

**1605/2005 - Under 16s Free Travel: Revocation of Passes**

**Roger Evans**

*You have assured Londoners that young people who conduct themselves in an unlawful or threatening manner whilst on public transport will have their passes revoked. How will TfL identify these individuals, and what procedure will be followed? Will this sanction also apply to behaviour outside the public transport network?*

**The Mayor:** TfL is working closely with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to ensure that the under-16 free travel concession can be withdrawn from young people given formal police warnings, reprimands, or convictions for criminal offences related to the public transport network. These offences include criminal damage, assault, and public disorder. Details of these arrangements are being finalised, but will involve the MPS notifying TfL of such incidents, where the child is in possession of an Oyster photo-identification (ID).

TfL revenue inspectors are empowered to withdraw Oyster photo-IDs on the spot, where the card has been transferred or altered. Revenue inspectors will also report to TfL the details of any Oyster photo-ID holders they find involved in any instance of criminal or anti-social behaviour. This may result in the free travel concession being withdrawn or final warnings be given by TfL.

**Roger Evans (AM):** You say that your work with the MPS on this is being finalised. When is a procedure going to be in place to deal with that situation?

**The Mayor:** It will evolve as we see what problems emerge, and how we deal with them.

**Roger Evans (AM):** It will evolve.

**The Mayor:** In the best of all possible worlds, there will not be any. It might be that we have found anti-social behaviour amongst youngsters who are 13-years-old, just the year below where they need to get the photo-ID cards. If that is the case, then we will extend the photo-ID cards down the age range to accommodate it.

**Roger Evans (AM):** What about people who we must know, through MPS records, have a criminal record for committing criminal damage, for mugging, or for committing crimes outside the transport network, and who have applied for a pass? Will they be allowed to have one, or will they be prevented from having one?

**The Mayor:** I think we will start on the basis that everyone starts afresh – turn over a fresh leaf, and so on. Where, however, people make any anti-social behaviour on the buses, we will deal with it. For things off the buses, I suspect we are not going to get into a position of making those judgments. What we are saying to young people is, ‘You have here a tremendous opportunity on the buses to be able to use them to explore London. If you abuse it, it will be taken away.’ I do not think we should start to see this as something somehow subordinate to the criminal justice system outside the bus network.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I think the same standards of proof may well be required, though, you will ultimately find. Does this mean that someone can commit vandalism on the Underground or the surface rail system and still be allowed to use the bus?

**The Mayor:** No. I suspect if we caught a child vandalising the Tube or the Docklands Light Railway (DLR), we would most probably withdraw that. As I say, the pattern of how we manage this will evolve as we come to terms with any problems that actually arise.

**Roger Evans (AM):** You talk about inappropriate behaviour, as well as criminal acts. I know I get a lot of complaints from pensioners who use the buses about younger people who refuse to give up their seats for them, or who behave in otherwise anti-social ways. Is there a possibility that you could use this photo-ID scheme as a way of instilling better behaviour and courtesy on the bus network, as well as just dealing with criminal acts?

**The Mayor:** I have to say, those pensioners and women who I talk to – women who are pregnant in particular – say it is a universal problem with men of all ages. I have noticed, myself, on the Underground invariably when a pregnant woman gets on, it is another woman who gets up and offers her seat, rather than a man. Therefore, I do not think this is uniquely a problem of youngsters.

It might very well be, through *The Londoner* and our other advertising methods, we need to start to try to change social behaviour in London. I do think that that is more appropriate, once we reach the point where we have the completed roll out of neighbourhood policing. It is my intention – and I know this is a matter of a lot of debate and planning to get it right – that once we have the full roll out of neighbourhood policing, they should start to enforce all the laws and also just get back into making sure people are in an orderly queue at the bus stop and so on – all these things. Police are there to remind and prod people in the right direction with anti-social behaviour.

**Roger Evans (AM):** You are going to use neighbourhood police to make sure people form an orderly queue at the bus stop?

**The Mayor:** I would very much hope, if you get police walking past a great scrum of people at a bus stop, they would ask them to form an orderly queue. It is really unhelpful when people spread out over the whole pavement, so that elderly people, people with children, and people with heavy shopping have to manoeuvre round to get in.

I have noticed, increasingly, that people will just push others out the way to get on the bus. I grew up in a city where people did respect others enough to queue, and I would like to see us getting back to that. Yes, I do expect police, once we have that rolled out, will start to draw these things to the attention of the public. I see a lot of people here smirking, but I think the vast majority of people want that.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I think if there is some wry amusement around this table, it is only because it appears you are making this up as you go along. There does not seem to be a procedure in place for dealing with this. Saying it is going to evolve is simply not going to be good enough when you start to face challenges from parents and from people whose cards you take away. This is full of holes, Mr Mayor.

**The Mayor:** If you go back to the initial statements I made when we launched the first of the neighbourhood patrols two years ago with the Prime Minister up at Harlesden, I made absolutely clear the long-term objective was the enforcement of all our laws and a change in the behaviour of people. On the question of protests from parents when we remove the card, this is a gift from Londoners to a younger generation; it is not a right.

Therefore, we are not subject to a whole long and drawn-out legal process, which people can exploit. It will be used without that long, drawn-out structure. It will be a virtually instantaneous response by TfL to anti-social behaviour.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Can this 'gift from Londoners,' as you call it, be exploited, as you say, by people who are from outside London? Are young people outside London eligible, if they apply?

**The Mayor:** You have a situation where we are exploring this with neighbouring authorities. Young people, I am certain, will apply. We will deal with this as it emerges. At the moment, we are still rolling out the initial card issue to Londoners. My initial view was very much it should only apply to children in London. It might very well be that we take a more relaxed view about that, once we see the likely demand from neighbouring areas, and particularly if we get any financial support from neighbouring councils.

**Roger Evans (AM):** What if you are a young person from outside the country? Say you are from another European country; you are coming here with your parents as tourists to London. Would you be eligible to apply for this ticket?

**The Mayor:** We are not using this to provide a subsidy for tourism. We target tourism in other specific ways. There is still a whole range of products you can buy from TfL to ensure that you can get your children around. This is something that is paid for by London fare payers and the council tax payer, and we are not in a position of subsidising either the rest of Britain or the rest of the world.

**Roger Evans (AM):** That will come as a relief to London council tax and fare payers. What is the mechanism that you have in place to prevent people from outside London applying and using these passes?

**The Mayor:** What we have done is we have asked people to apply with details of their address, and it has to be validated either by the local school or by the other methods, with the passport or whatever, when people turn up. I am sure you will be able to do an awful lot of work and eventually find somebody from Chipping Sodbury who has applied unlawfully. I am sure, when you do, it will be presented as the end of civilisation as we know it.

I do think perhaps a more positive approach is the fact that young Londoners are now able to get out and about, that we have had a real improvement in the quality of life of low-income families by lifting the burden of child transport costs. Perhaps a more positive approach to life might be good for you, as well.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I am sure it would be, but you see, it is not my job. It is my job to scrutinise your arrangements to make sure that they are effective.

**The Mayor:** Not so miserably.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Are you saying, Mr Mayor, that if someone applies from an address that is not in London, you will refuse them?

**The Mayor:** No, what I am saying is we are letting this evolve. It is not like the Congestion Charge where we had a whole load of legal structures to go through, where those were defined by law. This is something we have done. There is no legal structure in place. As it evolves, it will be managed and adapted. If there were major problems – if suddenly, we had the collapse of social order, and young people running rampant – we might have to withdraw it completely. I do not think that is going to happen, and at the margins, we will see as it develops.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I am sorry; this was manifesto commitment 18 months ago.

**The Mayor:** I have not finished answering the question. If you have a huge scale of abuse, you will have to have very rigorous means of enforcing it as you want. If you have a minute level of abuse, it most probably is not worth putting in place great structures to enforce it.

**Roger Evans (AM):** This was a manifesto commitment. It is your commitment from 18 months ago. How much evolution does it need to do, given that you should have planned it before you brought it in?

**The Mayor:** No, it was actually an idea by Frank Dobson (MP, former Labour Party Mayoral candidate), which I thought was a very good one five years ago. We could not introduce it immediately, because we had to restore the basic fabric of the bus service. Until you put something like this in place, you cannot work out perfectly what is going to happen. We all remember the Congestion Charge when it came in: twice as many car owners as we anticipated stopped driving in. This will not turn out exactly as we predict, but we will manage it so it becomes an enrichment for young people in London, that they can enjoy this city, and they can better themselves and the city.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Finally, Mr Mayor, we attempted to apply for a ticket using the form on the website yesterday, and we were told by TfL that it is not accepting the form on the website, and you should go to the Post Office to get a form. Is this not a hopeless shambles?

**The Mayor:** No, no, it is not a hopeless shambles, because we really do not want – I imagine you must be approaching 50 – a 50-year-old man able to get one of these over the website. We want you to have to go to the Post Office, so the person behind the counter can see such a balding, old ancient really does not qualify for one.

**Geoff Pope (AM):** Good morning. The bad news is that if you try the website first, and if you happen to live in Sutton and you go to the Post Office to apply for your free travel, you will almost certainly find that you will not be able to get your Oyster Card, if you are 14 or 15, because there is a shortage. Therefore, you will not be able to get a free pass with your Oyster Card.

They say that they order the cards, but do not get near as many as they need, and we are told that they receive a weekly allocation, rather than get what they require. This is causing concern and difficulty. Could you arrange for those responsible to respond to the Post Office's actual requirements, and get this mess sorted out?

**The Mayor:** There is a safety margin built in here. Almost all the children applying already have photo-ID cards, because they were using them to get the half-travel concession. What we have said is in the period from now to 1 January, whilst this system is rolled out, you can carry on using those, so people have until 1 January. I suspect that the idea of sending a finite number to each Post Office is to prevent one Post Office having a vast number, and perhaps them being used with criminal intent or pass them off or whatever. I will, however, go back and check to make sure we increase the allocation to Sutton. Obviously, there has been much more procreation than TfL anticipated.

