thanks to Alan Baxter for his generosity in providing office space and the use of the Gallery. This enabled the Forum to hold meetings and network with the many other residents of the building involved in planning and kindred matters. The recent installation of a comprehensive audio-visual system in the Gallery had already proved very useful.

**The Forum's four to five yearly survey** was conducted in May and the results were discussed at an open meeting in September. It identifies members' interests and concerns, enabling the Forum Committee to plan its activities to suit members. It has been sent to all members by email.

**The London Forum web site** was recreated and its content management system is now being finalised so that it can be updated regularly. It has news feeds that bring the latest information from Government and the GLA and the Twitter system is being used to spread information on live issues quickly and widely.

## Financial Report

Financial Report: The Treasurer had prepared the Financial Report but had been called away from London at the last minute. The Chairman summarised the Report. Income was currently just sufficient and the Balance Sheet was healthy. The website and Survey had been major costs in the same year but were very worthwhile. After several years without any increase, despite inflation, an increase had been essential to meet rising costs. Several donations were acknowledged and welcomed. The Annual Report and Accounts for 2011-12 were duly approved, and the motion was passed nem con.

## Election of Officers and Trustees

Simon Baddeley was re-elected as

Speaking at the annual conference of the Confederation of British Industry on November 19, the Prime Minister announced plans to limit objectors' rights to mount legal challenges to projects they oppose as part of the drive to speed up development and boost economic growth. He would introduce increased charges

for applications, a shortening of the three-month limit on applying for judicial review, and reduce the number of possible appeals from four to two. Only one in six judicial review applications had been granted last year suggesting that this demonstrated that the right to have planning decisions judicially reviewed was being abused. ■

Honorary Independent Examiner.

Four members of the Executive Committee retired by rotation: Peter Eversden (Chairman), Michael Hammerson, Bill Linskey and Helen Marcus. All were willing to stand for again and a motion to elect them en bloc was passed nem con.

The Chairman thanked the Executive Committee (EC) for their work and support. The Chairman thanked Michael Bach and all the members of the Planning and Transport committee (P&T) which did a great deal of vital work throughout the year.

**Need for new committee members**

The Chairman emphasised the need for new members to fill vacancies on the EC and P&T. Membership did not involve attendance at numerous meetings as much was dealt with by e-mail.

**Any Other Business**

Marion Harvey expressed thanks to Peter Eversden for his excellent running of London Forum.

**Open forum session**

After the formal session, general discussion amongst over 40 people in attendance centred on two matters: housing and the use of open spaces.

**Housing**

Michael Bach introduced the discussion with an historical overview of current planning issues.

Recent densely-built housing with low minimum standards compares poorly even to post-war housing, which at least had Parker Morris standards and more family units. It seems that the Opportunity Areas in the London Plan have given some developers an 'open field' to build very high density housing.

The "Density Matrix" concept of the London Plan, agreed in 201 and now being revised, states that the aim of housing development is not to maximise the number of units, but to optimise – that is, to achieve the right balance as a function of location and context. But around London developments, such as a 35-storey building in White City, seem to becoming more prolific.

*Sir Richard noted that recent developments seem to be replicating 60s high-rise housing which resulted in many social problems.*

The target in the London Plan is that 95% of all new housing should adhere to the appropriate density range in the London Plan density matrix to get a good balance between density and amenity. However recently, over 50% of developments are above the maximum limit for the appropriate range. The GLA position is not yet clear, with officers criticising densities above the London Plan matrix, but still approving them. This can only create serious problems for the future, yielding poor quality housing. Planning as undertaken at Council level is little more than regulation; whereas proper planning should be seen as a much longer term process. We must push for the London Plan to be followed.

In response to these concerns, Sir Richard MacCormac and Peter Eversden urged members present to push for the London Plan agreed density matrix for their area to be implemented appropriately.

As Sir Richard noted: recent developments seem to be replicating 60s high-rise housing which resulted in many social problems. Are we building transient ghettos for young workers who cannot, or do not want to, stay in London for long? Are we creating another social housing crisis, developing the slums of the future?

**Contributions from the floor raised the following issues**

- The increasing trend of housing units in Central London being bought up by overseas companies (over 60% of new build last year in Central London);
- Risks to social cohesion, with young families being forced out of London.
- The Planning Inspectorate overruling some local authorities' refusal of permission for large-scale housing

developments - for example, a 24-storey block for student accommodation proposed by the Arsenal Football Club near their Emirates ground.

- The amount of approved sites being land-banked instead of being developed despite the need for more housing; and the number of second/empty homes in the capital.
- Developers should be challenged on the costs of proper insulation and land reclamation;
- Insufficient scrutiny by Boroughs of development proposals;

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment showed that all housing needs could be met using the agreed mid-point density for sites. Design is key here: one can build 70 dwellings per hectare with apartments of 4 to 5 storeys, or family housing at 50 to 100 dwellings per hectare.

Planners need a tool kit to pre-empt developers. Help is needed to examine the viability of applications for housing so that societies can unpick some of the detail of these and ask the appropriate questions. When the only recourse may be to take out a judicial review, this can impose an impossible cost for many societies. The London Forum needs to be demanding a proper scrutiny of large developments by the GLA and boroughs.

**The Use of open spaces**

This matter has been raised at recent meetings of the London Forum illustrating the increasing concerns that member societies have about the commercialisation of open spaces; specific examples given included activities at Kensington Gardens, Richmond Park and Chiswick House Gardens. The Royal Parks are suffering funding cuts of 10% pa.

There seems to be a move to privatise the use of our open spaces, with boroughs needing to earn income due to Government cutbacks. It was commonly accepted that it is a question of degree and frequency, and that we need to monitor this situation and keep in contact with Dave Morris, the chair of the London Green Spaces Friends Groups Network (LFGN). ■

# London Forum Survey of Members 2012

Open meeting to discuss Survey results, September 2012,  
by **Diane Burrige**

**D**eveloper-led planning and high density housing are amongst the most serious challenges facing members who responded to the London Forum's fourth survey recently. Other recent challenges have been traffic and road safety, the decline of local shops, and excessive street clutter.

51 of 101 member societies responded to the survey, and stated, that over the past two years, their top achievements have been to prevent inappropriate developments, run events and public meetings, and gain more recognition and publicity for their organisations.

At a meeting held 11 September 2012, with over 20 society members present, to discuss the survey results in more depth, the London Forum's chairman, Peter Eversden, noted that members want the London Forum to prioritise the following work over the next few years:

- Influence planning policy;
- Give local issues a bigger voice;
- Provide expert information and advice;
- Provide a London-wide perspective for members;
- Play a pro-active role with the Mayor and GLA.

Membership of the London Forum is now important to seven of ten member societies, with the News Forum, bulletins and alerts, and work to respond to Government consultations, found to be of benefit to 94% of members.

Encouragingly, nine of ten member societies responding stated that they are thriving or ticking over - with 31% having rising membership; 48% having static membership, and 21% falling. However, 45% of members stated that their activities were being limited by shortages of skills/people, and nearly one-quarter of member societies have at least one officer vacancy. At the same time, working relationships with councillors and officers have improved greatly since the last survey was held in 2008.

## Innovative ideas

Societies are increasingly active in many innovative ways: for example, Enfield Society organises walks in the borough with over 1,100 people participating to

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*Working relationships with councillors and officers have improved greatly since the last survey was held in 2008.*

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date, and Camden Civic Society conducts a regular survey of schools to look at what was good for children in their area.

## Strength in variety

Obviously, the variety of member societies around London is a strength, with membership figures for individual societies ranging from 19 to over 5,000, with the median being 430. And membership fees for individuals ranged from nil to £16/year with the median being £8/year.

## Concerns on council decisions

General discussion followed presentations of the findings of the survey. A focus of discussion highlighted concerns regarding various recent council decisions; for example, in one borough the planning committee has a quorum of two, and a London Forum member declared that, 'planning does not seem to exist anymore in some boroughs.' For example, when councils work against the wishes of many local residents - including taking out pedestrian crossing points for the cycle superhighway.

In other areas, some decisions have contradicted councils' own Statements of Community Involvement, and increasingly planning decisions are delegated to officers, even when there are objections. Many recent developments, with a focus on housing, are going against councils' own policies supporting mixed use developments, including retaining industrial units. And housing densities in some outer London boroughs seem to be reflecting inner city matrices for density.

## Decline of local shops

The decline of local shops was also discussed and examples given on how to manage this. Moves to encourage living above shops have been impeded by the

need to have separate access to the upstairs areas - very difficult when the entrance to upstairs areas is through the shop. And with some councils selling off local shops for supermarkets, and large shopping malls proving popular, there is concern about the survival of the town centre and smaller parades of local shops.

## London Forum's website

In response to member societies' feedback, over the next few years, the London Forum's revamped website will hopefully play a key role as a contact point, able to be interactive, and to list events and link to members' own websites. Feedback from member societies is always essential to ensure that the committee of the London Forum is responding to member priorities, and SurveyMonkey will be used to analyse the results of this survey in more detail, and to run more on-going surveys.

## The importance of a national voice

Finally discussion was held on the importance of having a national voice for Amenity and Civic Societies; however only about 10% of London Forum members are also members of Civic Voice. The London Forum is increasingly working with Civic Voice to highlight the importance of a national presence for societies.

Peter Eversden concluded the meeting by emphasising that we are all volunteers and can only do so much on an individual level. We need to link more with Planning Aid for London to obtain expert advice, and work as much as we can with local councils and the GLA. ■



## London Society Centenary

The London Society continued their Centenary celebrations with a reception in the historic Great Hall at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in October. Helen Marcus was pleased to attend representing the London Forum. ■



### Access to local authority meetings

There has been an important change to Regulations to extend the rights of people to attend all meetings of a council's executive, its committees and subcommittees came into force on 10 September 2012. Its aim is to remove unnecessary and bureaucratic red tape on forward plans introduced by legislation in 2000, and introduce greater openness, transparency and public scrutiny in council executive meetings. The new regulations create a presumption that all meetings of the executive, its committees and subcommittees, and decisions, including those affecting budgets and local services, will have to be taken in an open and public forum (regulation 3), unless a narrowly defined legal exception applies.

