

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

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London Forum celebrates 25 years

Celebrating London Forum's 25th anniversary at City Hall

London Forum celebrates 25 years in style
The Mayor thanks Londoners

London Forum members were entertained in memorable style by Mayor Boris Johnson on July 17, to celebrate the Forum's 25th birthday.

Two hundred people gathered in the spacious surroundings of London's Living Room at the top of City Hall to enjoy lavish hospitality, surrounded by splendid views of the city that they do so much to preserve and enhance. City Hall staff provided a most friendly, relaxed and welcoming atmosphere which greatly contributed to the occasion. Guests included Griff Rhys Jones, President of Civic Voice.

Peter Eversden welcomed everyone saying how pleased he was that so many members were able to be there.

He thanked Mayor Boris Johnson, his deputy Sir Edward Lister, Rhiannon Watson, the GLA's senior community relations officer, and the team which set up and staffed the event and provided the much appreciated food and drink.

"It is a privilege to be in 'London's Living Room' to celebrate the progress made by the London Forum, together with its member societies, since 1988 when we were formed to network, advise and support civic, community and amenity groups in London. Anyone who wants to know what we have achieved since then can look at the annual reports on our web site."

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Tribute from the Mayor

"It is a privilege to be in 'London's Living Room' to celebrate the progress made by the London Forum, together with its member societies, since 1988".

Peter Eversden

The Mayor paid generous tribute to the London Forum and to its constituent members, emphasising that if he is able to take credit for our great city, it is because of the work done all over London by societies and amenity groups in preserving and enhancing their areas.

Mayor Boris Johnson pays tribute to the London Forum

Promoting 25 Years of Society Achievements

A special award for our 25th Year

As part of the London Forum's 25th year celebrations we are inviting member Societies to share with others their 'best achievements' in recognition of the successes of Amenity and Civic Societies as a great voluntary movement, with so much to be proud of, and sometimes against great odds. The time scale covers the life of the London Forum.

All the submissions will be displayed at the

AGM, Tuesday October 15th 2013

The closing date for entries for both these events will be Monday September 30

Walter Bor Awards 2013

Details on the back page

Awards will be presented on

Tuesday November 26

See back page and enclosed form

We look forward to receiving your contributions highlighting some of the many achievements of the London Forum's members over the last 25 Years. Entry forms enclosed.

London Forum at City Hall

(continued)



Peter went on to say: "The success of the London Forum was due to the hard work of its founder President, the late Walter Bor, and of its first chairman, Marion Harvey, who steered the development of the Forum for the first half of our 25 years. Several of the original trustees are still with us as Vice Presidents, supporting the rest of the team. It was needed then and even more so now"

He paid tribute to Alan Baxter - who was unable to attend - a London Forum Patron and a great benefactor to both the Forum and many other organisations. He wished a speedy recovery to our President, Sir Richard MacCormac who has been ill and was also unable to be with us.

Working with the GLA

Peter spoke appreciatively of the Forum's work with the GLA and Assembly saying that "One of our early objectives was to seek restoration of governance of the capital and the creation of the GLA has influenced a lot of the Forum's work over the twelve years I have been chairman. Working with Assembly Members and officers in this building and in Urban Design London and TfL has been a pleasure and I think we have achieved a lot together. We have been very demanding but it has been a good relationship and the dialogue has been open and positive. I think the Forum is seen as a critical friend of the GLA."

He praised the work of London Forum members, paying tribute to their success "in operating largely on a voluntary basis to influence planning, developments and quality of life where they are based. Many have given responses to the Assembly's studies, and to drafts from the Authority, and have presented evidence to examinations of the versions of the London Plan. That input is vital for shaping policy and highlighting issues". He urged them keep up the good work!

He also thanked London Forum's many Associate Members who share our aims, for the opportunities we have had to work together.

He spoke of his pride in being chairman of the London Forum and looked forward to the challenges ahead: the Government cuts from English Heritage's budget; London's housing needs; another revision of the London Plan to meet the ever-changing needs of the capital; the economy and growth of outer London town centres; and new tasks set for the Outer London Commission, of which the Mayor made him a member.

Peter then thanked everyone and asked our host, the Mayor, to speak.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson

The Mayor replied by welcoming everyone to City Hall and thanking Peter for all the work he does.

In a characteristically rumbustious speech packed with amusing anecdote, he began by assuring us that the food and drink would not add anything to our taxes!



Photos:

Peter Eversden and the Mayor addressing the London Forum members



Photos, anti-clockwise from top right : London Forum Vice Presidents: Harley Sherlock; Bill Tyler (with Alastair Hanton); Marion Harvey; Forum members against the backdrop of the spectacular view; Peter Eversden with the Mayor; Griff Rhys Jones, President of Civic Voice, with Tony Fooks; Michael Bach; a group of Forum members.

Grateful thanks to the City Hall photographer, and to Bill Linskey and Sue Chandler

Praise for London Forum

The Mayor paid generous tribute to the London Forum and to its constituent members, emphasising that if he is able to take credit for our great city, it is because of the work done all over London by societies and amenity groups in preserving and enhancing their areas.

He spoke of London's recent huge success in sport: unlike the experience of other Olympic cities, tourism to London has increased, and money is now "flooding in". Tourists love London because it has so much to offer. In addition to the obvious heritage attractions, the lively social scene and flourishing cultural offerings, he pointed out that it has more bookshops than New York, and, more surprisingly, less rain than Rome!

In particular it has more green space than any other city in Europe, and the fact that the city and its wonderful green spaces are so appreciated is that they are so obviously cared for, again due to the work of London Forum's member societies.

There then followed some enjoyable and lively banter with the audience about the activities and merits of London's foxes and squirrels. He assured everyone that if London Forum wanted to form a bicycle hunt he would not stand in their way.

The mayor concluded by saying he wanted to continue to improve parks and to expand the bicycle schemes. He thanked the Forum members again for all the work they do and hoped that the friendly dialogue would continue. ■



The View from the hot seat

Chairman of the London Forum **Peter Eversden** reminisces to **Helen Marcus** about his background and the Forum's development since he became Chair.

Peter's professional background was in the early stages of the development of the world's first business computers through to the time when personal computers were in everyday use. His account of those years throws a fascinating light on this now historic period. Having studied physics and maths at Exeter University he took up an interview with J. Lyons and Co., the Corner House catering and food company, somewhat mystified as to why they were looking for physics graduates. It transpired that in their quest for new more efficient business methods, they had seen the potential of computers to help the administrative side of the business. Peter remembers wondering, at his interview, if they manufactured the computers alongside the bread! He wasn't so far out - the first business application to be run on the Lyons computer in the 1950s was Bakery Valuations - calculating margins on Lyons output of bread, cakes and pies.

The world's first business computer

Having investigated the possibilities, Lyons had helped with funding of the final stages of the pioneering EDSAC computer at the University of Cambridge, and following its successful completion, in 1951, the Lyons' board agreed to commission their own machine, expanding on the EDSAC design. It was called Lyons Electronic Office, (LEO) and was the world's first business computer.

It was so successful that Lyons began outsourcing its services and subsequently formed LEO Computers Ltd. in 1954 to market the machines to other companies. By the time Peter joined the company in 1963 they were onto their LEO III series and he was involved with developing this new generation of computers that used transistors instead of valves - building and partly designing it as they went along.

LEO Computers eventually became part of English Electric Company (EELM) and then International Computers Limited (ICL). Peter stayed with them as a senior executive in most parts of the business until 1994 after they had been taken over by Fujitsu.

Many years later this background in computing was to be invaluable to London Forum as Peter oversaw the establishment and updating of the London Forum website and the use of Twitter and e-bulletins.

Arriving in Chiswick

Peter has always been interested in the local community wherever he lived. After many years as a Bloomsbury resident, he came to live in the Bedford Park / Chiswick area in 1971, and was chairman of the East Chiswick Residents Association for several years. He then became Secretary of the Chiswick Protection Group in the early 80s and is still the Convenor of that organisation, which covers twelve amenity groups in London W4. This involves networking, mutual support for fighting unsuitable planning applications and engagement in Hounslow Council's planning and service development. Peter managed to get several developers to conduct pre-application consultations, in particular for the development of the Chiswick Park Business Scheme.

In 1998 he was co-opted on to the Chiswick Area Committee of the Borough of Hounslow for three years to monitor, alongside Councillors, service delivery, public transport development, highways, parking and the use of developer contributions.

He has fought at least five unsatisfactory developments in Hounslow as a Rule 6 Party at appeal inquiries, working closely with Hounslow borough, achieving re-designs of three of them as a result. Because of the absence of any third party rights of appeal in the system he believes it is vital that societies learn how to use appeal inquiries in this way to get the best out of them. It is not easy because local objectors find themselves pitted against experienced barristers. Peter's aim has been that London Forum members understand the London Plan policies and can use them effectively.

Recruited by Marion

In 1996 he heard about the London Forum and felt Chiswick should belong. Marion Harvey, the founder-chairman, spotted his talents immediately, persuaded him onto the committee, and the next thing he knew he was "volunteered" for the position of Honorary Secretary.

Chairman of Bedford Park

At around the same Peter became the Chairman of the Bedford Park Society, a position he still holds as they celebrate their 50th anniversary in 2013.

He was involved as a trustee in the

successful campaign by the William Hogarth Trust, set up in 2003 to raise funds to have a statue of the painter in Chiswick and to restore Hogarth House there with the help of Lottery Grant.

A new governing body for London

Peter was inspired by the prospect of a new coherent governing body for London, one of London Forum's original objectives, eventually achieved in 1999 when the Greater London Authority Act was passed. A Manifesto for the Mayor was developed and the Forum invited all the mayoral candidates to hustings meetings; all except Ken Livingstone took up the invitation.

The Forum was pleased to see parts of its manifesto appearing in the various documents that led to the first Draft London Plan. In the lengthy Examinations in Public that were conducted for the first London Plan by Ken Livingstone and for his amended versions, evidence from London Forum and its member societies - encouraged by London Forum to participate - resulted in the plan containing much of what the Forum had sought. The preparation and consultation on the Plan provided opportunities to develop close working relations with GLA officers and Assembly Members.