**Geoff Pope (AM):** All right. Thank you. We have heard about the difficulties in making the revocation of passes work. What is the view of the MPS and the British Transport Police about this proposal?

**The Mayor:** I did not ask for their permission.

**Geoff Pope (AM):** You have said you were consulting them.

**The Mayor:** They have been consulted at all stages about how this is carried forward. In the end, I do not think there was any particularly noticeable change, but we were ready to make quite a diversion of neighbourhood police patrols onto the buses, had there been any immediate problems. We did not, however, pick up any. They have been involved all the way through on this.

Clearly, under the various Acts relating to confidentiality in computer-stored data, the MPS are not in a position where they can just pass over to us all copies of their criminal records relating to young people. Fortunately, in almost every instance where there is a problem, there will either be a bus driver or revenue collection inspector present at the time, and they can get the details of the child as well as the police can.

**Geoff Pope (AM):** Should you not be bearing down equally in removing passes or Oyster Cards from anyone of any age who is behaving in an unlawful or threatening manner? It really just seems to be focusing on 14- and 15-year-olds.

**The Mayor:** As I said earlier, if 13-year-olds have a sudden upsurge in criminality, we will change the regulation, so that 13-year-olds have to have the photo-ID pass. On the balance of the existing recorded crime, it really is youngsters of 14; that is about the age they start to get into trouble. There is not a great problem under that age. Now, I am sure someone can really come up with a 12-year-old who is a monster with a knife on the bus, but overwhelmingly, the problem starts about that time. If we need to, we can always make it younger, but I do not anticipate the scale of problems that some Members of the Assembly seem to worry about.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** I sometimes wonder whether I live in the same city as some of my fellow Assembly Members. It is clearly being rolled out very smoothly, the free bus travel for under-16s. I was just wondering, as a kind of technicality in terms of procedures between the MPS and TfL, what things you have in place to protect the rights of children and young people under the Child Protection Act and data protection requirements.

**The Mayor:** Under the Data Protection Act, it is not lawful for the MPS to pass their criminal files and details of them over to TfL. As I say, I do not anticipate that being a problem, because there is always a driver on the bus, and we have our photo. We will have a photograph of the offender from the closed-circuit television, which as you know, is already on 95% of buses and will be on 100% by early next year.

We are keeping in close contact and debate with the Transport Operational Command Unit (TOCU), the MPS, and the British Transport Police monitoring this as it develops, and we will adjust and adapt as it does develop. Simply because it is purely a decision we have made and not part of a national framework of legislation, we have a very wide discretion about how we implement it. We will clearly want to make sure that young people continue to get the level of protection that we have already had.

As you know, the standing instruction to all bus drivers is if a child had no money, he or she had to be taken on the bus to the point where they were going and not left at the bus stop, because of the overriding needs for the safety of the child. Now, of course, that is not a problem, but we will still look for the same sort of approach. Almost all our drivers by the end of this year, I think, will have been through the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualification, which has customer safety, customer satisfaction, and customer relations as a key part of that training.

**Joanne McCartney**

*Would the Mayor please update his written report?*

**The Mayor:** Thank you. On 8 September, the MPS Commissioner (Sir Ian Blair) outlined how the service will be reshaped in the next three years to deliver enhanced policing for London. Emerging results from the service review point in six directions. It is our intention that the roll out of the Safer Neighbourhoods Programme should be accelerated across every borough in London by the end of the next financial year, bringing forward the plan by at least one year, and it might very well have been two years. Therefore, within 18 months, we anticipate every neighbourhood in London will have their team of police and police community support officers (PCSOs).

We are moving towards a bigger counter-terrorism department, which will be absorbing the existing Anti-Terrorism Branch and Special Branch into a single Counter-Terrorist Branch. There will be a new emphasis within the Specialist Crime Directorate on cracking organised criminal networks, and this will support the work of the Safer Neighbourhoods Teams. There will be more investment in the training of frontline staff and the establishment of a leadership academy to deliver this.

There will be movement towards a much more information-driven service and a strong focus on public accessibility. Next year, Met Call, the new communication infrastructure, will come into almost full flow. Other initiatives include plans to transform the MPS's estate and a bid to reverse the common culture of officers patrolling in pairs, so that the presumption will be officers will patrol singly, except in areas where there is any heightened degree of danger.

I am now proceeding, as well, on the issue of the matter of the London Borough of Bromley and its refusal to allow same-sex couples to hold ceremonies to mark their civil partnerships. I have informed the leader of Bromley Council (Stephen Carr) that my legal advice is this policy could be unlawful and an infringement of the Human Rights Act of 1998. There have been statements attributed by Bromley councillors in the local media – always bearing in mind that not everything in the newspapers is correct, but I have seen no letters from the members concerned denying this.

We saw in the *Bromley News Shopper* on 7 June, Council Leader Stephen Carr saying, 'They should not be seen as equal. Gay marriage undermines our society and family values.' The same article reported Councillor Colin Bloom said, 'Gay marriages are immoral and undermine family values in society.' The current Mayor of the London Borough of Bromley, Councillor Joan Wykes, is reported to have said, 'Marriage is about procreation and contributing to society. However, with same-sex partnerships, this does not contribute to anything, apart from trying to get what perks they can.' That is another example of positive thinking.

If Bromley continues to refuse equality for lesbians and gay men, I will seriously consider legal action by the Greater London Authority (GLA). I know the Assembly discussed this matter at a recent Plenary, and I welcome the comments of Members from across the political spectrum. I have asked the leader of the Opposition, Michael Howard (MP, Leader, Conservative Party) to take up this matter with Bromley, as it breaches his party's manifesto policy on equality.

Finally, on 28 September, I will be putting before the TfL board the proposal to make the whole of Greater London a low emission zone by the end of this Mayoral term. This will implement the commitment I made in my last election manifesto. The zone will set tough new emission standards for all lorries and coaches entering London, building on the measures we are already implementing for buses and taxis.

Road transport is responsible for nearly 50% of emissions of both oxides of nitrogen and particulate matter, the two pollutants that cause ill health and, in the worst cases, premature death for large numbers of Londoners. Making London a low emission zone will improve the health and quality of life for Londoners and make London a more attractive place to visit and do business. Full details of the scheme will be announced at the TfL board meeting.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Firstly, on the policing update you gave: a great welcome to the roll out of the Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and the larger counter-terrorism unit. Given the recent events in London, there has been concern that other crimes have not been investigated as quickly as they should have been. Does the increase and the establishment of the specialist crime networks go some way to building and bridging the deficit that has been shown to exist?

**The Mayor:** If you compare what happened after 9/11 with what happened after 7 July, the contrast is striking. At the time of 9/11, we had 25,500 police. So many were sucked into central London to protect key terrorist targets that we had an absolute surge in crime throughout virtually every other part of London, and this went on for months. What we had after 7 July was a brief blip upwards, particularly in some of the outer boroughs, but this has now come back down to normal levels, because we are operating with 31,000 police, and we can cope with something like this better.

In a sense, what is even more significant than these changes is that long increase in policing – five years' continuous growth. I always believed that once you reached a point like we have now, that you needed to really re-think the existing structures of policing, not just carry on adding more to this department and more to that. As neighbourhood policing starts to bring down crime, it has to have significant implications for how we organise the centre. Therefore, we could not have done this in the first two or three years of the Mayoral system, but we are in a position to do it now, and it means a real shift of people from behind the desk out onto the streets.

There has been remarkably little complaint from the sources you might have expected on this, and I think the MPS has been transformed in terms of its confidence and its preparation to make the sort of structural changes people have been arguing for for years. It is very much as a parallel to the changes that Valerie (Shawcross, Chair, London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA)) has pushed through the Fire Brigade in London, just to bring it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It really will be a significant change, now, in all the structures of the MPS. We think – and it can only be an estimate – that the roll out of Safer Neighbourhoods will reduce crime overall in London by a further 10%.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Can I also ask about the low-emission zone? That is going to the TfL board this month. I am just wondering when, if it is approved at that board meeting, consultation will take place.

**The Mayor:** There has been consultation, really, since the establishment of the Mayoral system. There was a long period of discussion between TfL officers, the boroughs, and the Association of London Government (ALG). This is one of those things where, at the beginning, everybody thought it was a wonderful idea, and I was always being told by the Assembly, 'Do not waste your time with a Congestion Charge. Press ahead with the low emission zone.'

As we have got closer, one or two of the faint-hearted have peeled off, and also, it has become clear, it is much more technically difficult – I am not thinking in terms of the technology of tackling the pollution, but the legalities around all of it. Effectively, we are using the powers that we also used for Congestion Charging to create a zone for London and levy, basically, a fine or charge for coming into it with a polluting vehicle. It is not the ideal way. If we were a legislative body, we would do it in a simpler way, but these are the only powers we have, and we will use them. I am hopeful this will be in operation early in 2008.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** That is very welcome. Thank you.

**Elizabeth Howlett (AM):** Mr Mayor, you have accepted that PCSOs seem to reduce crime. They certainly offer reassurance, and I am not against them at all, because they have a role in certain situations. The roll out, however, as you know, is very expensive. Therefore, would you accept that the roll out of PCSOs is to the detriment, perhaps, of trained and warranted police officers, i.e., we would not get as many new police officers if we had to roll out the whole of the Safer Neighbourhoods Programme?

**The Mayor:** The roll out of the rest of the programme will be police officers and PCSOs – both. In each year since the establishment of the Mayoral system, we have increased the numbers of full police officers. In addition, we have had the benefit of the support provided by the PCSOs. Under these proposals, at the end of this transformation, there will be more full police officers than there are today. There will also be more PCSOs. Now, exactly how many of each, I am not in a position to predict, because this represents a significant shift away from behind-the-desk work out onto the streets. Nevertheless, I guarantee, both to you and to the Police Federation, in terms of full police officers with the whole range of powers, there will be more of them at the end of this process than there are today.

