

**Mayor's Question Time – 21 May 2009**

**Transcript: Mayor's Oral Update**

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** Good morning and welcome to Mayor's Question Time on 21 May. Welcome to the Mayor and Members and members in the public gallery.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you so much, Chair, and can I begin by congratulating you on attaining your office as Chair of this Assembly and I would also like to take this opportunity to pay a final tribute to the work of your illustrious predecessor, Jennette [Arnold], who I think did chair our proceedings with a great deal of firmness, fairness and style and helped to propel our deliberations to the ever growing international audience they deserve. So thank you to both of you and congratulations, Chair.

Since we last met we have been working on what I believe is the priority for millions of people in this city, and that is getting London through the economic recession, the downturn, and out through the other end in even better shape than we were. That is why we are spending £23 million - we announced it last week - on a programme to support the unemployed who are hardest to reach and helping support a number of schemes to get 20,000 unemployed into work. That is why we launched last week, I think very effectively, the first excavations of the new Crossrail station at Canary Wharf. This is more than symbolic; it is the beginning of a vast investment in London's transport infrastructure that will generate 14,000 jobs in the construction of Crossrail, that will expand London's rail network capacity by 10% and is therefore exactly the right thing to be doing now in a downturn but also the right thing to be doing for the long term future of our city.

We are also, to the same end, continuing to make very substantial investments in housing and in trying to get the London housing market moving in what everybody agrees are extremely difficult circumstances for developers, with glacial movement in new build. That is why, among the elements that you will discover in the revised London Housing Strategy which I hope you will have seen, Chair, I would highlight the £186 million strategy to kick start stalled housing developments such as the Aylesbury or Woodbury Down; vital improvements for housing in London in which the London Homes and Communities Agency, which I chair, is now making a very, very substantial investment.

It is vital that the developers understand their role, in my view, in keeping these things moving. They cannot allow vital investments in London's housing infrastructure to hibernate. It is vital that they keep such investments moving along so that when the London property market recovers, as it will, the spike in prices that will inevitably return - because the interesting thing about the London housing market is that it has not fallen off quite as sharply as some people predicted - the housing needs of Londoners can again be properly catered for through new development.

I should conclude by saying a couple of things. I have just got back from Seoul and it is extremely chastening and enlightening to see how much progress other cities have made, particularly in low carbon vehicles, and I really think that we must do much, much better and work much, much faster to improve our air quality. I know there are some questions that Assembly Members want to ask about that a bit later on.

I come back to my final point; whatever I saw in Seoul about improving the environment - and there are fantastic schemes that we can promote and encourage - they are by no means incoherent - in fact they are directly congruent - with our general desire to boost employment and boost growth now during the downturn. If we champion retrofitting and the improvement of London's housing stock and the improvement of commercial property around London and the improvement of all the

buildings that this body is responsible for and all the buildings that Whitehall is responsible for, then we will not only substantially reduce CO<sub>2</sub> and meet our targets of 60% reductions by 2025 - because that is where the big savings are to be made - we will also of course produce jobs for thousands of people in the business of retrofitting and improving our homes and our public buildings and, last but not least, we will help to reduce people's fuel bills and their costs of living now in very difficult circumstances.

I want to end with one final comment if I may, Chair, on what I think was your very wise response to my letter of last night. I do think it is essential that the Assembly sorts this out and makes proper representations to whichever body is necessary to ensure that the Queen's Garden Party - which is a happy annual event at which the service to the community of thousands of people is recognised - is not turned into a political stunt. I know that that is your intention. Chair, I congratulate you on that intention and I strongly advise the Assembly to take whatever steps are necessary to sort this matter out as soon as is convenient.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** Thank you, Mayor. Before I bring in Members I will point out that this is a system that has operated without problem for several years in the Assembly but I will work with you and the Chief Executive to try to resolve this issue.

Now questions from Members on the Mayor's update.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** In relation to your Housing Strategy published this morning and which you mentioned there, you say on page one that you are making excellent progress towards the target of 50,000 affordable houses. Careful reading, by the time you get to page 155, reveals actually that you are less than halfway in terms of getting firm promises from the boroughs. So my question really is, acknowledging the fact that this is hugely difficult, these are only promises to use the best endeavours, these are not numbers of houses built, these are promises from boroughs, are you and the boroughs serious about meeting this 50,000 target which was in your manifesto?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We are very serious. If you look at the achievements so far that we have been able to record through the single conversation and the negotiations, 21 boroughs, as you rightly say, have come in with offers of about 20,000 --

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** 23,000. 23,000 towards 50,000.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There is a further 17,000 that we think are on the table either through overall commitments already made. That is an 80% achievement of the target already. I think that is very creditable both to the boroughs and to the system that we have got in place. I think if you had asked six or eight months ago whether we would be in this position of looking at numbers of around 40,000 overall, I think most people would have said it was completely inconceivable. I do think it is a testament to the hard work of David Lunts at the Homes and Communities Agency and Rick Blakeway [Director of Housing, GLA] here at the Mayor's office and also to everybody in the boroughs who is I think really seized of this problem and the urgency to make a difference.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** I understand it is difficult but it is eight months since the negotiations started. The reason I am concerned is if you look at your London Plan proposals on page 41 it says that you are going to look at revising the target, "This target will be reviewed in the light of available resources" but then when you go on to the website and find the same document, electronically, that sentence has magically disappeared, so I fear there is retrofitting of policy going on here --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It has. That sentence, alas, was capable, Mike, of exactly the kind of misconstruction upon which you have inadvertently placed it.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** So you have corrected it. Excellent.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** For the benefit of everybody in our intergalactic audience I want to clear that up. Can I just explain what that review in that sentence refers to, because I think Jennette [Arnold] is asking about it later on. That refers to the situation post 2011. So what we want to do is keep our targets up until 2011 and then of course any further targets will be reviewed in the light of resources at the time.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Can I point out to you that for Barnet 3,369 is your target, but Barnet has not agreed that figure with your officers yet. For Newham, 5,754 is your target. It has not agreed. Tower Hamlets, 5,000 -- so three boroughs. Now, what I want to invite you, without going into the detail of individual boroughs which will take us all morning --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Which you just have.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** I am illustrating the problem here, and I want to invite you to be the Roosevelt of London housing. The Teddy Roosevelt, not the FDR, the Democrat. The Teddy Roosevelt, the good Republican, who spoke softly and carried a big stick. The problem is you are speaking softly and you are not carrying a big stick. You should be saying to these boroughs, "Come on. You have got the land. It is a difficult housing market but I have £5 billion in my pocket so that is an incentive but I also have a big stick which is if you do not step up to the plate I will take over your big sites as I now have the planning power and take over and get those houses' permissions in place so they can be built". So will you be the Teddy Roosevelt of London housing?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think the boroughs are amply aware of the powers of coercion that we do have --

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** It is not working.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is not in my nature to take out my big stick and wave it over the heads of the boroughs and I would not seek to do so now, much though you may invite me to do so.

Since you mention detailed borough commitments, am I allowed, Chair, to try to get that ball back over --

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Why do we not do it later?

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** Let's move on to that later.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Because there are some wonderful success stories of boroughs --

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Thank you. Yes. Southwark and Islington for example.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you. Boroughs which are doing extremely well. Islington, as Mike rightly says, has increased its target by 28%. Camden has for the first time got a target of 1,000 homes. Westminster has increased its target agreed with the Government by 56% under the single conversation that we are engaging in now with the boroughs. I do think our system is working. I think it is working beyond the expectations of people a year ago and I think we should persist with it.

**John Biggs (AM):** Apropos your intergalactic following, we do understand you have a very loyal base on Planet Zog but welcome back to London. I think we would endorse the comments made by Mike Tuffrey on housing, that you do need to have a big stick.

I want to raise another big stick issue with you which is Crossrail. We stood together at the launch of Crossrail, on the station at Canary Wharf. The question is, is your party committed to supporting Crossrail? I think there is a consensus across the parties in this Assembly we should build it. There is a risk - not that we are going to have a Conservative Government - that if a consensus outside of here does not exist we could return to the same stop/go problems that paralyzed the Tube for donkeys years and that prevented many things from happening in this great city for years. So what is your position and what are you doing to ensure we have confidence it will be built?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** John, I think that is actually a very good question and it is an apposite question, because if you remember what happened in the early 1990s when we last got into a recession, one of the first things they did was to cancel Crossrail. That is one of the reasons why people's Tube journeys in London and people's mass transit journeys are so overcrowded and why the quality of London transport was not improved over the last 20 years in the way that it might have been.

I do think, to answer your question directly, from everything I have heard from the Shadow Cabinet - and I have talked, as you can imagine, to the highest possible authorities in that body - Crossrail is one of those things which is actually ring fenced. It is very, very difficult for the current opposition -- I think they will be the Government, unlike you. I think it is the view of the Government that it cannot itemise now spending commitments, line by line, which they will make sacrosanct. It is very, very difficult for people in the position of the current Shadow Treasury team to say to all comers, "Yes, fine, you are all right, you are all right" because you then get into a terrible bidding war and it would simply be impossible to go on like that.

However, I will be direct with you. I have asked this question --

**John Biggs (AM):** Hang on. I do not think you can get away with that answer.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- and I have had the most robust possible private assurances that Crossrail will be protected. I do think that it is a view across all parties --

**John Biggs (AM):** Can I tackle you on that, because we have limited time. I appreciate your comments so far but the logic of your argument would be that the Conservative front bench cannot support the Olympics either --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No.

**John Biggs (AM):** -- so clearly there are some things which are seen as so important that we must go behind them. On Crossrail, Theresa Villiers [Shadow Secretary of State for Transport] I think it was said that there was no current review. Mr Osborne [George Osborne, Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer] - good pal of yours - was not prepared to make a public statement on the issue. A man called Hammond [Stephen Hammond, Shadow Minister for Transport] I think said, to summarise, "It's a rather expensive folly I think". All things are expensive. They might be desirable but whether they are affordable is a question that needs to be thrown into the mix. I think there is a risk for Londoners, particularly in the context of the cuts programmes that are looming on the horizon, that this could be lost. How important is it for you and how willing are you to stand up for London against a Conservative government which might slash this programme?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I say, I think it inconceivable that any incoming government would want either to slash or to defer this programme since it is integral to the future success of London and I have no doubt that the Conservatives will want to support Crossrail.

**John Biggs (AM):** Can you tell us what other things are inconceivable?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I can think of a few, John!

**Navin Shah (AM):** In your Affordable Housing Strategy there is an interesting and welcome section on designing better homes. What is worrying is one of the aspects dealing with design of homes is you are not requiring private developers to adopt the design standards. Why is that the case?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am not certain that that is the case. If you look at our revisions to the London Plan we will be making some very, very demanding new changes to what we require from developers across the board. It is my view that it is quite unacceptable that British people who are not notably diminishing in size - I speak for myself - are being housed in rooms that are getting smaller and smaller. We have the smallest rooms in new developments of any city in Europe and it is time that we had proper new Parker Morris standards.

We want to go to Parker Morris plus ten. There will be howls of pain. There will be howls of rage. I have no doubt about it. People will complain about this in the development industry. They will be quite wrong to complain because the people of this country deserve better housing standards and we intend to bring them about.

**Navin Shah (AM):** I have heard this before. I welcome it. However I think probably your document needs amending in that case, because on page 67, where it deals with this particular section, it says it will 'encourage' private developers. It does not say require private developers, which is very different. If you are really sure about improving design standards rather than giving a green light to private developers for shoddy poor design and poor standard of accommodation then you have got to require them. Therefore I would certainly urge you to make the necessary changes to make sure that these are driven and not left for the choice of private developers.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Parker Morris plus ten is the bottom line. I am going to insist on that. I am going to insist on proper space standards. However, there are other aspects of design improvement that I think are perhaps even more difficult and which we need to get back to. As a country and as a society we need to get back to a concept of beauty and ornament in our domestic architecture which I think we have lost and I would like to see private developers take that on board as well.

**Navin Shah (AM):** Mr Mayor, I am happy with that response for now. There are detailed questions later on so we will come back to some of the other areas of detail. Thank you.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** During your visit to Seoul you mentioned that you wanted to have the main Olympic Stadium with the roof completely changed so that it covered the entire stadium.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That was not what I said.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** I heard you on television.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That was not what I said.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** I was wondering how, with such a major design change, you are planning to pay for this?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** What I said was that there was an issue in that 32% of the audience, under the current designs, will not be covered. It is always possible that it will rain in England in August. I think you would accept that? Is that a widely accepted hypothesis?

**Dee Doocey (AM):** I will get you the clip and play it for you next time, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It might rain in England in August. I think therefore that we should look at solutions for that eventuality. What I said was I am concerned about that problem and I want to see some solutions. If it turns out that it is impossible to construct any kind of canopy or tarpaulin or any sort of device to protect people from inundations during the opening ceremony or throughout the Games then I will have, reluctantly, to accept that that is the decision that was taken by my illustrious predecessor and there is nothing I can do within the current budgets. I really think it is my job, and our job, to draw people's attention now to what could be serious defects in the programming. We should be looking at whether or not there is something we can do to ameliorate the effects of the weather on the opening ceremony.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Free umbrellas.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I mentioned umbrellas to one of my experts and the view about umbrellas is that they block everybody else's view of the Games so there are issues with umbrellas.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** I hope this is not coming off my time.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will answer. Dee, the best we seem to be able to do at the moment is talk about Disney land type ponchos. Ponchos are the solution at the moment.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Ponchos!