Chair of London Forum

At the end of 2000 Marion Harvey stepped down as chairman of London Forum and Peter was elected her successor.

While the previous mayor had remained aloof from the Forum and its members, with the arrival of Boris Johnson the atmosphere changed. Ken Livingstone's policies had been concentrating on maximising use of land for high density housing, strongly opposed by Peter and by Michael Bach for the Forum.

Redrafting the London Plan

In 2008 Mayor Johnson began looking at redrafting the plan. London Forum was part of the wider campaign to get the high density policy revised to "optimising" the use of land sustainably. There was also inclusion in the London Plan for the first time of guidance on what should be contained in a borough's Local Plan and the basis on which boroughs should make planning decisions, so making a two-level

development plan cohesive and achievable.

Peter was involved in the development of the GLA's 'London Plan Implementation Plan' and several of the Mayor's SPGs, intended to help the Mayor's objectives to be achieved. As a result of all this work London Forum has come to be regarded by the GLA as a 'Critical Friend', and a voice to be listened to, becoming involved, with its members, in drawing up many of the GLA strategies and guidance notes published, and in their subsequent versions. The Forum is regularly invited to attend Assembly Committee meetings to put its view about topics of concern.

The Outer London Commission

A year after Boris Johnson was elected Mayor of London in 2008, he established the Outer London Commission (OLC) to advise how Outer London can play its full part in the city's economic success. It is described on the GLA website as "a small, highly experienced and focused Commission... chaired by William McKee CBE, who has a long career in the public and private sectors, and is advised on architecture and design by Sir Terry Farrell." It includes representatives of business, the boroughs, (several borough leaders) and the development industry.

On the recommendation of GLA officers, Peter was invited to join the OLC as the representative of the community sector. That is a mark of the respect for Peter's work and the standing of the London Forum. Peter is proud of the contribution that the OLC has made to the London Plan based on its first two reports. The Mayor's Outer London Fund was proposed by the OLC and has helped many boroughs with town centre initiatives. The OLC is about to consider how to further develop and protect outer London's town centres.

Working with others

As London Forum members will know, Peter devotes enormous amounts of his time to scrutinising and working with others in the team, responding to policy announcements and consultations on the Forum's behalf. Peter also represents the London Forum regularly at meetings

of other London wide organisations such as the New London Sounding Board.

Peter has worked with the West London River Group, Thamesbank and canal groups. One of the key issues is to try to make developments on river banks use the waterways and not just treat them as background, and to have a single authority for the Thames. The groups worked together to seek policies in the Mayor's London Plan for the Blue Ribbon Network.

He is keen that the London Forum should be aware of the many problems in deprived areas and the issues for those who rent homes and he uses the opportunity of regular meetings with groups such as the London Tenants Federation, and the Just Space Network to help such groups and advise how they could build confidence by using planning to help themselves.

The Forum has a programme of well attended open meetings covering a wide range of subjects. Peter feels these are very important for informing members and achieving networking.

London Forum a force to be reckoned with

Peter says his satisfaction in the job comes from the tremendous support and achievements, on a voluntary basis, of officers and committee members of the London Forum who have high skills from their current and previous work. He feels the London Forum is now a force to be reckoned with.

One of Peter's aims is to work with the GLA and boroughs to decide how an increased number of homes of all tenures and types can be delivered. He wants to recruit or develop membership in areas of opportunity and intensification described in the London Plan and build relationships with the many associate members of the London Forum which share its aims and objectives. A key objective, he says, is helping civic, amenity and community groups to succeed in their work to make London a better place in which to live. As a result of Peter's dedicated work and that of his colleagues, London Forum can look forward with confidence to the next 25 years. ■

Nick Boles under fire

Peter Eversden reports on CLG Committee's questioning of Nick Boles

On June 17 the Communities and Local Government Committee of the House of Commons questioned Nick Boles on the new planning arrangements. He had frequently to consult his advisors before answering their questions. They said they could not understand his direction of travel: decision making powers like those given to communities for wind farm positioning, are taken away by extending permitted development rights.

In reply to most of their challenges about the harmful effect of his policies, the Minister said that local authorities could use Article 4 Directions if they wanted to retain control. It was pointed out to him that this is a time and resource demanding process requiring one year's notice, and could render councils liable for millions of pounds in compensating owners of properties. Boles claimed that the prior approval systems he had introduced would prevent things going wrong.

He claimed that the conversion of offices to flats, without planning permission, was because of the number of empty buildings. He defended his decision not to allow most of the Local Planning Authorities any exemption, on the basis that external consultants has scored their reasons too low.

When challenged about retail shops becoming betting shops and pawnbrokers, Mr. Boles said the use would be only until May 2016 and then planning permission would be required. He was not clear on what criteria will be used to end the various temporary uses but said it would depend upon Councils' evidence of problems. If a planning application is not submitted after the period of use allowed, then Councils will have to take enforcement action.

He defended the permitted extension of homes because neighbours will be able to have a proposal examined if their 'amenity' is adversely affected. Boles conceded, after consulting with advisers, that the owner or the current occupier of any property on land which abuts the development site would be able to challenge an extension, not just the owners or occupiers on each side.

The Committee challenged the Minister on the problems which could arise and the harm to local economy if the new home occupiers of an office converted into flats took action under statutory nuisance provisions to close down any surrounding commercial operations they did not like for noise, vehicle movements, odour, etc. Nick Boles confirmed that the prior approval procedures do not cover noise but said a developer would not risk offering homes that would not sell easily. ■

The future of London's Airports

Speakers Councillor Daniel Moylan, Kensington and Chelsea, aviation adviser to Boris Johnson; John Stewart. Chair of HACAN ClearSkies
Report of the March open meeting by **Peter Pickering**

There was a good attendance, especially considering the bad weather. Michael Bach introduced the speakers, saying that no protagonist of the expansion of Heathrow had been available.

The competing options.

John Stewart analysed the competing options.

- A third runway at Heathrow. Heathrow had until recently been supported in this proposal by London First and by the London Chamber of Commerce. Their argument was that Britain needed a hub airport, because interchange passengers made more flights to more destinations viable, and that made London attractive to business and tourism. The need for more third world destinations was made very vociferously. But the noise impact of Heathrow was enormous - 28% of the people in Europe who were affected by flight-path noise were in London; a third runway would affect a total of a million people in London. His view was that business now was beginning to understand the political realities, and accept that there would not be a third runway at Heathrow.
- Gatwick (now a separate company from Heathrow) argued that London could be a two-hub city, as Amsterdam could not, since London had a much higher proportion of terminating passengers, both business and tourists. These could see all London airports as equally suitable as a destination. London is a major "business" City, which rivals are not.
- There could be a new airport in the Thames estuary, or a major expansion of Stansted, now very largely a preserve of budget airlines.

Mr Stewart observed that a better, not a bigger, Heathrow was needed, and that there should be a modal shift for short-haul flights from air to rail. This would release the slots needed for wider long-haul services. He said that there was a 'deep green' opinion that opposed any airport expansion, but some environmentalist groups conceded that there could be one new runway somewhere in the UK. The Climate Change Committee said that a 26% increase in flights in the UK by 2026

John Rowcliffe cautioned against assuming that the third runway at Heathrow was dead; Mr Moylan agreed; the airways industry knew what it wanted, and historically had eventually got it.

could be compatible with CO2 reduction targets. His view is that BA (Willie Walsh) are now planning on the basis of "No HR3". By 2018 HR3 would not even be considered as possible.

The Mayor's view

Daniel Moylan, who had political responsibility to the Mayor for his idea of a new airport for London, said that there would be a six-runway hub airport; the question was whether it would be in Schipol (where many conferences involving people from around the globe were now held) or in Britain. Shipping had gone to Rotterdam when the London docks declined because the Dutch acted and Britain did not. A third runway at Heathrow would be so cut off from the existing airport as to be in practical terms a separate entity.

Gatwick manipulated the figures in pursuance of their own interests; two hub airports for London would be a bad mistake and Heathrow was a better option than Gatwick; 60% of the passengers on some airlines were transferring, and that sustained their viability; Amsterdam and Frankfurt were building up their transfer passengers.

Clapham Junction was a good analogue; it was very much a transfer station, increasing passengers' choice, and made the railway system south of the Thames much more efficient. London was not, however, like Dubai, where virtually all passengers were transferring. There were 24,000 commercial jet aeroplanes in the entire world, and aviation did not make a significant contribution to climate change.

The great importance of airfreight was wrongly underestimated – 30% of freight by value went by air.

Mr Moylan said that we needed a proper airport, with four runways and space to grow, able to serve flights all days, without large numbers of people living near it. That airport should be to the east of London; it could be in the Thames estuary or at Stansted. An east location would bring great benefits in terms of business, education etc. to that sector of greater London. Studies of all the options under clear criteria were needed, but could not by themselves give the answer.

Discussion from the floor

In discussion from the floor the following points were made:-

Heathrow could be closed (or left as a very small airport, like London City,) which would free up a massive area for development. Mr Stewart pointed out that 76,000 jobs at Heathrow would be at risk by this.

The overwhelming need to combat global warming made reducing air travel imperative. Mr Moylan said that if climate change trumped everything - connectivity etc. - then London would suffer. He accepted that absolute ('clean green') opposition to airport expansion was a defensible stance; it was not his or the Mayor's. Mr Stewart said that the targets for CO2 reduction might be too stringent, and those who spoke only about climate change assumed too much.

Tom Ball drew attention to the way in which the Maplin project had collapsed on a change of Government; Mr Moylan said that the need was to have let contracts which could not be reneged on.

There was a need for more flights to China and there was great potential for flights to China and India. Mr Moylan said the new runways at Schipol, Dubai and Istanbul were London's rivals. Mr Stewart said that the 'emerging markets' would not peak for some time. Long-haul flights must be given priority over short-haul ones.

An estuary airport was needed; the problem was the impossibility of making decisions in the UK. Mr Moylan said that the present Government had shown that it was able to take brave decisions; the problem was the priority it gave to subjects; the Mayor had put the new

Air Pollution in London

Air pollution in London is a serious problem – how can it be reduced?