- A meeting will only be held in private if confidential information would be disclosed, or a resolution has been passed to exclude the public because exempt information is likely to be disclosed, or a lawful power is used to exclude the public in order to maintain orderly conduct at the meeting (regulation 4).
- Any executive decision that would result in the council incurring new spending or savings significantly affecting its budget or where it would affect the communities of two or more council wards will have to be taken in a more transparent way. Crucially councils will no longer be able to cite political advice as justification for closing a meeting to the public and press, or state that decisions being made were not 'key decisions'. Intentional obstruction or refusal to supply certain documents could result in a fine for the individual concerned.
- The existing media definition will be broadened opening up councils to local online news outlets. Before councils could prohibit members of the public from videoing, tweeting and live-blogging their meetings.
- Individual councillors will also have stronger rights to scrutinise the actions of their council.
- The changes clarify the limited circumstances where meetings can be closed: the council must now justify why that meeting is to be closed and give 28 days notice of such decision.

London Forum members' attention has been drawn to this in an e-bulletin, ■  
More information can be found at:  
[www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/2089/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/2089/made)

# Change of use

London Forum response to Government consultation on use classes order and reuse of existing buildings

This Consultation has been flagged as: New opportunities for sustainable development and growth through the reuse of existing buildings:

London Forum has responded to this Government consultation which seeks to make alterations to the regulations on permitted development and change of use classes, affecting business, office, warehouse, and industrial use; and hotels, boarding and guest houses conversions to dwellings, without the need for planning permission

### Conversion of hotels to housing

The London Forum considers: the conversion of hotels to housing without requiring consent for a change of use is ill-conceived and inappropriate in London where the local economy requires more not less hotel accommodation.

### Delivering sustainable communities

The review should have provided the tools to deliver healthy, sustainable communities promoted by the Localism Act and the NPPF (paras 69/70) by giving local authorities the ability to prevent the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, such as pubs, and to plan positively for the provision of community facilities by ensuring a better distribution, such as for post offices. Pubs and post offices should be in a separate use class.

There is a need to separate betting shops from other high street uses to control their concentration. This is a major issue for many London Boroughs.

### Use Classes Order should support the NPPF

The London Forum considers that Use Classes Order should support the NPPF in delivering:

- the right development in the right place, at the right time and of the right scale, such as developing, retaining and enhancing town centre economic uses, including not only retail and leisure, but also offices and health, education,

*The review should have provided the tools to prevent the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services.....a deeply-flawed approach and runs totally counter to localism.*

- public administration, libraries, etc which need such central locations that provide economies of agglomeration that support one another as well as infrastructure, such as public transport, which makes them accessible to all; and
- benefits for the local economy and the local community, which means retaining much-needed economic uses, such as small offices generally and medium and larger-scale offices in existing town centres and/or close to public transport interchanges; hotels and tourist facilities to support the local economy;
  - strong, sustainable and healthy communities,

### Using Article 4 Directions

Wholesale relaxation with the "safeguard" of using Article 4 Directions to "opt out" is a totally unrealistic proposal. Solving a local problem through general relaxation is the wrong way to do it, when local solutions are being encouraged. Where local relaxation is needed, it can be encouraged by local policies or even Local Development Orders. There should be no need for a change in secondary legislation just to reduce the cost of making an application for a few projects. This is a deeply-flawed approach and runs totally counter to localism. ■

# Volunteering at the Olympics

Two London Forum committee members participated in the Games Makers and London Ambassadors volunteers programmes. They share their experiences with Forum members.

## Life in Trafalgar Square as a London Ambassador

by **Judy Hillman**, London Forum Vice-President

'Is life just a game?' This question stood out on the postcard held out by the 20-something Muslim with a long black beard and dressed in scarlet T-shirt, part of a group making their mark in front of the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. My fellow London ambassador, an Italian woman, who has worked in the capital for several years, and I reacted simultaneously. 'No' we both said firmly. 'Do you believe in God?' he asked. 'Yes,' we both said. 'What was our faith was the next sally. 'Christian,' we both replied, although we had certainly not discussed religion as we helped people with their queries about the Olympics or London. However, dressed in our distinctive slashed pink and purple shirts and black trousers, we were intrigued by what became an almost Jesuitical inquisition of our faith and beliefs. After a few minutes, we said we must make ourselves available more generally to the queries of visitors from home and abroad and even Londoners. At this point, our inquisitor offered a small abbreviated paperback version of the Koran to my fellow ambassador. Her reply neatly ended our encounter. 'Thank you but I already have the full version at home.'

That was the most memorable but certainly not the most typical exchange with the many people our team tried to help. During the Olympics, I was on duty as a volunteer from the beginning of August for six consecutive days from five to 10pm. The role was exhilarating, worthwhile, fun – and exhausting – as we stood and strolled around reacting to queries or asking whether we could be of any help.

The reaction was always polite. People from all over the world seemed delighted to find Londoners prepared to give up time (many took leave from paid jobs) to help visitors. Our obvious enjoyment contrasted with any idea that, as a nation, we are cold to strangers and insular.

Our team was a diverse lot, in age, sex, colour and background. Our ages ranged from about 20 to the mid 70s and included students, a business consultant, someone who buys advertising space, marketing for a charity, a retired accountant, a woman who sells theatre tickets, a former taxi driver, an IT teacher, a college sports head and a catering manager in a Soho restaurant.

As languages, we offered French, German, Italian and Japanese. Our first location manager, who was also the link to the area manager, was on duty for 20 days in all, four days on, four days off. When off duty, she was working on a business plan for a new business.

### Becoming a real team

The extraordinary thing was that this seemingly odd collection of people, who normally operated around the square in pairs, became a real team. We all knew we were doing our best and we could trust someone else to help out if we did not know an answer. At a pinch there were two touch screens with details about progress and results in the Olympics inside the pod, or temporary hut on the promenade outside the National Gallery and a computer for unusual queries.

The majority of questions related to the lack of a big screen in the square and dearth of tickets for the games. The only answer to the first was to talk about safety and the likelihood that too many people would have congregated on this central traffic island. We suggested they went to Hyde Park with its several screens but a need to go through security and with a ban on food and drink. Otherwise there was the screen in Potters Field, on the south side of Tower Bridge, which provided a totally relaxed environment without queues or searches. If individuals were really at the end of their tether, then there was a sports pub nearby – or virtually any bar.

As for tickets, the best we could do was suggest they stayed up late, tried to penetrate the queues on the computer and crossed their fingers. They might or might not be lucky. At one point it was possible to go to Wembley and get straight in to watch football and one man even went to Cardiff hoping to see his home country play. He got a ticket there and turned up at the pod the next day beaming with pleasure.

### Using London's great buildings

Early on I was almost fazed the first time I was asked where one could find out about country houses. I swallowed my instinctive reply to suggest the National Trust or a tourist office and learnt we had a list of the impressive buildings which

different countries had rented to host for the games. Apart from entertaining their teams and officials, these provided their nationals with big screen sports reportage in the relevant language and welcomed the curious who wanted to expand their enjoyment of London as an international city. For example, Austria was based in Trinity House and offered a jazz player alternating with mountain folk music for free and beer and sausages at a reasonable price. Italy had moved into the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre and offered wine tastings and concerts.

As volunteers we received free travel within London (or used existing passes) and a card topped up with £30 from which to draw for a daily sandwich or salad to restore the inner man or woman and allow for a brief respite for well worn feet. We also received the uniform with two collared short sleeved shirts, a fleece, a shower-proof jacket, coarse black trousers, a rucksack, a water bottle, a baseball cap and a straw-looking trilby. With its all too obvious pink and purple colours, the uniform quickly identified ambassadors to anyone who was a bit lost.

### London ambassadors at County Hall

The organisation of the London ambassadors by the Mayor's Office at County Hall was well thought out, planned and generally first class. I initially registered an interest in October 2010 and filled in my application in the following February, followed by an interview in July at a local library. There were seven groups of 12 that day and this process went on all over London to whittle down the 16,000 chosen for interview to 8,000, of which about 300 would be area and local managers. The ambassadors, aged as it turned out between 14 and 85, were to look after more than 40 locations as varied as London's airports and railway stations and key focal points in the city. Each ambassador had to attend three training days, in my case, at Camden Town, Stratford and St. Martin's-in-the-Field by Trafalgar Square.

The first two were round table occasions with screen presentations and quiz questions about the Olympics and the capital, providing an impressive amount of background information to read and possibly absorb. The day I attended Stratford was the

## An Olympics' Games Maker -

the experience of one London Forum committee member  
by **Diane Burridge**

32nd in a run of 33 days with 200 potential ambassadors each day. The most anticipated question at the Trafalgar Square session was the location of local loos, a place to fill up a water bottle and the nearest ATM. In the event, I got asked about public loos only once and as for the rest, not at all. We also had to prepare our reaction to the possibility of abandoned luggage or shopping or a lost child. Real questions included travel routes, particularly to beach volley ball at Horse Guards, National Gallery hours, the nearest swimming pool (the Oasis), restaurants suitable for anniversary celebrations, the long-term future of the Olympic park and the reason for the somewhat unusual (i.e. non military) sculpture on the fourth plinth.

### A first class legacy

Perhaps I was lucky in my team at Trafalgar Square and the general busyness and interest of this major crossroads. And we all had the chance to attend the athletes' parade on the Mall, although some team members were back at work and could not take time off. On that day, two strangers came up to me separately on the underground and thanked me for being one of London's thousands of volunteers.

I felt and feel very privileged to have seen the advertisement, made the grade and then contributed in a tiny way to a great celebration of sport, this city and an extraordinarily well run international event. Its construction, the use of volunteers, the regeneration of Stratford as an accessible new centre hopefully leaves a first class legacy on all counts. ■

*Copyright Judy Hillman*

London Ambassador Judy in Trafalgar Square



**W**hat was it like to have been a Games Maker for the Olympics? Many people presumed that we received free tickets or that we met famous athletes as a matter of course. If only.