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Environmentally friendly biodegradable ponchos.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Mr Mayor, you quite rightly mentioned that we have to prepare ourselves for when the spike in house prices returns and suddenly this funding hiatus is over. Can we use this opportunity do you think, Mr Mayor, to review some of the housing schemes in which the Greater London Authority (GLA) is a partner? I am thinking here specifically of Barrier Park East where the local need - and you have said about the London need for housing - is not really matched by the plans that the London Development Agency (LDA) has put in place for that particular development.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. I know that you are a passionate campaigner on this, Andrew, and I will certainly take your reservations about the plan to the LDA and see what flexibility we can find.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Thank you.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** Can you confirm, Mr Mayor, that nobody in your office approved the Garden Party list?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, Brian, I can. I can tell you exactly what the position is. Nobody in my office approved the nomination list. We approved the general principle that the Assembly should decide those that the Assembly wanted to nominate for invitation by the Palace authorities to the Garden Party. I really think that the sooner the Assembly can sort it out the better.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** Do you not therefore think it was very naïve of whoever did approve the Garden Party list not to see this row coming?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** If you speak of somebody in the Assembly then I heartily agree with you.

Mayor's Question Time – 21 May 2009

Transcript: Questions to the Mayor

908/2009 - Cycle hire scheme

**Jenny Jones**

*Why are there no plans for bike hire docking base-stations within 100m of Network Rail stations?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Jenny, this is a very gloomy question. Like you I am a passionate supporter and believer in the bike hire scheme. I think it is going to be a howling success for the city. It will be a soar away success for people who love cycling in London. Indeed, one of the difficulties that we are having is modelling exactly where the bikes are going to flow to and from.

There are two difficult issues we have got to deal with in respect of putting loads of bikes by the stations. There are three points I want to make: First of all they are not going to be that far from stations. There will be bike docking stations near stations. It is very, very difficult at the moment to persuade Network Rail to accept them in the positions we would like them on the stations. Our negotiations with Network Rail have been more vexed than our negotiations with the boroughs, who have actually played a blinder so far in agreeing where these stations should be and I congratulate everybody in the boroughs' environment and roads departments who have worked with us on this. That is the second problem; we have got Network Rail being difficult.

The third problem is that we do not really know how people are going to use them. One of the anxieties we have got is that people will come out of the stations in their hundreds and thousands in the mornings and descend like locusts on the bike hire docking station immediately outside the station, empty it and the bikes will be dispersed. I admit that this is a paradoxical argument --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** That sounds like success.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I accept this is a paradoxical argument because I seem to be saying that we should not be trying to meet the demand where it is strongest.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** You have not got an answer have you to that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Wait. Before you beat me up, this is a point that I have raised --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** That is obviously your briefing and you have said it and you suddenly realised the fact that it does not actually work very well.

Could I just say first of all I am not trying to get at you. I think these decisions have been taken below your pay grade or, given Transport for London (TfL) salaries, possibly above your pay grade!

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Can I just make my last point?

**Jenny Jones (AM):** The fact is I read in the *Evening Standard* - which I obviously believed - that a City Hall source said that Network Rail had been uncooperative, but it was still hoped some docking

points could be agreed within station boundaries. I then went on TV, radio and that sort of thing and said, "That rotten outfit, Network Rail, they really --"

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is true. You were good. Good, Jenny. Good.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** -- deserves to be hung drawn and quartered". Then Network Rail emailed me - actually they phoned and emailed - and said that - I will read out what they emailed, "The decision by TfL not to put docking stations at the railway termini in phase one of the project might--"

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is the key phrase. Stop right there.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I am glad I am helping you here. Listen: "might be based on TfL's feasibility study which advised.." the nonsense that you have just come out with; that it might be so successful - - people wait for taxis and people accept that sometimes there is a rush. Why cannot they wait for the bikes?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Jenny, listen, I fully understand the point that you are making and I think a lot of people listening to you will understand what you are saying and it is a very, very reasonable commonsensical point that we should be trying to meet demand where it is keenest. I would like to do that. Once the scheme is going well and once we have demonstrated that we understand exactly how the flow of bikes is working, I certainly do want to see bikes by the stations. The bike hire scheme is not only going to be useful for people who are moving around London generally or for tourists or whatever but is actually a commuter scheme as well.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** That is where the biggest use is actually.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That will be an important part of phase two. I stress to you. Phase one is only 6,000 bikes, Jenny.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I realise that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** In Paris they currently have 25,000.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** This is one of my biggest gripes actually; the area is half the size that Paris first went with and also you have only got 6,000 bikes instead of the 10,000. Paris immediately decided they would, as you said, go to 25,000. So you are already limiting your ambitions which seems to me a really negative thing to do --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** So my gloomy question is actually based on the negativity that is coming from Transport for London.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No. You are the negative person.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** No, I am not; you are!

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am absolutely bursting with positivity about this.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Just tell me, seriously, is it TfL who is refusing to put the docking hubs into Network Rail space?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Is it TfL? Because it is not Network Rail.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The problem is with Network Rail and it is being --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** It is Network Rail. So I can lobby them? I am not going to lobby you if it is their fault.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Secondly, whilst you are lobbying them, Jenny. I really think what is going on at Waterloo is an utter disgrace. They really need to put in proper bike station facilities there.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I agree with you completely. So you are saying that Network Rail has lied to me in this email? They have lied to me and said it is not their fault.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I cannot remember exactly what the email said but it is certainly the case that Network Rail, to the best of my knowledge, is being extremely obstructive in the matter of putting large numbers of bike hire docking stations by its mainline stations.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** OK. In that case you will now speak to Transport for London and say that it should be insisting with Network Rail that docking hubs go into stations. Are you going to do that? Now you have laughed at your own briefing and realised how ridiculous it sounds, will you have a word with David Brown [Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL] or Peter Hendy [Commissioner, TfL]? Yes?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I can assure you, Jenny, that what we will do is, as we expand the scheme from the initial phase one of 6,000 bikes, we will certainly be working with you to get Network Rail to see sense and put the bikes by railway stations as well. I think that is the way to go.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Mr Mayor, I think you are quite right to be cautious about this because if in the first few weeks of the operation of the bike hire scheme we see bikes effectively not being available to Londoners to get around London because they have all shifted from the railway stations into the centre --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Because they are being used. They are not available because --

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** Jenny Jones, do not interrupt the Member.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** They would be used, Jenny, but as far as Londoners are concerned they would not have it available for them during the middle of the day. The whole lot will be moving from the stations into the centre and we would end up with a system that was discredited. I applaud you on your caution, Mr Mayor, on this and make sure that this is going to be the most successful bike hire scheme in the world and that, in order to do that, we have got to learn the lessons of Barcelona and Paris who have come up with similar problems that you have already identified. So I congratulate you on your caution --

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** Is there a question in there, Andrew Boff?

**Andrew Boff (AM):** No! I tried and it worked!

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** That does not require a response so we will move on because this is Mayor's Question Time, not statements from Members.

## 1201/2009 - Statement of Intent

### Valerie Shawcross

*What will you be doing to ensure that the 'Statement of Intent' for the Revised Transport Strategy for London attracts many more contributions than the poor 260 responses received to 'Way To Go'?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Again, I cannot help feeling, Val, despite your normal goodwill this is a slightly negative question. In fact, *Way To Go*, the beloved document which I think you still possess, received 260 responses from London boroughs as well as London Councils generally, from the London Assembly Transport Committee, from transport organisations including Network Rail, London Cycling Campaign, London Living Streets, disability and mobility groups including Transport for All, Scope and The Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) and public bodies such as English Heritage, the Environment Agency and Natural England and plenty of other bodies and members of the public made representations to us.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Can I thank you for that reply and take your cue and be a bit more positive then. I want to talk to you about the developing Transport Strategy and the environment and you have made a couple of statements I think this week about electric cars.

Without any cynicism can I say I think we are really glad that you are recognising the size and scale of the environmental challenge we are facing, but I am concerned that you are probably putting too many of your CO<sub>2</sub> reduction eggs in the small basket of electric cars alone and it might not have enough impact. If cars are producing half the CO<sub>2</sub> on the road, according to the calculations I have done, if you do succeed - and we hope we do - in getting 100,000 electric cars on the road by 2015; that really is a drop in the ocean. We are getting four billion private car journeys in London a year and it only takes us down to a 2.7% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from road traffic. It is really not even scratching the surface.

So I think my opening question to you would be would it not make more sense to keep the current Congestion Charging Zone intact and stop that extra 30,000 cars a day rolling into London as well as pressing ahead with the electric car programme? It can only be one plan.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Several points in answer to that. First of all the impact of Congestion Charging is absolutely minimal upon pollution and, in particular, upon air quality. I think you are being slightly narrow in your focus on electric vehicles; that is only a small part of the strategy for reducing vehicular emissions and for improving CO<sub>2</sub> performance throughout the city generally. We need to be careful and separate out CO<sub>2</sub> and air quality because they are two completely different environmental challenges which need --

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** We are talking about CO<sub>2</sub> at the moment. I agree with you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** If you are talking about CO<sub>2</sub>, 71% of CO<sub>2</sub> is emitted by commercial or domestic buildings and that is where the big savings are to be found. 22% are emitted by vehicles of which roughly half are cars. Now I do think that it is vital that we move forward towards low carbon vehicles of all kinds. That is why I think it unbelievable that certain reactionary forces, Val, are still sticking up for the bendy bus - the diesel fume emitting bendy bus - which for some atavistic conservative reason they want to preserve on the streets of London which I do not fully understand --

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Chair, I think we are digressing and I am short of time, Mayor. I want to come back on that if I may.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am not digressing. This is absolutely central to what we are trying to do because private electric cars are only a fraction of the issue in respect of what we are trying to achieve in low carbon vehicles. China has 1,000 hybrid buses on its streets already. 1,000. We have only 56. China has 50 electric buses. 50 electric buses. We are woefully behind and --

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Mr Mayor, can I go back to this issue of private cars?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- if you want to address vehicular CO<sub>2</sub> emissions you need to look at the range of vehicles that are currently on the streets. We have 8,300 buses currently emitting diesel fumes and CO<sub>2</sub>. There are 21,000 taxis and 44,000 private hire vehicles. Already in Seoul all taxis and all buses are running on compressed natural gas (CNG). We are way behind and we need to move towards a low carbon future for our vehicle fleet.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Mr Mayor --

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** Val, can I ask you to bring your questions back to the theme of the consultation process, which is what the question was about?

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** It is partly about the document because the document itself leads us into the issues of the process I think. There is no commitment, so therefore it is not really an issue for the consultation, to reviewing the Congestion Charge. You were saying that the Congestion Charge was not dealing with CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, but in fact the previous Mayor had started to deal with it through the gas guzzler charge. When there are still so many private conventional vehicles on the road there are very many options for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from conventional vehicles. It is going back to this issue of soft voice and stick --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is Neanderthal.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** The Government has actually started to do something through road tax so if, for example, you have a Land Rover Freelander, which is 3.2 litres, you can reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from that vehicle by buying a 2.2 litre vehicle of the same category. That is a massive reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Do you not think it would make sense to review the congestion charging system to try to influence the individual choices in a way that would make some very rapid gains on CO<sub>2</sub> reduction --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** They would make vanishingly small gains compared to the steps that I have outlined. That is the reality. I am afraid you want to reintroduce an argument that is --

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** But that is not discussed in the report and I do not believe those figures.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- really based on a desire to clobber what you perceive to be rich people driving around in big cars. That is your political agenda and I accept that and I understand that. The sad reality is that the £25 charge would not only have hit the fat cats driving around in 4x4s - whom we all deprecate and we all understand the political agenda - that tax would also have hit families driving family vehicles at a time of real economic difficulty for a tiny, tiny gain in terms either of CO<sub>2</sub> or of particulates --

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** The point I am making, Mr Mayor, is that you can carry on driving a large family car in London, reduce your CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 100 grams per kilometre and not necessarily have to go to an electric car which, at the moment, are very limited in range and are hugely expensive. There are some easy gains to be had in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> pollution and you are not looking at them in this document.

You mentioned modal shift. Tell me what do you think is the least CO<sub>2</sub> polluting form of public transport?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would say it is going by bike. How about that?

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Public transport. In fact, Mr Mayor --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Are you saying that when I go by bike I emit more CO<sub>2</sub> per passenger mile --

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** I am talking about public transport, Mr Mayor. We absolutely support cycling, although it is a pity that your document only talks about 5% share of modal shift by 2026 and, given that the last Mayor doubled cycling in 5 years, 17 years to do the same is very unambitious.