Peter Pickering reports on the June Open Meeting

airport issue much higher on the agenda.

David Irwin (Putney Society) asked Mr Moylan what he saw as the difficulties with the idea of an estuary airport. Mr Moylan said that they were powerful local objections, and the need to recreate wildlife habitats, which had been done successfully, but never on this scale.

John Rowcliffe (Wimbledon Society) cautioned against assuming that the third runway at Heathrow was dead; the difficulty with an estuary airport would be the access routes, which would affect for more people than the airport itself did. The need was to build a consensus. Mr Moylan agreed the Heathrow third runway was far from dead; the airways industry complex knew what it wanted, and historically had eventually got it.

Stansted was currently a flop, used only by low-cost airlines. Mr Stewart thought it would be very hard now to get political agreement to the third runway; the Sir Howard Davies report seemed likely to produce a menu of options.

Nick Jeffrey (Catford) said that his students thought the estuary was the obvious solution, and just wondered why it was not happening. Mr Moylan said that it would cost billions to build. The Government should provide the money and recoup it by selling the airport as a going concern.

Alan Piper (Brixton Society) stressed the importance of surface access. Mr Moylan said that a spur from the High Speed line from Ebbsfleet could mean access from central London in little over twenty minutes; there could also be a spur to London Bridge and Waterloo, with stops which would provide for airport workers; and there could be road and rail access across the estuary to Essex.

Bill Linskey (Brixton Society) asked whether flying would increase as much as was being projected since meetings and discussions could now be conducted electronically. Mr Stewart thought Mr Linskey might be right, but Mr Moylan thought real personal contact was and would remain very important. ■

Speakers: Dr Ian Mudway, of the King's College Environmental Research Group, Maria Arnold of ClientEarth, the environmental law organisation, and Jonathan Calloway of the Putney Society. Daniel Instone of the Department For Environment Food and Rural Affairs, (DEFRA) and Lucy Saunders a public health specialist from the GLA joined the Panel discussion.

Dr Mudway has published 23 papers on air pollution based research. He has investigated the impacts of pollutants on lung function and examined the impact of the introduction of the Low Emission Zone on the respiratory health of children in inner London. He emphasised that air pollution now was invisible, unlike the smog of the 1950s, because the particles were very small indeed. Air pollution was largely the result of PM (Particulate Matter) in emissions from motor vehicles (not only from their exhausts); diesel, including bio-diesel, was as bad as, if not worse than, petrol. Although some of these came from a distance (including from outside London), the concentration was nearest roads with heavy traffic (especially Oxford Street and the A12). The excess death rate (and hospital admission rate) due to PM pollution was greater than that for anything else but cigarette smoking; moreover, it caused a decline in lung function, especially in children. Avoiding the most polluted routes when walking could reduce exposure by 50%. Wearing a mask was useless - unless it were of germ warfare standard.

Maria Arnold leads the Healthy Air campaign at ClientEarth, combining work to engage communities at the local level with policy advocacy at a UK level. She said that the Government was making inadequate progress towards the implementation of the EU's Ambient Air Directive, although 2013 was the Year of Air; indeed the Government's attention was focused on reducing the risk of infraction proceedings. As many as sixteen regional air quality plans would not achieve compliance by 2015, and there had been little progress in London since 2012 - indeed the Mayor was slowing down implementation (witness the 4,300 parking spaces planned in the Earl's Court development) and was offering a three-year discount on the congestion charge to diesel vehicles, despite their especially damaging emissions.

In the light of all this Client Earth was taking the Government to judicial review, and had got a declaration from the Supreme Court that the Government were in breach; they were seeking action, not the imposition of fines. They were trying to raise awareness, which was very low among MPs; they supported groups in London, and had prepared 'Health and Well-being' boards.

The Putney campaign

Jonathan Calloway described the genesis of the Putney Air Pollution Campaign. Six years ago there had been little public concern about the problem of air pollution, but it became clear from Wandsworth Council's own monitoring equipment that there were high readings for pollution on Putney High Street. The Putney Society had fears, therefore, about the level on adjacent residential streets, where the Council had no monitors, and with help and advice from 'Mapping for Change' established monitors on forty sites over a wider area. The result demonstrated high readings and the Society publicised this with good effect (the local paper had a 'polluted Putney' campaign). This persuaded the Council to co-operate. Vehicle recognition cameras established that buses were the major source of the problem. The Society engaged with Transport for London (TfL), and persuaded them to bring forward the use of low pollution and hybrid buses on Putney High Street (though experience was that hybrid buses were not as successful in reducing pollution as had been hoped.)

Mr Calloway added that now that Councils had responsibility for public health it was important to engage the Director of Public Health in campaigns about the health effects of air pollution. The Government should be made to realise the economic cost of poor public health.

The Panel discussion

Daniel Instone of DEFRA said that he had found it frustrating that the dissemination of the relevant science had not seemed very good, and that the pressure from environmentalists had not been very effective. If Ministers were to be persuaded to take strong action on air pollution, there would have to be a link to economic growth, which was a high priority for Ministers.

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London's rail services

Geoff Hobbs Head of Planning, London Rail at Transport for London gave a comprehensive overview of current thinking for the London Network
Helen Marcus reports on the July Open Meeting .

Lucy Saunders said that her responsibility, at the GLA, was to get factors, including air pollution, which were important for public health, taken properly into account by all sections of the GLA, including TfL; she was not on the panel to explain or defend TfL policy.

Some members of the audience expressed concern that hybrid buses might not in practice be as beneficial in reducing air pollution as had been hoped; it might be that more training was necessary on how best to drive them. Mr Calloway said that it might be possible through vehicle recognition technology to see if new buses had made a real difference.

Peter Pickering asked whether the wider membership of the Putney Society was content with the Society's stance; his experience was that many civic society members were unhappy at attacks on the motorist, and that many saw convenient car access and cheap parking as essential for the future of town centres. Mr Calloway said that though there was a recognition in the Putney Society that not all objectives were totally compatible with each other, no members had said that its policies on air pollution were wrong.

Dick Allard said that though air pollution originated with vehicles, it could drift. He was worried about the effect of the proposed Silvertown Tunnel, whose protagonists claimed that it would reduce air pollution by reducing the time vehicles remained stationary; Dr Mudway was sure that the tunnel was a bad idea, which would increase traffic and therefore pollution in the most deprived areas.

Other points and questions raised

TfL had a major responsibility in that much of the polluting traffic was on Red Routes, which caused gridlock and ghettoisation.

Could air pollution levels be linked with flight paths? Mr Instone said that the air pollution round Heathrow was much more related to surface travel.

There was a discussion of the way in which people could be helped to make informed choices; there was still a perception, reinforced by the lower tax, that diesel cars were environmentally better than petrol ones. Mr Instone said that this was true as regarded CO2 emissions.

Peter Eversden thanked Diana Linskey for arranging the meeting. ■

Mr Hobbs's talk covered six main areas:

What's next for London Overground; Should TfL operate further suburban routes; Thameslink; progress on Crossrail; Crossrail 2 consultation and implications of HS2

He described the current high level of activity as a "neo-Victorian splurge the like of which had not been seen in many years". For many years rail had declined and suffered line closures, resulting from what was regarded as an excess of capacity. In the last ten years that had completely reversed: demand had gone up and continues to grow. Londoners make six times as many rail trips as anywhere in the UK. Mr. Hobbs spelt out the business case for growth backed up by detailed survey figures and benefit/cost ratio assessments. Gross added value by growth was greater in London than in the rest of the UK. The surveys also included a prediction that road congestion would increase 14% by 2031.

£10b had been budgeted for the next few years. Part of the Mayor's transport strategy was to achieve 30% more reliability on the tube network.

TfL and the suburban routes.

Suburban railways had been relatively neglected and much more could be done. TfL had campaigned hard to persuade MPs that the Mayor should be allowed to run London's railways. Previous

contracts has been inadequate as evidenced by the fact that on some lines management did not even ensure that fares were collected. It was not appropriate to expect the private sector to take on some of the risks inherent to the operation.

On the routes already operated by TfL there had been marked improvements: the level of "ticketless travel" (passengers not buying tickets) had decreased from 10% to 2%; surveys of passenger satisfaction and public performance measures had shown improvement. Demand has gone up so much that capacity needs to increase, including from four to five carriages per train, platform extensions and additional sidings. Much of this had already been started with new vehicles on order from Bombardier.

The government has announced funding for long-overdue work to electrify the Barking to Gospel Oak route.

The London Plan was an excellent document giving the base data needed for forecasting future demand.

Thameslink

The programme of works had delivered more capacity, and more destinations and new stations such as Farringdon and St Pancras, while at Blackfirs the bridge itself had become the station with entrances on both sides of the river.

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Supreme Court verdict in favour of ClientEarth

As mentioned in our report on page 7 ClientEarth sought a judicial review at the Supreme Court. The Court declared that the Government is failing in its legal duty to protect people from the harmful effects of air pollution. The ruling has broader implications for EU environmental law, paving the way for the European Commission to take legal action against the UK.

Air pollution causes heart attacks, strokes, respiratory disease and is said to cause 29,000 early deaths a year in the UK – more than obesity and alcohol combined. Children living near busy roads have been shown to grow up with

underdeveloped lungs.

ClientEarth's case concerns 16 cities and regions (including London, Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow) which government plans show will suffer from illegal levels of nitrogen dioxide, a toxic gas - until as late as 2020 or 2025.

The Supreme Court confirmed that because the Government is in breach of the EU Air Quality Directive "the way is open to immediate enforcement action at national or European level". However, before deciding whether to take further action to enforce the law, it has referred a number of legal questions to the Court of Justice of the European Union. ■

London's rail services

Report of open meeting, continued

London Bridge was being substantially rebuilt. It will have extra platforms and a new main entrance on Tooley Street and vast areas of derelict space under the bridges will be brought into use.

Crossrail.

This is Europe's largest infrastructure programme involving massive tunnelling works, 27 station upgrades, signalling improvements, new trains and a new depot at Old Oak Common. It will come into service in segments, between 2015 – 19, allowing problems to be ironed out as they arise. An operator for the concession will be sought.

Crossrail 2 consultation.