But despite this lack of perks, it was exhilarating and an honour to have been a Games Maker - one of 70,000 chosen from over 240,000 who applied. Looking back, to me, the main honour was meeting fellow Games Makers who all seemed to possess copious amounts of good will, patience, politeness, enthusiasm and the ability to be constantly friendly - despite having to get to venues by 6am, if on an early shift, and then having to stand for eight hours, either inside or outside venues.

### The selection process

Resilience was required just to survive the process of becoming a Games Maker. In my situation, I applied on-line in October 2010 and was called in for an interview in November 2011, at LOCOG's head quarters in Canary Wharf.

Once accepted, in February 2012, I had to attend three compulsory training days, commit to a minimum of 10 days of volunteering, and then finally pick up the uniform from a large warehouse in East London in June 2012. Perhaps this selection process was intentionally onerous to weed out those applicants who might be fair-weather enthusiasts. One eight hour shift in the rain, and never seen again? In fact the process did work. Rumour had it that the organisers were expecting a large drop-out rate when very few actually did.

### What role would I be chosen for?

My excitement grew as the months went by and July was approaching. What would my specific role be (of 26 'functional areas')? I dreamt: would I be chosen as a drummer for the opening ceremony as the wife of a friend of mine was? (Mind you- this did require a promise of 140 hours commitment for the rehearsals.) Would I be chosen to work in one of the venues, helping to welcome teams of athletes - the job given to a neighbour?

No. I was chosen to be a Venue Entry Security Team Leader! Sounds very impressive - if not in practice! I had to support teams of about 10 Games Makers to carry out these functions at gates into

the Olympic Park: queue assistants; queue pacers; walk through metal detector (WTMD) pacer assistants; X-ray loaders and soft-ticket checkers. The target was to put through 350 bags per hour, and this was easily met. Due to the fiasco of security staffing just before the Games, the military was called in and the process was then very efficient. It was a pleasure to support the soldiers who were always good-natured, and great fun to work with.

### Duties of a team leader

As a team leader I mainly had to ensure that the Games Makers had their breaks - there was a special canteen in the Olympic Park, and that roles were rotated if people got bored or tired; the Stratford Gates were the busiest

Each day I had to register with the LOCOG staff co-ordinating the volunteers, before 'collecting' about ten people to go to an assigned gate, with different teams of people each day. There was an amazing variety of people - doctors, lawyers, students, business people - with many coming from outside London. One person from Southend got up at 3am each morning to arrive at the Olympic Park by 6am! Some took overnight buses to arrive on time. I felt ashamed of my whingeing at having to get up at 5am to travel all the way from Highbury!

Now, looking back, I am so glad that I did volunteer for 'this once in a lifetime experience'. To be in the Olympic Park was such a thrill - some days over 200,000 people came into the Park, and in total 15,000 athletes competed in 46 sports in over 805 events for the Olympics and Paralympics.

It is easy to forget that London was so lucky to have hosted the Games - the only city to have done this three times. Come on the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014, I say. It is just so much fun to have the world come to your city to celebrate the human spirit - particularly, for me, by putting on the Paralympics.

So now, the 6am starts and being on my feet for 8 hour days are a blur in my memories of the fabulous experience of being a Games Maker in the summer of 2012. ■

*Diane will return to this subject with an article on the Olympic Legacy in the next edition.*

# A round up of recent legislative matters

## Sustainable Communities Act 2007 - Second round consultation

Between June and September this year the Government issued a second invitation to local authorities under the Sustainable Communities Act 2007.

Local authorities were invited to consult people, to ask them how they would like to see their local area improved and to take appropriate action to make it happen. The Localism Act has given them far more freedom and flexibility to do this.

If local authorities, having consulted and reached agreement with their local communities, find that a bureaucratic barrier prevents them from taking action, they can submit a formal 'proposal' under the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 asking Government to remove the barrier through the online portal at [www.barrierbusting.communities.gov.uk](http://www.barrierbusting.communities.gov.uk) (external link).

This portal is also open to anyone who wishes to ask the Government to remove a barrier which is stopping local action. ■

## Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill.

London Forum had particular concerns arising from Clause 50 and Schedule 16 Heritage Planning Regulation in these proposals. Initial concerns were:

- The benefits to be derived from the historic built environment are insufficiently recognised in the Bill.
- Not enough provision for the range of benefits inherent in listed status or from local recognition of aspects of the built environment.
- The Bill was imprecise in its wording especially in the paragraphs relating to Heritage Partnerships and could lead to recourse to the courts over what should be matters of reasonable interpretation.
- Paragraph 377 of the Explanatory Notes, to Paragraph 8, stated that Certificates of Immunity from Listing 'give certainty to developers and owners by removing the risk of a building being listed at a late stage...thereby causing delay or even the abandonment of redevelopment schemes.'
- The use of the word risk is highly contentious implying that the recognition given a building or group of buildings through the listing process is inevitably a

danger to the achievement of economic and social benefit. The use of the word 'abandonment' is inappropriately emotive in this context. These paragraphs failed to acknowledge the existence of any of the benefits derived from listed status.

- Green matters seemed not to be a matter of concern regarding heritage - which is of course arguable.
- The incorporation of Listed Building Consent within Planning Permission seems workable but implies charging for a hitherto free service.

Regulation is surely required to be impartial and to recognise that well-being implies availability of a whole range of benefits for the present, and also for future, generations.

It appears that deregulation means not, as one might have thought, the removal of regulation, but the imposition of new sets of regulation whose function is to deregulate.

However, following consultation, the most objectionable provisions, about the delegation of Listed Building Consent to consultants, had been dropped, and the provisions in the Bill were now generally acceptable.. ■

## The Growth and Infrastructure Bill second reading postponed

The Commons second reading debate of the Growth and Infrastructure Bill, scheduled for 30 October 2012 was postponed to make way for MPs to deliberate mental health legislation.

The bill contains a raft of further controversial reforms on planning, supposedly designed to boost the economy. There is concern that the Government appeared not to comprehend the implications, or the difficulties these changes would involve.

Many of its provisions, as designed, could actually reduce local democratic control.

It would give communities secretary Eric Pickles more power over planning decisions by allowing developers to submit plans directly to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) where councils have a track record of poor performance, thereby undermining the coalition's stated desire

for localism. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) said it was a "below the radar attack on level-headed planning and protection of the nation's precious environment and countryside".

However it may not have such an effect in London. It was not clear how London would be affected by the new restrictions on gaining Village/Town Green status.

But there were no London authorities among the 25 worst-performing ones (which had been losing over 50% of appeals, and were therefore at risk of having planning powers taken over by the Planning Inspectorate); The Forum would examine the implications of the proposals for London.

Further announcements on growth and development are anticipated in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement to be made on 5 December. In the meantime, it is clear that, through the Bill, the

government is seeking to respond to concerns about the planning system raised by the development industry.

London Forum emailed members with details of the proposals on October 27.

A further message has just been emailed to members that there is an opportunity to send your views before the 9th December 2012 to the Select Committee considering the Bill. Details on how to do that are at <http://bit.ly/STMyLS>

An article in the BBC web site on the Bill is at <http://bbc.in/TtylNX>

A new date for the second reading is expected to be announced in the House of Commons shortly. ■



# Outsourcing of public sector services

Helen Marcus rounds up recent press reports

Analysts are predicting the biggest outsourcing surge in public sector services since the 1980s.

Sir Merrick Cockell leader of Kensington & Chelsea Borough Council and the Local Government Association chairman has warned against a blind faith in the virtues of outsourcing council services and criticised the philosophy that councils should become commissioners rather than providers of services.

Sir Merrick was quoted in the press as saying the period when "public bad, private good", had "almost been a mantra" was over, along with the view that "the right way for local authorities to do things was to outsource everything". "I hope we've moved beyond that because there are very good cases for outsourcing." "There are even stronger cases for testing a service properly to see whether it's the right service to outsource, to see whether there's a mature market out there that may be suitable to tender against it and to then properly reach a conclusion that there is, or there isn't."

Two factors are said to be driving this move: the pressure on the public sector

caused by the economic crisis to increase efficiency by reducing costs and the coalition's desire to reshape and restrict what the state does.

More than £4 billion in tenders are being negotiated this year, according to studies of contracts published in the Official Journal of the European Union and analysis of companies' bid pipelines. The majority of tenders to be released are said to be with the Department of Work and Pensions, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Defence. Contracts involving police forces, defence and health are "coming to market this year". Other contracts within education, transport and local governments are also thought to be coming to market in the next twelve months.

However the Government has just had a major rethink on the prison service – which was going to be almost wholly outsourced. A surprise decision announced this month has put the programme on hold, and four of the nine prisons due to be outsourced, will remain in state control.

Local authorities are losing 27 per cent of their grant over four years and

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*Is this "the end of local government as we have known it"?*

**Sir Albert Bore, leader of Birmingham City Council** *The Financial Times*

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government is under increasing pressure to use the private sector in order to maintain frontline services in the face of the cuts.

One of the nation's longest-serving council leaders Sir Albert Bore, leader of Birmingham City Council went so far as to declare it "the end of local government as we have known it", as the imperatives of austerity force councils into a radical rethink of their relationship with citizens.

It has been described on several websites as a "modern-day enclosure of the public sphere and state services by the private sector".

What are the implications for democratic accountability? ■

## Accountability of Civil Servants - MP Margaret Hodge speaks out

Margaret Hodge MP, chair of the Public Accounts Committee, has called for more accountability of civil servants. In a speech delivered to the Policy Exchange earlier in the year on 'Accountability in today's Public Services', she questioned the historic convention of ministerial responsibility, saying: "The old doctrine of accountability isn't fit for the 21st century." "Both the Freedom of Information Act and the role of the Ombudsman have helped to open up the civil service to public account and so alter the conventional principle of ministerial accountability." "Civil servants escape external accountability because they are protected by the convention of ministerial responsibility, and they escape internal accountability because ministers are powerless to hold them to account in any meaningful way".