The least CO<sub>2</sub> polluting form of public transport is Croydon Tram Link in this city by a very long way and they are less polluting per passenger kilometre vehicle --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well let's get the Labour Government to give us the money.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** -- than even electric cars.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. Tell your masters. Tell your masters in Whitehall, Val, to give us the money to build it.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Do you not think, if you want to do something serious about reducing CO<sub>2</sub> in this city, you actually ought to be looking seriously at reinstating the tram programme as part of the Transport Strategy?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** OK. Out of the great minestrone of your question the crouton of sense appears! Yes. I do want to drive forward with the expansion of the Croydon Tram Link and I hope that you will join us in making those representations to the Government.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Why have you taken it out of development then?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Because there is no point in wasting millions and millions of pounds of your money and my money and everybody's money in this city on loads of plans and prognostications which can go down the drain unless this Government will step up to the plate and invest in London where investment is needed. I hope you will join me and join everybody else in calling on the Labour Government to put money into London where it will deliver a result not just for this city but for this country.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Are you intending to bid then for funding for the Croydon Tram Link extension and the Cross River Tram?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am bidding for funding --

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Are you preparing to bid?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Of course I am. Of course I am.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** I do not see that, Mr Mayor, in your draft Transport Strategy.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is our intention to go ahead with all plans that we can conceivably afford and it is up to the Labour Government to give us the money for very good plans which it has woefully decided not to provide for.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Was that a commitment to write it into the next stage of the Transport Strategy then?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Val, if you can persuade the Labour Government to commit to funding it then I will do so. What I will not do is write in a commitment which would oblige me to spend millions and millions of pounds of taxpayers' money on doing something that the Labour Government has no intention of giving the capital funding to support. Let me tell you, there is a --

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Sorry, Mr Mayor, I did think you had said that you thought there was going to be a Conservative Government. Would you be bidding to a Conservative Government if there was one for --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Of course I will. Of course I will. £34 million was spent on the West London Tram. £34 million was spent on keeping the name of the West London Tram in documents. Where is the West London Tram? It does not exist.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** Can I remind Members that this question is about the consultation process and to centre their line of questioning around the consultation process. John Biggs?

**John Biggs (AM):** I will be very brief. I am delighted that you have reversed your decision that the Dockland Light Railway (DLR) extension to Dagenham is unfundable and unsupportable and I think that shows a slight contradiction in your thinking but it is a delightful one and I think it takes us to the core of this --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, no, no --

**John Biggs (AM):** I am still asking the question, which is that your predecessor, he may have been nominally Labour but he spoke up vigorously for London and he told the Labour Government to get stuffed as often as he needed to when he felt that London's interests were served best by that. What is lacking in this document is a hunger from you to serve London first and your party second.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think that is completely wrong --

**John Biggs (AM):** Good. I am delighted you think that and the test is for you to demonstrate that that is wrong. The question I have for you --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** If you want to serve London why do you not tell your Labour masters to give us the funding to do the schemes we need?

**John Biggs (AM):** I do not have Labour masters but we did actually get a pretty good funding settlement under the previous Mayor.

The question I have is about congestion. You have spoken at length about congestion on the road network and the need to tackle that and coordinate repairs. I have got a very pressing local problem and my mail bag is filling up with it. I think you should be consulting on this and I have written to you about it and you have refused to meet me about it, which is the lack of coordination on rail engineering closures and repairs at the weekend, and it is causing massive inconvenience and nuisance for me. I have had letters from Roger Evans' constituents as well as in East London. There seems to be almost a conspiracy to shut down and lock down East London. We appreciate the urgency but --

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** Can you make that relevant to the consultation process, Mr Biggs?

**John Biggs (AM):** Are you going to consult with people on what they think the priorities are? I think for them a priority is about a London that is not only brought up to date but is allowed to work fluidly and where inconvenience is stopped.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** OK. That is a serious question, John --

**John Biggs (AM):** It is a serious question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- and I am grateful to you for raising that. I am concerned about this issue --

**John Biggs (AM):** All my questions are serious, by the way.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not think that is wholly true. I will certainly undertake to meet you and Roger and any other Members of the Assembly who wish to raise the issue of rail closures at the weekend because it certainly is a problem that needs to be sorted out and I certainly agree with that.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I am pleased to hear that, Mr Mayor, and I am grateful that we have such a lot of things to do in Romford because, yet again at a Bank Holiday, we are going to find ourselves effectively cut off from the centre of London because of rail closures which make it impossible to actually use our Bank Holiday weekend in the centre of town. So I look forward to that meeting.

The Labour Group this morning are once again so 2005 in their approach to policy here. We have "save the Western Extension", "save the bendy bus", "bring back the tram" even this morning, and "save the £25 charge". Can you tell us some of the things Londoners have to look forward to in transport in the coming years rather than some of the things they are going to be pleased not to have in future?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Roger. As I say, I am delighted that Jenny [Jones] is as passionate as I am about this. We are going to have a fantastic bike hire scheme. We are going to have a new era of low carbon vehicles across all fleets. This is the vital point that Val [Shawcross] needs to grasp, in my view. We are going to have the upgrades to the Tube that you are familiar with and everybody should be championing now; a 30% increase in capacity on our Tube network by 2012. We are going to have Crossrail because John [Biggs] and I are ad idem on that issue and we are going to make sure that any incoming Government delivers that wonderful new project.

Then what we need to do now - and I think one of the reasons this Assembly is vital and our work here in this GLA is vital - is protract the line of investment and ambition beyond 2017 and beyond the £39 billion settlement and to look at the things that we want to deliver in the very long term when some of us, frankly, may not even be around to see the fruits of our ambition. Some of the people who championed Crossrail 30 years ago have, I am afraid, passed away and even now Crossrail is still seven years away from completion.

We should be looking at the Chelsea/Hackney line. Long before that we should be looking at extending the Northern Line to Battersea. We should be looking at the extension of the other lines into south London and, yes, I do think that the future of the Croydon Tram Link is not something that we can let go. We should be looking at protracting and extending ambitious transport programmes for London well beyond 2017.

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** I defer to no one with my support for the tram extension up to Upper Norwood and I thank Valerie's [Shawcross] for her interest in all things Croydon.

Mr Mayor, would you not agree that there is a theme here around funding? The theme is that all Labour administrations tend to run out of spending other people's money - and I say this as an incoming Conservative administration to Croydon in 2006, because when you get into an administration post a Labour administration and you open the books you tend to see an appalling mess of finances. Mr Mayor, can I suggest this issue around the Croydon Tram is also a situation with a budget that you inherited from the previous Mayor and you quite rightly supported the idea of a tram extension which is clearly dependent on governmental money and when you did come into office, Mr Mayor, and opened up the books that money was not there to be had, hence we need to all lobby central Government?

That also brings me back partly to this theme with John Biggs' question around Crossrail. When a Conservative Government comes in and opens the books next year they will open up the books and probably see an appalling mess as well, so it is absolutely right that commitments around future spending must be sensible and must appreciate the fact of the matter that you do not have all the figures in front of you.

I support the Croydon Tram extension and I know you do, Mr Mayor, but would you agree with those themes?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would completely agree with those themes and I think that is the right point to make. However, there is a fundamental issue that people need to grasp in this country about categories of public expenditure. It is really, really vital that we understand the difference between long term capital investment in London and revenue expenditure of one kind or another throughout Whitehall of a kind which is, I am afraid, very much open to reduction. There are serious savings and serious reductions that can be made in revenue expenditure. We should not be making reductions in capital expenditure of a kind that will be of long-term benefit to this city and this country. That is why I think you can make the case not just for Crossrail but for things like the Croydon Tram Link as well.

## **1111/2009 - Train operating companies**

### **Caroline Pidgeon**

*What progress has been made in working with train operating companies to improve the lot of London's rail passengers?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think a great deal of progress has been made, Caroline, in improving the lot of London's rail passengers and I would single out the reductions in crime and fear of crime that have been occasioned by our investment of £6 million in Safer Transport Teams and British Transport Police - another 50 Transport Police on the Overground and particularly outer London stations. I think that is something that has been very warmly welcomed by the public and it does seem to be working in terms of crime and fear of crime.

I mentioned the investment that TfL is making throughout the South Central franchise to increase staffing at stations and to do deep cleaning as well. What we want to do, of course, is to introduce on all Overground as well as Underground routes the possibility of using your Oyster Card and I am very confident that we will have an agreement by the end of this year. The Train Operating Companies (TOCs) are still not signed up. They have still not signed on the dotted line. 59% of the infrastructure is already there, 59% of the machines are already installed, but I have every confidence that we will be able to deliver that.

I want to say one final thing, in spite of the progress we have made with the TOCs, I still think it would be a good thing to have -- the reason we have not had the so-called TOC summit is because we are waiting for them to do the deal finally on the Oyster Card but I think it would be a good thing for us nonetheless to go ahead and have such a meeting and I would be very happy to invite you to it, Caroline.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Thank you very much. In your great document *Getting Londoners Moving* that you launched in the election you did say that you would convene this rail summit in the first few weeks of City Hall. I appreciate you are saying the TOCs have not yet signed up and you want to have it afterwards. I would have thought it would be wise to have a meeting with them urgently to try to bash their heads together and try to make progress on this, so why have you not met with them and will you now commit to meet with them to try to get this deal signed as soon as possible?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The reason I have not met with them, as you will appreciate, is because we are trying to do the deal before we have the summit. Like most summits the summit is basically intended to be totally pre-cooked by the Sherpas of the summit and nobody particularly wants - least of all me - all the TOCs to arrive at a summit where we have a row and a walk out. I want to have a glorious summit in which we walk out having done the deal.

However, such is my impatience and such is my desire to oblige you, the new Chair of the Transport Committee, that I think we should do it anyway. I think we should go ahead. Frankly there are other issues to do with overcrowding and there are other issues about the benefits that we want to see for London passengers that we could talk about at that summit, irrespective of the Oyster Card deal. So I think we should have a separate discussion with the TOCs to which I would be happy to invite you.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** I think it is really important you do have that meeting urgently and I am glad you have now agreed to that. You did stress in your document that, whilst you may have no control over the management of rail services, you would not use that as an excuse to shirk your responsibilities in this area and I think it is very important that you are committed to all the different things that you state in your document in terms of overcrowding and so on.

You have already stated that not one train operating company has signed a permanent contract to allow pay as you go on the Overground. You said you hoped by the end of the year. When can rail passengers in London expect to be able to use Oyster pay as you go?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** By the end of the year, Caroline, as I said earlier. Not only that; they will have a wonderful new beautiful integrated map illustrating the world of Oyster - Overground and Underground together for the first time.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** You say the end of this year. Last year we heard it was going to be this May, then you said the end of the year and in your statement of intent you say it will be the end of the financial year, so when? I want an absolute confirmation from you - absolutely for rail passengers in London - when passengers will be able to use Oyster pay as you go on the Overground?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** By the end of this calendar year.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** By the end of this calendar year. By the end of December. That is a firm commitment or an aspiration?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is a firm commitment.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Firm commitment.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Unfortunately the problem is we do not run the TOCs. We do not run the Overground rail --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** You did say, "I won't shirk responsibility" in terms of rail.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I love the way that you are always trying to ascribe to me dictatorial powers. I think we should seize and take over large areas of the Overground rail and that is something that we should perhaps talk about in more detail but, at the moment, we need to get them to do this. They know it is the right thing to do. It will greatly increase the ease and convenience of their passengers. It will lead to more people using their services, it will be a great improvement to their services and I have every confidence that they will do it --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** So by the end of December --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- by the end of the year.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** -- Londoners will be able to use pay as you go on rail?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You will be joining me, Caroline, at the triumphant inauguration of that integrated Overground Underground Oysterised rail network.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Thank you very much. Look forward to it.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Mr Mayor, I am glad you are talking about this because I would not want you in any way to underestimate the importance of pay as you go Oyster on mainline services coming into being. I get a constant stream of messages from my constituents asking for it.

Can I, as the Conservative lead on the Transport Committee, congratulate you on the progress you have made and can I also ask you if, along with the Chair of the Transport Committee, you will invite the rest of the Transport Committee to join you in discussions with the Train Operating Companies because I think you might find quite a deal of expertise at your disposal in helping you to persuade them to go the right way?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is a very handsome offer, Dick. How many are there on the Transport Committee?

**Brian Coleman (AM):** Too many!

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Nine. A lot of expertise, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am sure we can organise something on the lines you discussed. I think we should do. I think you are right.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Mr Mayor, do you recall your visit to Romford a couple of weeks ago --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** With great pleasure!

**Roger Evans (AM):** -- when you went to the station --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Can I now pay tribute to Albie and everybody else who made my day so enjoyable.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I was not going to ask you that but I was going to ask you what steps you think should be taken to improve the service out of Liverpool Street for my constituents and what issues were raised and what you are doing about that problem?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** One of the things that we did - and I think it is important and it has been successful - is to introduce more British Transport Police (BTP) Safer Transport Teams on that line. They were very conspicuous there on the day as you and I both noticed and I found a great deal of public support for that.

I saw some statistics in the paper yesterday about crime on the Underground going down. I am very pleased with that. I think it is fundamental to what we are trying to do here in London. People have got to feel safe on public transport. It is an absolutely central part of people's quality of life. It is our duty to supply that and I think we made some good steps on that line out to Romford.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** In your discussion with the TOCs and Network Rail are you continuing to press for the removal of some stations in South West London which are currently in Zone 6 but in terms of mileage really ought to be in Zone 5?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes and I congratulate you and other Conservatives who have campaigned on this issue. With other parties I suppose!

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Just us!

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** And it is something that we will be raising.

## **1020/2009 - Metropolitan Police**

### **Brian Coleman**

*Does the Mayor think that the lack of media attention to the death of PC Gary Toms killed as a result of carrying out his duties is sadly symptomatic of the lack of respect shown to the Metropolitan Police? Will the Mayor ensure that proper tribute is paid to this Officer and will he further lobby the Home Secretary to make sure that those convicted of murdering Metropolitan Police Officers are never released on parole?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I do think there has been, over the last month or so now, a sort of protracted fit of hostility in the media towards the work of the Metropolitan Police Service and I do deprecate that and I do want to commend the words of Sir Paul Stephenson [Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis] who I think speaks for millions of commonsensical people in this city when he says that overwhelmingly the police in London do a fantastic job. I am sure that is the view of the vast majority of Londoners.