This will run until August 2. The greatest demand is a route across London from NE to SW. The tube is already crowded and more capacity is needed.

HS2

The Mayor and TfL have concerns about Euston: congestion for passengers arriving at Euston could cancel out the 20 minutes saved on the journey. Inadequate interchanges to other lines such as Euston Square need to be addressed.

The effect on the environment – arrangements for Camden are inadequate; a tunnel might solve the problem; HS2 representatives are now saying they might put a bridge across Kentish Town Road.

A campaign is now building up, led by the local councils to regenerate and utilise the Old Oak Common site and to have good interchanges.

Issues of concern raised included

-The recent Lords proposal of a huge space under Euston to link it to St. Pancras. This could involve safety risks.

-The loss of social housing in Euston which will be demolished to make way for the new line.

- The links to airports and to SW London. Could Crossrail be extended to Stansted? This would take a long time and the trains would be the wrong sort of rolling stock for making a quick journey; mixed traffic on railways is not efficient. Increased frequency and number of carriages is needed on the overground network. Again the problem of mixed traffic, having to share the line with freight trains – if it were possible to build a freight bypass it would solve the problem. ■

Further controversy on HS2

Following the London Forum open meeting the Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin's announcement that the bill for HS2 had risen by £8bn to £42.6bn set off a flurry of further controversy in the press.

Adam Mills a former chairman of Eurostar wrote to the Times on July 4 saying "The rationale for Eurostar/HS1 was the same as for HS2: time equals money. The new infrastructure would also generate business and profitable urban regeneration. I inherited forecasts based mainly on this rationale. It rapidly became apparent that such forecasts were away with the fairies. I spent two years trying to defend the indefensible Volume in the first year or so was little more than 10 per cent of forecast. There are lessons here for HS2.."

But more surprising was the sudden change of heart among its former political proponents. Alistair Darling, the former Chancellor, and Lord Prescott, who oversaw the last stages of HS1 link with the Continent under the previous Labour government, both declared their

doubts. Lord Prescott said he had always been sceptical of the cost of the new line and did not believe ministers' claims that it would extend beyond Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds. "They said the same thing last time and it didn't happen. It's a con on the north."

Lord Mandelson, writing in the Financial Times, admitted that the decision to go ahead had been guided by politics and flawed estimates: 'In 2010, when the then Labour government decided to back HS2, we did so based on the best estimates of what it would involve, 'But these were almost entirely speculative' and the central assumption that construction would spread growth across the country was 'neither quantified nor proved'. 'In addition to the projected cost, we gave insufficient attention to the massive disruption to many people's lives construction would bring. He said and that it could be an "expensive mistake". The FT itself ran an editorial on July 3 headed: "Abandon Britain's white elephant - It makes sense to cut the losses and stop HS2 in its tracks" ■

All change on London buses

One of Britain's biggest bus companies FirstGroup is to quit the London market, according to a report in The Times, "because of Transport for London's clampdown on profiteering and demands on operators to invest heavily in new, cleaner fleets".

In another example of the revolving doors (see page 14) Tim O'Toole, FirstGroup's chief executive, is a former senior TfL director, latterly heading the London Underground. On the other side of the fence, Peter Hendy, the TfL commissioner, and Leon Daniels, the authority's head of buses, are both former FirstGroup London bus chiefs.

FirstGroup said yesterday that it would sell eight of its nine London bus depots. Five of them, along with nearly 500 vehicles and 1,700 staff, are transferring to Metroline. Owned by ComfortDelGro, the Singaporean passenger transport group, Metroline will account for nearly one in five of all London buses after the deal and will be the third-biggest operator in the capital, behind Go-Ahead Group and the German-owned Arriva.

A further three depots, operating 400 buses and employing another 1,500 workers, will transfer to Transit Systems Group, a privately owned operator of buses in Perth, Adelaide and Sydney and of ferries in its home state of Queensland. It is a big acquisition for the Australian group, which at present employs 2,000 people but has no previous experience of running buses outside its own country. ■

"Abandon Britain's white elephant – It makes sense to cut the losses and stop HS2 in its tracks".

Financial Times editorial July 3

Spotlight on The Dulwich Society

Maintaining and enhancing Dulwich's unique character.

By **Ian McInnes**

Founded 50 years ago this October, the Dulwich Society has maintained its influence in the local area through its membership of 1100 households and its active specialist committee structure. Although originally founded to act as a pressure group to persuade the Dulwich Estate to be more accountable to local residents' concerns it has, over the years, expanded its influence over the whole of the Dulwich area. It works proactively with local councillors, residents' associations, and the local parks friends groups, to secure its objectives of maintaining and enhancing the unique character of the area while building on its sense of community and defending it against the pressures of inappropriate development.

Dulwich is a unique semi-rural environment just five miles from the centre of London. It is overlooked by the historic Sydenham Hill woods and much of its area is given over to playing fields and open spaces. Most of the area lies within one of three conservation areas and, at the centre, is historic Dulwich Village and the world-renowned Dulwich Picture Gallery. The business in Dulwich is schools – it has three top independent schools, Dulwich College, Alleyn's School and James Allen Girls School, along with Dulwich Prep London, one of the biggest prep schools in the country, two large state comprehensives, the Charter School and Kingsdale School, and several primary schools and smaller prep schools. It is shortly to have its first 'free school'.

An exhibition highlighting the changes

As part of its celebrations earlier this year, the Society held an exhibition in the Dulwich College Archive highlighting the changes in Dulwich since 1963. It was fascinating to see that many of the residents' concerns in the early 1960s were not so different from today - the rising levels of traffic and the implications for road safety, the loss of trees, and most importantly, the maintenance of its architectural character.

Photographs of Dulwich Village taken in the early 1960s seem to show that the only apparent difference is the type and number of cars and the clothes people were wearing, most of the buildings are still the same. But there have been major changes of course, the range of shops is very different -

*'To foster and safeguard
the amenities of Dulwich'*

there are no butchers, fishmongers, dairies, or greengrocers any more. Instead we have estate agents, delis and restaurants. The Dulwich Picture Gallery is now a world class art gallery, and the three independent schools have expanded to offer education from kindergarten upwards. The general appearance of the area has also improved - we now have extensive 20 mph zones with traffic calming measures, and Dulwich Park has been re-energised through the National Lottery Fund.

Bringing management into the 20th C

The major change, however, is unseen. In 1963 the Estate Governors presided over Dulwich in a very paternalistic way, all the houses were leasehold and, as the leases ran out, the condition of the properties deteriorated. The introduction of the 1967 Leasehold Reform Act allowed owners to enfranchise their properties and the subsequent approval of a 'Scheme of Management' (which requires all residents to seek approval from the Dulwich Estate for any external alterations to their houses, gardens or the removal of any trees), brought the management of the Estate into the 20th Century and led directly to the enhancement of Dulwich's older housing stock.

The Society has played a major part in that improvement. It was a key protagonist in the formation of the 'Scheme of Management', it campaigned for many years to introduce traffic calming measures, and it fought long and hard, with others, to stop the Dulwich Estate's proposed developments in the Sydenham Hill Woods. It also helped to retain the Village Post Office, restricted the construction of unsightly mobile phone masts, and encouraged the continued use of one of our major local assets, the historic Herne Hill Velodrome.

Society organisation

The Society is managed through an executive committee that meets every two

months. Special interest sub committees meet separately and this enables a large number of local residents to be actively involved in running the Society. The well regarded Society's Journal (winner of a London Forum award) is published four times a year. There are regular updates to the news section of the website and the Society is also on twitter.

The Planning and Architecture Group monitors all planning applications to Southwark and Lambeth councils which affect the area, and reviews and comments on every licence application to the Dulwich Estate. It supports the Dulwich Estate in the application of its design guidelines for house extensions and, where appropriate, actively encourages contemporary design. It also works in conjunction with the traffic and trees committees to secure a co-ordinated response to development proposals.

The Traffic and Transport Group promotes the growth of cycling and walking to schools – the 'Safer routes to schools' programme, and the enhancement of cyclist safety throughout the area. It continues to press for the wider introduction of 20mph speed limits and works to improve both the frequency of local bus and train services and disabled access to stations.

The Wildlife Group works to improve bio-diversity in the area by raising awareness of the many species of plants, birds, insects, amphibians and small mammals which share our urban habitat. It liaises actively with other local wildlife organisations such as the London Wildlife Trust, and the local parks' friends' organisations. The group sponsors an annual public lecture on a wildlife subject of local interest and provides an emergency helpline on the care of wounded wild animals and birds.

The Garden Group publishes an annual booklet 'Dulwich Gardens open for Charity'. This gives the date of opening, photographs and other details of over 40 local gardens which are open during the year. The promotion of these visits is the group's key activity but it also arranges a free lecture, usually in March or April, and a full day's members' summer outing to interesting gardens in the south east of England.



Dulwich Society

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Ian McInnes

The Trees Group monitors and protects local trees working with the Estate's tree consultant to identify referrals for Tree Preservation Orders and review requests by residents for felling and lopping, and insurance requests for tree removal. It identifies and promotes sites for new tree planting. It produced 'Remarkable Trees', the popular illustrated tree map of the local area - a revised issue will be published later in 2013. The group makes regular contributions to the Society's Journal and arranges talks and visits both locally with a guide/lecturer, and to further afield by coach.

The Society's 50th anniversary

As part of the Society's 50th anniversary the Local History Group is currently organising the installation of twelve memorial plaques to commemorate the sites of multiple deaths due to enemy action in WW2 - Dulwich was heavily bombed during the war. Over the years it has also produced a

number of publications on local houses and personalities, its best seller being 'Dulwich - the home front' detailing the experiences of local people between 1939-45. The group now concentrates on researching and writing articles for the Society's Journal and website. It also responds to enquiries about the area from all over the world and organises walks and talks on local history for local residents' associations, the Dulwich Festival and the Friends of the Dulwich Picture Gallery. ■



Right: a finger post

Below: The statue of Edward Alleyn on the Green fronting the the Old College.

The Society secured the funding for it in 2006 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of his purchase of the Estate.