**The doctrine of ministerial accountability**  
The Committee were accused of having

"contravened the constitutional 'principle' that to maintain impartiality, civil servants should not be accountable to Parliament but should be accountable to ministers, who in turn are accountable to Parliament for all the policy and all the actions of the Government". Ms Hodge asked: "Is that really a 'principle' of the British constitution, or a convenient view from a group who want to resist proper openness and accountability?" The question of "whether and how the civil service should be accountable to Parliament and, through us, to the public, is serious" "Government has got vastly bigger and more complex and so the doctrine of ministerial accountability is now insufficient. Of course ministers are responsible and accountable for the policies they pursue. But civil servants are responsible for the execution of these policies and should, as an IPPR study some years ago argued, also be accountable for them".

**The Freedom of Information Act should be amended**

She also suggested that the Freedom of Information Act should be amended so that private companies are compelled to share with the public information on contracts which are funded with public money.

In the wake of the the fiasco over the West Coast Main Line franchise Ms Hodge followed up with an article in the Times which had the sub-heading: "Ministers hide behind civil servants, who cannot be called to account. This must change".

She attacked the role of consultants and the way in which they and private companies move "seamlessly between one another, or in and out of Whitehall. She said: "As more public services are provided by private companies it is vital they cannot hide behind commercial confidentiality to stop taxpayers knowing how their money is being spent." ■

# Spotlight on Hammersmith Society

Hammersmith's history reflects the history of town planning in London; it has many listed buildings but is under constant pressure from development and top-down infrastructure projects.

Chairman **Rosemary Pettit** celebrates fifty years of vigorous campaigning

The Hammersmith Society celebrated its half centenary this year by inviting residents to submit photographs of Hammersmith. The '50 Special Places' project was a huge success – pictures of best-loved parks, spotlit buildings, a 1930s tube station, seagulls, front garden plantings and Lyric Square flooded in. The Thames and Hammersmith bridge views were romantic or foggy, early morning dewy or sunset dramatic, with or without cormorants on posts, boats sailing or barges tied up, pubs peering through the mist or ablaze with summer colour and visitors. Hammersmith doesn't lightly wear its heart on its sleeve, tending to the workaday rather than trailing clouds of glory - but it clearly has its admirers.

The affection for Hammersmith felt by its residents is important for the Society committee to know as we beaver away at the planning coal-face, attending meetings, watching the Council's email planning alerts, responding to applications and policy, and helping anxious residents. The Society covers the old LCC borough of Hammersmith, now the northern half of the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. Our area of interest runs from south of Hammersmith Broadway up to Old Oak, including Shepherds Bush, Westfield shopping centre, and Wormwood Scrubs. It includes the town centres of Hammersmith and Shepherds Bush.

## Fifty years of formidable challenges

Over the last fifty years the challenges have always been formidable, but nothing the Society now faces beats the scorched earth threat noted at its first meeting on 23 March 1962: the Metropolitan Water Board preventing land in Barnes going to St Paul's school; a new six-lane bridge across the Thames downstream from Hammersmith Bridge – the largest pre-stressed span in the world, and proposals for rebuilding the Broadway.

St Paul's did indeed move across Hammersmith Bridge to Barnes and in due course the Broadway – to much controversy – was rebuilt as an island fortress surrounded by a gyratory moat of traffic. But the six-lane bridge (part of the West London Motorway Box which would have swept whole streets away) was seen

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*Where there is a fresh wind blowing from the Town Hall the intelligent amenity society puts up a sail.*

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off after an inquiry in 1972. Our love affair with large roads – at least in urban settings – had concluded, and in Hammersmith we now seek to bury them.

Fifty years on we still live with the effects of the A4 and the notorious Hammersmith Flyover. Although the Society's founders' determination that such a mistake should not be repeated has not been fulfilled, we are celebrating our 50th anniversary; we have raised awareness of the value of our townscape and achieved some notable successes over decades.

However there has been widespread destruction along the way. The Luftwaffe destroyed the lovely 18th Quaker meeting house by the river and Hammersmith's first public library in Ravenscourt Park, but over the last fifty years a nexus of Council and developer has done far worse. Much of Victorian King St, including the wedding-cake Hammersmith Palace of Varieties was demolished in 1950; The magnificent old Town Hall in Shepherd's Bush Road and the Kings Theatre in Hammersmith Road went in the 1960s, and Palmers Stores, in the 1980s. The West End Chapel in King St has been superseded by the Soviet-style architecture of the Polish Centre. The gorgeous White City exhibition has long gone and its last sad arch recently demolished by Westfield. Latymer school still remains but the Grade II Gothic St Paul's school, was demolished by the ILEA in 1969. Perhaps the most poignant loss is the disappearance of the landmark Palais de Danse, especially for the generation which danced the night away under a crystal ball.

But the Society vigorously campaigned against this wholesale demolition and much remains. Primarily a Victorian, low-rise residential area, Hammersmith still has a beautiful riverside walk - instead of a riverside drive - with 18th century houses and pubs, as well as large housing estates,

such as White City and 1920s Wormholt, a conservation area. Although short of green open parks it offers the unexpectedly spacious Wormwood Scrubs, a site of Special Scientific Interest, next door to Old Oak, a tangle of rail lines. We saved the 18th century Bradmore House from destruction when Hammersmith Broadway was redeveloped, and against all odds achieved the rescue and reconstruction of the Frank Matcham interior of the Lyric Theatre with its splendid plasterwork, when it was demolished and reconstructed in the 1970s.

## Group initiatives by the Society

In the 70s and 80s the Society encouraged the setting up of local residents' groups where none existed before. The Ravenscourt, Fulham and Brook Green Societies, St Peter's and Brackenbury Residents Association, and the Hammersmith Grove Group, for example, form a federation of groups across Hammersmith, enabling us all to be more influential by working together. Hammersmith Study Group (1969) examined key environmental and conservation planning issues. Hammersmith & Fulham Historic Buildings Group (1987) set up to protect and conserve the borough's historic heritage and, in alliance with the Hammersmith Society, informs local and London policy, and responds to major development issues. Together they established the West London River Group (1996) to represent the societies and other riverside community groups between Kew and Chelsea.

## Into the future

The Society's founders could not have foreseen the huge growth in the market for office space in the 1980s and 90s, which led to intense development pressure across Hammersmith. Nor the change in property markets which made residential development such a valuable commodity, commanding a huge premium for high-rise views - especially of the river. Hammersmith now has the fourth highest property values in London. Thus the large areas of derelict or near-derelict warehousing and light industrial space, a feature of our area scattered over the north



## Hammersmith Society

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of Hammersmith, are now the opportunity and regeneration areas. Marshalling yards at Old Oak look set to accommodate 10,000 homes when - and if - the link with the HS2 line is built on top of the planned Crossrail interchange.

We are very proud of our beautiful suspension bridge; despite the IRA trying to blow it up twice. Sir Joseph Bazalgette's creation of 1887 survives and is celebrated, not least by the Society which takes its arch as its logo. As always, developers seek to make capital from this superlative sweep of river as it bends north and then curves south to Chiswick. Having seen off proposals to redevelop the Town Hall area within a stone's throw of the river, the Council tells us that residents will be at the heart of new proposals. We have yet to feel that beating heart - it's still watch and wait time. Just downstream, the proposed redevelopment of Queens Wharf in a most sensitive site just south of the bridge offers a clumpy building which does nothing to enhance the setting of the bridge.

The Society is very aware of efforts by developers to seek to plant a 'gateway' or a 'marker' to a town centre, and we watch their

intentions with eyes in the backs of our heads. Not that we can always do anything about it. We were unable to stop Imperial College getting permission for a 35-storey tower north of Westway (in an Opportunity Area) and if the Earls Court/West Kensington Opportunity Area development goes ahead this will be a most massive development. Both are subject to legal inquiry and review.

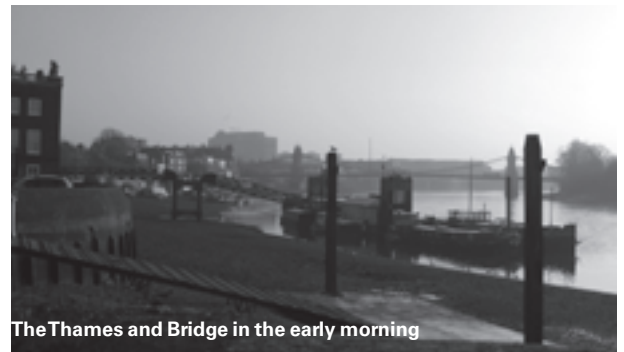
At a lighter level, however, there is a fresh wind blowing from the Town Hall. Whatever the reason for this - and although non-political our Society must have highly attuned political antennae - where there's a Localism wind behind, the intelligent amenity society puts up a sail.

As for the future, we'd like a pause in the relentless march of developers' feet, not to put our own feet up but to take on new, creative projects. Hammersmith could accommodate many more street trees, our programme for the current year includes increasing membership, regular email news, a lecture/debate on planning, films on Hammersmith and its street markets, publication of 50 Special Places photographs - all to be progressed.

But that is what aspirations are for. When it comes down to it, everything we in an amenity society do is to preserve and forward the quality of life, to make possible harmony, opportunities and freedom for all. That's our work and our true aspiration. ■



The Rutland Arms Pub by the Bridge



The Thames and Bridge in the early morning

**Age:** Celebrating 50th anniversary in 2012.

**Circumstances of birth:** started by residents of St Peter's Square dismayed at the effects of the ill-judged widening and re-routing of the A4/Great West Road (and Hammersmith flyover) which sliced west from Hammersmith to Heathrow and beyond.

**Biggest successes:** 1) defeating proposals for development around the Grade II Town Hall; 2) Annual Environment Awards for excellent design in new building and townscape, now in its 23rd year (and the Wooden Spoon award for eyesores); 3) Saving 18th century Bradmore House, Bridge Avenue and Angel Walk from Council destruction; 4) Sowing the seeds for tunnelling the A4 flyover under Hammersmith. The Flyunder is now a serious concept in the debate on west London infrastructure; 5) Convincing the Council to remove pedestrian underpasses at Hammersmith Broadway and reinstating surface crossings; 6) saving the interior of the Frank Matcham Lyric Theatre; 7) Raising public awareness of conservation and high quality townscape.