I think what the tragic death of PC Gary Toms reminds us all of is that these police men and women are the people who run towards danger and sometimes there are police officers who do make the ultimate sacrifice and whatever criticisms or feelings we may have about the Metropolitan Police Service we should not forget that.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** Would you agree, Mr Mayor, that reports of Metropolitan Police officers and others being abused in the streets by members of the public are disgraceful and outrageous and would you encourage Londoners to go up to police officers on duty and actually thank them for the service that they are giving Londoners? Would you also deplore those who filled our media columns - the *Guardian* and other such left wing publications; some of whom, I have to say, as Members of the Police Authority ought to know better - jumping on the band wagon of this anti-police hysteria?

Would you condemn politicians who have decided it is fashionable, cool and trendy to attack the Metropolitan Police Service?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. As I say, I do not think anybody with any common sense in London would want to be too critical of the Metropolitan Police Service because they are overwhelmingly doing a fantastic job.

The criticism mainly focuses on the policing of the G20. People should bear in mind the consequences of letting that event go out of control. Imagine what people would have said if hundreds of buildings in London had been trashed as opposed to only a few windows broken in one bank. There would have been a very different order and a very different kind of criticism. So in spite of the tragic and regrettable death of one completely innocent man in the course of the G20 policing people overwhelmingly understand that the police do a very, very good job in managing 4,500 such events every year on the streets of London.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** And that the Metropolitan Police Service and City police in fact saved our city from being trashed during the G20 protests and allowed the vast majority of Londoners to go about their normal day to day business. Would you not agree that the vast majority of those demonstrators who turned up at Bank - which were not large numbers - were not there to hold a peaceful protest and many turned up deliberately to provoke the police and to attack the police?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Brian, I do not want to go back into the details of what happened at the G20. As everybody knows there are several inquiries currently going on at the moment into the particular complaints that have been received and there is a review being carried out of the police's tactics. I am sure that the points that you make will be taken into account in the course of those reviews.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** Basically we should be commending our coppers and not criticising them.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Correct.

**John Biggs (AM):** Just for the record, obviously Labour Members believe that we should defend and support our police service and have said many --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. I think most Labour Members do.

**John Biggs (AM):** You would I am sure agree with me, however, that no public service should be immune from scrutiny and if there is bad practice that must be dealt with.

Finally, for the record, PC Toms was not some anonymous officer; he was a police constable from Barking and Dagenham who is very much missed by his colleagues and the community he served there. His death was most tragic and I think we all feel that sense of loss and we must learn from it and ensure that our public services are supported but also that they are held publicly to account because the best way of supporting them is to make sure that they are beyond reproach and acting properly.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think everybody would agree with that.

## 1363/2009 - Savings

### Joanne McCartney

*How much money will be saved on the council tax precept from the cuts to staff at the GLA?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Joanne asks how much of the Council Tax precept will be saved by cuts to staff at the GLA and obviously the sum will not be colossal in terms of the council tax precept but that does not mean it is not an important saving to make. It is 16.7% of our controllable expenditure in 2009/10 and I think it is vital that we show a lead here in this body by making savings and by showing budgetary discipline now in a very difficult time for Londoners so that we can bear down on that council tax. I do think that is the right thing to do and obviously other GLA institutions are under the same pressure to deliver savings where they can find them.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** I think we would all agree that where we can make savings we should do. One of the things throughout this process that we have been told is that these cuts are for efficiency; not for the sake of cuts. You have returned from Seoul and you have spoken today about some of the things that London could do with regards to the environment and global warming. I want to focus, if I can, about the cuts that are being made to the environment department because that does take a big hit with its loss of staff. So can I ask you, are you satisfied that there will be sufficient capacity and skills remaining to deliver your environmental agenda?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, because our environmental agenda is getting considerably more ambitious, not less ambitious, and the more I look at the things we can do the more convinced I am that we can make real changes for the better. I want to say I think we all have, in Isabel Dedring [Director of Environmental Policy], a first class public servant. I think she is doing a very good job of leading and delivering on the changes that we need. I am very happy with the guidance I have received about the revisions to the environment team.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** The environment team is having substantial job losses and you have just said this morning that your strategy is going to be a lot more ambitious and you want to do a lot more. I am wondering how can you actually join that circle up; if you are losing a great amount of staff yet you want to do more?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Obviously because it is not always and everywhere the case that having more people doing things in a department leads to greater productivity, greater output and greater success. It is, I am afraid, the view of Isabel Dedring and others that the changes that have been made are necessary and will be beneficial to the environment team.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Can I ask, what is that you are expecting to do that is new and over and above your environmental statutory duties? We have not yet seen your Environment Strategy.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You will see, for instance, an Air Quality Strategy I think next month and you will see a lot more on what we hope to do on the environment in due course.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** My concern is that by making cuts at the moment, and a lot of your strategies have not yet been developed and finalised, that you could end up with a mismatch and therefore not saving money in the long term because you have to hire in extra consultants or you have to then go out to the market for those skills that we have now lost.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No. Joanne, I think you have to take it that people who are absolutely passionate zealots for the environmental improvement of this city - and I think there are some very, very good people working in City Hall on the environment - have taken the view that we could make changes to the composition of our environment team without in any way jeopardising the

quality of our environmental work, in fact we could improve. I think people throughout this country are familiar with the concept of getting more value out of your resources and streamlining your team for better results.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** If I can just remind Members that it is actually the Chief Executive who has the final responsibility on staffing and not the Mayor. If you can bear that in mind in your line of questioning.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** It is right, as you say, that this organisation, just as Londoners have to tighten their belts, should also be tightening its belt. Would you agree, however, that this is only the first notch of the belt that you are tightening given that the total number of real reductions that you are making is only 39 people, ie that people who are in post are only being reduced by 39 and that there is still a long way to go? Is it not right that the best way to ensure that this organisation is slim and is strategic is for this organisation rather than doing more, as has been suggested by the other side, ought to be doing less and the people who are best able to do the vital jobs for London are those people who know more about it than we do?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No one can say that there is not a lively spread of opinion here in this Assembly because we have got Joanne arguing for the retention of officials irrespective of what they are doing and Tony arguing for a general reduction in ambition!

It is my intention to increase the environmental ambitions of this organisation. This is a strategic organisation. There is no reason whatever why we should not lead London in developing policies that will be hugely for the benefit of the whole city. The more I do this job the more often I find -- you talk about the wisdom of the boroughs and I agree with you about the wisdom of the London boroughs, but time and again I get representations from the London boroughs who say they want coordination and they want to know what the priorities are.

If we are going to move towards low carbon vehicles, if we are going to have a serious programme of retro fitting and if we are going to make big reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> in this city we simply cannot do it without some kind of central drive and coordination and it needs us to have that ambition, it needs a strong intellectually robust environment team here at City Hall to lead that and I am delighted that in Isabel Deding we have got exactly the right person to do it.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** This organisation does a lot more than simply working on the environment and low carbon producing vehicles and things of that sort. Those are simply the eye-catching things. Let me draw your attention to the fact that under this reorganisation there are going to be 11 diversity and equality officers each of whom have exactly the same job description. I am hard put to think that that is an appropriate thing for a strategic authority to be continuing to appoint.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I want to revert to the Chair's point that some of these decisions obviously are a matter for the Chief Executive of the Authority. My general principle on this has been - whilst I was campaigning and throughout the time I have been Mayor - to recognise that London - a huge city of 300 languages and heaven knows how many communities - has particular problems about ensuring that people get access to the services they need and that people do feel included. I do think there are issues that need to be tackled around diversity and I am not going to go back into some sort of neutral passive position where we as the GLA say that we are not going to champion active integration. We should be active champions of integration. Whether or not that means we have to have quite so many diversity officers or not I do not know, but we cannot abandon that basic duty.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Mr Mayor, I merely cite that as an example. There are a great range of activities which this Authority has taken on over the past eight years. Again, to put the cuts that you are making into perspective, that is less than the average of one year's increase of your predecessor so

you have got a very long way to go to get this place back as slim as it was when it started and I very much hope that that is your ambition. Is that indeed your ambition?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** My ambition, Tony, is to deliver on Council Tax freezes and, if possible, reductions in bills for the people of this city and to do our best to help people in very, very difficult economic times and that is why we are making the savings that we are.

My further ambition - my prime ambition - is to make sure that the GLA and this group generally and all the functional bodies deliver the best quality of life for the people of London. Where that means we have to coordinate environmental policies and we have to work hard to get all the boroughs to agree certain provisions that they have to do jointly then, yes, I think that we must step up to the plate and lead.

**John Biggs (AM):** I think we have already established today that you have designed with the cycle hire scheme a scheme that does not work. Do you think that this structure at City Hall --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not think we have established anything of the kind.

**John Biggs (AM):** I think we have. You have designed a scheme for cycle hire which is designed to discourage people from using it and that does seem a rather bizarre invention but we will examine that later on.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No. We think it will be so successful in its first phase --

**John Biggs (AM):** On this structure at City Hall, although it is formally the Chief Executive's, are you content that it is a structure that will carry out your will and your intentions?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am.

**John Biggs (AM):** That is excellent. That is good for the record. I am delighted you stood up to Mr Arbour although it is not difficult to be even a right wing Conservative and stand up to Mr Arbour in my experience!

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I heard you being attacked for being too right wing the other day.

**John Biggs (AM):** That is fine. I am not the Mayor so that does not worry me. The question is do you not accept that there is a risk that Londoners are wise to this; that under Conservative councils and Governments there are always cuts which we then have to pick up and repair later on? There are bus workers here today who are facing £8,000 a year wage cuts as a result of your tendering policies. Do you think there is a risk in terms of the quality of life and public services to Londoners out of your policies at all? Do you think that in striking this balance, in throwing red meat at your Conservative pals and trying to be a good semi-*Guardian* reader to the wider London public you are going to slip over the line here? Say 'no'.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Chair, I am going to try to answer that. I am going to reach into the intestines of that question and try to find the --

**John Biggs (AM):** I accept it probably was not my finest question but carry on.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think you are asking about the bus dispute?

**John Biggs (AM):** I was asking about bus workers but I am asking also about the capacity of City Hall to make its case. I will crystallize it better, which is that the previous Mayor - and I was looking around for his ghost in the hall and he does not seem to be here today --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** He does not come anymore.

**John Biggs (AM):** The previous Mayor was very clear that this brain centre for City Hall needs to go out there and make the case for London; fight for resources for Crossrail, for the environment, for European money and so on.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** In that he was totally right.

**John Biggs (AM):** The question of you is are you going to create a machine here which is hobbled in its ability to do that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No.

**John Biggs (AM):** You are absolutely clear about that? There will be no problem in making that case?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am with you on that.

**John Biggs (AM):** We will hold you to account on that then because I think the previous Mayor had a problem with that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Since we are in the business now of congratulating the previous Mayor let me say that he was absolutely right in the robust way he refused to get involved in the tendering procedures of the bus companies. Time and again he was invited --

**John Biggs (AM):** He paid a premium to bus workers.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- to step in and adjust the tendering process and do the bidding of the unions. Time and again he refused because it would be quite wrong for the Mayor to get involved in those negotiations and those contracts.

**John Biggs (AM):** So you are absolutely clear apropos bus workers - this is not a question about bus workers - apropos public services that if you found that the tendering process was degrading the quality of life, retention and motivation of workers to such an extent that the services started to crumble - as has happened in the past - you would, in no circumstances, intervene?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think that is what they call a hypothetical question --

**John Biggs (AM):** No, no, no. It is a very real question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- because I do not see --

**John Biggs (AM):** It is a very real question which this country has suffered from repeatedly in the past.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- any evidence either of the decay that you speak of in terms of service or of the bus drivers or in terms of the service provided to buses.

**John Biggs (AM):** When City Hall was established there were some bus operators with over 60% turnover of staff because they paid such lousy wages and gave such little support to their workers that

people could not be bothered to work for them once they found something better to do. That is a very real risk for London's public services and I think Londoners will want to see a very sharp leadership from you on this issue.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I say, I think it was a notable feature of the last regime that it did not get involved in disputes between the bus companies and their workers and I think it very important that we do not breach that principle today.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** Mr Mayor, can I congratulate you on finding at least something to congratulate the previous Mayor on over these last eight years. I have scratched my head many a time to find it and there you are with it all together.

Mr Mayor, would you join me in reminding all Members around this table that Organising for Delivery is now going through a proper and due process and we are in part of the consultation period for that Organising for Delivery, that all Members have the opportunity and indeed the right to contribute to that consultation and it is at the end of that when the true shape of the organisation will begin to emerge but there is a proper due process which is being observed and it is a genuine consultation process?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Of course, Richard, that is absolutely right and that is an important point to make at this juncture. I am sure that Joanne [McCartney] and others who have concerns about some of the changes we are making will have registered that and will be making their position plain to the Chief Executive and others in the normal way.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Can I express my deep concern about the savings being proposed on the library service? I know that one of the public services that lots of local authorities get a lot of kudos and credit for is maintaining the library services that we have across the whole of London so I am actually deeply and privately very concerned about the numbers of staff that have been reduced in the library and I wanted to know what your views are given that you are a great book lover?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Murad, it is a good question. For the benefit of viewers in Scotland and elsewhere and outer space who tune in to our proceedings, they should realise that when we are talking about the library in City Hall we are not, to the best of my knowledge, talking about a public lending library; this is not a library that boosts literacy and engagement in reading across London. We are talking about a library in which you would hope to find documents and books relevant to our business here in City Hall.