**Elizabeth Howlett (AM):** That is your guarantee?

**The Mayor:** Absolute guarantee.

**Elizabeth Howlett (AM):** Thank you.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** Yes, London will welcome the roll out of PCSOs to the wards in the neighbourhoods which currently do not have them. Indeed, there is a certain tension between wards which have PCSOs and those that do not. Based on historical costs, to roll out the next 368 wards, I believe it is, it will cost £120 million. Is this going to be the first call on your precept?

**The Mayor:** No, the historical cost figures died with Sir Ian's (Blair) announcement. We are changing all the internal structures of the MPS. The historical cost was based on keeping the existing MPS structure and establishment and simply adding on, for five consecutive years, the roll out of neighbourhood policing. You are right: that would have been painful. What Sir Ian (Blair) is doing is diverting resources from behind-the-scenes at Scotland Yard out onto the street. Therefore, it will not be that scale of cost.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** What do you estimate to be the call on the precept, then?

**The Mayor:** If we could get the Government to pay for half of it, we could keep it down to about 12 pence. If we have to bear all of it, it would come in more like 24 pence. Now, clearly, we have to go off and argue. This is a big commitment. If it works completely in London, it has long-term benefits for the rest of the country. There is going to be a lot of haggling between now and then.

There is also the argument we are having about who bears the cost of all the extra policing arising from 7 July, and we are also arguing, of course, about extra money for developments in the Thames Gateway, particularly around the Olympics. We really are in major discussions with Government about the budget for next year.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** Therefore, the next wards to get PCSOs will be equally well equipped as those that already exist?

**The Mayor:** Yes.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** They will have radios, MPS-dress luminous jackets?

**The Mayor:** Well, we are not going to send them out naked.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** Well, Mr Mayor, I just want to make sure that you are not doing the next lot on the cheap.

**The Mayor:** No. Let us be honest. In the run up to the establishment of the Mayoral system in London, much of the debate in the media was, 'Could any Mayor have sufficient authority to change all the outmoded practices in the transport, police, and fire systems?' They were. Inside London Transport, first the bus side and then the Underground side, we found appalling levels of waste, which have been squeezed out of the system year-by-year.

Already, under Sir John Stevens's (former MPS Commissioner) proposals in the first four years, we identified £130 million of savings. We are anticipating finding another £150 million. Therefore, we will be very close to the sort of £200-300 million figure we were talking about five years ago.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** In fact, the current Commissioner (Sir Ian Blair) said that this service review was to identify £300 million for redeployment once he had taken over. Last Thursday, at the same time you made this announcement, you also said £150 million had been identified for, I assume, redeployment. How much of that are you going to use for PCSOs?

**The Mayor:** This is why we can talk about the cost of the full roll out of the PCSOs coming in at the equivalent of about 24 pence on the council tax. The vast bulk of it is the shift of resources by the reconstruction internally of the MPS. We are most probably talking about 2,000-3,000 people being redeployed from desk duties to street patrol.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** If I told you that the information given to the budget and overtime review group of the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) is in conflict with what you have just said today, how would you react?

**The Mayor:** I would not be surprised. When you are making these sorts of huge institutional changes, there is going to be a lot of conflicting advice, analysis, and prediction, and I am certain no one will have the figures absolutely right. This scale of changes has never been made in the police. They have seldom been made in any major public service, and undoubtedly, Sir Ian (Blair) will learn and adapt as he drives them through.

You could not have done them five years ago, when morale was at rock bottom, policing was totally stretched, and we had no reserves. Now we have a secure number of police; we have good reserves; and there is morale and confidence in the force, so you can make this sort of structural change. To have done it four years ago might have been devastating.

**Bob Neill (AM):** Can you confirm that the roll out of PCSOs will continue to be on the basis of one sergeant, one police constable (PC), and three PCSOs for all neighbourhood teams for the whole roll out?

**The Mayor:** Given we are talking about another 400 wards, I will not swear that every single one of them will have exactly that, but that is the basis on which we are proceeding. I can think of a couple of wards on the outskirts of Bromley where a street patrol might take the best part of a week, with most of that happening on bikes or motor bikes. In some areas of the outer part of your constituency, your constituents' back gardens are bigger than some of the wards I have represented in inner London.

**Bob Neill (AM):** I am glad to know that you have actually been that far south in Bromley. It has taken you a very long time to do it.

**The Mayor:** I have been down to Biggin Hill, yes.

**Bob Neill (AM):** I actually agree with you about some rural areas. What you are saying, I gather, is with those very small geographic exceptions, you are committing to rolling out one sergeant, one PC, and three PCSOs, with tiny geographic exceptions.

**The Mayor:** Yes, but let us be quite clear about this. This is the biggest change we have ever made. Do not go mad if Sir Ian (Blair) comes back to us and says he thinks there is a slight shift or change he wants to make.

**Bob Neill (AM):** It would seem, we may not be rolling those out?

**The Mayor:** I am not in operational control of the MPS. The proposals I have listed for you today are not something I have imposed on the MPS. They have arisen inside the MPS under the leadership of Sir Ian (Blair), with much of the work initially begun under Sir John (Stevens). They have come forward confident they can do this. Neither you, nor the MPA, nor the Government, nor I have operational control. Sir Ian (Blair) will do what he thinks is in the best interests of policing this city and making it safe. We cannot order him exactly on the nature of policing in each ward, but he has my total confidence that he is more likely to get it right than we are.

**Bob Neill (AM):** You were very happy to share the press conference with him, but I just want to make clear that there is not going to be any dilution of the number of people in the Safer Neighbourhood Teams. That is all. That is a basic principle. I am sure you would have agreed that with him.

**The Mayor:** On the basic principle, that is absolutely right, but clearly, once you are dealing with all of them, some wards are exceptional, either in terms of crime or in terms of their sheer geographic size. There might be variations. Some wards may require more.

**Bob Neill (AM):** One other thing: I wonder if you have been able to establish this with Sir Ian (Blair). Do we understand that no police officers currently on frontline duties will be moved into the Safer Neighbourhood Teams?

**The Mayor:** No, I suspect many of them will, because what we have at the moment is some frontline duties, where people are basically doing the sort of work that will be absorbed by the neighbourhood teams. Clearly, they should be part of that. What is at the core of this is the shift of 2,000-3,000 people who are not on frontline duties into frontline duties.

**Bob Neill (AM):** Okay, let me just change the tack. Can you just explain this to me: why is it that offensive comments about homosexuals and gay people when made in a council meeting in Bromley are, in your view, so serious, so derogatory, and so grave as to justify legal action and to be a breach of people's human rights, but when they appear on Dr Yusuf Al-Qaradawi's (Muslim cleric) website, they are merely a series of questions of a philosophical nature?

**The Mayor:** That is exactly right.

**Bob Neill (AM):** They were having a philosophical discussion in Bromley. What is wrong with that?

**The Mayor:** I have to say, as a colleague of Joan Wykes in her Greater London Council (GLC) days, I do not recall philosophy being her strong point – good old, hardline Tory principles there. The reality here is I have met Dr Qaradawi. I have heard him himself, and I have seen him in written form saying absolutely clearly whilst he does not support homosexuality, that does not give any Muslim the right to physically or verbally abuse anybody who is. You are not going to get him on a gay-rights march.

**Bob Neill (AM):** Therefore, the emphasis on his website on discussing whether you should kill them or burn them, that is just philosophic. That is all right.

**The Mayor:** No, if you actually look at what Qaradawi's website said – and let us be honest, no 79-year-old cleric is monitoring or editing his daily website – it was quoting Quranic verses and debate. It is bizarre that the policies in this country are so distorted, we are asked to believe what others tell us, rather than what we hear someone say with our own ears.

**Bob Neill (AM):** At the end of the day, it simply comes to this, does it not: is it not the most monstrous of dual standards to apply one level of criticism, perhaps justified, to people in Bromley and to absolve from criticism somebody whom you have chosen, for political purposes, to give your benediction upon?

**The Mayor:** It seems to me an interesting confluence of views. The position is quite simple.

**Bob Neill (AM):** Yes, you are playing both ends against the middle.

**The Mayor:** No, no. Here in Britain, we have a set of laws, and Bromley Council seems to be prepared to ignore those to pander to prejudice, and they have to be dragged into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Bromley Council is the back end of society in terms of its acceptance of these things. In the Muslim world, Sheikh Qaradawi is opposed to the killing of homosexuals and is opposed to the abuse of homosexuals. There are other Muslims who are in favour of state execution, and in the Muslim world, Sheikh Qaradawi is at the most progressive end on the issue of lesbians and gays.

**Bob Neill (AM):** Would it not just be much better and much easier to get yourself out of this hook, and say, 'All prejudice is wrong, whatever it comes from and whatever religious or other faith or guise it is dressed up in'? Then you might have some authority in the matter.

**The Mayor:** I say exactly that.

**Bob Neill (AM):** That is exactly what you did not say to the Home Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons yesterday.

**The Mayor:** I said all prejudice is wrong. I actually pointed out, as an atheist I do not have to suffer any of these bizarre religious interdictions on how we should live our lives.

**Bob Neill (AM):** My friend's prejudices are merely philosophic discussions?

**The Mayor:** Yes, and in the position of the Muslim world, which is 1.25 billion people, Sheikh Qaradawi is the leading progressive force. When Pope John XXIII became Pope in 1958, the world did not say, 'We do not agree with him about abortion. We do not agree with him about women priests. We will have nothing to do with him.' They said, 'Here, finally, is a bloke trying to turn the Catholic church outward to engage with the rest of the world,' and we all grabbed at it.

**Bob Neill (AM):** I think most people would find the correlation between those people one of the most offensive things you have managed to come up with yet.

**The Mayor:** Only somebody who is ignorant of the real views of Qaradawi and knows very little about the role of Pope John XXIII, who is one of my lifelong heroes.