**Biggest disappointments/ frustrations:** 1) The demolition of many fine, historic urban and civic buildings in Hammersmith over the last fifty years to make way for brutal and ugly blocks; 2) The threatened closure of the Archives and Local History Centre (temporarily reprieved); 3) Council not being a tough enough negotiator with developers to gain better design, lower density and more open space.

**Present preoccupations:** 1) An increasing population and corresponding pressures on infrastructure; 2) Turning the Flyunder tunnel project into reality: the Council wants it, residents want it. TfL needs to will it; 3) Retaining historic Hammersmith; 4) Achieving a good redevelopment for the Town Hall area; 5) Stopping third runway at Heathrow; 6) Establishing a better working relationship with the Council.

**Working details:** Membership: 1000 households through individual membership and affiliated groups. An active committee representing the Society at planning fora, inquiries, policy examinations-in-public and meetings with the Council. Annual subscriptions: £6 per annum (individual), £5 (concession), £8 family, £15 affiliated groups. Publications: Newsletter bi-annually.

**Last word:** To encourage the highest standards of architecture and town planning, and not give credence - even by silence - to box-ticking, mediocre, boorish or overbearing development. ■



# Airports Update

Helen Marcus reports

The Davies Commission led by Sir Howard Davies has been set up by the Government to investigate where additional aviation capacity should be developed. It is not due to report back until 2015. Its announcement sparked a spate of discussion in the media and takes place against a background of increasing financial problems for European airlines. Last month IATA warned that Europe's airlines were still suffering from the effects of the Eurozone debt crisis, with the number of passengers travelling in first or business class declining.

## 2M group steps up campaign

The 2M groups of councils stepped up their campaign to eliminate Heathrow from the list of potential sites for new runways in the south east, reiterating the combination of environmental factors and physical constraints which they maintain, make further expansion at the airport untenable now and in the future.

Subjecting the most densely populated part of the country to the noise misery of new flightpaths and environmental damage without a secure economic benefit would be a reckless gamble, according to the boroughs.

## Operational freedoms trial at Heathrow

The 'operational freedoms' trial was set up in 2010 to explore whether new procedures could provide a more punctual service, reduce aircraft stacking times, and reduce emissions.

The first phase ran between 1 November 2011 to 29 February 2012. The second phase began on 1 July 2012 and will run until 31 March 2013.

It allowed BAA, which has now rebranded itself as Heathrow, to land planes out of alternation if delays were building up. Normally, aircraft switch runways at 3pm to allow residents in the boroughs closest to Heathrow a half day's break from the noise.

## Findings from Phase 1 included:

- A large increase in complaints, although it was not clear whether these were generated by the use of operational freedoms, as a proportion appear to correlate to a prolonged period of easterly operations which was due to weather conditions rather than the trial;

- generally low awareness of the trial but some support for it from residents surveyed when its objectives were explained; and
- no detriment to safety.

John Stewart, of HACAN said, "We need more information before we can make a real assessment of the impact and value of operational freedoms."

Residents' complaints over aircraft noise appeared to overwhelm Heathrow's complaints department to the point where they gave up providing individual responses to disgruntled residents.

A Hammersmith & Fulham resident received an email saying: "Thank you for your email and I hope this finds you well. Unfortunately due to the high volume of complaints we are receiving at the moment, we are currently unable to provide detailed individual responses. We aspire to providing individual responses in future."

**For more information** about the trial and the report see:

[www.heathrowairport.com/noise/noise-in-your-area/operational-freedoms-trial](http://www.heathrowairport.com/noise/noise-in-your-area/operational-freedoms-trial)

[www.dft.gov.uk/news/statements/villiers-20120515a/](http://www.dft.gov.uk/news/statements/villiers-20120515a/)

## Alternative proposals: dual hub" system

Architectural group Make has presented plans for a "dual hub" system connecting Heathrow with Stansted via the Crossrail project. They say Stansted could become a four-runway airport at significantly lower cost than current plans for either a new runway at Heathrow or a new airport in the Thames Estuary. Conservative MP Zac Goldsmith, has also argued that a high speed rail link between London and Stansted would represent the fastest, most cost effective, and least environmentally damaging solution to the south east's airport capacity crunch. Defence Secretary Philip Hammond, a former Transport Minister, has also favoured a "Heath-wick" solution to London's airport capacity problems, linking Heathrow to Gatwick via high-speed rail.

Heathrow's chief financial officer, dismissed the proposals, saying the idea is a commercial risk because it would take too long to transfer passengers between airports to connecting flights.

## Move Heathrow's runways west

Tim Leunig, chief economist at the liberal think tank Centre Forum, and a reader in economic history at the LSE, has written a report for the PolicyExchange suggesting building four new runways at Heathrow but placing them to the west of the current site, over the M25, the Poyle industrial estate and the Wraysbury reservoir. Fewer people would be affected by noise.

## Gatwick master plan 2012

Gatwick Airport ran a consultation last year on a master plan for growth up to 2020.

Around 2,200 people took part including residents, businesses, councils and MPs. The plan acknowledges that air and noise pollution was a major concern for residents, and detailed the range of noise management and mitigation measures in place with a commitment to delivering a better noise insulation scheme for local communities during 2013. It also commits to help fund improvements for rail, coach and local bus services.

A long-standing agreement restricts Gatwick from building an extra runway before 2019 but it has safeguarded land for the purpose. Most of the reserved land is owned by Crawley Borough Council which has given the airport priority for any future development. With its single runway and two terminals, the airport currently handles around 34 million passengers a year, and could sustain around 45 million passengers a year.

## Gatwick criticises Heathrow

Chief executive of Gatwick, Stewart Wingate, publicly lambasted rival Heathrow and other parts of the industry for having an "obsession" with Heathrow. He warned that messages put out by BAA were, in fact, damaging London's ability to secure more long-haul connections. Heathrow is giving foreign airlines a false impression that Heathrow is full [and therefore] London's aviation market was "closed for business".

He said: "As far as I am concerned that is a terrible message to be giving to these people [in emerging markets] when you actually have significant capacity at Gatwick and at Stansted too." ■



# Newsletter of the Friends of Capital Transport Campaign

Extracts from Editor **Andrew Bosi's** recent reports

## New Buses for London

Transport for London has confirmed an order for 600 of Boris Johnson's New Bus For London hybrid buses.

Approximately 200 vehicles manufactured by Wrightbus are due to be delivered in 2014, 250 in 2015, with the remainder in 2016. Each bus is projected to have an operational life of 14 years.

In a departure from the current bus ownership model, TfL is purchasing the buses directly from the manufacturer; accounting rules meant that as TfL assets they count towards its borrowing capacity.

This, says the organisation, has secured a better unit price, because of the larger numbers being ordered. The buses will then be allocated to the bus operators, reducing contract costs as the operator will simply quote for staffing, fuel and maintenance costs.

But critics say that they won't be given an option to choose the best bus from the best manufacturer and the best price. So these extra costs will be carried by Transport for London and that means higher fares.

### Temporary ramps could be made permanent

Temporary ramps were installed at 16 underground stations to facilitate travel to the Paralympic games. Transport for All is urging that they be made permanent and it seems that TfL has not ruled this out: they are going to "look at it". ■

Former members of Capital Transport Campaign will be aware that, when the Campaign was forced to close due to lack of funds, its archive was donated to the London Metropolitan Archive which is run by the City of London Corporation and based in Clerkenwell. The LMA has now catalogued this material and it can be viewed by the public, quoting the reference LMA/4560. It is a tribute to the phenomenal amount of work put in by Cynthia Hay and her predecessors Kathryn, Sara, Jon, Maria and others.

Capital Transport Campaign also donated some documents relating to various Women's Safety Campaigns to the Women's Library, which after an uncertain year, may now be transferring to LSE.

### The West Coast Main Line fiasco

The initial response of the government was to lay the blame exclusively with civil servants. In reality, things are rarely this simple, but over the years there has been some blurring of the boundaries between Ministers and civil servants which might usefully form part of the enquiry now being held.

There seems little likelihood of the blameworthy civil servants being identified. (See more on this subject on page 9). Those nominated to carry the can will probably be exonerated, whereas those who dreamed up the whole franchising system and the many "tweaks" supposedly designed to eradicate identified flaws will continue serenely in post.

### CrossRail progress report

Some good has come from the frustrating delays to CrossRail, which should have been built twenty years ago, in that the area around the stations will be much better than planned then when the scheme is complete. This might come as some relief to commuters and other users forced to make various detours on foot or on bus, and to allow extra time for their journeys.

Unfortunately, there is still a way to go before we can rejoice that joined up thinking

has come to London. The station at Abbey Wood, blighted by a road flyover since the mid-1980s, is to undergo a makeover that will transform it into somewhere suitable for the large increase in users that CrossRail is expected to bring. Late in the day, however, CrossRail decided that it would be expedient to put a depot at Plumstead. No doubt the railway operational case is sound, but the effect at Abbey Wood has been to switch the Crossrail tracks to one side rather than running them through the middle. This means that people changing trains will have further to walk, and the circulation space available will be compromised as a result.

### Orbital link completion

December 9th should see the completion of the Orbital link around London with the opening of the line from Surrey Quays to Clapham Junction. It will then be possible to take a train from Highbury & Islington or Canonbury to Clapham Junction in either direction, from adjoining platforms. The present route will remain the quicker, and should be the cheaper since it will not involve travel via zone 1. Wandsworth Road to Imperial Wharf will require a change of trains.

Next week London Overground Rail Operations Ltd celebrates five years of operation under the Concession to Transport for London. It gives the lie to the idea that, even with the botched privatisation of the Major government, franchising is the only way of attracting business to the railways. Growth on the North London Line and Barking-Gospel Oak line, compared to the levels achieved under the franchise to Silverlink, has far outweighed anything achieved by Virgin trains, the First Group or National Express. Punctuality has gone from the relegation zone to the top of the Train Operating Companies league. The North London line was earmarked for closure by Beeching, whose ignominious report will be celebrating its fiftieth year in 2013. ■

## Mobile phone companies lobbying to relax planning laws

Mobile phone companies are lobbying ministers to relax planning laws so that they can put up masts in conservation areas far more easily, including many parks, town squares and village greens. They claim this is necessary to meet Government targets for the introduction of

super-fast 4G coverage.