As I understand the case that is being currently put - and I revert to Richard's [Barnes] point that this is still up for negotiation - much of the documentation which is being stored currently in hard form in the library is I suppose now at least technically available on the web, therefore it is possible to make some savings and that is a case, it seems to me, to be at least worth pursuing.

As I say, if you have detailed complaints about this, detailed concerns, if there are particular books or a particular range of books or documents that you wish to see preserved in the library here at City Hall then obviously that is a point you are going to have to make to those responsible for Organising for Delivery.

## **1025/2009 - Air Quality Working Group**

### **Gareth Bacon**

*What progress is being made by the joint working group, set up by the GLA and DEFRA, to address air pollution in London?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Gareth. I know that you are very committed to this issue. I think actually this is one of those things where we need to make more progress. I do think that we need to work together with Government to deliver real savings in emissions. For everybody who is following this, this is not a CO<sub>2</sub> issue, this is about the nasties that come out of tail pipes, this is about nitrogen oxides (NOx) coming out of your boilers that are not properly fitted or that need to be improved and this is about the steps we can take to improve that.

I have already talked quite a lot about what we want to do with vehicles. It is perhaps less well understood that there is a great deal you can do by retrofitting your central heating systems to reduce your NOx emissions. That is a very, very important part of what we plan to do with the retro fitting.

I do not think it by any means irrelevant that we are going to plant huge numbers of trees around London. Trees do have a role in fixing particulates and in stopping the heat island phenomenon and I do think that that should be something we actively support across all parties here in this Assembly.

Of course we are going to be continuing in our opposition to a third runway at Heathrow which, by its increase in vehicle traffic in West London, would be the single biggest blow to air quality in London, I think, for the last 20 years.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor, for that response. To drill into that a little bit, what has been DEFRA's contribution to those meetings? I am aware of the schemes that you have been proposing and that Isabel Dedring has been talking about but I have not been hearing much coming from DEFRA in terms of what it is prepared to do with you? I think, given the scale of the problem, the fact that pollution does not respect city boundaries and can spread across it, that central Government involvement in this will be crucial to solve the problem so I am quite interested in what your experience of DEFRA's contribution has been so far.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am having another meeting with Lord Hunt [Minister for Sustainable Development and Energy Innovation] very shortly but I have to say that, so far, there has not been, in my view, adequate progress. On PM<sub>10</sub>s; 40% of PM<sub>10</sub>s in London come from outside London. We in this body cannot solve our PM<sub>10</sub> problem without coordination between DEFRA and ourselves and I think some of the things that it is doing on vehicle excise - which is actually encouraging more diesel vehicles - is completely environmentally counterproductive.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** Chair, if I may, in light of that response and the inactivity we seem to be seeing from the Government in the working group, do you find it somewhat disappointing to see that Lord Hunt's office seems to have been blabbing to the *Guardian* that the UK is about to cop a £300 million fine from the European Union for breaching air quality standards and that they seem to be passing the blame on to you?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think it is wholly satirical that the Government should be trying to do this when it is supporting, as I say, the construction of a third runway in the outer suburbs of London which will be the single biggest and most devastating blow to air quality in this capital for a generation.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** The European Union's standards that they set for NO<sub>2</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> emissions were set back in 1999. The Government has ears so I am sure it was aware of that in all of that time; they have been in office since that time. I think most reasonable people will feel that it is simply trying to pass the buck for their own failure, their own ineptitude and their own incompetence and that is pretty unreasonable to do to somebody who at the time that this article appeared had only actually been in office for 11 months as opposed to 11 years.

I would like to draw your attention to the London Assembly's Environment Committee report on air quality, which was purposely designed to feed in to your own Air Quality Strategy. There are a couple of recommendations in there that I want to talk about particularly which I think will be of great benefit to London if they are able to be practically implemented, but they cannot be implemented without central Government help.

The recommendations I am talking about are targeted Low Emission Zones (LEZ), not the one size fits all that is currently slapped on to London. We were very mindful, I think, of your fear that the Low Emission Zone phase three could force many small businesses and people into bankruptcy by imposing crippling charges upon them and this side of the Chamber fully supports your decision to suspend the implementation of phase three.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is a suspension, not a cancellation. I think it is very important that people who have these vans should understand that.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** Absolutely right. But the recommendation that is in the report is that we could look at a targeted inner Low Emission Zone where the pollution hot spot is - and we broadly know where that is; it is roughly Zones 1 and 2, generally speaking - and that would be supported by a subsidised retro fit scheme so the vehicles that would offend that would actually be able to retrofit their vehicles.

Now coincidentally the price of that will be around about £2,000 per vehicle, which broadly accords with the rather nonsensical statement from Alistair Darling [Chancellor of the Exchequer] in the last budget which is supposedly about kick starting the motor industry. We all know that is farcical.

Would you agree that it would be more sensible for the Government to re-divert those funds towards a subsidised retrofit scheme in London to actually target the air quality pollution problems that we have?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. As I say, I wrote to Peter Mandelson [Lord Mandelson, Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform] about scrappage some time ago and I think we should be looking at ways to encourage people to improve the vehicular emissions of their vehicles. That is why we are focusing so hard on low carbon vehicles of all types.

Whether or not you go for Low Carbon Zones or Low Emission Zones of one kind or another is a very, very interesting question. I certainly agree with your basic approach.

I just want to be absolutely clear with people; I am not abandoning the stick of the LEZ. I do think the LEZ is a useful tool and we should not allow a false consciousness to develop that we have somehow given up on this. I just thought that in the back end of 2008 going into 2009, one of the worst recessions for 30 years, with small businesses laying off huge numbers of people, it was not right to ask the drivers of vans to pay another £15,000 for a new vehicle or £2,000 for new equipment in those circumstances.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** That was an interesting discussion and I do agree with Gareth that retro fitting, from an environmental point of view, is actually slightly friendlier because you are not generating a new vehicle so that is a good idea.

Having brought up this topic of the massive fines that we could face, the Green group was raising this right from the beginning of the start of the Assembly so it long predates your mayoralty. The fine could be enormous unless we get some sort of big idea about cleaning up the air. Retrofitting cars: great; trees: really good idea; stop the airport: good idea; electric cars--

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Not just electric. I mean low carbon --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Hold on.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think electric is a bit of a narrow --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Electric cars are part of it. I am not saying they are not part of it. City Hall lawyers - our excellent team here - have said actually that the Government could overturn your decision not to implement phase three of the Low Emission Zone. Now if that happens will you accept it quietly and will you let it happen or are you going to fight it?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would have to be advised by our lawyers about what the position is but I believe that it has a very, very -- the suspension - I want to stress that this is a suspension. You are already saying something to me that I have not heard before; the Government might be minded to overturn this. I think it would find it was deeply politically --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I have a press release here from Darren [Johnson] which says that so I am absolutely positive it is accurate.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Who I am to disagree with anything you find in a press release from Darren. I think what the Government would find is that there is very clear democratic mandate for such modifications of the LEZ. I think we would also make the points very strongly in our defence; the particular economic circumstances that justify this suspension, two, that it is only a suspension and, three - most importantly - that it will be more than compensated for by the other measures we are going to introduce.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I would say that the other measures are not sufficient. That is the problem. I think you need a big idea and actually the third phase of the LEZ is a big idea. Given Gareth's [Bacon] point about retrofitting vehicles, it is much cheaper than the £15,000 you have been talking about per vehicle so it might make it easier for you to accept if the Government does overturn your decision.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think it vanishingly improbable the Government will elect to do that now but I would be very interested to see what it chooses to do because I think our arguments are extremely powerful --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Let's hope they do it before they are kicked out.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** We have had a splendid summary of various pieces of evidence given to the Environment Committee which Gareth Bacon has been taking us through but, Mr Mayor, are you aware of some other evidence given to the Environment Committee that apparently air quality improves when cars travel over 20 mph? Because of my position on the Transport Committee this especially interests me and I am sure my colleagues on the Transport Committee. What do you think of it, Mr Mayor? Can you ask the Government working party to go a bit further into this because it is rather an important point, I think?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is an interesting point. I have to tell you, Richard, that I am not myself in favour of cars travelling very fast on the streets of London. My general view is that -- and I think we are having a question later on about 20 mph zones. I think if boroughs want to introduce 20 mph zones actually that probably makes a great deal of sense in certain particular areas. I do not want to encourage people to be roaring around.

The second point I would make is that at either 20 mph or 30 mph or 40 mph an electric car produces, at the tail pipe, zero emissions.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Thank you.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** In some ways Gareth has stolen my thunder in promoting the Environment Committee report but I am glad to see, Mayor, you become very enthused after your trip to Seoul --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Before. Before.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Even more so then, and it is quite clear that there are cities in the world doing probably substantially more, other countries like South Korea, and I have certainly learnt from my trips to East Asia in the previous term.

The reality is, Mayor, that so far you have reduced the inspection requirements of black cabs. If you look at your investment programme for the bus fleet, at the end of your term the most we are going to get is less than 5% of the buses converted to hybrids. So the actions do not match up with your rhetoric.

Other things I would like to raise in response to Richard's [Tracey] points are we also heard other bits of evidence at the Environment Committee which are pertinent. The fact of the matter is air quality is a lot worse than we had envisaged when the previous Mayor based his decision on the LEZ. If anything that means we should be doing a lot more. When you talk about the ill effects on Londoners, there are about 107,000 Londoners whose health is affected by the poor air quality.

I am concerned that you are pushing the business case again on the first phase of the LEZ and I want to be clear; did you ever consult your business representation in the GLA group, the LDA, when you took this decision?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There was a wide range of consultees on the LEZ issue. To be honest, Murad, at this distance now from when we took this back, I think, in November, I cannot recall whether the LDA was intimately involved in it. However, I do think it was the right thing to do.

Generally, on your opening salvo, I do think you are wrong. I really do. I think what we are doing is a fantastically ambitious programme to steer London away from an addiction to diesel powered vehicles, not least Val's [Shawcross] beloved bendy bus. That is one of the reasons why it is completely right that TfL should be leading the world now in scoping out the possibilities for a lighter, cleaner, greener, new generation bus. What we want is a vehicle that will not just be ideal for the streets of London but that will be bought by cities around the world.

Interestingly one of the things that I am discovering as I go round talking to other capitals is they are very interested in this investment in this technology as well. So far from lagging behind with vehicular emissions, I think London should be in the lead.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Mayor, as I have stated, even if we look at your investment programmes, we are only going to get 370 buses in a fleet of 8,300 buses which are going to be hybrid --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** By 2012.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** That is not actually making a lot of progress at all. I think you have got powers there at least to get TfL to do more things --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are neglecting what we want to do with the electric fleet, Murad, where we have 8,000 vehicles in the GLA fleet. 4,000 of them are non-response vehicles. We think that by 2015 we can convert 1,000 of them to electricity.

I think it would be an absolute shame if we did not use the Olympics as an opportunity to drive forward low carbon vehicles and we should be going either for electric or for plug in hybrid or some sort of low carbon vehicles to take people around London during the Olympic Games. I think it would be a huge missed opportunity.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** I am glad you have mentioned the Olympics because the big issue for the last two Olympics has been air quality. I have seen that as a spectator. I think that is a desirable timeline to be working towards improvements in air quality.

Coming back to the initial question from Gareth [Bacon], I do feel not only do you have to work with DEFRA but other parts and arms of government; the car scrapping schemes that have been proposed by the Business Enterprise and Regulation Department and also the electric vehicle investment. I do not see enough of that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Can I tell you, Murad, in all sincerity, I believe if it had not been for the energy and drive of Isabel Dedring and other people involved in our team in the campaign for low carbon vehicles we would never have got the Government up to the position they were in when they went up to Glasgow and did that announcement about electric vehicles. The only reason they did it is because they felt that London was pushing so hard on it and they did not want to look as though they were out manoeuvred or lagging behind in any way.

Believe me, we have been leading on this in the drive for low carbon vehicles of all kinds and I really think if you want to talk about a collaboration with the Government then it is up to the Government to show that it means to take this seriously and to help us to put in the infrastructure across London that will really make this possible.

By 2012 we are going to be putting in 25,000 plugs around the streets of London. I cannot remember whether it is by 2015 or 2012. In the next few years we are putting in huge numbers of plugs around the streets of London. I think actually that programme should be stepped up so that we have the infrastructure that will give people the confidence to invest in a low carbon vehicle - it could be an electric vehicle, it could be a plug in hybrid - but it is our job to prime the pump; to get the city ready.

I am afraid that the Labour Government so far has not, in my view, shown the kind of imagination and commitment to this that they might have done.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** I beg to differ. I think Geoff Hoon [Secretary of State for Transport] has been doing some things in the Department of --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Sorry, Murad, there you are right. Geoff has been great. Geoff has been great.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Let me finish. I think you have got to make a strategic decision about which local authorities you are going to be supporting to have the infrastructure to plug those cars in. Which ones are you backing?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Sorry, which local authorities? Sorry, I cannot hear the question.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** It was about which local authorities you would support regarding infrastructure?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would support all local authorities that join us --

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** They are not all going to get it.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- in the programmes of putting in plugs around London that will give people the confidence to invest in a low carbon vehicle.