Dulwich Village

Age: 50 years old

Founded: 10 October 1963

Circumstances of Birth: Founded following a local meeting called to highlight residents' concerns over the lack of accountability of Dulwich Estate's management of the area, the loss of large numbers of large Victorian houses, and the increase in the number of housing developments in the Sydenham Hill Woods.

Biggest Successes: 1. Maintaining and enhancing the unique character of the Dulwich area. 2. Securing a 'Scheme of Management' for the Dulwich Estate. 3. Preventing development in the Sydenham Hill Woods. 4. Stopping the proposal to run the South Circular under Dulwich Park. 5. Obtaining an award winning housing development on the 'Woodyard' site in Dulwich Village following 10 years of argument.

Biggest Disappointments/Frustrations: 1. The time it takes to make improvements happen - whether carried out by the Council or the Dulwich Estate. 2. Planning decisions being removed from the local Dulwich Community Council to a sub-committee in Southwark Council's main offices in the north of the borough.

Present Preoccupations: 1. Setting up a Dulwich Archive to highlight the area's history. 2. Trying to return planning control to the area after the Council restricted local meetings to save money. 3. Expanding the Society's on-line presence and encouraging all members to provide email contacts. 4. Responding to the changing demographic by actively seeking younger members.

Working Details: Membership: 1100 households - 2000 plus individuals; Annual subscription: £10 per household; Small executive committee plus six specialist interest sub committees; Dulwich Society Journal 4 times a year; annual 'Dulwich Gardens open for Charity' booklet.

Special Characteristics: a semi-rural environment just five miles from the centre of London with a historic Village at the centre and the world-renowned Dulwich Picture Gallery. The business in Dulwich is schools, including three top independent schools, and one of the biggest prep schools in the country.

Last Word: Dulwich has maintained its unique character over the last 50 years and now looks better than ever. The Society is looking forward to its further enhancement over the next 50 years. ■

Planning for 'Post-Human' Activities in London?

Diane Burridge looks at the challenges ahead posed by the automated economy

The 21st century will witness more technological and scientific advances than in the last 500 years, highlighted Will Hutton, the Chair of London's Big Innovation Centre, in an article for the Work Foundation's 2013 Annual Debate*. The challenge of the decades ahead is the transition to the automated economy full of 'automated doers', according to the former US Treasury Secretary, now Professor Larry Summers.

The challenge of technological change

The scale of technological change is now so great that it can be difficult to think of the impact that these changes will have on London's physical and social infrastructure. And as Hutton reminds us: two-thirds of what we consume today was not invented 25 years ago. What will we be consuming in 25 years' time: goods produced and services offered most likely by 'post-humans', such as digital doubles, robots and home hubs.

How frequently will the London Plan and regeneration, transport and housing plans need to be updated in response to these enormous changes?

Significant developments, now being trialled, include:

- Home hubs - control systems which monitor and control thousands of objects and sensors in the home.
- Self-healing and self-cleaning building materials, such as concrete. It is even predicted that in 50 years' time, buildings will be able to 'grow' themselves.
- Self-driving cars, aeroplanes and trains.
- Drones carrying out surveillance and other activities.
- VGo robots which stream two-way videos, for example, between the school and the home of house-bound pupils. Pupils here can use computers, the internet and cameras to manoeuvre their robot around the school building. The robot has a display screen showing the pupil's face and flash lights to get the teacher's attention. Made by a company based in Nashua, New Hampshire, VGo robots are now being tested by doctors to use for visits to patients, and by companies to keep an eye on employees.
- Digital Double robots - two wheeled vehicles which sport a stand holding an

ipad that displays the user's face; these can record everything that the robot 'sees', with a webcam, and are able to participate in meetings. The double robot can move about indoors while the user controls it from his/her computer. These 'personal remote presence drones' or humanoid robots are entering the shops now.**

- Digital animations which are projected onto a frame with the shape of the real person on this. These are now being used as airport assistants, able to give directions; and it is planned that these animations will soon be able to answer live questions.
- Medical advances are mind-boggling. We know about the increasing use of robots to carry out surgery. But links between humans and robots? Professor Kevin Warwick, of the University of Reading, has developed implants for the first purely electronic communication between the nervous systems of two humans, and has linked the nervous system of a human to a computer. And new generations of neuro-enhancers and brain stimulation devices call into question: what does it mean to be human?

These are just a few examples of recent developments where 'automated doers' and robot-human links are replacing human activity. Will there be a cull of middle class professions, as predicted by Professor Larry Summers*, who feels that the 'real' jobs will be in writing the software and building the automated 'doers'.

Questions for the future

What education programmes, to develop engineering and cognitive skills, will be required in response? These could include building on the best of what robots themselves have: prosthetic limbs, synthetic eyes and expanded memories to benefit humans? And there is already a major demand for digital and big data management skills.

One job growth area predicted by Will Hutton is in supporting human well-being. Will new social networking systems need to be developed if humans feel isolated and under-employed, as robots become commonplace? Will our identities become a mixture of physical and virtual identities? Will the workplace, as we now know it, cease to exist?

We are all aware of many of these developments. What may be difficult, for many of us, is to think through the implications of these changes on the houses, offices, educational establishments and hospitals required in the future - as well as the types of jobs. Perhaps change will be organic and as some jobs are lost, new ones will be created. Or perhaps humans will resist some aspects of these changes.

Amenity and civic societies may wish to share thoughts about the possible implications for employment and planning in their localities. ■

**Work Foundation's 2013 Annual Debate: Will robots or enhanced humans steal our jobs?, 11 June 2013.*

***Futurefest.org - a festival taking place 28 and 29 September at Shoreditch Town Hall, organised by NESTA with the Observer as media partner. (The Observer, 16.6.13)*

Filming at Council meetings

Launching a new Guide in June on filming council meetings, Communities Secretary Eric Pickles disputed misconceptions that this could breach data protection or health and safety laws. Bloggers, journalists and members of the public must be allowed to tweet, film and report on council meetings.

One blogger has been arrested and handcuffed by police for filming a council meeting in Carmarthenshire. Wrexham council also banned a journalist from the Daily Post from tweeting a council meeting.

The Guidance says that filming should be overt, people should be informed at the start of the meeting and councils should have a clear policy on whether members of the public should have the right to opt out of being filmed if they ask questions. Mr. Pickles said that many councils were refusing to implement the laws, which also allow members of the public to obtain council documents. He said that journalists and taxpayers must be able to scrutinise and challenge decisions of the state: "Data protection rules or health and safety should not be used to suppress reporting." ■

Shops to Housing

Michael Bach responds to the government's proposed new measures

The forthcoming proposals to provide a freedom to change from shops to housing, whilst motivated by the existence of vacant shops in many parts of the country, especially in secondary or tertiary shopping areas, unfortunately cannot be limited either to such areas or to vacant units.

The situation, particularly in much of London and other areas with large differentials in values between shops and housing, is that even if shops are viable, there would still be a huge windfall gain to be achieved by converting all corner shops, many shops in local parades and neighbourhood centres and a substantial change to the outer edges of district centres. This would be fairly devastating for the distribution of convenience shops and local services, access to day-to-day shopping needs within easy walking distance for local communities, but more particularly to the continuing vitality and viability of local centres. Being able to control the release of local shops to other uses is absolutely critical to maintaining vital and viable local centres.

A possible outcome could be even larger "under-served markets" in our inner city areas, resulting in increased social exclusion, as well as villages with no shops.

Conflict with the NPPF

This would be in direct conflict with the NPPF, particularly:

- in rural areas/villages
- maintaining a balance of uses
- promoting healthy communities, by promoting strong neighbourhood

centres and active street frontages,

- planning positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, pubs and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
- guarding against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;
- ensuring that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and
- ensuring an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

How to avoid a bad outcome

To enable local/neighbourhood centres to continue to provide a focus for local communities as well as to provide a range of their day-to-day needs, it will be absolutely essential to retain the existing planning powers to manage both the amount and the mix of uses in local centres. It will also be essential for neighbourhood planning that communities can shape their local centres and maintain their ability to meet the daily needs of their community.

This would suggest:

- exempting communities/areas/local centres where a blanket relaxation of change of use from shops to housing could destroy the network of neighbourhood centres – this would certainly be necessary for neighbourhood centres across London, as well as villages;
- limiting the proposals to premises currently vacant; or failing that
- limiting the proposals to premises last used as a shop at the point when the SI is issued – ie excluding A2, A3, A4 and A5 uses which could otherwise be converted to a shop without consent and then converted to housing without consent. Even this would make post offices and pharmacies at risk.

Given the strong conflict with central themes of the Government's planning policy, namely ensuring the vitality of town centres, supporting a prosperous rural economy, and promoting healthy communities, it will be essential to emphasise greater use of positive planning to manage the change within existing centres rather than introduce an across-the-board proposal that could decimate local neighbourhood centres, local parades and corner shops in areas where housing values greatly exceed those for small shops. This suggests a more disaggregated approach to impact assessment, especially recognising the very different situations in London, major cities, market towns and villages. ■

Retail Futures 2018 - a new analysis of UK Retail by the Centre for Retail Research

This analysis of how UK retailing will have changed by 2018, published in May, forecasts a looming retail crisis unless radical changes are made by retailers, town centres and the government to preserve what is best in retailing and avoid a potentially significant detrimental impact on town centres.

153 UK towns centres (41% of the total) will experience a rapid decline as a result of changing retail patterns and will need to shrink to survive. Some smaller secondary and tertiary sites may disappear almost completely. Stores are always closing - and reopening - but this time the pace of change is considerable, with vacancy rates across the

country increasing from 5.4% in December 2008 to 14.1% in March 2013 (according to the Local Data Company), a rise of 161%. The total number of shops is expected to fall by 22% over the next five years.

The social divide will also widen as retail centres most vulnerable are those near low-income populations.

Customers now 'shop' in multiple ways, checking store websites, viewing prices of competitors on a smartphone whilst standing outside a store, and choosing whether to buy the goods in-store or online and collect it in-store or have it delivered to a nominated address. Businesses must respond to these changing patterns and

devise strategies to integrate their physical shops, online sites and other channels.