The public would only have 56 days to raise objections.

The "Big Four" operators say the bureaucracy makes it hard for them to improve their networks fast enough to cope with the surging popularity of

smartphones and the demand for internet access on the move.

The mobile operators are not calling for changes to the rules on conservation areas that are protected because of their historic status or outstanding natural beauty. ■

# Concern over pub closures

A new survey by the consultancy GVA has found that Planning policies in London and the South East are contributing to the decline in the number of pubs.

Fewer than a third of councils in London and the South East have planning policies to protect pubs from redevelopment.

It also discovered that the majority of authorities in London have policies which put limitations on the number of restaurants and pubs in their high streets.

90 per cent of authorities in London have more general policies to protect cultural or community facilities, but only one-third have more specific policies to protect pubs from redevelopment.

In London housing pressures are very strong, putting pubs at risk because their value for housing may significantly outweigh that for continued use as a pub or restaurant."

## Councils not using available powers

There are policies to resist the loss of pubs and post offices recognising them as community assets and even providing powers that might help the community to buy. London Forum's Michael Bach,

who has appeared at two appeals relating to pubs, pointed out that there is absolutely no excuse for not having policies that enable local planning authorities to resist the loss of pubs.

The NPPF (para 28) explicitly recognises pubs as community facilities and policies in the London Plan and Borough Plans deal with "creating strong communities" maintaining vitality, diversity and keeping life local. There are currently campaigns to save the Castle in Battersea High Street and the Queensbury in Willesden Green.

## The Protection of Local Services (Planning) Bill,

A Private Members' Bill introduced by Cambridge Liberal Democrat MP Julian Huppert, to give town halls stronger planning controls to protect pubs and local shops and prevent the demolition or change of use of such premises without planning permission, has unfortunately been withdrawn and will not progress any further. The Bill had its first reading on 30 June 2010 through the Ballot Bill procedure, and won unanimous support at its first reading in July. ■

*There is absolutely no excuse for not having policies that enable local planning authorities to resist the loss of pubs.*

Michael Bach, Chair, London Forum's P&T Committee

## Smithfield

A campaign by Save Britain's Heritage, to save Smithfield's 129-year-old General Market, one of its historic market buildings has been launched. It has lain empty and partially derelict since the eighties and English Heritage has refused to list it. The market's original glass dome, which was destroyed in a V2 attack at the end of the Second World War would be replaced. Only an outer perimeter of Victorian buildings would survive, being "hollowing out" to make way for low-rise office blocks.

Previous plans to demolish the General Market and build a glass and steel block were thrown out by then-Communities Secretary Hazel Blears in 2008. The new plans do not affect the central wholesale meat market. ■

## Redevelopment threatens Cork Street art galleries

For almost 90 years, Cork Street in Mayfair has been one of the most famous streets for art galleries in London, and possibly the world. Known and loved internationally, its 20 independent art dealers provide a major draw to London and the UK throughout the year. The history and atmosphere of this street, as well as its close proximity to the Royal Academy of Art, makes it a unique place to visit for collectors, art enthusiasts, students and tourists alike. operate out of Cork Street

The careers of many prominent British artists - Barbara Hepworth, Lucian Freud, Francis Bacon, and Lynn Chadwick, to name a few - have been closely related to Cork Street. The exhibition spaces of Cork Street have launched the British careers of many major modern artists - with the Mayor Gallery alone giving Paul Klee,

Francis Bacon, Max Ernst and Joan Miró their first London shows.

Now a large part of the street is in danger of being demolished and turned into luxury apartments and non-art retail spaces forcing out over half of these historic local art businesses..

Two large developments planned by international development companies threaten both sides of the street. 22 to 27 Cork Street will force seven galleries to leave their premises, while on the opposite side at numbers 5-9, home to another four are under threat.

## Save Cork Street petition

The gallery owners have mounted a "Save Cork Street" petition to oppose the planning applications, and to preserve Cork Street as an area of artistic and cultural importance and are appealing for public support.

One of the gallery owners commented: "It could be the death of the whole street. It's all about short-term gain, who will these flats be for? They won't be for residents or nationals. Haven't we got enough hideous apartment buildings being built? We're losing all individuality as a city."

Another said: "They've had to put in a provision of galleries but I understand that encompasses boutiques, jewellers, etc. There's no doubt they can get a lot more money if they let in fashion. But we can't afford to compete with Prada."

A council spokesman said it had not received any planning application with regard to Cork Street, adding: "As a general principle, we can protect the fact that retail units exist in buildings but not dictate the occupier or type of retailer." ■

# Government announces further relaxation of planning laws

In the face of all the evidence to the contrary, the government is still obsessed with the notion that somehow the planning system is at the root of all our growth, housing and financial problems. In a further assault on planning regulations in September the Chancellor announced a consultation on a proposal for a three-year further relaxing of planning laws to allow homeowners to build up to eight metres into their gardens without council planning permission; to expand shops and offices and on not having to include affordable housing in developments. Ministers are also said to be looking at loosening rules on building on the green belt.

## Opposition to the new proposals

These new proposals have met with almost universal scepticism and hostility, even from the building industry, which said that lack of demand and shortage of affordable mortgages was the real blockage. In an editorial headed: "Planning reforms will not secure homes the country needs", the FT said: "The industry does not lack spaces on which to build. The problem is that it chooses not to..." "...hoarding its scarce landbank with the aim of building when prices are better".

David Pretty former group Chief Executive of Barratt's made an even more crucial point in The Times: "The most

notable feature of this crisis is..... the dramatic shortage of [low cost] homes to rent". Calls to axe the affordable housing rules can only make things worse.

The British Property Federation and the Local Government Association (LGA) issued a joint report questioning whether changes to planning would have the economic impact that the Chancellor suggested. The LGA said it is a "myth" that the planning system was stopping house-building. It released figures which show a backlog of 400,000 prospective homes which have planning permission but have not yet been built.

## London Forum in the Evening Standard

The Evening Standard published a letter from London Forum's Peter Eversden:- "The Coalition seem to have invented these proposals without considering the implications. Only in April it published a new National Planning Policy Framework, yet now the Government is saying planning laws are out-dated and policies need to be simplified. The aim seems to be to make it easy to get planning permission, not to achieve sustainable development".

## Housebuilders profits continue to rise

At the same time, several reports in both the FT and The Times remarked on the fact that while house prices are falling and

mortgage lending is stagnating, the housebuilders are nevertheless reporting record increases in profits.

Land prices have fallen by up to 60% and many housebuilders have exploited these falling prices to buy land cheaply. They have developed a new strategy of pursuing margin growth instead of housing volumes. Planning is not mentioned; it is the difficulty in getting mortgages that "remains the main drag to housing market recovery".

## Construction sector struggling

However, according to various industry reports the construction sector as a whole continues to be hampered by the extended weak economy, a struggling housing sector, and problems in getting funding for large-scale projects. The government's spending cuts are limiting overall expenditure on public buildings, schools and hospitals.

A lack of new work to replace completed projects meant companies are shedding jobs and cutting back on the use of subcontractors. Costs rose at the fastest rate in nearly a year due to higher fuel and energy prices, ramping up the pressure on margins. Again planning is not mentioned as a factor. ■

## More towers for the south Bank

Developers from across the world are snapping up dilapidated warehouses, decommissioned printworks and under-utilised offices along the river. There has been a spate of deals this year to convert industrial sites into residential schemes, including the £150m sale of News International's London headquarters at Wapping and the £400m sale of Battersea Power Station.

## Demand from all over the world

Demand is coming not so much from domestic buyers but from all over the world. This interest from abroad has increasingly led developers to market their schemes overseas, where they can often

sell two-thirds of a housing project before starting construction – and before trying to sell units to domestic buyers. The strength of demand has caused house prices along the river to outpace the overall market in the capital in the past five years.

The latest proposals are from American investment group Carlyle whose plans for a major high-rise residential and office scheme would transform the south side of the Thames between Tate Modern and Blackfriars Bridge.

There will be nine buildings ranging from 5 to 48 storeys in height on both sides of Blackfriars bridge's southern end. The tallest tower of 48 storeys will stand opposite the proposed One Blackfriars

development creating a towering 'Gateway', to Blackfriars Bridge. There will be 492 luxury apartments, 450,000 sq ft of offices and 25,000 sq ft of retail space and a new public open space between the bridge and Tate Modern. There is no affordable housing in the scheme.

The sites are presently occupied by Ludgate House and Sampson House. The 'brutalist' Sampson House was completed in 1979 by Fitzroy Robinson & Partners as a processing centre for Lloyds Bank and the 1989 Ludgate House was originally home to the Daily Express newspaper. ■

# News from the GLA

London Forum's **Planning and Transport Committee** have highlighted the following concerns

An important review is being conducted by the GLA Oversight Committee, led by John Biggs, into the openness of the GLA Group in decision making and contracts.

It does not mention specifically the Mayor's Planning Decisions Unit, but London Forum is of the view that that must be investigated. London Forum has concerns about how the Mayoral Development Corporation would operate in its planning capacity, and how it would involve the local community; it ought to behave like a local planning authority, especially when it was a matter of giving itself planning permission.

London Forum has asked to give evidence and be questioned, see

<http://bit.ly/Pj0xKe>

## Development Control; the Density Matrix

London Forum is concerned that the Planning Decisions Unit defended the fact that over 60% of approved developments had densities that were over the maximum of the appropriate density matrix range (while the target in the London Plan was to have 95% of developments within that range) by claiming that there had been lots of exceptional cases.

Very high densities were being proposed for Vauxhall and for Battersea Power Station, but there was a legal challenge to the plans for the Earl's Court/West Kensington Opportunity Area.