**James Cleverly (AM):** I know my colleague has already highlighted the attempt to deflect the blame for the potential EU fine. Will you just confirm this is a nationwide fine and not just a London based fine?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, James. Of course it is. I am not certain that the Government really means this about the fine being somehow imposed on us. It would be wholly satirical if it were because London is one of a hundred places in the UK that does not comply with the EU standards. As I say, there are ample reasons why the Government is really in the dock for this, not us, and I think it would be completely mad and irrelevant of them if they were to engage in a kind of stunt of the kind described.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Thank you.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** Thank you. The question on 'Passing Through', Q1211, has been withdrawn by the Labour Group. They have substituted it with Q1222, 'Affordable Homes Target' in the name of Len Duvall and the questioning will be taken by Jennette Arnold. It is asking you about targets in the Economic Recovery Action Plan.

## **1222/2009 - Affordable Homes Target**

### **Jennette Arnold on behalf of Len Duvall**

*In Action Point 45 of your Economic Recovery Action Plan, you committed to "oversee an investment programme to produce 50,000 affordable homes over the next three years". You are now apparently 'reviewing' this target. Will you or will you not fulfil this commitment?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Jennette. I answered already to Mike [Tuffrey]: there is a misconstruction in the language which has now been corrected. The word 'review' of the target to which Mike objected is of course referring to a review that would take place after 2011. That is the essential point that I wanted to clear up.

**Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair):** Let's get some more clarity from you then, Mayor. Let me just ask a straightforward question: how many affordable housing units have you been directly responsible for in your first year as Mayor of London?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think it is about -- well I have not personally built any, Jennette, with my own hands but --

**Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair):** You set the targets.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The London Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), which I chair, has delivered in this last year 11,000 homes providing quality accommodation for 25,000 Londoners in housing need.

**Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair):** Mr Mayor, I am taking you back to the relationship that you have with the boroughs of London. You can set targets. Indeed a target was set, which you have berated and talked negatively about, from the previous administration and that target did produce some 13,000 social housing/affordable housing in London. You have scrapped the 50% target. You have also changed the tenure split from 70% social rented/30% intermediate to 60%/40%. The

position here is that this is at a time when hundreds of thousands of children in London are in overcrowded conditions. Almost one million people are already on social rented waiting lists. I am putting to you that this can only be seen that you are doing next to nothing about this critical area of concern to Londoners and that is access to affordable homes in their city.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I have to say you are talking complete nonsense, Jennette. I pine for the days when you were Chair and you never used to weigh in in this way because you are completely, completely wrong.

If you look at what we are doing and you look at the scale of the ambition of our programme I think we are offering real hope for the first time. I have spoken of the 11,000 already delivered by the Homes and Communities Agency this year and I chair the HCA. You talk about overcrowding. I have already mentioned in response to Mike [Tuffrey] that in spite of the very, very difficult circumstances the single conversation negotiations we are having with the boroughs have yielded a commitment to build at least 40,000 over the next few years. 80% of the 50,000 target - from which I do not for one minute resile.

If we achieve our ambitions 30,000 of the 50,000 will be social rented, which will be more than in any three-year period of this city since before 1997. I will say it again: 30,000 of the 50,000 will be social rented which will be more than for any three- year period of this city since before 1997, a date whose historic significance I do not need to repeat to you.

We are also going to build more large homes because you mention overcrowding, Jennette. 42% of our homes will be three plus bedrooms. Today in the Housing Strategy we are announcing a real drive to reduce the phenomenon of under occupation. There are huge numbers of houses in London in the social housing sector where you have two bedrooms more than it currently needs and we believe that we can do a great deal to reduce that phenomenon and we want to reduce it by two thirds by 2016.

We are boosting the seaside and country homes schemes, a very, very popular scheme where we help people who have a large social rented house in London or social affordable accommodation house in London that is too big for their needs. We help them to move to some other part of the country, which they may very well be yearning to do, where they can take up accommodation more suited to their needs and liberate that dwelling for people who need it.

We are also using the targeted funding stream to help people in affordable accommodation to make changes to their dwelling so that it can accommodate more people and thereby also tackling overcrowding.

**Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair):** Mr Mayor, we have heard this morning that barely a handful of boroughs have signed up and agreed --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No. 21. 21 have agreed the targets.

**Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair):** 21.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** 21

**Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair):** 21. Can you tell us in terms of the geographical placement of these boroughs how many of these boroughs are inner and outer London because it seems to me that what you will end up with is actually perpetuating the social segregation because you are not getting the outer London Conservative boroughs to comply to providing social housing?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No. Boroughs across the board in inner London and outer London are signing up to the targets. Obviously I encourage all those who have not yet done so to

reach agreements. I do think it is in the interests, not just of London. I think boroughs all over London understand it is in the interests of their own people. Every single London borough understands that they have people in need who need help with their housing and it is their duty as public servants to help them get that.

**Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair):** So are you confirming that you are signed up for an appropriate healthy social mix of social intermediate private housing all across London?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes.

**Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair):** And that you are then going to be looking to monitor and, if need be, when you review you will have to then bring in some sort of percentage that you will then instruct those boroughs to deliver?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As you well know we do have a ratio between the intermediate and the social rented sectors and I think that is quite a sensible reform. I just remind you, Jennette, of the statistic that I have now quoted twice, that if we are successful in our ambitions then 30,000 of the 50,000 will be for social rent - for social rent - which will be a higher proportion of any three year period for any year before 1997.

**Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair):** We have asked so many questions about this and we will keep asking because this is what we get from our constituents; the need for social housing in London is without question --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** They are quite right. We should lead on it and we should not be satisfied and we should not be fobbed off by people who say that it is impossible and difficult. Of course it is difficult but it is not impossible and it is our duty to keep going now in the down turn.

**Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair):** So you will be addressing the Barnet question then?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There is never a moment when I do not in one way or another address the Barnet question.

**Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair):** Thank you.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Mr Mayor, certainly from this side we welcome your commitment to addressing the severe problems of overcrowding in London and it is about time we had a Mayor who did address those particular issues. Your firm commitment to the 30,000 new socially rented properties is going to make a real difference to Londoners in those parts of London where overcrowding is a particular problem. I must however take issue with one particular part of --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I know what you are going to say.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** -- and you know exactly what I am going to say. Of the 30,000 properties on a 42% proportion that is going to be family housing, that actually means that of those 30,000 approximately 17,400 of those will be one and two bedroom flats with only 12,600 as family sized properties. Bearing in mind that 74% of the overcrowding in London is currently in one and two bedroom properties I would ask whether or not building more one and two bedroom properties is a way of targeting overcrowding and I once again ask you to revisit that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Andrew, I know you are a passionate campaigner and you are completely right. All I would say is that, yes, we are hugely expanding our provision of three plus bedroom houses; that is why we have gone up to 42% and it is why we are doing what we are doing

on a Parker Morris plus ten. I do not think people out there yet understand the ambition of that programme.

I was thinking about this earlier on. The issue of building one and two bedroom flats - I remember you memorably saying that if you had your way you would ban them --

**Andrew Boff (AM):** I would not have any of them. It would be better than having any to be honest.

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** We have got so many.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I understand that position. All I would say is --

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Mr Mayor, if I can interrupt, currently 71% of the social housing stock already is one and two bedroom flats. Why add to 71%?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The statistical answer is that of London's projected population increase which is going to be about 840,000 we think until 2037, it is estimated that the overwhelming majority - three quarters - of that demand will be for one or two bedroom dwellings.

Much as I would love people to live together in big happy families and all the rest of it, there seems to be a tendency in our society towards fragmentation of units, people do live increasingly on their own, and I am afraid that --

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Mr Mayor, you can generate those one bedroom flats every time you build a five bedroom house. If you build a one bedroom flat you solve one family's housing problem. If you build a five bedroom house you solve five families' problems because of the churn in the housing system because the people who need the five bedroom get out of their four bedroom and the people who need the four bedroom get out of their three bedroom and the people who need the three bedroom get out of their two bedroom and right at the end of the line you have got the one bedroom flat that you needed to start off with. If you just build a one bedroom flat it is skimming the symptoms of the problem; not addressing the heart of it.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Andrew, I hear what you say. I would simply redirect you to the 42% of dwellings that we are going to create that will be three plus bedrooms. I do understand the problems. I do understand the particular needs of large families and we are working very, very hard on that.

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** Mr Mayor, we partly answered my question [Q1384 - 'Overcrowding'] which I will now withdraw.

Mr Mayor, getting back to the general debate around social housing, do you share my despair at this rather stale accusation that somehow Conservatives are anti social housing which is absolute tosh? Speaking particularly as an ex-council house boy myself and speaking for Croydon borough which actually is the only borough that I know of that is building actively council houses.

The need for affordable housing is very strong. As the owner of two young, rather handsome, sons the chance of them getting on the private market is going to be very, very difficult. Mr Mayor, will you share with me the disappointment and inevitability that the last Mayor reached nowhere near the affordable housing target of 50,000 despite this arm twisting policy that the previous Mayor had and will you, Mr Mayor, stay resolute with your light touch to set the boroughs free to build those houses for our young people going forward?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will. I will, Steve. I think you are absolutely right and I pay tribute to the borough of Croydon that I think is working very hard on this and I really echo your

point; all boroughs, whatever their political complexion, understand the urgency of dealing with their people's housing needs. Andrew makes a vigorous point in favour of more five bedroom houses. I will look at the number of five bedroom houses that we build and that we offer - three plus will do you - and I will come back to you with some more statistics.

**Navin Shah (AM):** Mr Mayor, in order to improve the quality of life real measures need to be taken to address the question of overcrowding. Would you, in the London design guide, be stipulating enhanced standards for private and public open spaces because that is an integral part of what we are talking about? Not only do we have space standards with larger room sizes etc within the accommodation but part of the accommodation is quality of life for children and for families to enjoy the spaces outside as well, both the private within their states and their public spaces as well.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Absolutely, Navin. There will be plenty of language about that kind of thing in the revised London Plan. Indeed I think our GLA planners are now incredibly resolute. When a development comes before us which we think does not have sufficient provision for outside play areas or green space then it is thrown out and I believe that those principles should be applied throughout London.

**Navin Shah (AM):** How are we addressing any shortfalls that you might come across - which I think you will - in terms of reaching your own set targets in terms of number of units?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are back on the affordable housing targets now?

**Navin Shah (AM):** Yes. Very clearly you stated 1,677 units per year for a three year period. You are clearly not reaching that. What measures will you be taking to address this serious problem?

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** If we can have a very brief answer to that because the Labour Group are now out of time.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** What we need is to continue with the kick start programmes that we are doing through the HCA and we need the developers to recognise that this is not the moment to hibernate their schemes; this is the moment to keep going. We intend to use the HCA funding that we have available - £1.5 billion this year - to drive that forward.

## 1043/2009 - Swine flu

### James Cleverly

*What contingency plans are in place to ensure that essential services in London will continue to operate in the event of a flu pandemic?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, James. The situation of course is that this is all being dealt with through the London Resilience Forum and I am in very regular contact with Simon Tanner, who is my health adviser, and I have every confidence in the measures that are currently in place. Indeed, I think they have been praised by Sir Liam Donaldson, the Chief Medical Officer.

Since the Labour Group is out of time I will just make a point because Navin [Shah] wanted to ask about the Tamiflu stocks. I will just answer that question, if I may, in your time if you do not mind. In a spirit of generosity.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Why not.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We all work together.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** In the spirit of harmony. Fine.

**James Cleverly (AM):** I am quite sure at some point in the future they will donate some of their time to us.

## 1217/2009 - Tamiflu

**Navin Shah**

*Whilst I must applaud your generosity in offering additional Tamiflu supplies to the Government, I am concerned that this seems yet another rash gesture, on your part. How will you ensure that sufficient stocks will be available for London's emergency services and vital service personnel? These stocks of Tamiflu were bought by Ken Livingstone to protect London and were paid for by Londoners. What guarantees do you have from Government that these supplies of the vaccine will be used specifically to protect London and Londoners?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** They will. I think there has been some confusion about this and it is very important for people to understand - perhaps not Navin - but some people have been confused.

Tamiflu is not a vaccine. It is not something that stops you contracting swine flu. Tamiflu is a preparation that can be used to treat the early symptoms of the disease. When the GLA bought in substantial stocks I think a few years ago it was at a stage when there was not very much of it in the UK and everybody was extremely apprehensive about bird flu and obviously there was an issue about using our own stocks to make sure that vital London public sector workers could continue to keep the city moving and I can see the logic of what was done then.

As it happens the Government now has enough Tamiflu preparation to give it to - I think - 50% of the population. We are not a drugs dispensing agency ourselves. We are not legally able to give medical preparations or treatments. Therefore the logical thing to do with our stocks of Tamiflu - as I am sure everybody understands - was to give it to the NHS for their use and for them to administer it to the general population. That is something that got a bit lost I think a few weeks ago and it is important to get that clear.

**James Cleverly (AM):** So just for a point of clarification, you are confident that there are adequate stocks of retro viral drugs in London in case of a significant outbreak?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, as I say, my understanding is that there is enough to give 50% of the UK population a dose of Tamiflu. If 50% were to contract swine flu then that would be a pandemic on a scale that we have not seen for 40 years.