**Sally Hamwee (Chair):** Shall we continue with questions?

**Graham Tople (AM):** Can I draw us back, Chair and Mayor, to the rather less philosophical world of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams, and just point out, Mr Mayor, you allowed yourself to be led by the Conservative group into talking only about the roll out of PCSOs. We are actually talking about the roll out of Safer Neighbourhood Teams, and the standard Safer Neighbourhood Team includes two PCs, not one, as Bob Neill was saying. Any variation is and ought to be a matter for the Borough Commander.

Did I understand you, though, to say in your answers to Richard Barnes not only that nobody has the figures right, but that you have no commitment at all from Government to help with the funding of this roll out?

**The Mayor:** No, I did not say that. What I said was I am in discussions with the Government, both the Home Office and 10 Downing Street, about the subsidy that we will be getting towards policing in London for the next financial year. Most probably, we will have a fairly good idea of where we are going in December. It might not get the final resolution of the issue until January or even early February.

**Graham Tople (AM):** You call it a 'subsidy.' I think I might want to call it a grant, but we always get some funding from central Government towards policing in London, and particularly the special payment for national and counter-terrorism and so on. Nevertheless, you have no specific commitment or indication that there will be a commitment towards the funding of the roll out of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams?

**The Mayor:** I will not have, until we finish the negotiations, and the negotiations will go on at least for the rest of this year. I am, however, confident we will be assisted.

**Graham Tople (AM):** We will get some funding, but you do not know how much.

**The Mayor:** Yes. We are in there asking for several billion pounds extra across the whole range of my programmes. I do not expect to get all of it. I know I will get some of it.

**Graham Tople (AM):** What commitment did you give the Commissioner about the funding of this roll out before he announced it?

**The Mayor:** I said to the Commissioner when we were discussing this the day before the announcement, as we went through this, that it is my overwhelming desire that this should be done. We cannot guarantee to do it, until we see what the package from Government will be, but if it is at all possible, I will do everything possible to achieve this package in the next financial year.

**Graham Tople (AM):** Probably all of us with experience of Safer Neighbourhood Teams would accept that the single most important component of them is the sergeant, and they succeed or fail largely on the personal qualities of the sergeant in the Safer Neighbourhood Team. Have you discussed with the Commissioner how confident he is that in the accelerated roll out, they will be able to recruit and train the right sort of sergeant, if I can use that expression?

There are some very good sergeants who are very good, but just not personally suited to leading a Safer Neighbourhood Team. Can we be sure that we are going to get the right personality, I guess, of Safer Neighbourhood Team sergeants on an accelerated programme? We all want it to succeed, but if you get too many of the wrong leaders, it will fail, and that will help none of us.

**The Mayor:** In a sense, I think you are right that the quality of the sergeants is as important to delivering this as what support we get from Government, if not more so. It might very well be that is the constraint. If anything was to hold this back, it might not be the willingness of Government or ourselves to fund it, but simply not having sufficient sergeants of that calibre.

Now, when we come to look at the 2,000-3,000 staffing transferred from behind the scenes to frontline duty, clearly many of them will have those skills and abilities, but we will not know until Sir Ian (Blair) and his team start digging through the machine, looking at the people we are redeploying.

**Brian Coleman (Deputy Chair):** Mr Mayor, can I refer back to the London Borough of Bromley. Will you accept that perhaps the way to deal with this situation is not to take out an expensive and high-profile court case, which will just drive individuals into entrenched positions, but to adopt a much more persuasive and educated approach? I think that my dear friend, Joan Wykes, who is such a devoted, doughty champion of the people of Bromley, will love nothing more than being attacked continually and publicly by you.

Several other good friends and colleagues in Bromley will also enjoy the experience. The more public money and the more high profile your court case, it will do nothing to further what we all want, which is equality for gays and lesbians in the London Borough of Bromley.

**The Mayor:** I do wish that your colleagues in Bromley would recognise there are an awful lot of gays and lesbians in Bromley, and they are supposed to represent them, too. The reality on this is as long as they think no one will take them to court, they are just going to dig in, and they will not be changed. If all of you – and I do not think any of the Tory group here share these sorts of barmy prejudices – cannot change them, I suspect it is only the final threat of the law that will.

I love Joan Wykes dearly as a person. I remember at the GLC, she campaigned to have films banned not because of sex and violence, but because of flatulence. I just do not think her world view really gels with most of London anymore.

**Brian Coleman (Deputy Chair):** Like you, Mr Mayor, I am deeply fond of the Worshipful Mayor of the London Borough of Bromley. However, the serious point here is that there are many Conservatives and Conservative councillors who do not agree with the views of all the group. There are tensions within the Conservative group in Bromley on this. I think the right will prevail. There are no votes in bigotry, and all parties realise that, but if you take out a court case against the London Borough of Bromley, you will push people into even more entrenched positions and will undermine a lot of the good work that is going on to resolve this situation.

**The Mayor:** I am quite happy to give you a bit more time to work your charm on these people. Now, as you can imagine, taking out a court action is seldom a rapid process. Therefore, I am quite happy to keep in touch with you. If you think you are making progress, we will hold off.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** I just wanted to move on to the low-emission zone. You will be aware of the considerable frustration at how long it has taken to get this moving, so can I ask you two questions. Firstly, what has actually happened that allows you to put something to the board next month, I think you said? Secondly, that is merely, presumably, an announcement of some sort. When can we actually see things happening?

**The Mayor:** We have been looking at the detailed options about the way to proceed. Much the easiest way would have been Government legislation which would allow us and other local authorities to do this. That does not seem to be on the horizon, and with the current legislative timetable, I do not think there is any realistic chance of getting it.

Therefore, we are looking at the existing powers we have, which are not perfect and will mean you have to have such a substantial fine that it is a real deterrent, rather than just an inconvenience. Then, you will have to have people on the streets to enforce it. It is not our first choice of the way, but it is the only legal way we can do it, as I said, and it is an adaptation of the Congestion Charge powers we have.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** I absolutely welcome that things are moving. What I do not understand is what has changed now, compared to last year and the year before and all the feasibility studies. Have you just given up on the Government, then?

**The Mayor:** No, no. This is one of those things that everyone says is a good idea. We had a two-year study, between TfL and the London boroughs, to look at how you would do it, and there was a broad acceptance you could do it. We then spent another two years, basically, looking at much more detailed ways of approaching and tackling this. There really was not a plan to pull off the shelf 'How to do a low-emission zone.' We have come up with the scheme, after a lot of work between ourselves and the boroughs. Everyone was in favour of it, but no one had seen any detailed prospectus for how to do it.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** We will look at the details when they come, but roughly, when can we expect some action? How many more years?

**The Mayor:** The target is that this should come in early in 2008. That is the earliest. We will have to maintain real pressure to make sure it does not slip beyond the date of the next Mayoral election.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Thank you. We will come back to this.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Have your plans for a low-emission zone been affected by the current fuel shortages?

**The Mayor:** There are no current fuel shortages. This is rather like a complete fantasy here. Going home the other night, I saw in my former constituency huge queues of people for petrol. There is no shortage on the part of any of the fuel suppliers. It is quite clear from the news today, there is not the sort of great upsurge of anger from individuals that is going to lead to blockades, and I do not think the Government would make the mistake it did four years ago, of being slow to respond. I expect a very firm policing response if we see blockades aimed at stopping the fuel getting out of depots.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I am really happy about the low-emission zone, so congratulations on that. I just want to talk to you about the changes in the structure of the MPS. You know I have been fighting for years now to keep the traffic section fully staffed – or rather, to get it fully staffed. It has just about achieved that, and they are now planning to take away 35 officers for anti-terrorist duties.

If those officers are taken – they are really highly skilled; they are very dedicated to what they are doing – then more people will die on the roads. It is almost a guarantee: if you reduce the amount of traffic policing, you will push up the death rate. It is lives, whichever way you look at it, but I do think that these officers deserve, perhaps, to be left alone for at least a few years to establish the whole concept of traffic policing being something that is important to London.

**The Mayor:** We did not, in our discussions, deal with the 35 officers you are talking about. Now you have alerted me to this, so I shall go back and talk to Sir Ian (Blair) about that.

**Sally Hamwee (Chair):** Can I ask you about something I had expected to hear in your update? Almost two years ago, you announced when we won the Rugby World Cup, that you had conferred the Freedom of Greater London on the squad. What about our cricket team?

**The Mayor:** Sadly, as I was appearing before the Home Affairs Select Committee, I was not able to get up to Trafalgar Square and insert myself in the happy squad, as with the rugby. As you know, the proposal I made then ran into the pre-election period, and we did not get involved in it. I am happy to revisit it, but as none of you have been demanding that I do it for anybody else, I suspect there is not the overwhelming public demand for this that I would have hoped.

**Sally Hamwee (Chair):** I am sorry that such an announcement is dependent on the availability of a photo opportunity, but I have been asking questions regularly about the process.

**The Mayor:** The difference this time is that whereas last time, with the World Cup Rugby Team, I was there to greet them. This time, the Lord Mayor of London (Michael Savory) sent them off. We never compete between the two of us for the broadly ceremonial or gastronomic side of the job. We are happy to cooperate.

**Sally Hamwee (Chair):** Politics is such a gentlemanly sport.

**1818/2005 - More Police and PCSOs**

**Geoff Pope**

*In view of the security situation and the need to provide maximum protection for Londoners as they go about their daily lives, would not the £73 million you are spending this year on the Western Extension to the Congestion Charge be better spent on putting more police and PCSOs onto London's public transport system?*

**The Mayor:** I am afraid you misunderstand the position. The Western Extension is expected to generate £30-50 million a year in net revenues. These monies would be lost if the scheme were cancelled. We would be £30-50 million worse off, not £73 million better off as you suggest.