The report suggests that a pump-priming fund of £320 million is required to start redeveloping problem town centres to turn failing and empty shops into good residential accommodation, create more service/entertainment/leisure outlets, and/or provide offices, doctor's surgeries, classrooms/meeting rooms or other facilities for which there may be a local demand. This could perhaps create 15,000 - 20,000 new homes. The transformation also has implications for the hundreds of £billions of investments, including pension funds, tied up in retail property. ■

The 'revolving door'

The Public Administration Select Committee inquiry into the Business Appointment Rules; increasing expressions of concern about government competence

Helen Marcus reports

In February the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) discussed the 'revolving door' between the upper echelons of public service and the private sector as part of its inquiry into the Business Appointment Rules that govern the take-up of jobs by former ministers and crown servants.

Until now, ex-ministers and senior civil servants had to notify the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACoBA) if they moved from Whitehall to other employment, but special advisers (SPADS) only had to do so if they were above civil service pay-grade 'SCS3'. Now – regardless of pay-grade – all will need to consult ACoBA.

The latest report from ACoBA give examples of some of these appointments: Lord Reid, the former home secretary, is a paid adviser to G4S Secure Solutions since December 2008. Both he and Sir John Scarlett, former head of MI6 are involved with the Chertoff Security Consultancy which offers "strategic security advice to corporations and governments". The First Sea Lord Sir Jonathan Band became a consultant to US war jet manufacture Lockheed and British warship firm VT Group. Air Marshal Iain McNicoll,

deputy commander in chief at the Ministry of Defence became a partner at Defence Strategy and Solutions LLP, a multinational that advises defence companies on procurement.

Paul Stein, the former Ministry of Defence director general for science & technology, joined defence supplier Rolls Royce, although he was banned from lobbying ministers and officials or being involved in bids for the MoD for a year.

More than a dozen former UK ministers and senior civil servants have left government posts for jobs with Big Four accountancy firms in the past decade, one being Dave Hartnett, the UK's chief tax collector, who has become a consultant to Deloitte. There are many others too numerous to list here.

The Financial Times, commenting in May, found this worrying. The benefits of knowing how things work at the top, and knowing the people in charge, are valuable. The fact that those benefits can easily be sold to outside bidders changes the incentives to become a public servant disturbingly. The division between public administration and private enterprise has been blurred by public-private partnerships and outsourcing. Even if all the rules are

followed, it does not look good to those outside this charmed network.

Competence

Furthermore there are increasing doubts about the competence of the present generation of civil servants. We have reported in these pages over the years of Government blunders and failings. Are these two trends connected? Anthony King, Professor of Government at the University of Essex, also writing in the FT in July, says "The blunders committed by British governments in the past 30 years have been monumental. British government used to be regarded as one of the wonders of the world: intelligent, decisive and sensible, with democratically elected leaders supported by a Rolls-Royce civil service. In the 1950s; a French observer wrote that the British system provided an enviable model of democratic government".

He cites public-private partnerships; the disastrous NHS National Programme for IT, the West Coast main line railway franchise fiasco, amongst many others. All are "reinforced by Britain's notoriously high rate of ministerial turnover. The resulting loss of institutional memory is immense. So is the loss of accountability". ■

Continuing concerns about the future of Judicial review

In the light of the above report, the current moves to reduce the ability to apply for judicial review takes on an even more worrying aspect. Chris Grayling, the Justice Secretary, argues that the measures will stop "time-wasting" and meritless appeals, and prevent the system being used as a "cheap delaying tactic". Officials maintain that the changes would not alter the role of judicial review in holding the Government to account but instead deal with needless delays in the system and weak or ill-conceived cases.

But senior judges and others have expressed deep concerns that the changes will weaken vital checks on power by limiting the right of people to contest governmental decisions. Some of their concerns have been taken on board but the main thrust of the changes will be introduced through court rules and be in force by July. They include:

- A £215 court fee for anyone seeking a hearing in person after a written application has been turned down.
- A ban on seeking a hearing in person if an initial written application is held to be without merit.
- Halving the time limit for applying for a judicial review in planning cases to six weeks.
- Cutting the time allowed for applying for a judicial review of a procurement decision from three months to four weeks.

Andy Slaughter, a Shadow Justice Minister, commented: "If immigration cases are stripped out, the number of judicial reviews is broadly at the same level it was 20 years ago — hardly the explosion in numbers ministers would have us believe, and no greater burden on business (if it ever was in the first place) than in 1993."

David Kirwan, managing partner at Kirwans law firm, said judicial review has proved "vital in exposing shoddy or unlawful decision-making in cases such as the franchising of the West Coast Main Line.... The right to challenge the way that government decisions are made is a fundamental part of living in a democratic country. Time and time again judicial reviews have proved their worth, acting as a policing measure to prevent the abuse of power and bringing those who have abused that power to justice."

One might add that in the absence of any written constitution in the UK, the ability – and the freedom – to challenge government through judicial review is of even greater significance. ■

The Mayor unveils his vision for London's future

In June **Mayor Boris Johnson** presented an agenda for London's future with the publication of his '2020 Vision - The Greatest City on Earth; Ambitions for London'

The 2020 Vision outlines measures the Mayor intends to take to tackle issues facing the capital as its population heads towards ten million by 2030. These include addressing the shortage of affordable housing and continued investment to meet capacity demands on the transport network caused by a growing population, and the need to ensure people have the right skills for the jobs of the future, allowing them to find jobs and support both themselves and the wider economy.

Londoners need jobs and homes

He highlighted that the capital now contributes a greater share to the UK's economic output than at any point in its history, but made it clear that Londoners need jobs and homes – and a quick and convenient way of getting from one to the other.

'Use it or lose it' planning permission

There would also be a new "use it or lose it" planning permission for developers" and an intention to "legislate on strategic planning decisions to allow the mayor to call in more, and unblock stalled decisions", although this option would only be used in exceptional circumstances when all other attempts to progress work on a development by working with the developer had failed.

Removing borrowing cap

Other measures include: removing the central government cap on local authorities' borrowing power to enable them to build more new affordable homes; increasing cycling in inner London and improving facilities for cyclists; a new river crossing to the east of the Dartford Crossing; start construction of Crossrail 2 in 2019; investigate new road tunnels such as replacing the Hammersmith flyover; transform the Greenwich Peninsula waterside into a commercial development and transport hub including a cruise liner terminal; study the potential for further rail and Underground lines south of the river; ensure sustainable urban drainage schemes are delivered to mitigate the likelihood of surface water flooding and reduce rain entering the sewers; increase tree cover in London by five per cent by 2025, and the same again by 2050.

For more detail see:

www.london.gov.uk/london2020vision.com ■

New Assembly committees

At its Annual Meeting in May the Assembly agreed the establishment and membership of a range of new Committees to lead investigations into key issues ranging from public transport to spending at City Hall. The new committees established by the London Assembly can be seen at <http://bit.ly/12S5jFd> ■

Update on the Olympic Park

In May the Mayor of London and the London Legacy Development Corporation announced that the future of all eight permanent venues on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park had been secured, following the signing of a deal with iCITY for the Press and Broadcast Centres. ■

Tri-borough outsourcing deal

Hammersmith and Fulham LB, Kensington and Chelsea RLB and Westminster City Council - the West London 'tri-borough' - has awarded a ten-year outsourced facilities management deal worth more than £150m to contractors Amey. The deal combines facilities management services across nearly 2,000 buildings comprising 1.3 million square feet. It is hoped that it could reduce costs by a third and deliver annual efficiency savings of more than £2m annually to each of the boroughs. It is part of a series of wider tri-borough partnerships, including shared arrangements for children's services, adult social care and library provision, which are expected to result in £40m savings by 2015/16.

It is claimed that it will prove to residents and other local authorities that this approach works and provides even better services.

It will be interesting to hear from London Forum Members if, or how, they are affected by these changes. ■

Selling off Whitehall - government on the move

Old War Office to be sold

The grand neo-baroque Old War Office opposite Horse Guards, in the heart of Whitehall is to be sold off as part of the programme to reduce Government spending.

The decision follows a six-month review about whether to modernise it; the costs were considered to be "prohibitive". It was designed by William Young and completed in 1910 at the cost of £1.2 million. It has 1,000 rooms over seven floors and more than two miles of corridors. Churchill was based there between 1919 and 1921. Kitchener and Lloyd George worked there as war

minister and munitions minister during the First World War, and T E Lawrence was stationed there in 1914, drawing up maps of the Middle East. It currently houses the secretive Defence Intelligence Staff and comes, allegedly, complete with secret underground tunnels connecting it to some of the most sensitive sites in Whitehall including Downing Street. It is possible that the security aspects could yet persuade the MoD not to put the building on the open market but to make an internal sale to another government department.

DCLG to move to Marsham Street

As part of the continuing drive to reduce costs and increase efficiency across Whitehall, the Home Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) are to share headquarters. Scheduled to take place in mid-2014, the DCLG will take up spare office space at 2 Marsham Street. The move will help reduce the cost of the civil estate by £24 million annually.

The Cabinet Office revealed earlier this year that sales of property and land have raised more than £1bn since the coalition came to power in May 2010. ■

The changing face of London

Threats or opportunities? **Helen Marcus** rounds up recent development stories

More towers for London

995 new homes in City Road

Developer Berkeley Homes submitted a planning application to Islington Council in May for a 995-home development at 250 City Road in London's EC2.

The proposals include the demolition of existing buildings on the 1.9 hectare City Forum business park site and the construction of two towers reaching 42 and 36 storeys respectively as well as four blocks ranging from seven to nine storeys.

The new buildings would include 326 affordable homes, as well as up to 5,000 sq m of commercial floor space, affordable workspace, 3,650 sq m of space for shops, cafes and a health centre, a 190-bed hotel and new public open space.

South Bank skyline set for dramatic change

Braeburn Estates — a joint venture between Canary Wharf Group and Qatari Diar — has been given permission by Lambeth Council to develop a 1.45 million sq ft mixed use commercial and residential campus around the Shell Centre at Waterloo. The 27-storey Shell Centre tower, built 50 years ago, will remain the centrepiece of the scheme, surrounded by two office and six residential buildings. The tower will continue to be owned and occupied by Shell, which will expand its London headquarters into one of the two new office buildings. ■

Welsh Harp development plans

The landscape of the Brent Reservoir one of London's biggest nature reserves, popularly known as the Welsh Harp, is under threat from the so-called West Hendon Regeneration scheme, a huge housing development on the West Hendon Estate between the A5 Edgware Road and the Reservoir. It could cause irreversible damage to the reservoir and nature reserve, changing its rural landscape for ever. The area, designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), is home to both birds and other wildlife and is a popular destination for residents in Brent, Barnet and beyond.