**James Cleverly (AM):** So, as an extension from that, do you feel confident you are in a position to reassure Londoners that key services - public transport etc - will have a robust contingency plan in the event of a widespread outbreak and London will not brought to its knees?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Absolutely right, James. I am very confident in the contingency plans that we have to make sure that vital services are kept running.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Thank you.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** Mr Mayor, as you are answering Navin Shah's question which is on the order paper which he did not reach, can we make it clear to him that the £1 million that Ken Livingstone spent on these capsules - not the vaccine - were kept by Transport for London, however, the process was not thought through because actually nobody within the building or the organisation could deliver them to those emergency services or highly critical personnel within the GLA group and that they were, effectively, a waste of time but the National Health Service (NHS) has now welcome their delivery to them, they can get it out to doctors and nurses and organisation where there is somebody who can make use of them, as against sitting uselessly on the shelf?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would not disagree much with what you have just said.

## 1381/2009 - Expenses

### Richard Barnbrook

*In the light of the expenses scandal emerging in Parliament, is the Mayor confident that no such abuse can occur at City Hall?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do think that we have in City Hall now a very good system of putting expenses incurred immediately on the web. I think it is the right thing to do. It gets it out there. In the words of Judge Louis Brandeis, "Sunlight is the best disinfectant".

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** Good morning, Mayor Boris. Hopefully during some period of this conversation you might have the decency to look at me when I speak to you and actually answer me and not the Chair.

A little ditto for yourself which I think might go down well with your charred Latin and that is *Dei Gratia Probemur Rebus*. For those that do not understand Latin - I am not great at it - it says, "By the grace of God, let us be judged by our deeds". It is Barking and Dagenham Council's motto. The reason I bring this up quite clearly is it is all quite nice for us to sit here all smug, having a little go at the British National Party but my question to you is in three parts, Mayor Boris.

Number one. You have mentioned about the aspect of putting our expenses - hopefully including your own - onto a website and I would like to find out if that is going to include all details down to the penny - with an explanation, as transparency leads to honesty I like to think - of both your salary, as I mentioned, our salary at the GLA and also our expenses and other perks?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I say, the position is that all expenses incurred by our side of the City Hall and by the Assembly's side of City Hall, to the best of my knowledge, are now put on the web and that includes all the expenses to which we are entitled. They are not the lavish smorgasbord of expenses to which our friends and colleagues down river seem to have been claiming for. I think it is only travel we can really book for is it not? Very modest they should be too.

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** Let us go a little further deeper into this to get a resolve from yourself. In light of the fraud and the corruption down the river at Troughminster - sorry, Westminster - it seems that Labour, Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats - the Greens are just arrogant about it all so they are not really involved - are in a state of crisis. It seems that all three leading parties seem to be sticking their hands and their noses into public money and you have the audacity - this governing body of London has the audacity - and the dare to start pointing fingers at myself and my party and my leader but do not even touch upon the corruption and decadence of the Members which you support, the political parties, is quite clear.

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** So let's put this into a context, Mayor - and I would be grateful if you would look at me when I say this - in the first quarter of this year 13,000 people have lost their houses by repossession while, at the same time, Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats seem to be claiming for second homes. People in this country can barely afford one home regardless a second home. For duck islands, for moat maintenance, for nappies<sup>1</sup> --

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** Is there a question?

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** My time is still running; I will continue, thank you. For nappies, for cat food, for manure - oink oink. It seems the opulence does not seem to reach any boundaries with these three parties.

Your organisation has been exposed by the greed from your paper. Will you now, right here, in the Assembly, make it quite clear your disgust with the Conservative Party? I do not wish you to speak for the Labour and Liberal Democrats - they have their own grave to dig themselves into and explain away - but will you apologise, on behalf of the Conservative Party which at the moment is damaging both yourself as the Mayor and the Mayorship inside this capital city, while at the same time putting the working of the majority party in this Chamber into the highlight in a negative form? It pales into insignificance what I have done or apparently have done to be possibly suspended for. Or the alternative, Mayor Boris, is for you to resign in recognition that your party cannot even contribute to the working of this nation.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** I believe there might have been a question there if you wish to answer that?

**Richard Barnes (AM):** I missed it; could he repeat it!

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** That is probably because your ears are up your backside and your problem is you do not have much concern towards the public and you do not really want to face the truth. Thank you. Go ahead, Boris.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Chair, do you want me to have a crack at --

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** We have 30 seconds left of Mr Barnbrook's time so if you want to be very brief with your answer.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think that here in City Hall we have very good systems of putting our expenses on the web as soon as they are incurred. That is the way to go. That is what they should have been doing for ages in Westminster. The problem they have got is the whole thing has been suddenly revealed all at once; a great --

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** Grab a cab Coleman.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- can of worms has been exposed. I do think that the best way they could clear up the mess would be to have a dissolution of the Parliament down the river and call a general election. I really think that is the way forward.

---

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Standing Order 1.14, this transcript has been redacted to remove comments which have been ruled improper.

## 1053/2009 - Western Extension

### Victoria Borwick

*Given that it will not be possible to scrap the Western Extension until 2010, can you look closely at my suggestion in question 3014/2008 to consider a number of exemption periods in the run up to Christmas this year?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Victoria, thanks. You are an absolutely valiant warrior for this and for the smoothing of traffic in London generally and thank you for everything that you have been doing on that.

All I would say is, just on relieving the Congestion Charge at Christmas, it is an interesting suggestion, it is something that we want to take up with you and I have arranged for TfL officials to have a word with you about it. There are disadvantages: it would be extremely expensive; it could lead to more congestion in Zone 1 at the very time when congestion is maximised during the Christmas rush, so there are big downsides to it, but I think we are definitely willing to have a discussion.

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** Thank you for that encouraging answer. Obviously the contract signed by your predecessor means that maybe your first initial intentions of possibly being able to get rid of the Western Extension of the Congestion Charge by November have unfortunately been postponed and we may not see the end of the Western Extension until this time next year depending on the future consultation.

Of course, for those small businesses and other businesses in that area, including those in Oxford Street who rely heavily on the business generated, and you did say once before that you would consider more exemption periods which proved a success, for example, even some of the very important person (VIP) shopping days in Oxford Street. There are lots of initiatives going on but all of them will be helped by you continuing to show your support - as you have done so far - for London's business and to consider removing this iniquitous tax on a few occasions to help business in that zone.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is a powerful case, Victoria. The case is well understood. If you would be willing I would like to take it up with you in more detail with TfL officials so we can look at the pros and cons.

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** Thank you very much.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** And of course with the other Member for the central zone who sits on your right.

## 1061/2009 - London Plan

### Andrew Boff

*Will the Mayor include shopping parades as a part of the "social infrastructure" in the London Plan? How might their inclusion in the London Plan assist in their protection?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Andrew, thanks. You are right. You are the champion of fruit and veg and local shops throughout London. I congratulate you. He is pro-market and he is right and neighbourhood shopping parades are part of your vision of a vibrant sustainable local economy and you are absolutely right to want that and there will be something in the language of the London Plan

to allow councils -- I get fed up with councils saying they do not have the statutory basis to do something that they want to do. There is nothing in the London Plan they say to help them to protect neighbourhood shops or whatever it happens to be.

OK. I am sure there is plenty of stuff they could use if they chose but let's put some language in that really makes it possible for councils to defend local shopping parades and markets and things that people love and want to maintain.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** That is enormously welcome, Mr Mayor. Thank you very much for that answer. I do appreciate it because it is the vagueness of the language sometimes within the London Plan when it uses terms like social infrastructure without actually defining what that means. It is then open to misinterpretation down the years of what that actually means.

I had another question on the order paper as well which wanted to add pubs in there as well but it is of a similar nature. It is down the list and therefore you will probably give me a written answer --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I did not see it. Where is your pub question?

**Andrew Boff (AM):** You will probably give me a written answer to that but it is of a similar structure. It is not important at the moment. I am hoping for a similar reply because pubs as well are part of the local communities.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are right. What we need to do is insert language into the London Plan that stops local councils giving us the excuse that they do not have any statutory basis to do the thing that they want to do. It is no good them claiming they want to do it and then saying, "We can't". If they really want to do it let us give them the language within our planning system that allows them to do it.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Thank you very much. Enormously welcome.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That allows them to do it.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Very much welcome. Yes, allows them. Does not make them do it.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Does not make them. It allows them.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Allows them. Thank you.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Can I help you perhaps, Mr Mayor, with the language that you should be using in the London Plan? Can the London Plan please say that boroughs will be able to say that there shall not be bus lanes going past these local parades of shops where they are ruining those parades? Can the language please say that we shall not put in red routes past these local shopping parades where there are - all over London as you must see on your bicycle - for sale signs simply because of restrictions which have been placed on shoppers by Transport for London?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not think the London Plan is the place for that kind of detail but what we can do - and what we are doing under the City Charter process which -- alas, we are not going to get to our questions about the City Charter --

**Tony Arbour (AM):** I think you are; it is the next question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Are we? Oh good. I will anticipate it by saying that amongst the things that we could discuss between us, TfL and the boroughs are ways of dealing with that kind of issue and whether there could be more cooperation and more flexibility on some of those questions.

What I do not want to do and I do not think it is reasonable to ask any central London authority to do is for us to abrogate our basic rights to run the Transport for London route network in the way that we want to or to look after the interests of the whole of the city as we see it. You cannot allow the transport network to descend into some sort of piecemeal anarchy.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Mr Mayor, I have got a question down on the Charter but so far as that is concerned you must surely accept that over the past 20 years - which has been the period where there has been the decline in these small shopping parades which serve local communities which they can get to with relatively short journeys - the principal thing which has killed them off has indeed been the accretion by TfL of powers to introduce restrictions on parking. Parking is the principal thing which makes these small parades work and if TfL and its predecessors has been the organisation which has been leading to this decline in the shops then TfL maybe can be the catalyst to stop the decline. I think that it is not a good thing in effect to say, "Well these things must all be decided on a strategic basis and must not be decided on a piecemeal basis" because it is a fact that across London, so far as bus lanes are concerned, for example, TfL has been urging that they should be uniform across boroughs irrespective of the particular circumstances.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I hear what you say about parking rules, Tony and it is a hotly contested issue. I happen to think that if you look at congestion problems not just in the centre of London but around London we would not be doing ourselves any favours as a city if we encourage people ever more in the outer boroughs to depend on their cars as their primary means of getting around.

I am passionately pro-car and I want to defend people who use their motor vehicles. You cannot clobber them too much. But if you endlessly provide for more parking then you will not get people doing the modal shift that we want, you will not get people on bicycles, you will not generate the environmental improvements and the improvements to people's quality of life and the reduction in congestion that we want to see. Actually you will kill off economic growth all the more speedily.

There are certainly plenty of issues around shopping parades and there are plenty of ways we could support them but I am not convinced that a massive expansion of car parks and parking across London is the way forward.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** We are not suggesting that. What I have been saying is that TfL has in fact been squeezing these. To give you an example, many bus stop clearways are up to 100 metres long. Often these bus stop clearways are outside these shopping parades and people therefore no longer have access to them --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is a very fair point. One of the things we are trying to do with the flexible Local Implementation Plans (LIPs) funding - which has been widely welcomed by boroughs - is to give boroughs much more ability to vary their own priorities. I think we have reduced the categories of funding within the LIPs programme from 20 to 5 so that there is far less prescription from us from the centre about what boroughs can decide are their transport priorities. If there are improvements that they want to make to benefit, for instance, a local shopping parade or group of shops or whatever then they will now have far more flexibility to do that.

I think that is an argument that you have made very powerfully over the last few years and which we are trying to go as far as we can to accept but without losing our basic duty, strategically, to keep the transport system moving.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Thank you.

## 1079/2009 - Airwave

### Dee Doocey

*In March, workers at Airwave went on strike in protest against compulsory redundancies. What impact did this have on the Metropolitan Police Services' use of Airwave, and what measures are in place to ensure that the Airwave support remains continuous in the event of any future actions?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Dee, my information is that there was no operational impact from the strike and that of course the Metropolitan Police Service is working with Airwave to make sure that any future such industrial action does not lead to any erosion of the capability.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Are you satisfied that that will happen?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** OK. A couple of specific questions. You are aware that the Airwave coverage in London is patchy. I was wondering if you would ask the Metropolitan Police Service to do an audit in each borough to try to identify the black spots? It is a good idea.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** In my capacity as Chairman of the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) and I see --

**Dee Doocey (AM):** He is nodding so say yes!

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The Deputy Chairman for Policing [Kit Malthouse AM] is nodding so this extra burden can be placed up on the Metropolitan Police Service can it? The Deputy Chairman for Policing nods.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** It is a good idea because some boroughs have got black spots.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I take a very lively interest in what the Deputy Chairman for Policing says.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Excellent. Will you further then undertake that when these black spots are identified that you will make sure something is done to address them? It is not a trick question I assure you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, no, it is a very sensible and practical question. Of course we will, yes.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** OK. What is being done to address the problem to make sure that there are sufficient operational Airwave channels to cover all of the communications in the Metropolitan Police Service?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Sufficient channels to cover all the communications --

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Yes, bandwidth. Communications channels so that when the Metropolitan Police Service needs to police a large area, for example the Olympics, that there are sufficient channels available for them to talk to each other.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** My own view about this - without having inquired into the detail of the bandwidth requirements of the Metropolitan Police Service, which I believe to be

adequate for their purposes at the moment - is that it is a national scandal that we give over so much of our bandwidth to the Pentagon. Did you know that, Dee?

**Dee Doocey (AM):** I did not.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You might want to campaign about that. Do you know huge quantities of UK bandwidth are consecrated --

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Mr Mayor, much as I hate to interrupt you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- to those American golf balls at Fylingdales or whatever it is. It is absolutely true.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** I would love to hear about this afterwards. If perhaps I could just ask you to --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think it should be given back. UK bandwidth is a UK resource.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** I think Dee is running out of time so if Dee can come back in and ask her supplementary?