In addition, a further £65-85 million a year of traffic-related economic benefits – over and above those of the existing scheme – will occur, although the final projections of benefits are under review by TfL. TfL is already investing over £100 million on over 1,500 police officers and PCSOs dedicated to patrolling London's transport network.

**Geoff Pope (AM):** Is the Mayor really saying that if the Western Extension – which clearly is not popular and has very questionable benefits – were to be stopped, there would be no immediate saving? Is he also saying that trying to achieve these questionable benefits is more important than improving the security of London's transport system in respect to protecting Londoners against further terrorist attacks?

**The Mayor:** Oddly enough, I am saying none of those things. The reality is that following the increase in the charge from £5 to £8 inside the existing zone, all the calculations that people did before about the Extension – when at best it was revenue neutral, and might actually have made a loss – are transformed. Clearly, there would be short-term saving in terms of not undertaking the expenditure on the scheme, but within the space of the current five-year transport budget, there will be a very substantial loss.

The constraint on the roll out of policing has not been financial. At the end of the day, we have either been able to prise out of Government or had the courage to increase the council tax enough to pay for the policing roll out. The constraint over the last five years has been the rapidity with which we can get properly trained police officers through Hendon Police College. We have avoided that sort of knee-jerk thing of saying, 'Well, let us just double the capacity and bang them through, and they will learn on the job,' or something like that. We have maintained the standard.

Therefore, the constraint on the continuing expansion of policing is not a financial one either on British Transport Police or on the MPS.

**Geoff Pope (AM):** Are you aware that our policies propose more than just putting more people into the transport network? There needs to be better training, and also, we need to be better prepared for an attack. There is a proposal to produce an emergency volunteer reserve force and to have permanently staffed police boxes at mainline stations, so that the public know how they can get support, and so that it is better established.

None of these things have yet been addressed. Is the Mayor intending to do anything on those?

**The Mayor:** The programme of selling off the large, old unfriendly police stations is balanced by getting – perhaps in an industrial area, perhaps in a shopping area – a shop front, a lot more places where people can just pop in and see their local police. I have to say, whenever I have gone into an existing police station, what you see is a very unfriendly entry point – barriers of glass, people queuing – often a very long queue – and one person behind the desk.

Whereas, when you go down to other places where we have been experimenting, you find a few police in a neighbourhood centre. You are able to get in, and it is much more informal. That is the way we are going, so we may very well steal any of your ideas like that that are worth stealing – as I always have.

**Geoff Pope (AM):** Thank you very much. Are you saying that you will seriously look into the possibility of having permanently staffed police boxes or something similar – a visible presence at a permanent, fixed box in mainline railway stations?

**The Mayor:** Certainly, as gradually we are getting to grips with what was a fairly archaic, old British Transport Police, under its new leadership it is beginning to change. The extra money we have put in for the recruitment and training of British Transport Police has already led to one change, which is police allocated to covering particular groups of stations, just to be seen to be a presence. That was not the case before, and we will go farther on the rest.

I suspect we are not looking at a police box, or some ghastly little vandal will most likely set the thing alight. We are looking for obvious points on the system where there would be a regular policing presence, and people would know where to go. If I think back 10 years, the only time you ever saw British Transport Police was when they were doing a fares swoop. All the other things seemed not to be on the agenda.

**Geoff Pope (AM):** Will you be setting objectives for improvements of the police visibility in this?

**The Mayor:** At the moment, there is a big debate about the future of the British Transport Police. Government has clearly indicated its desire that they should be absorbed or merged into the MPS. That is something I strongly support. I think there should be one police force for London, with all the issues of accountability. What we do not want to lose, which we could do with a simple absorption, is our ability to pay for and ring-fence particular police. If they are simply absorbed, we would lose that protection. We want to make certain that, where we have put money into recruiting more police, they are used for visible policing that is reassurance.

**Geoff Pope (AM):** Thank you. Will you also consider the setting up of an emergency volunteer reserve force to assist the emergency services in the case of an attack? We saw the number of volunteers who are wishing to help with the Olympics, so why not in this area?

**The Mayor:** We have had 60,000 people now who have applied to be volunteers for the Olympics. If I look at the situation in July, particularly after the second bombings, the MPS were very stretched. There has been a lot of overtime and so on, but we did cope. The Fire Brigade coped. We did not need to bring in appliances from outside. You do have areas where there are volunteers. Volunteers go in as special constables; you have the St John Ambulance and so on. There are opportunities for volunteering in which there is real training.

A real *Dad's Army*-quality springs to mind with the idea of a volunteer force. With the existing St John Ambulance and the specials, there are good procedures to weed out the nutters. If we suddenly announced we are having a volunteer force to help in the next emergency, I suspect half the mad people that follow us around denouncing us will be in the front of the queue to be local commandant of their area. I can see real problems with this. That was a 'no,' Geoff (Pope).

**Geoff Pope (AM):** Given the current security threat, what is your view of South Eastern Trains' plans to remove staffing from some of its suburban railway stations? You cannot be happy with that, surely.

**The Mayor:** Everyone here, except you, has heard me talk about the train operating companies and my views on them. They are a disgrace, and the needs of their customers and the security of their customers are just so far down their list of priorities compared with raking in the subsidy from Government. They have a captive audience; they know they can bang up the price and reduce the service abysmally.

The good news is we have presented to Alistair Darling (MP, Secretary of State for Transport) – and we will shortly be going public – on a proposal for the transformation of suburban train services in London, with an increase of 40% in capacity between now and 2025 – over the next 20 years. The price tag for that is £7 billion. What effectively has happened is the train services are bad, because capacity has been taken out of the system consistently since the early 1960s. Putting it back in is going to be expensive, but a 40% increase in the capacity of the suburban train service in London would transform the quality of life for all of our citizens who are caught in the south or the east or where they do not have a Tube system.

Security is one part of that. We will press ahead with security, because we have done the funding of closed-circuit television and other schemes first. We have not, however, forgotten the people who are the prisoners of the present train operating companies.

**Angie Bray (AM):** Yes, well that is one idea for spending the unnecessary money that you intend to spend on the Extension. There are other ways, I am sure, that people would prefer to see that money spent, rather than on the Extension. As you know, Mr Mayor, there are many people who simply do not see any of the benefits that you claim there will be under the Extension, and many of them are here today in the audience.

I just wonder why you felt it necessary to sneak into this building through the back this morning. Whatever happened to the man who said, 'I like a bit of direct action, myself'? Are you seriously nervous and scared of meeting 10 or so very well behaved members of the West London Residents' Association?

**The Mayor:** The position this morning was that I came in the side door, because there is a safety factor with the protesters and the revolving doors. The last time I came in, they physically stopped the revolving door. Now, that was no problem; I was just trapped in it for about a minute, but in that sort of scrum, someone's arm or leg could be trapped in the door and broken. Therefore, out of consideration for them, because I do not want to see any of them on crutches, I just avoided that problem.

Can I tell you the good news, though? As you know, we had the previous consultation, before the Mayoral election, where I made major changes. We have had the formal consultation now. You have campaigned with massive industry around this issue, and so have the west London residents. We are now in a position to see the end result of all of that. Whereas, when I first proposed this, Londoners were two- or three-to-one opposed, the latest Market & Opinion Research International (MORI) poll shows support for the scheme is 40%, and opposition is 43%.

You cannot say I am a liar. This is commissioned by MORI. It is a serious opinion poll by MORI, and there has been a big shift in support in London in favour. They have all listened to the debate. They recognise that it is good sense.

**Angie Bray (AM):** Mr Mayor, what we would all really like to see is the final result of the consultation that has been undertaken by TfL.

**The Mayor:** That will not be quite as positive.

**Angie Bray (AM):** When are we going to hear the result of your own TfL consultation which you did in the summer? That is the really big question in people's minds. You mess about with your polls. We have seen what you have done with the West London Tram, when you produced all sorts of strange results. I am asking you when we are going to hear about the real consultation. That is what we are waiting for.

**The Mayor:** I have big chunks of my diary set aside to finish reading the submissions over the next 10 days. Once I have read the submissions, I will take my decision, and then the submissions will be available to anyone who wishes to see them, along with the notes. I can assure you, you will be happy to know, the majority are opposed to the Extension. You are right; the majority are opposed.

**Angie Bray (AM):** Okay, so we are going to get the results sometime probably in early October?

**The Mayor:** Early October.

**Angie Bray (AM):** Right, okay. You will then be making your announcement on whether or not you are going to proceed?

**The Mayor:** Yes.

**Angie Bray (AM):** May I also ask you, since we are talking about consultations: do you stick by your remarks that the whole thing that you have invited Londoners to participate in is actually a charade?

**The Mayor:** Had you come to the business forum, you would know the man who was asking the question was under the impression it was a referendum. This has been a recurrent problem. It is not a referendum.

**Angie Bray (AM):** Yes, that is one thing, but to call it a 'charade' is to imply that it does not have any meaning.

**The Mayor:** What I have said – and I have said it to this Assembly – is I think the legal structures about how we consult are ridiculous. I made that clear ahead of the elections, so everyone knew before they had to vote for myself or Steve Norris (former Conservative Party Mayoral candidate) exactly what the position was. We did a consultation in west London. We listened to that consultation. We made huge structural changes to the scheme, and that is what we then went out to consult on a second time.

**Angie Bray (AM):** That was surely an important thing to do then. You had made changes. Was it not right that you should consult again?

**The Mayor:** That is why we went out and consulted again.

**Angie Bray (AM):** Yes, but was it a charade?

**The Mayor:** What is a charade is that we listen, we make major changes, we go out for a second round of consultation, and the people who objected in the first place to the original proposals object to the changed proposals with exactly the same arguments and often using exactly the same photocopy.

**Angie Bray (AM):** We do not know that yet, because you have not finished reading the consultation. How can you possibly say that until you have finished reading it? My question is: why did you choose the word 'charade,' unless what you were saying was that it did not actually matter what people said to you?