## The Health and Environment Committee

This Committee chaired by Murad Qureshi, has responsibility for London Waterways Commission and is a Member of Heathrow Airport Consultative Committee

## Changes to Health Service delivery

The Assembly Health and Environment Committee has been investigating what will happen from April 2013 when changes occur in how Health services will be delivered in London including the reorganisation of accident and emergency, and maternity care.

A transcript of discussions is at

<http://bit.ly/SusY7B> in 03a Appendix 1 to the minutes of 12Sept12.

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*Over 60% of approved developments had densities that were over the maximum of the appropriate density matrix range*

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## Playing fields

A letter will be sent to Sport England by the Committee to seek information on what is being done to protect or monitor a number of playing fields in London identified by Sport England as being at risk.

## The capital's airports

The Committee recently questioned a range of experts about addressing the environmental and health impacts of existing and future air traffic from the capital's airports. Members focused on trade-offs between mitigating carbon dioxide emissions and noise impacts; assessments of actual impact of noise on local residents; and how current arrangements for managing night noise might be improved.

They will submit a response to the Government consultation on the draft Aviation Policy Framework.

A briefing paper on that consultation is at <http://bit.ly/W2agsl>

## Water Management

The Committee has published a report and recommendations at <http://bit.ly/T0aYQV> Murad Qureshi has written to Veolia Water with a set of questions at

<http://bit.ly/VB4rfJ>

## Empty shops

The London Assembly's Economy Committee will hold a second public meeting about empty shops this month. As part of the review, the Committee is asking high street shop owners to send in their views on the challenges they are facing, and what support is needed to keep high streets thriving and diverse.

There has been also a consultation on the Croydon Town Centre Opportunity Area Planning Framework.

The Committee also wants to hear from members of the public about what is happening in their local high street. The email address for that is [economycommittee@london.gov.uk](mailto:economycommittee@london.gov.uk)

## Community Infrastructure Levy

The London Assembly's Planning Committee is holding a review of how the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will apply in the capital and the risks and opportunities it represents for London boroughs. The final of two meetings on CIL took place on 17Oct12, where the Committee looked at the viability of the levy, the impact on social housing, and pooling the levy between local authorities to pay for cross-boundary projects. The report was awaited. Boroughs were complaining that the Mayor's CIL was pre-empting theirs. It was a concern that Land Securities had negotiated an exemption.

## London Plan Implementation Plan

The consultation on the latest stage of the London Plan Implementation Plan has just ended. London Forum has submitted comments

## Housing and Regeneration

The London Assembly's Housing and Regeneration Committee is conducting a detailed review of the reforms needed to raise the quality of London's private rented sector, which now comprises around 850,000 homes, houses one in four Londoners, and continues to grow. The investigation is aimed at identifying ways to make the private rented sector more affordable and secure. A meeting in September was the first of three.

## Call for new sites

Jennifer Peters, London Plan Team Senior Strategic Planner at the GLA has put out a call for people to submit details of sites (above 0.25ha) across London that may have housing potential so that they may be considered as part of the London wide Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

The call for sites will be open until the 28th of January 2013.

Further information can be found on the GLA website:

[www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/callforsites](http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/callforsites) ■



# Supersewer: Who will pay and how much?

Peter Eversden and Helen Marcus report

Thames Water intends to continue with its plans for a 20 mile long concrete mega pipe under the capital despite repeated warnings from industry experts that there are cheaper, greener and less disruptive ways to improve water quality in the river. The Government is said to be negotiating with Thames Water over how this scheme will be financed.

But in an astonishing development both the Financial Times and The Times launched attacks on the company this month questioning its financial record.

Sir Ian Byatt, former Ofwat chief, jointly with Simon Hughes MP, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats, made devastating accusations in an article in The Times on November 5, saying "the outcome could have serious implications for the cost of living for millions of people in the Thames Water region. In a time of austerity, with many families struggling to make ends meet, the Government should consider whether it is right to ask customers to stump up the cash."

## Questions over financial management

Sir Ian maintains: "This is an even bigger question given the way in which Thames Water, owned by Macquarie, has chosen to spend the company's cash in the past."

The company's corporate policy and decisions "have had a serious and damaging effect on the financial strength of the company". Both newspapers point out that Thames and its owners knew that a large capital investment would be needed to clean up London's sewage network before they took over the company. Both claim that Thames Water has paid huge dividends — 30 per cent more than earnings in the past four years. And both accuse the company of running up huge liabilities making it impossible to raise new debt from the market without threatening its investment-grade status, instead of setting aside the necessary funds.

Sir Ian says that with the "byzantine corporate structure" of Thames's owners, (see Newsforum Issue 61 Summer 2012 Newsbriefs) decisions have been made that have had a serious and damaging effect on the financial strength of the company. With "a more responsible corporate policy", they would now have the capital resources to support the necessary investment. 13 million customers are being

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*Why should taxpayers help a company that has disposed of its cash in this profligate way?*

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Sir Ian Byatt, former Ofwat chief

asked to pay an extra £80 each year for ever to pay for the tunnel. Sir Ian asks: "Why should taxpayers help a company that has disposed of its cash in this profligate way? The profligacy of the owners should be no excuse to let off Thames Water from its obligations and the company should be asked to make a substantial contribution to the scheme..... through a rights issue"

Sir Ian goes further, suggesting that if the company cannot raise the capital, it should be put into Special Administration and another company allowed to take over. He points out that something similar happened when Hyder failed and was taken over without loss to customers; Welsh Water has since become one of the more successful water companies in Britain. Sir Ian concludes: "The healthy profits of the water industry since privatisation have demonstrated that it should be possible to make the investments required to improve the quality of our water without forcing customers and the taxpayer to pay a heavy price. If Thames cannot do the job, others should be given the opportunity."

## Thames Water Chairman replies

In a reply to both newspapers the Chairman of Thames Water, Sir Peter Mason, refuted the claim about payment of huge dividends, saying that since 2006 dividends have been 24 per cent below post-tax profits. He claimed that even with the costs of the tunnel, bills for Thames Water Customers are projected to be at or around the national average. He also made the point that the project is to be financed and delivered by an independent infrastructure provider with its own licence from Ofwat.

## Supersewer tunnelling will force hundreds from their homes

Nevertheless Thames Water has now made

initial moves to secure land near the River Thames in preparation for building the Thames Tunnel.

Despite not yet having planning permission, they have written to Hammersmith & Fulham (H&F) Council with a series of maps highlighting vast tracts of land that the water company wants to buy for their £4.1 billion project. These show how the tunnel would go underneath residents' homes and businesses. Thames Water will apparently submit a 45,000-page planning application for the project in January. H&F says: "The maps show the truly devastating impact the sewer could have if construction work is not prevented. We remain 100% opposed to the super sewer not only because it will turn residents' lives upside down and bring massive disruption to communities across London but because we know there are cheaper, greener and less disruptive alternatives."

## Protests from residents

Several hundred Londoners face being rehoused for three years to make way for the work along the 24-miles which begins in 2015 and will involve round-the-clock construction work with heavy plant. Residents around the building sites will be offered free-double glazing, noise-absorbing "green walls" and even relocation for those living closest to the sites. Actor Sir Patrick Stewart is leading opposition to a main tunnelling site in Southwark. Other affected sites are Carnwath Road and a disused wharf just west of Wandsworth Bridge, both of which have schools in the vicinity.

Thames Water say it will deliver benefits to eight million people for 100 years. "We are building a tunnel wide enough to put three London buses in from one side of London to the other."

## Profits from perverse incentives?

Thames Water stands to make around £162 million a year in additional revenue from the super sewer due to a 'perverse incentive' in the way the water industry is financed, according to Professor Colin Green — who is a national expert on water economics. For more alternatives to Thames Water plans visit

[www.lbhf.gov.uk/supersewer](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/supersewer) ■

# Round the Societies

A round-up of news from our member societies.

By **Haydn Mylchreest**

## Anniversary Congratulations

Congratulations to **Highbury Community Association** which was 15 years old in October. The Association was formed to oppose Arsenal's original intention of expanding the old stadium by demolishing houses in Highbury Hill. Keeping a watching brief on plans for the neighbourhood remains part of HCA's remit, but it has focussed its attention on much else.

The **Blackheath Society** marks its 75th anniversary this year - the first meeting of the Society was in March 1937.

We celebrate **Hammersmith Society's** 50th anniversary in Spotlight on page 10.

## Improving Parks

Holding events on parkland and open spaces are increasingly seen by Councils as a potential source of revenue, (see also Newsbriefs) and it interesting to read of successful moves by communities to challenge some of these proposals.

With the **Friends of Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith Society** have been working with the Council on behalf of all users of the Park. There have been "positive developments" whereby maintenance has improved and planting has become "more imaginative and less municipal". The Green Flag inspector has apparently stated that the most important issues facing the Council are pressure and overuse of this historic park. Proposals to build changing rooms, effectively converting much of Ravenscourt Park into secondary school playing fields, are therefore predicted to meet strong resistance from many parts of the community.

The **Finchley Society's** autumn newsletter carries a report on the welcome decision by their local Council, Barnet, to drop its proposals to hold revenue-generating events on several of (but not all of) its parks. The decision is the result of vigorous campaigning. Objections to the proposals have been made by many individuals and local amenity organisations, and the local press has printed sympathetic commentary. This is another example of the influence local people can have on proposals which are against a community's interests by putting forward sensible and well-argued objections. Civic & amenity organisations have a major role to play in preserving the character of local communities and should attract new members to their ranks.

**Both Blackheath and Greenwich Societies** report how they were able to influence plans for widening the Blackheath Gate at the southern end of Greenwich Park, in preparation for the Olympic Games events. The Royal Parks Agency (RPA) brought in design managers, who produced proposals. Although they consulted with English Heritage and the World Heritage Site, a planning application was submitted without the Greenwich Society or Blackheath Society having had any opportunity to bring their architectural expertise to bear. Greenwich Conservation Group (which includes both Societies) took the view that the proposed design looked cramped and awkward, and would not make a worthy entrance to the Park viewed from the Heath. Fortunately the RPA agreed to discuss this and thanks to sterling efforts, including by Society volunteers, a much improved design was agreed.