The scheme is being proposed in partnership with Barratt Metropolitan LLP (BMLLP) which is a consortium made up of Metropolitan Housing Partnership and Barratt Homes, and is backed by Barnet Council who are the planning authority for that section of the Welsh Harp. It includes four tower blocks and around 2,000 new flats. It is the second housing development to threaten the area after another application was successfully seen off in 2009.

Apart from the impact on local wildlife, there are concerns about whether the infrastructure is designed to cope with an influx in traffic and residents.

Given the scale of the development, consent may also have to be given by Mayor of London, Boris Johnson. ■

Trouble at the Top

Reports have been filtering in that some of the new towers in London are experiencing problems both in letting and in refinancing debt.

Heron Tower

In February the consortium responsible for the Heron Tower on Bishopsgate, Gerald Ronson in conjunction with Middle Eastern investors, were understood to be in discussions with German banks about refinancing; fewer than half the floors have been let.

The Shard

Earlier this month it was reported that the Shard is still almost empty after a year.

As Prince Andrew joined the Qatari prime minister and various luminaries at the ceremony to open it in July, its 589,602 square feet of office space remained largely unlet. Not a single office in the 26 floors devoted to business use has been rented. Just six of its 72 floors are in use: the 32nd floor restaurant and a viewing gallery on the upper five floors.

The owners have failed to find buyers and tenants for the 10 luxury flats which, at between £30m and £50m each, is perhaps not surprising. It has been described as part of London's new "oligarchitecture". High rents and economic stagnation have been blamed but other experts believe the problem is more fundamental: its location. ■

Battersea chimneys to be replaced

Haydn Mylchreest reports

The chimneys of Battersea Power Station will continue to be a prominent feature of the London scene; a long-running debate about whether to replace or refurbish them has ended. The quality of the originals is so poor they would be prohibitively expensive to restore. They will be taken down and replaced with exact replicas made using the original architectural plans of more than 80 years ago. The Malaysian owners have reportedly earmarked £100 million for the project which will use the same construction materials as for the originals. One of the new chimneys will be used to vent the exhaust gases from the energy centre although the type of fuel to be used is still the subject of discussion.

The site continues to host public events and on 21st and 22nd September the public will be able to visit the site as part of the Open House scheme.

Buro Happold and Purcell have been appointed to provide structural engineering and façade repairs advice, and Wilkinson Eyre, a specialist heritage architect, has been appointed to design the interior of the station. The work will be completed by 2016.

The proposal to extend the Northern Line from Kennington to the Power Station has now been given the go-ahead and government financial support has been committed.

Other developers are proceeding apace with their own schemes along either side of Nine Elms Lane. The United States has begun work south of Nine Elms Lane on their new embassy complex scheduled to open in 2017-18, and other diplomatic interest in the area is strongly rumoured. The redevelopment of the New Covent Garden market is at an advanced stage of planning: St Modwen Properties hopes to create about 2,800 flats there. The Chinese property and hotel conglomerate, Dalian Wanda Group, has bought the One Nine Elms site in Vauxhall; the site marks the gateway to the Nine Elms Opportunity Area and has planning consent for two towers: one of 60 storeys said to be the tallest residential tower in Europe — topped off with a five-star hotel to rival the Dorchester — and one of 45 storeys. ■

Round the Societies

A round-up of news from our member societies.

By **Diane Burridge**

Anniversaries and Achievements

Dulwich and Clapham Societies celebrate 50th anniversaries this year.

Streatham Society committee members Brian Bloice and Clare Moore received awards (Lambeth Champions) from Lambeth Council for services to Streatham.

Angela Dixon is standing down from the **Hammersmith Society's** Committee, having been first elected to this in 1972. Since then, she has set up the Hammersmith and Fulham Historic Buildings Group; co-founded the West London River Group; and examined many planning documents, giving evidence at Examinations in Public, after meticulous and in-depth research. Appreciative thanks were given to Angela in the Chairman's (Rosemary Pettit) 2012-13 report.

Erosion of Green Belt in Totteridge

Mill Hill Preservation Society has objected to a planning application to relocate the Belmont Children's Farm into a riding school structure further down the Totteridge Valley, deeper into the Green Belt. The proposed development includes a new roadway, 50 space car park, shop, cinema for 100 people, large rooms which could be used for cafes – far above a simple children's farm. If approved, such a development augurs badly for the Green Belt.

Character Study for Isleworth

The Isleworth Society, concerned about the quality of the Context and Character Study for Isleworth, has compiled a comprehensive list of structures and buildings considered to enhance the character of the area. The first draft has been lodged with the Borough's conservation and urban design officer. The Society is supporting the setting up of Planning Panels as public forums in the borough to discuss major and contentious applications.

Protecting Victorian heritage in Teddington

The Teddington Society is working to protect the High Street and Broad Street. Recently, the Society objected to two modifications to frontages of the late Victorian shop premises on the High Street. In response, the Council is now insisting on the reinstatement of the original Victorian frontage and upgrading of shoddy fascia. The Teddington Society also successfully urged the Council to repave Broad Street as the state of the pavements was very poor with a clutter of disparate setts and patches of tarmac.

What future for Battersea Power Station?

Battersea Society held a meeting in May to discuss the future of the Battersea Power Station site. Speakers described the intentions of the latest developer consortium for the comprehensive development of what has been called the 'new city at Nine Elms'. The meeting was told that a massive mixed development is proposed in order to secure the future of the Power Station. Society members asked what happens if developers go bust, change their minds or sell the site on? The worst scenario is that the most iconic building in Nine Elms City ends up as a conserved ruin with its four chimneys. For more news about the latest developments see previous page. See also the Nine Elms website: www.nineelmslondon.com

Battling BT in Chelsea

Advertising multinational JC Decaux and BT Payphones applied for permission, late 2012, to provide 41 large advertisement panels with coin-operated payphones on the back, with promises to remove a significant number of payphones, throughout the Borough. A campaign by **Chelsea Society** to get all 41 applications rejected was successful with all refused in December.

The Society's case was helped considerably by the fact that the officer who wrote the report had failed to notice that almost identical proposals for 11 sites in 2007 had been refused and the appeals all dismissed. JC Decaux and BT Payphones have now appealed and the Chelsea Society has submitted its case - which should be heard shortly.

Neighbourhood Forums

CASCH Residents Association **The Highgate Society**, and other groups in Highgate Village, are working to establish a Highgate Forum. As the boundaries of three London boroughs run through Highgate Village, the Highgate proposal incorporates several streets in the CASCH area (CASCH represents about 16 streets between Crouch End and Highgate). This proposal has been opposed by CASCH Residents Association, concerned that planning decisions made by the new Highgate Forum would have legal force and the council would have to take account of them. CASCH is concerned that some decisions may not be in their best interests. CASCH continues to do periodic street surveys to record conditions of footpaths, street surfaces, street lighting, and other matters, which are the responsibility of Haringey Council, and reports defects to relevant Council officials.

Ealing Civic Society has reported that both Central Ealing and West Ealing Centre Forums have been officially recognised as able to create plans for their respective areas. Both forums now have to engage with all sections of the local community to encourage ideas to come forward on how the centres might develop. These can range from simple projects capable of implementation by the forums themselves, such as minor changes to public areas, to more significant and potentially visionary concepts. All members of the Ealing Civic Society are being encouraged to contribute ideas through the web sites at Improve Ealing and West Ealing Centre Neighbourhood Forum, and sign up at Central Ealing Neighbourhood Forum

High profile in Brixton

Brixton Society's Chairman, Bill Linskey (also on London Forum's Executive Committee), had an article published in the local paper, the Brixton Bugle, making an impassioned plea for greater democracy and transparency in the planning system. Despite a 3000-strong petition against a Tesco proposal to change the frontage of an old pub, opposed by a majority of councillors on the Planning Committee, Tesco nevertheless got its way due to an undemocratic, but perfectly legal manoeuvre by the Committee Chair. As Bill pointed out, had Tesco lost, they could have gone to appeal while the objectors have no right of appeal. Bill used the article to explain Brixton Society's work, and also made a nice mention of the London Forum.

continued on next page

Round the Societies

(continued)

Caring for local heritage

Tottenham Civic Society is seeking reassurances from the Council and the GLA regarding sections within the GLA's report: 'It took another riot', published by the Mayor's independent panel on Tottenham. This report applauds Tottenham Football Club's decision to stay in the borough, but then suggests that it might be a good idea for Spurs to be allowed to knock down the heritage buildings on its High Road frontage. The Tottenham Civic Society is alarmed as, with others, they fought a long battle to persuade Spurs to change their plans and save these buildings.

The Wimbledon Society has agreed to take on the responsibility for maintaining the grass at the Wimbledon War Memorial. This work will be carried out by local residents' group One Man Went to Mow, as agreed by the Council.

The Finchley Society's PR Committee is sponsoring and holding funds in a special account for a new group: The Victoria Park Tree Project Team. This Team plans to provide an avenue of oak trees for Victoria Park.

Regeneration in Clapham

Clapham Society is giving feedback to councillors on the latest proposals for the regeneration of the Old Town, Clapham Cross and the High Street – in particular the changes to parking arrangements and the introduction of a contra-flow cycle lane. There is general agreement that further consultation on some aspects is needed, and that Clapham's so-called 'vibrant night-time economy' had got out of hand, and steps to reduce both the number, and the opening hours, of licensed premises are overdue.

Prizes/Books/Awards

The Wimbledon Society launched, in the Spring 2013, the Richard Milward Memorial Prize for Local History. Richard Milward was Chairman of the Local History Group for 25 years and died in 2006. The Prize aims to give everyone the opportunity to 'make history' themselves with entries based on some degree on original research within the Borough of Wimbledon. The Wimbledon Society Museum Press has also just published: *Heritage Tales - 52 Stories of Wimbledon*.