**The Mayor:** No. What I said is that, as I have said to you before...

**Angie Bray (AM):** You choose your words with care, I am sure.

**The Mayor:** Excuse me. Part of the problem in all of this is often people are not listening to what each other says. The position is I have made absolutely clear is there was genuine consultation. Huge changes were made in the Congestion Charge proposal for the Extension. Once I have finished going through the representations, any improvements to the scheme that can be made will be taken on board.

I have not yet found one, but were there the killer argument that demonstrated it would not work, I would not proceed. You have had one consultation before the election. The election was, partly, a referendum on this, with a clear choice between Steve Norris and myself and not quite so clear a one with Simon Hughes (MP, former Liberal Democrat Mayoral candidate). We have now had a further consultation. People cannot complain about the lack of consultation.

**Angie Bray (AM):** I think, Mr Mayor, what they are complaining about is that you appear to have asked people to have their say, when in fact, at the same time, you were saying, 'This is a charade. I am not bothered. I am not going to change my mind.'

**The Mayor:** The person asking the question clearly thought this was a referendum, and if the majority opposed it, it should end right there.

**Angie Bray (AM):** Well, you could have simply said, on that, 'No.'

**The Mayor:** I was explaining it is not. Actually, look at an even worse example: the West London Tram. By the time the Transport and Works Act inquiry is finished, we will have had eight years of consultation, after consultation, after public enquiry. I just think that is ridiculous.

**Angie Bray (AM):** Okay, one final question: in your perfect world, a government would be elected. There would be no scrutiny of any sort. There would be no consultation of any sort, and for four years or five years, you would simply do as you want. Is that really what you would prefer? You do not think consultation is the sensible thing to have as an adjunct to government?

**The Mayor:** Why is it I am asked to have consultation ad nauseam about the Congestion Charge and about the West London Tram, which you oppose? I have never heard a Conservative demand consultation with tenants about whether or not we should increase their rents, fare payers about whether we should increase their fares, or voters about whether we should increase their taxes to buy more nuclear weapons.

**Angie Bray (AM):** Because I think the GLA Act required it, Mr Mayor, and we all live under the law, do we not?

**The Mayor:** I am saying I think the law in this case is overly bureaucratic, overly prescriptive, and delays serious decision-making. There is a majority in favour of the tram in west London. There has been all the way through, and it is going to be 15-20 years from the inception of the scheme to them being able to enjoy the benefits of improved public transport.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** You have done the public consultation. You have had the opinion polls. When are you going to stop the shilly-shallying and get on with it, so more of London has the benefit of lower emissions, quieter streets, and cleaner air? When are you going to get on with it?

**The Mayor:** I do think, in a situation where I was not prescribed by law in the way that we are, after the first round of consultations, and after the successful election mandate I received, I would have done it immediately. I had to, by law, go through this, but I will move with every possible legal speed, now, to the completion of the process of consultation and a decision. We are still on track for the scheme going live in February 2007, if I decide so to do.

**Damian Hockney (AM):** Mayor, I realise that the Congestion Charge protesters have mostly gone, but you have to understand that the people of Kensington and Chelsea and west London do oppose the Extension of the scheme. They are unhappy with it, and I think you referred to opinion polls just now.

I just have to say one of the problems I have with listening to that is this: when there was an opinion poll that your office ordered on another matter, we were clear that the questions were leading questions. They led towards an end point. When we then tried to scrutiny it, we were told we were not allowed to have the background information. The reason we were given is, 'If we give this to you, it would affect the way people in future would respond to opinion polls.' That is a very patronising way, but also what is worse, it is clear to us that what was done with that opinion poll led towards an answer.

My caution with anybody listening when you say that the numbers of people are slightly more towards the Congestion Charge now is that I do not think we can trust such opinion polls. Nobody knows what the basis is. If I were now to try to scrutiny that, to say, 'What is the real background to this?', I would be told I am not allowed to have the background to it.

**The Mayor:** I do not know what it is you are talking about in relation to background. The opinion pollsters go out and ask a set of questions. All those answers and the questions asked were published. I do not see anything more than that. Now, if you are asking for information which would involve the polling organisations revealing the detail about their methods, I am sure it will get caught up with commercial confidentiality, but I do not see any more than you have seen.

In particular, with MORI and ICM Research, they are two polls that have commercial operations which are on such a scale they cannot be seen to be in any way skewing their questions in the interests of their clients. Very often, I have gone to MORI or ICM Research, and I say, 'I would like to ask a poll in this way,' and they say, 'No. We think that skews the answer. We will ask it only in a way we think is neutral.'

Therefore, certainly some of the polling organisations that appear and so on, I share your doubts about. I really do not feel that way about ICM Research and MORI, because I know, even when I have commissioned my own private poll – which I have no intention of publishing, and which I have paid for out of my own pocket for electoral purposes – MORI and ICM Research will not allow me to structure the questions, other than in the way they believe gives a credible answer that they can stand behind.

**Sally Hamwee (Chair):** Damian (Hockney), this is a very long way from the question, and I would like to move on. It is very interesting, but it is a long way from the question.

1576/2005 - Arms Fair

**Jenny Jones**

*Should public subsidies be withdrawn from arms fairs?*

**The Mayor:** Yes, and as I have stated in the past, under the GLA Act I have no powers to prevent events such as the Defence Systems and Equipment International (DSEi) Arms Fair from happening. I do not agree that such events should be held in London, particularly when so many of those attending have a history of human-rights abuse. I do not believe the DSEi Arms Fair is in the interests of Londoners or the United Kingdom (UK).

I would like to see us as a nation looking seriously at converting arms production into other, more constructive uses. I also believe it is wrong for police resources to be diverted to this event. This year, there will be a joint policing operation involving the MPS, the British Transport Police, the Ministry of Defence Police, and the City of London Police. Officers will be deployed to police the event at ExCeL and the related events in central London.

As the negotiations regarding the funding of the policing operation continue, I believe that it is a travesty that costs should be borne by Londoners and not the event organisers. We think the cost of policing this is going to be about £4 million, and the people selling these weapons and instruments of torture to the regimes concerned will make profits of hundreds of millions of pounds. They should bear the cost of policing, at the very least.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Apparently, there are massive public subsidies from the Government, through the Ministry of Defence, for this stuff. They include 600 civil servants in 18 countries. Can you imagine what we could do with 600 extra civil servants here?

**The Mayor:** We would turn them into nursery nurses.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** It was a completely peaceful demonstration yesterday. I went there, and I spoke. I even got a cheer from the MPS police out of it. In fact, the MPS, as well, have said they do not want it here, and instead of saying, as they did two years ago, that they would rather the demonstration did not happen, they said they would rather the DSEi Arms Fair did not happen.

All I am really concerned about is that we do not get it in two years' time. Do you think there is any chance that anything can convince the Ministry of Defence that London is not an appropriate place to hold this?

**The Mayor:** I never saw, under any Government, the Ministry of Defence as a progressive force. The particular problem we have here, if you look at the structure of the British arms industry, is it was always quite big because of the Cold War. When Mrs (Margaret) Thatcher came to office, the one part of British manufacturing that was protected during that recession was arms. With every year during the Thatcher regime, you had the relative strength of the arms industry in British manufacturing grow.

Therefore, it now is a major strand of the manufacturing industry. There are hundreds of thousands of jobs involved, and of course, there are huge subsidies in order to entice third-world regimes, often some of the most repressive and brutal regimes in the world, into buying this with money they can ill afford, diverted from much more vital stuff. I will continue to oppose it, although I have to say, I do not have 1% of belief that I would be able to persuade this or any other Government to go down this route, but it will not stop me continuing to campaign against them.

**John Biggs (AM):** I have two questions. The first one is one which will have some general consensus, and it is that there has been much discussion before about whether we can secure payments from third parties for policing, particularly in relation to football matches, of course. I am wondering what further progress we can make on this, rather than having a lot more hot air about it. Of course, it is easy to get wound up, but we want to see some progress.

**The Mayor:** The police are actively pursuing this with Government and with the organisers of the DSEi Arms Fair. The precedent is good. I understand a payment was made by the England and Wales Cricket Board towards the events yesterday. In all these areas, we are making some progress. There will always be charities or events like Notting Hill Carnival which do not make a profit which we need to assist. Where you are dealing with things like this, I think that is a nonsense.

**John Biggs (AM):** It is worth us investing some energy as a London authority in making progress in that area. My second question, though, is something I feel passionately strongly about personally, and may not be a Labour position. It is that, while I am not a pacifist, the history of war in the last century has shown increasingly attacks upon civilian populations and communities.

I find it obscene – this is a question – that an exhibition of weapons which can be used, whether they are battlefield weapons or not, against a civilian community should be held in a built-up, residential area where my constituents live. I find that morally repugnant. I am wondering what we can do to help encourage ExCeL to look for other, more beneficial uses of their accommodation. I appreciate they have massive debts; they need to generate income, but we have helped them an awful lot down the years. I think we still hold the freehold of the land on which they sit. We want them to develop into an effective venue in east London, but not, in my view, for that purpose. Would you agree with me?

**The Mayor:** I completely agree. I do not have the slightest doubt that the DSEi Arms Fair, being where it is, becomes a target. Clearly, if al-Qaeda were in a position to mount an attack on that DSEi Arms Fair, the casualties, some of the individuals involved, would be global news. Therefore, events like this do put us at risk. There is no doubt whatsoever, it will put your constituents at risk. Frankly, it cannot be any help to ExCeL's insurance premiums, either.