## Campaigning against Heathrow noise

**Greenwich Society** described the Department for Transport (DfT) as staying "in its little fantasy world, as if it had gone through a looking glass or the back of a wardrobe". This is particularly evident on the matter of 'noise metrics' used in connection with assessing the effects of aircraft noise on the general population. Their newsletter analyses these metrics and finds them misleading. The **Richmond Heathrow Campaign** – the **Richmond Society** with the **Kew Society** and **Friends of Richmond Green** is also working on technical arguments such as better spreading and control of landing distributions which would make any encroachment of the quiet periods unnecessary. They remind members that contrary to BAA propaganda Heathrow is not full!

## Outsourcing at Barnet

**Mill Hill Preservation Society** is alarmed about two developments in Barnet, and no doubt the Society's concerns will be mirrored by comments from others of our Members. The first reason for alarm is the possibility that Barnet Council will outsource more than 70% of its services in two large contracts lasting more than 10 years, including planning, procurement, licensing and environmental health, and some of these commitments could be passed on to sub-contractors. Apparently, these proposals have not been the subject of consultation, and discussion of the possible changes has been forbidden at area forums. The length of the proposed contracts means, of course, that elected members of the Council will in future have a minimal say in how the Council is run. (see also page 9)

The second and related alarm is the Council's recent decision to use delegated powers to deal with planning applications if insufficient objections are received; in future, at least 5 objections must be received to ensure an application has to be decided by Councillors whereas the previous trigger was only 3 objections.

## A social enterprise scheme to help ex-prisoners

**Battersea Society's** autumn newsletter reports a Local Management Agreement (LMA) between Wandsworth Council and the Ethelburga Estate Residents Association (EERA) whereby the Association will in future carry out the gardening service for the same budget (£20,000) the Council spent employing their own contractors. The EERA plan is to use Blue Sky, a social enterprise which employs ex-prisoners in grounds maintenance work and which has a reputation for reliability and conscientious work. Setting up the LMA has been complex and time-consuming, but "in the long run, the LMA will represent far better value for residents." These agreements depend also for their long-term success on a dedicated and knowledgeable group of volunteer enthusiasts; the Council has been satisfied the EERA has the necessary range of skills, and we wish the enterprise every success.

## Battersea in watercolours

An exhibition at **Wandsworth Museum** (it runs until 24th February 2012) contains watercolours showing Battersea from the 18th to 20th centuries showing how the area has developed. ■

# newsbriefs

Key issues of interest and concern to note.

## Damage to Hyde Park from pop concerts

Hyde Park has been turned into a puddle-strewn “brownfield” mud-bath after hosting 15 free Olympic concerts, a Wireless Festival and several other pop concerts this summer. More than 800,000 people attended the Olympic celebration shows. The area will remain covered in wood chip until the new year, when a restoration programme funded by the concert promoters will begin. Parks bosses say they are confident that the 350-acre park will return to its previous state by the spring but experts fear the park will struggle to recover. A Royal Parks spokeswoman said the grounds would be “fully restored” and that restoration work will be completed during spring 2013. Next year the number of concerts will be cut from 12 to nine.

Richard Morrison, chief music critic of the Times, and roving commentator, has written twice in the paper about the state of both Hyde Park and Regent’s Park after the summer activities. He pointed out that this is not just damage from an exceptional Olympic season. “Central London’s largest open space is being hijacked – not just this Olympic year but summer after summer – for huge commercial events that ... place this oasis of calm in a frenetic city out of bounds to tourists and Londoners alike for weeks at a time.” “Hyde Park isn’t a rock venue. It’s a park. Millions want to enjoy it as such. Their interests shouldn’t be swept aside contemptuously in the mad dash for cash” “If one of the richest cities on the planet can’t maintain its beautiful parks as free public amenities without continually prostituting them out to quick-buck promoters, we really need to ask what sort of nation we are becoming.”

## The end of the Hammersmith Palais

Hammersmith Palais de Danse which was demolished earlier this year will now be redeveloped as student accommodation after the Carlyle Group and Generation Estates secured funding that allows Morgan Sindall to progress with its £37m deal.

Opened in 1919 to host ballroom dancing, it remained a popular dance venue until the 1980s, and then played host mostly to live pop music. For a period in the 1930s, part of the Palais site was also used as an ice rink, with the original London Lions ice hockey team using it as a base. In excess of 2,000 people could be accommodated at the venue. One of the features was a huge revolving stage with a band on each side (this also caused a number of accidents when microphones and stands were left on the revolve).

It was once used to make tanks during the war, and was also used as a tram shed for London’s trams. The rails for the trams were still under the floor along with the pipes for the ice rink. Parts of the very well sprung dance floor had removable sections where one could clearly see all the tracks and pipes.

The Palais finally closed its doors in April 2007. In 2009, plans for demolition and redevelopment as student flats were rejected by Hammersmith and Fulham council, a decision, upheld by the Planning Inspectorate on appeal in 2010.

New plans were approved by Hammersmith & Fulham Council in February 2011 when the council felt that the application was much more sympathetic to its surroundings and in keeping with the neighbouring listed buildings of the police station and the library.

## Changes at English Heritage

In response to budget cuts and the changes to the planning system English Heritage has announced a review of the activities and services delivered by its planning department. It has consulted with local authority partners.

Wading through the management-speak jargon of their statement, the following:

“Rather than just reducing headcount, we undertook a thorough review which responded comprehensively to your feedback and the changing context of our work”

has been deciphered by one commentator as meaning:

“because of financial constraints we have had to reduce headcount, merge some teams and move some staff around”

### **EH list the following team reorganisations:**

**Historic Places Team** will support communities by promoting the effective use of the planning system and identify opportunities and funds for enhancement and championing historic places.

**Heritage at Risk Team** will be working alongside owners of at risk assets to encourage and support them in making the first step towards repairs.

**Development Management Team** will monitor how national historic environment policies to proposals for change are applied, concentrating on early engagement and pre-application discussions.

**Business Support** – This team provides support across all three local service teams’ work, dealing directly with customers and managing the delivery of grant-aid and advice.

**The Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service Team** gives information and planning advice relating to the historic environment of London to owners and others on the sustainable management of the historic environment.

English Heritage say the changes “will allow a greater focus on your needs and will enable us to respond flexibly to changing future demands”

## Objections to developments on Clapham Common

The Clapham Society, Friends of Clapham Common and the Open Spaces Society have objected to plans to use part of Clapham Common for filming ‘Got to Dance’ involving three dome structures, fencing, portacabins and other paraphernalia.

The applicants, Princess Productions, and the council appear to have ignored the requirement to obtain consent from the Secretary of State for Environment under the 1967 Act, and to consult the Open Spaces Society, which is also a legal requirement. There is an exemption for applications which the council considers to be recreational, but this is commercial not recreational. The fact that it is temporary is irrelevant so far as the commons legislation is concerned.

It follows the recent Nike sports centre, which was constructed on the common without consent or consultation with the Open Spaces Society. The society has urged councillors either to ensure that consent is obtained or that the building is removed forthwith.

# newsbriefs

## Helping London Forum's Membership Secretary

As you all know, London Forum runs on a very small budget relying totally on subscriptions from Members, and therefore we are grateful to Members who have already paid their subscriptions for this year. Many Members are early payers but there are a few that, for one understandable reason or another, have not yet sent us their cheques and we would be delighted to hear from them.

If there are changes in the names or addresses for those nominated to receive post or emails, do let us know so that we can keep our records up to date; if we have not been notified of a new postal contact, post may not reach the right persons. We would like to welcome other groups to be members and your suggestions and recommendations would be valued.

## Town Teams

The government is providing a £5.5 million package of support for high streets and town centres, including £10,000 for each Town under the banner of Town Teams. LF members may have noticed these appearing in their locality. Up to 392 Town Teams can access the funding and package once their MP has pledged support.

The Association of Town Centre Management is a public private partnership offering support to Town Team Partners, to help town and city centres realise their potential as prosperous locations for business and investment, and as focal points for communities. They now have a monthly Newsletter covering Town Centre Management, developments in the Evening and Night-time Economy and Business Improvement Districts. To find out more about the Town Teams Support Programme contact: Toyubur Rahman [toyubur.rahman@atcm.org](mailto:toyubur.rahman@atcm.org)

## Relocation of Annan murals approved

Goldman Sachs have been granted permission by the City of London to relocate a series of listed 1960s murals by Dorothy Annan, on the theme of telecommunications, to make way for a redevelopment of the Fleet Building. City planners recommended listed building consent be granted for the "removal and safe storage of the ceramic panels", which adorn the eastern elevation of the Fleet Building at 40 Shoe Lane and 70 Farringdon Street, subject to a section 106 agreement. ■

### For information about the London Forum contact:

[www.londonforum.org.uk](http://www.londonforum.org.uk)

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Registered Charity Number 1093134

# Dates for your diary

## London Forum events

### London Forum Open Meetings 2013

#### Coming up:

#### Monday 28th January

Subject and speakers to be announced; watch out for further information by email

#### Monday 11th March

#### Daniel Moylan

will speak on

#### The Mayor's policy for aviation

It is expected that there will be also be other speakers on aviation, including someone from HACAN

Daniel Moylan joined the TfL Board in August 2008 and served as Deputy Chairman of TfL from 2009 to 2012. He has been a Conservative councillor in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea since 1990 and was Deputy Leader of the Council from 2000 to 2011. He is Chairman of Kensington and Chelsea Environmental Limited and co-chairs Urban Design London. He is a non-executive director of a property investment trust.

#### Meetings are held at The Gallery,

75 Cowcross Street, EC1M 6EJ, (Farringdon station)

All meetings begin with refreshments at 6pm

#### for a 6:30pm start ■

### London Forum on Twitter

#### Don't forget the London Forum Twitter site.

Stories; updates on the latest news as it comes in; useful web addresses.

Do pass on the address to all your amenity society contacts.

Twitter can reach far beyond London Forum's e-bulletin list of contacts.

[http://twitter.com/London\\_Forum](http://twitter.com/London_Forum)

NB - note the underscore: \_ in the name ■

### newsforum

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