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Please. Could I ask that I could have a response in writing since you clearly do not know the answer, Mr Mayor?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do. I have said that I think that the Metropolitan Police Service has adequate bandwidth.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Sorry, I was trying to be polite. Your answer is wrong, Mr Mayor! Can I ask you to give me a proper answer in writing and can I finally ask you what you are doing to address the problem that there are not enough radios to go round and officers are having to share them? Could I ask you to come back to me in writing about that as well?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Certainly. I am sure we can revert --to you.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Perhaps you would want to bring it up at the MPA when we next attend it?

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Thank you.

## **995/2009 - Burglary**

### **Richard Tracey**

*What are the Safer Neighbourhood Teams and police doing locally to ensure that high-risk communities and individuals are better prepared against burglary?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Dick. You are right to highlight this because burglary is of course a vile crime and it leaves householders with a real sense of violation. I think it right that it should be such a high priority for Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs). 360 of the 624 Safer Neighbourhood Teams have burglary as a priority and burglary is coming down. It is down this year on last year and I think that is all the more creditable given the economic circumstances and the

difficulties that many people are finding themselves in and the grim analysis there has been that we would see a rise in burglary as well as other acquisitive crime.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Thank you for that answer. It is obviously good news that burglary is coming down but it is, as you say, certainly something which all of our constituents fear very greatly, especially those that are vulnerable and perhaps old.

I do pick up comments though from my constituents and other people that some Safer Neighbourhood Teams are not perhaps doing quite the amount of hard work they should to inform people where there are burglary problems in the area and measures that could be taken to protect them. Also apparently some crime protection officers have been taken out because of some excessive cost.

What I really want to hear from you is that there is consistency across London in warning particularly the vulnerable and the old about the risks of burglary and then maybe helping them to take steps to protect themselves with locks and window protection and so on.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. We are certainly working to harden the targets as you suggest. I want to revert to the basic position because a lot of people will be listening to your question and worrying that perhaps they are more at risk than they were. Burglary is coming down along with many other forms of crime. It is down 1.1% year on year and I do think that Safer Neighbourhood Teams are a vital part of our war against that sort of crime. We have an operation called Operation Spotlight. The Metropolitan Police Service has been running Operation Spotlight with other partners which has targeted residential burglary and since November last year it has produced 2,500 arrests and actually concentrating on the repeat burglars because that is the way to stamp it out.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Thank you.

## **1031/2009 - City Charter**

### **Tony Arbour**

*Your City Charter says that you will pursue the 'devolution of powers on Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) to the boroughs'. Will you please list them?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thanks, Tony. Just to revert to our discussion which we interrupted a while ago, of course there are things that I think can be profitably done at a local level rather than at the TfL level and that is one of the things we will want to discuss with the City Charter. TfL, the GLA and London Councils are meeting on 18 June to see how they can take this kind of thing forward. I do not want to list all the areas. I do not want to promise that we can deliver all the things that you demand.

I would say that an obvious power that is capable of being devolved is the highways enforcement of obstructions of the footway which after Dick [Tracey] took me to see what was going on in Tooting - do you remember we went to see the A24 in Tooting - we are trialling that and I do think that is something that could be worked on.

I do not think it reasonable for any Mayor to say that the Transport for London route network should be devolved completely to borough management.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** I am sure that your heart is in the right place. I suspect that you have been got at by TfL and the general establishment to --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not know about that.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Your heart is in the right place is it not?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It certainly is, yes. Last time I looked!

**Tony Arbour (AM):** I am advocating this as much in your interests as well as those of Londoners because so long as TfL retain what I will consider to be trivial powers but which are significant as far as boroughs are concerned and have no great impact on the route network, boroughs are going to hide behind you.

I have a letter in front of me from one of the boroughs which I represent which deals with objections to a scheme where nobody was in support of the scheme whatsoever and the borough council's response as to why they did not bother to object to you was because, "We have not raised objection given that London Buses has the statutory powers to undertake such work". In other words the public is saying, "We don't want this thing to happen". The local authority is willing to take a blind eye to what their residents think because they say, "There is nothing we can do about it anyway, London Buses will enforce it".

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is like blaming Brussels.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Now I have had from you assurances - and indeed which I sent to the local authority in question - where you have said that if a borough is against something then TfL will not enforce it. So long as you are not willing to devolve such matters to the boroughs they are going to continue to hide behind this and that is the reason why I have asked this question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is a very interesting point. In a matter where TfL is, as it were, indifferent the borough cannot be allowed to hide behind the mere fact of TfL's nominal sovereignty over the question.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** That is very useful. I look to see the printed minute of that and hopefully these characters will listen --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It was very carefully phrased.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** It goes without saying they are Liberal Democrats who are not listening.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Can I support what my colleague, Tony Arbour, has been saying. You, Mr Mayor, mentioned the A24 road which runs through Tooting in my constituency. In fact what is happening there is that the local authority, Wandsworth Council, has taken up the management of the pavements particularly which is really very important to the people of Tooting --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We looked at it.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** It is a pilot operation and it is working extremely well, may I say, and the hope is that this will lead to far more agency working by borough councils across London on behalf of TfL. It may well be right that TfL retain the strategic power over these routes but actually the management of the pavements and very often the repair of pot holes is something that the local boroughs can do far better than TfL and much more quickly.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Dick, I think you are preaching to the semi-converted here! What we all need to do is see how far we can -- we are doing it on the A24. It is working in the matter of enforcing restrictions on clutter on pavements. Let's see how it goes. If there is progress to

be made on pot holes then that is the kind of thing we should be taking up in the City Charter on 18 June. Let's take this forward.

## **1068/2009 - Hainault Station Trees**

### **Roger Evans**

*In early March more than seventy 30 foot high trees next to Hainault Station were chopped down. Residents first received notice of this on 12 March, three days after the first branches were felled. Does the Mayor agree that this was unacceptable and what short-term and long-term plans does TfL have to rectify this situation?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Roger, for your question. I am informed that the felling of trees next to Hainault Station was necessitated by work that needed to be done at Hainault Embankment. Assessments showed that if steps were not taken to stabilise the embankment there could be a risk to the continued safe operation of the Tube. The clearing also needed to be completed urgently before birds began nesting which could have resulted in delays to these vital works.

But I am not satisfied about how it was done. Letters were delivered to residents on 11 March in advance of the tree removal works which is of course in breach of our normal practice of informing residents at least two weeks in advance of the works. I am sorry that this was not done on that occasion. I have asked TfL to look at its process, see what it did wrong and I know that TfL has since met residents and representatives of the borough to discuss the works in more detail.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I know Redbridge Borough is quite keen to work closely with Transport for London on this issue and make sure that the damage done is restored as sensitively as possible. Is that something that you will undertake to make sure that they do?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** If you are talking about environmental damage of course. If you are talking about emotional damage then I am not quite sure --

**Roger Evans (AM):** I did not mention emotional damage. We can judge that ourselves probably better.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Trauma.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Specifically, the train travels on an embankment above people's houses. A barrier of trees has been removed and that creates a situation where they are now exposed to a great deal more noise than they were before.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I say, I am very sorry that this was done in the way that it was done. Clearly this was not something that I had any prior knowledge of. We will make sure that reasonable steps are taken to rectify the damage that has been done.

**Roger Evans (AM):** It was a Metronet special this one. Of course, it being a station, as the train slows down and sometimes stops outside the station the passengers get a bird's eye view through people's bedroom windows and into their back gardens so we need some sort of vegetative barrier there to protect people's privacy --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I understand that. Roger, your point has very well made. Everybody will understand that in TfL. I can think of several solutions off the top of my head to restore a vegetative barrier there. We need to get on with it.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Excellent.

## **1032/2009 - Rape Crisis Centres**

**Steve O'Connell**

*You have been accused of cutting your proposed funding levels, and therefore commitment to, the Rape Crisis Centres. Does it remain your intention to fund an additional 3 Rape Crisis Centres in London on top of the existing facility in Croydon, will you commit to providing these centres for the benefit of London's women, how will the provision of £233,000 for the facilities work and why has there been a change in the funding figure from the original?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thanks, Steve. Obviously this springs from our joint interest - actually you introduced me to the work of the Croydon Rape Crisis Centre and it was the inspirational work that they do in Croydon that led us to decide that we wanted to fund three other such centres across London. It is vital that we get on and do this. It is something that Londoners want done.

The difficulty is that we are not a provider of services here in the GLA. We are not going to be in the business of offering our own rape crisis centres. We have got to make sure that they are in the right place, that they are responding to a genuine local need and that they have a long term business plan that makes sense. So we are working to get that done.

I am committed to doing this. It has not been possible to do it within the first year of my Mayoralty. That does not mean it is not going to be possible to deal with it in the first term of my Mayoralty, or the next three years at any rate. I am therefore allocating, as you know, £233,000 per year for the next three years to that end.

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor. You have come in for some criticism by some others around the fact that only 12 months in you have not delivered the full manifesto pledge of four centres and I do not doubt that you will deliver that manifesto pledge. You have already earmarked £233,000 in this one year.

This should not be a party political point but it has been made so by others in the press and the media. How does your commitment to rape crisis centres compare to the commitment under the previous administration?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not want to make any invidious comparisons with the previous administration. All I will say is I do think that this makes a very great deal of sense for London. Obviously rape is an odious crime and it is something that needs to be taken much more seriously I believe by us as a society.

I also think there are very sound criminological reasons for wishing to deal with it very, very effectively and to give people the maximum confidence to go to somewhere, go to a centre where, with discretion and with confidentiality, they can explain what has happened and they can get all the support that they may need. I say that because all the evidence is that if you can tackle rape and you can force down the incidence of rape - and it is worrying that that incidence is currently increasing - then you will be able also to deal with a wide range of associated crimes, particularly crimes of violence - and if you can deal with crimes against women you may very well be able to pre-empt other sorts of crime as well so it is a top priority for us.

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** Thank you. I will be less polite than you are; over the eight years of the previous administration only one rape crisis centre remained. Under your leadership I look forward to that being quadrupled.

## **907/2009 - 20mph boroughs**

**Jenny Jones**

*Will you meet borough representatives to discuss funding pilots of 20 mph borough wide speed limits, as recommended by the recent report from the London Assembly?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Jenny, I tried to answer this a little bit earlier on but I will say that of course I will be very happy to meet borough leaders, borough representatives and environment officers to discuss how they might want to take forward 20 mph zones where they have strong -- as I said to you when we met, I think we need to be convinced that they are going to have strong widespread local support.

I personally like the idea. I think that they could be a good thing. There are difficulties in introducing 20 mph limits on main roads in London. I think you really start to have very, very adverse consequences for traffic but, in areas that want them, there is no reason why you should not have a default setting of 20 mph.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I am not sure if I have said this to you before but there are something like eight boroughs queuing up and the reason that we have talked about doing it in Southwark and Hackney first is that their plans are the best put together. From Bexley but their plans are not very well worked up.

When we did the Transport Committee rapporteurship we did have officers from each of these boroughs and we had politicians from all these boroughs so I can assure you that there is widespread support in the boroughs that we have spoken to.

You have asked me now if I would guarantee that the Leaders would come if you ask them which seems to me a slightly odd protocol but which I am working with Jennette [Arnold] for Hackney and Southwark has agreed to come --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Hackney and Southwark are the two ones who want to lead on this and you are talking about a borough wide --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Yes.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am certainly interested in pursuing this. I think we need to look at the traffic impacts, we need to look at quite what reductions we would see in capacity on London's roads as a result of the measures that you were thinking of but, in principle, with strong local democratic support for 20 mph zones, I do not have any objection --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** We have got that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We have to get it clear to people that we are not talking about all roads in the borough. We are talking about --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Well we might be. We might be. That is the problem; we might be. Hackney wants it borough wide.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** You are out of time now, Jenny.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is very interesting and it is something that we would need to consider jointly because, if you do it borough wide and Hackney wants it on every single road in the borough, then you have just got to think about the impacts for the efficiency of London's roads altogether.

## **1166/2009 - Housing Target 2**

**Mike Tuffrey**

*Have you now agreed affordable housing targets for the 2008 to 2011 period, totalling 50,000, with all the boroughs individually?*

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** You have answered the main question so if I come straight in with a supplementary. It is in relation to the 39,000 possible units from land that Transport for London and the London Development Agency own. If you are not ready to step up to the role of Teddy Roosevelt can I press upon you --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Any kind of Roosevelt.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** -- if you remember from *House of Cards*, Francis Urquhart's phrase was 'to put a bit of stick about' because, in terms of your own officers, they need a little bit of stick putting about them. Via you, the answer you gave me from Transport for London in relation to their 5,000 and why they have not brought those forward is there is an ongoing review, a comprehensive assessment, premature -- I have been asking regular written questions about this. Can I ask you, urgently, in relation to the 7,000 possible units of land held by Transport for London and the 32,000 possible units from the LDA to put a bit of stick about and get them moving?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, of course.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, we will. We have to be careful that we do not flog off assets at a time when the value is not, to put it mildly, optimal. We need a strategy to make sure that we do it in such a way that the benefits of making this land available actually accrue to the tax payer in the long run if possible.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Absolutely. Good. Thank you.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** OK. Thank you very much. That concludes the questions this morning so thank you to the Mayor.