## 1587/2005 - London Deficit

### Peter Hulme Cross

*Five years ago, you told the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) that you were a 'London nationalist,' who would lead the campaign to reduce London's subsidy to the Exchequer and get extra money for London. Today, according to the London Chamber of Commerce, the gap between what London pays in taxes and what it receives in funding would appear to be as great as ever. Can you tell us what actions you have taken to recover this money over the past five years?*

**The Mayor:** The calculations done by GLA Economics reveal the gap between what London pays in taxes and what it sees in public spending is not as great as ever. In the 2001-02 financial year, London's net contribution to the public purse was somewhere between £9-£15 billion, depending on how you calculated it. Using the most recent Treasury and other data for the 2003-04 financial year, the contribution was reduced to somewhere between £1-£7 billion. Effectively, it has been, at the worst, halved and perhaps even more dramatically reduced.

The magnitude of London's tax export depends on economic growth and UK fiscal policy. Earlier this year, GLA Economics published a report explaining that the UK will not prosper without a prosperous London, and London will not prosper, if the rest of the country's economic performance is not strong. This reinforced the points made in my submission to the Spending Review 2004 that investment in London to support its continuing economic vitality is of benefit not just to London, but to the UK as a whole. I will continue to put this case to Government.

**Peter Hulme Cross (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor. In fact, the London Chamber of Commerce estimates it at between £10-£20 billion in their recent report. Even if we take the lower figure of £10 billion, which is close to what you just mentioned there, and if we take it that there are 3 million households in London, that works out an average of over £3,000 per household of what London contributes over and above what it gets back.

That is a huge figure by any standards. Yet, here in London, as you are very well aware, we have considerable unemployment. We have the five most deprived boroughs in the country, and London really does deserve to have some of this money returned and reinvested here in London. Would you not agree with that?

**The Mayor:** I have not yet read the London Chamber of Commerce report. I suspect its economic analysis will not be as robust as GLA Economics, which is the leading London forecaster. The advantage of the figures I am using is that they are consistent, i.e., drawing on the same sources. Whether we take the worst-case scenario that in 2001-02 it was £15 billion, but now it has come down to £7 billion, or the best-case scenario that it was only £9 billion and now it is down to £1 billion, we are clearly moving in the right direction.

The decision that we have had on the £500 million of extra funding for the cleanup in the Thames Gateway around the London Olympics and more to come – I suspect we might very well not be in net export at the moment. The only caution I would say is this: even with GLA Economics, which is, as I say, the leading London economic forecaster, given you are dealing with a range that is between £9-£15 billion, there are

huge elements of guesstimate in all these figures. I do think, and I have said before, we have most probably halved, at worst, that subsidy. We will continue to press on it, do not worry.

**Peter Hulme Cross (AM):** I should hope so, too, but the ALG has recently warned that boroughs could lose millions of pounds in services for vulnerable groups under proposals to change the way central Government grants are distributed to councils. Here is London losing out, potentially, again, and yet London is contributing more. London needs to get this money back, and to say, really, what you just said about the £500 million – you keep on talking about the underinvestment that has been in the transport system, in the waterworks, and so on and so forth. It can be underinvestment, but London is still contributing much more to the overall pie.

**The Mayor:** Clearly as the area of Britain with the highest levels of productivity, there will always be some degree of subsidy between London and the rest of the country. The question is getting it right. Sally (Hamwee) was telling me about views amongst people outside London about the Olympics. It is not universally popular, because they see we are getting everything again – that is how they perceive it.

If you actually look at the grant to the GLA family, which has gone from £2.5 billion five years ago to £4 billion today, that is a huge increase of £1.5 billion – very, very substantial. Across a whole range of other areas, we have been able to lever extra funding in. The ALG campaign at the moment is to make sure that changes to the system are not damaging to London.

We are making very good progress on this and also on the review of the council tax banding system. I am now absolutely confident that the dire predictions of the impact of this in London will be completely way off beam. I suspect minimal changes, at worst, and perhaps none whatsoever.

**Damian Hockney (AM):** Thank you, Mayor, for that. Taking it from the point of view of business, you talk about the extra money back, but the problem is that business and individuals are paying more and more in taxes in London. One of the difficulties that we have, in just pure practical terms, if you look at the London Chamber of Commerce recent reports and its updated report – and I will make sure you get a copy of that – and also what the British Retail Consortium said the day before yesterday, is that London has been hit, unlike any other region in the UK, with an 11% drop in trade, year on year, in August.

Their point was, when you speak to them, that it was as bad on the last day of August as the first. The problem with that is that as business in London is suffering and is being hit, particularly retail trade – my company publishes magazines – if you look at the electronic point of sales (EPOS) data across London, it is way down, year on year, in comparison with other parts. Nothing is being done, really – other than by street festivals and whatever – to relieve the businesses in London. Therefore, with this business of the London deficit, it is now doubly important that we fight for it.

Yes, I take on board what you say about it – that it is a very elastic consideration – but it does need fighting for. We do need to get some of that money back. Some of it must not be given to Government and to bodies, but it must be given back to the people, through taxation and through – I would like to see – a free-trade area for

London. However, that is another issue. Can you commit to involvement in that? Can you commit that you will?

**The Mayor:** The retail sales figures nationally and in London are the worst for at least a decade and maybe the worst since the oil crisis of the late 1970s. We have the added dimension of the economic impact of the attacks. Now, our calculation is that this will cost London's businesses about £550 million lost over the next 18 months. That is about 4% of our tourist revenue. If we cannot affect that, it would mean 10,000 jobs will be lost in, broadly, the tourism and retail area.

Now, it is quite specifically concentrated in central London. When you look at the impact in outer London, or just outside London in places like Bluewater, sales are up. Tourist attractions outside the centre are up. In the centre of London, we already see – although the Tube ridership for the rush hour during the week is back to virtually where it was a year ago – at weekends, in central London, West End stations, it is 15-20% down. Customers entering West End shops are also 15-20% down. There is a very concentrated central London effect.

I spoke to the Tourism Minister (James Purnell, MP, Minister for Creative Industries and Tourism) this week, and I have submitted a bid to the Treasury for £20 million for a campaign to get tourists back into central London. Of that £550 million that we are losing, £300 million is from domestic tourists, and the rest is international. Therefore, we would like the campaign focused very much. On our previous campaigns by Visit London, we have had a return of 20 to 1. It is a very good investment for London. If we get that £20 million, we should be able to claw this back, but without it, we have a problem. Now, had we not won the Olympics, we would have had spare money inside the London Development Agency (LDA) to do that.

**Damian Hockney (AM):** Can I just ask one thing, Mayor. One of the things that many of the organisations – London Chamber of Commerce – a lot of the businesses – London Dungeon are saying is, 'Can we waive the Congestion Charge until after the next school half-term holiday' to encourage those very visitors you have talked about from the southeast, who will not come in? They do not seem to want to come into London.

**The Mayor:** Visitors from the home counties come in on the public transport system.

**Damian Hockney (AM):** Not all of them do – right at the margin.

**The Mayor:** You would have to be off your head to drive into central London to a tourist attraction. If we were to waive the Congestion Charge, what you would simply have is the rapid return of the gridlock, with all the consequent problems, and it would become an unattractive city to come in for a tourist day out.

**1582/2005 - Building on Floodplains**

**Darren Johnson**

*Has the devastation in New Orleans caused you to reassess plans for building on high-risk flooding areas in the Thames Gateway?*

**The Mayor:** Firstly, I know I speak for the whole Assembly when I say our condolences and sympathies are for those who have been affected by the devastation in the United States gulf coast caused by Hurricane Katrina, and in particular, we have not yet identified the components of how many Londoners will have been affected. I am sure, however, this tragedy has specifically affected London families.

With regard to the implications for flooding in London, the Thames Gateway is a national regeneration priority, essential to the sustainability of London and will enhance the quality of life and opportunities for some of the most deprived communities in England. It also has the highest standard of flood protection anywhere in the UK. In addition, the Environment Agency is working at the moment on the project Thames Estuary 2100 to locate and design the next generation of flood defences to protect London until the end of this century.

Flood risk management is not just about the physical assets of flood defence walls, gates, and barriers, but also about emergency planning in terms of public awareness, infrastructural resilience, and the capacity to recover quickly. Alongside these reassurances, I have asked the London Resilience team to assess the risk of a similar disaster affecting London and how London would cope. The review of my London Plan and the preparation of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy will both help to guide the redevelopment of the Thames Gateway to appropriately manage flood risk.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** I am sure the whole Assembly joins you in sharing your comments on the people of New Orleans. In terms of the Thames Gateway, there are 96,000 new homes planned for the greater London part of the Thames Gateway. Much of that, as you say, is in areas that are highly protected by existing flood defences. However, the Association of British Insurers (ABI) estimate that over 5,000 of the 96,000 new homes will be in areas that are at significant risk from flooding. Do these need to be looked at again?

**The Mayor:** They are kept under constant review. The big difference between us and what happened in America is that following the devastating flood and loss of life in 1953 in London and the southeast, all governments and administrations of both parties at County Hall put in place a 30-year programme. It was not just the Thames Barrier, but for flood walls erected all the way along the Thames Estuary, which is why we have not had a recurrence.

We now get problems of flash flooding arising from rapid runoff in a rainstorm in parts of London, but that devastating flood – we calculate there is one risk in every 10,000 years of something of that order, and it would have to be linked to some completely unusual event that we have not seen in recorded human history: a catastrophic shift in tectonic plates, a substantial asteroid impact in the North Sea.

We are currently, at the moment, planning the increase in size of the Thames Barrier. As we proceed with the Thames Gateway development, the Barrier walls that keep the

sea out will be raised as the melting of the ice caps increase the risk. We will not put homes there if we have not put in place the flood defences.

The Americans started the same programme in the mid-1950s. It was cut back by both this and previous American administrations, and the absolute nonsense of building flood defences, but not completing them – so you negate the whole cost – is rubbish. We finished the flood defences for London in 1986.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** Should we not at least avoid those high-risk areas that the ABI has pointed out? For a small percentage of the homes that are planned, should we at least not build on those high risk areas whilst we do not have adequate flood protection?