The Richmond Society has launched a photographic competition: The good, the bad and the ugly. Over the summer, budding photographers (under 12 years of age, and between 12 and 18 years) in Richmond are invited to enter photographs that capture something that is good, bad or ugly about the borough. Selected entries will be exhibited at locations around the borough, and the judges' selection will be on show at the Richmond Society Annual Awards ceremony.

The Chislehurst Society's Environmental Awards 2013 subject was 'Flora and Fauna of Chislehurst', which produced a wide and interesting array of entries, including artwork, poetry and other projects. 137 certificates, and prizes totalling over £1,800, were awarded to students and schools. The Society's newly-formed History Group is producing a book, commissioned by Amberley Publishing, Chislehurst through Time. This will feature old images of Chislehurst set against the view from 2013. ■

newsbriefs

Key issues of interest and concern to note.

Harsh revenue funding settlement for EH

The Heritage Alliance expressed extreme disappointment at the harsh revenue funding settlement for English Heritage under the Spending Review 2013. The 10% cut in revenue budget announced in July is twice as big as those to arts and museums. Overall, English Heritage has taken a 38% funding cut in real terms since 2011.

The Alliance sees some advantages in the restructuring announced by English Heritage separating the National Heritage Collection of 420 properties from EH planning and protection functions. Acting as both regulator and operator of historic sites has been a long-standing anomaly.

A one-off capital grant of £80million is expected to enable EH to set up a self-financing charity to manage the National Heritage Collection with a clear remit and greater freedom to operate, while a separate National Heritage Protection Service will continue to act as the expert adviser to government on heritage matters. But it is on this side that the the brunt of the cut will fall and the Alliance is particularly concerned that there will be adequate financial support for it.

Smithfield redevelopment

Controversial plans to overhaul London's Smithfield Market by John McAslan + Partners backed by Henderson Global Investors, have been approved, despite objections from, among others, the Twentieth Century Society, SPAB, Islington Council, Smithfield Trust and the Council for British Archaeology. SAVE Britain's Heritage submitted a petition with the names of almost 2,700 people opposed to the redevelopment. The Greater London Authority said that it was unconvinced the scheme complied with the London Plan.

However the City's committee agreed with its planning officers' recommendations, and voted 19-2 in favour of the plans which include listed-building consent for the dismantling of the Grade II canopy spanning West Poultry Avenue that links the General Market and Poultry Market, and would see the interiors of Smithfield's General Market, Annex Building and former Engine House demolished and replaced with six-storey office block which would loom over the old buildings. Campaigners have threatened to begin judicial review action if communities secretary Eric Pickles does not call in the plans.

Open House London 21 & 22 September 2013

This year sees a further expansion of the Talks and Tours programme with specialist guides, with tours by boat, bike, foot, bus and, with the Institution of Civil Engineers, engineering walks, boat tours and visits to major construction and engineering sites. All ticket purchases support the work of the organisation.

Highlights include: 30 St Mary Axe (aka the Gherkin) and Tower 42; areas in and around the Olympic Park; 100 private homes, architects' homes and groundbreaking housing developments; Photography competition in partnership with Architects' Journal and tThe Photographers' Gallery

Full details are in the 2013 Guide (available from mid August) which can be ordered online

www.openhouselondon.org.uk

Further information on Tours and Talks can be found at

www.open-city.org.uk/tours

newsbriefs

Key issues of interest and concern to note.

Government proposals for Village Greens

There is extreme concern about provisions in the Growth and Infrastructure Act that will remove the two-month grace period giving local people the possibility of registering development land as a village green if it is earmarked for development. The government also ruled that local people will have only one year in which to apply for green status after their use is challenged, instead of two years, despite a commitment by Baroness Hanham, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government, (DCLG) on 30 January 2013 that: "Nor is it our intention that the changes will affect applications to register land as a town or village green where there is no proposed development on the land in question."

The DCLG "have published a consultation seeking views on further detail and to extend the reforms to circumstances not currently covered by the reforms": 'Consultation on registration of new town or village greens: Proposed amendments to Schedule 1A (Exclusion of Right under section 15) to the Commons Act 2006' runs until Monday 19 August 2013. A response form can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/registration-of-new-town-or-village-greens-proposed-amendments-to-the-commons-act-2006>

Lord's 10-year redevelopment plan

After some controversy last year MCC has announced a new Masterplan for the development of Lord's Cricket Ground in St. John's Wood in May. Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) is not seeking planning permission for the Masterplan as a whole. Instead it provides a long-term context for separate planning applications. The phased plan will commence with the redevelopment of the Warner Stand in the autumn of 2014 and finish with the reconstruction of the Compton and Edrich Stands in 2027. It will increase the ground's capacity by 2,700 to 32,000. The abandonment of its earlier "Vision for Lord's", which would have involved a residential development, caused the resignation of Sir John Major, from the MCC committee. The new strategic plan, adopted in late 2012, stresses the importance of "maintaining the unique character of Lord's with gardens and trees".

The present ground is the third established by Thomas Lord, between 1787 and 1814. The first - Lord's Old Ground - was where Dorset Square now stands. The second was abandoned to make way for the construction of the Regent's Canal. The present ground is owned by MCC and is the home of Middlesex County Cricket Club. The museum, the world's oldest sporting museum, which traces the roots of the game and is a popular attraction throughout the year, will also be enlarged.

Fulham Football Club plans opposed

There was dismay at Boris Johnson's decision not to oppose proposals by Fulham Football Club to expand their grounds by encroaching 11 full metres into the river. In so doing he has failed to uphold his own Blue Ribbon Network policies in the London Plan. Groups with maritime interests including the Thames Heritage Alliance have been strongly opposing this. A letter has been sent to the Secretary of State asking him to intervene.

Replace Hammersmith Fly-Over with a Tunnel

The London Forum has campaigned to put the A4 in a tunnel and Peter Eversden wrote to Boris Johnson asking him to include that in his Transport Strategy as an aim and to seek funding and commitment for it from the Government.

Hammersmith & Fulham (H&F) Council has also expressed support for ideas put forward by West London Link – a group of renowned west London architects – as to how Transport for London (TfL) could replace the crumbling Hammersmith flyover with a tunnel.

Roman artifacts found in London

Museum of London Archaeology working at the Walbrook Square site near the Bank of England - set to become the new European headquarters of Bloomberg LP - have made some exciting finds. They have uncovered more than 10,000 ancient Roman artifacts some dating back to as early as 47 AD, ranging from a Gladiator amulet and ritual coins to an entire section of the Temple of Mithras. Other findings included a rare inked writing tablet containing an affectionate letter, a Roman ritual well and good luck charms. The waterlogged conditions at the lost Walbrook River created the perfect environment for the preservation of the artifacts. Wooden buildings were uncovered that survived to shoulder height, with layer upon layer of Roman timber buildings, fences and yards, containing personal items, clothes and even documents, throwing further light on the first four centuries of London's existence.

Thames Water pays no tax

It has been revealed that the UK's largest water company Thames Water not only pays no corporation tax on its £1.8bn turnover, but also received a £5m credit from the Treasury in a year when it made £550m in profits.

The company, which is currently seeking government support for the planned £4.1bn "super sewer" under the Thames, said it paid £150m in business rates, national insurance and other taxes. A spokesman said: "We have not paid much corporation tax in recent years because the government's tax system allows us to delay, not avoid, payment of tax based on how much we invest. Because we are investing £1bn a year from 2010 to 2015, more than any water firm in the UK's history, we are able to defer a lot of tax payments to future years."

However last year an investigation by the Observer revealed how Thames Water lowers its tax bill by offsetting interest payments on its debts against its tax liability. "They have been increasing the debt in the company, reducing the amount of profit liable to tax, but still paying themselves nice high dividends," Since the Macquarie Group bought the company in 2006, Thames Water has paid out £1.4bn in dividends

Questions are being raised as to whether the authorities looked closely enough at some of the financial characteristics that might develop in the industry when it was privatised. A further report by the CentreForum think tank accuses several water companies of paying out large dividends rather than paying off debt or reducing prices to consumers. ■

Dates for your diary

London Forum events; Walter Bor Media Awards 2013 The London Forum AGM

Walter Bor Media Awards 2013

The biennial awards, named after our founder President, will take place this autumn. Entry forms are enclosed with this newsforum.

The closing date will be Monday September 30.

The categories for the awards are:

- 1. Newsletters**
- 2. Printed publications:** annual reports, membership and promotional brochures, guides, town trails, posters
- 3. Books:** histories and studies
- 4. Web sites**
- 5. Media impact:** newspaper/radio/TV coverage of environmental and/or landscape and/or building projects.

The panel of judges will be chaired by Peter Murray of New London Architecture

The entries go to **Haydn Mylchreest**
London Forum,
70 Cowcross Street,
London EC1M 6EJ. ■

Delivering Newsforum by email

We currently send you Newsforum by email in the form of a PDF as well as posting you a hard copy. For most of you the PDF is the most useful form as it can be widely distributed at no cost. It also has the advantage that web links can be accessed directly.

Last year we reduced our costs by sending the summer edition in PDF form only. It is environmentally more friendly, saving paper, and it also saves London Forum a great deal of cost. With postage costs increasing enormously this is now becoming a major consideration.

If you do not keep your hard copy and feel you could do without it, relying on the PDF, please let us know via one of the email addresses below, giving your Society name as well as email address, so that we could reduce our postal mailing list and save printing and postage costs. ■

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London Forum Open Meetings 2013

Dates for your diary:

Tuesday September 24th, Tony Travers

Tuesday October 15th AGM

Tuesday November 26 The Walter Bor Awards

Watch out for email updates with further details

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 ■

Membership renewal - reminder

As you all know, London Forum relies totally on Members' subscriptions for its budget. Many Members are early payers and we are most grateful to Members who have already renewed this year. If for one understandable reason or another, you have not yet sent us your cheque we would be delighted to hear from you.

Please also let us know if there are changes to postal or email names or addresses so that we can keep our records up to date, otherwise 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. ■

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

NB - note the underscore: _ in the name ■

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