**The Mayor:** We should not build anywhere where there is any realistic risk of flooding, but if we have built a nine-foot wall, and that is adequate to keep out the highest possible surge tide, and if – as the global warming melts the ice caps – we raise that, as we will, it is safe to build there.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** You mentioned the 2100 Project, which is really important. However, that is not due for completion until 2008, and planning decisions and development proposals are already taking place. Do you not think we need a little bit of caution, particularly with regard to those in high-risk areas, until we have this plan completed?

**The Mayor:** No, because the Thames Barrier and the – I have the figure here – 185 miles of flood wall we finished in the 1980s protect those areas at the moment. The 2100 Project is looking at what we need to do, given the impact of global warming, and the proposals for the development of the Thames Gateway, so that is built in. The schemes they will devise, which are what we do after the Thames Barrier is no longer effective, will be built on the basis of what we are developing in the Thames Gateway. The first option, though, is we increase the capacity of the Thames Barrier to turn back higher tides.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** Given that affordable housing is a key component of your vision for the Thames Gateway, what about affordable insurance? Is that being factored into the equation, given the warnings we are getting from the insurance industry about the cost of insuring individual homes? Is that affordable?

**The Mayor:** I have to say, I am not a fan of the insurance industry, and I think the level of premiums is often a complete rip-off. I am on a borderline, and I am always in debate with Anne McMeel, our Director of Finance, about whether to stop taking insurance for the entire GLA family. For the times when there is a catastrophic problem, central Government would always have to assist.

For anything smaller than that, an organisation with a £9 billion spend may be better off to pay as we go, rather than jack up these huge insurance premiums. I am going to keep this under review. I am making a little trouble persuading Anne (McMeel) of this. Therefore, I am pessimistic about this. I am certain the insurers will ask for absolutely unrealistic premiums out of people living in the Gateway. I am not certain what we can do about this.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** We do not want people left with uninsurable homes, though.

**The Mayor:** Well, they will insure them for everything except a flood. When I look at the increase in insurance demanded for minicabs over the last few years, I find it inexplicable.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Can I just ask for a little bit more imaginative thinking here? It is not just a question of choosing between, 'If there is a risk, let us not build,' on the one hand, and on the other hand, 'If there is a risk, let us build more and more defences, higher and higher defences.' There is an additional option, which is to build in a way that allows the water to come in and be managed safely. That happens all around the world. Indeed, the argument is that New Orleans went wrong because they built defences which then failed, and when they failed, there was no way of coping.

We really ought to, in terms of the Thames Gateway, be thinking, should we not, about building in a way that allows us to manage nature's occasional aberrations, rather than defending, at a huge capital cost to keep it out.

**The Mayor:** We need to do that, just because of the increasingly violent pattern of weather in the London area, with increasing torrential downpours, often concentrated over the winter, when the ground does not have that much capacity. I saw the Assembly report about whether or not we should consider a prescription against people concreting over their front gardens. I am broadly sympathetic to that.

There are other alternatives. I have seen people who have provided a car parking space by using those bricks with large central holes, so you can drive over, but there is still grass there and the soil to absorb it. I am quite happy to take all these on board. Certainly, as we review the London Plan towards the end of this administration, I am thinking very strongly that this should be an area where we take firmer powers.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** I have advocated looking at building homes on stilts, which the Dutch do and the Bangladeshis do. Even if people do not want to do that, simply, if there is going to be a house with a garage, why not put the garage underneath and the house on top. Then, the worst that happens is the car is ruined and not all the possessions in the house. Darren (Johnson) is smiling now, because he does not want cars at all.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** They still need an electricity supply and a water supply, though. You still need to think about those.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** You can build those up at the first floor. There are ways of doing it, if we can only think and work with nature, rather than trying to keep it out the whole time.

**The Mayor:** That sort of planning and thinking is what we want built into the whole Thames Gateway project, because over the next 30 years, this is a huge investment. We need to get it right. I suspect, however, having made the initial investment in the 185 miles of flood defences, it is most likely also worth putting a bit more on top of them, as global warming reduces the ice caps.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** There are a few lessons we can learn from the Bangladeshis with floods, and I am sure the Americans could learn them. For example, we do bury our dead straight away, and we do not have the anarchy that the Americans had. Saying that, I understand, Mayor, that you are going to be having a conference on climate change in the cities in early October. It just seems that this may be a theme to adopt, given the interest. I do not know if Nicky (Gavron, Deputy Mayor) could also advise us as to whether that is something that she is keen to pursue.

**Sally Hamwee (Chair):** I am not going to let Nicky (Gavron) answer a question on Mayor's Question Time.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** I will let the Mayor answer for Nicky (Gavron), then.

**The Mayor:** What I find interesting – given all the vast empire of homeland defence that has been built in the United States – is that our response after 9/11 when the Government established the London Resilience Forum, chaired by Nick Raynsford (MP) and myself, was we did not just go over the scenarios of bomb attacks on the Underground. We also looked at the question of whether it was time to review all our catastrophic emergency planning.

We looked at the issue of devastating flooding. We looked at the possibility of a terrorist attack on the Thames Barrier, and we built all that in. We went on to look at what we would do in terms of a mass evacuation, where we would site emergency mortuaries, and so on. I am sure there is something we have not thought of, but nothing as simple as clearly should have been thought through by the American administration, the governor, and the mayor in that area.

The other factor in all of this is that in all our planning, there really was an awareness that it is the poorest people who will not have access to a car, will not have access to immediate means of evacuation, and that was central in all we did. I do not know to what extent this infects the political class in America that everyone must have a car, and therefore can drive away from anything. Clearly, in places like New Orleans, car ownership is as diverse in terms of the communities and the proportions that have access to transport as it is here in London. About one-third of Londoners do not have access to a car. If there is a flood, we have to provide the ways of getting safely away.

**1673/2005 - Abandoned Vehicles**

**Mike Tuffrey**

*Following your endorsement of the Operation Scrap-It campaign, in answer to question 1376/2005, will you ask the Home Office to extend the funding for the scheme until the End-of-Life Vehicles (ELV) Directive is implemented in January 2007?*

**The Mayor:** Operation Scrap-It has been a great success, and as I expressed in a previous answer, I continue to support it. The ALG are continuing to lobby the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Home Office for funding to continue the scheme until the producer-responsibility element of the ELV Directive commences. To complement and assist the efforts of the ALG, I will ask my policy director for environment to write to both Defra and the Home Office requesting their continued support. In particular in London, we have seen the situation of licence evasion, which is a real by-product of this, cut from 4.5% in 2002-03 to 2.1% two years later.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** That active support will be very welcome, because everybody – including Home Office ministers – praise the scheme, and yet the Home Office seems hell-bent on ending the funding, at considerable cost. Is this not actually a kind of microcosm example of the bizarre funding arrangements we have? A £6-£7 million a year scheme is bringing into the licensing authority £20-£30 million, is saving the Fire Brigade £4-£5 million, is saving the MPS considerable amounts – unquantified, but it is estimated up to half of untaxed vehicles are involved in criminal activities – so there is a huge benefit to crime and policing. Councils do not have the spare capacity to do this discretionary extra piece beyond their statutory duties, yet the Home Office is cutting off the funding. It is bizarre, is it not?

**The Mayor:** I completely agree. Over the last 30 years, I have come across endless examples – and I think this is basically civil service driven, rather than ministerial. All Governments have suffered from the fact of departments trying to reduce their spending by cutting out a programme, even if the saving is more than swamped by additional expenditure or loss of income by another department.

There is not that holistic approach, whereas here, having created a devolved authority, we broadly try to avoid that situation of the MPS cutting back spending, if it means a burden for TfL or vice versa. We try to get a level of cooperation, which just does not exist – and I do not ever recall it existing – in national Government. It is all the more reason for the more rapid devolution of responsibilities to the GLA from central Government out of the present review.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Even in your wildest, megalomaniac moments, I do not think you are wanting to have trucks going round from City Hall picking up untaxed vehicles, so this is a borough responsibility.

**The Mayor:** It would be fine if we could get the money for it, yes. There is nothing I most probably would not take...

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Indeed, this is our worry, and we shall look at the single waste authority ideas with some scepticism with those comments in mind. What can we actually do? My information is that this is simply the Home Office forgot to put it into its comprehensive spending review, so the Treasury did not give the Home Office the money first off. Now, it is a classic civil servants' logjam. What can you actually do to help unblock this nonsense? Everybody says it is a nonsense.

**The Mayor:** I will be seeing the Home Secretary (Charles Clarke, MP) about other matters, and I will mention this as well, but we will just continue lobbying. This is actually the case for devolved government. Instead of having vast central Government departments, if you break up the services and have a local administration managing them on a more human scale, you do not get this sort of short-termism.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** It should be devolved to the boroughs. That was my point. Thank you, Chair.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** How could we pursue manufacturers of cars and have them taking some responsibilities? It is always clear to me what types of cars they are, and maybe that is the way to go in the long term, rather than trying to expect the public sector always to pick up the burden on this front.

**The Mayor:** This is finally coming into view. The ELV Directive will bring that finally into play, and manufacturers will have to take back and dispose of their cars in a way that is environmentally sustainable and recycle as much as they possibly can out of them. This is only, really, about bridging the gap between the end of this scheme and the coming into force of that. This is another example of Europe being ahead of us and the progressive influence of the European Union on our policies.

## **1686/2005 - Financial Aid to Groups**

### **Tony Arbour**

*How many groups have you provided financial backing for in the last six months?*

**The Mayor:** Financial backing to various groups for amounts over £10,000 has already been reported to the Assembly by my regular decision list and in my regular mayoral reports. Amounts under £10,000, which are defined – and I must say, by officers, not by me – as 'novel or contentious' are also reported to the Assembly via the decision list. Amounts under £10,000 which are not novel or contentious are not reported to the Assembly, but are authorised by approved officers after they have completed a delegated matters check list. No central record of these decisions is kept. However, as with all financial decisions, they are subject to routine audit procedures.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Can you not give me a global figure? Is it 100? Is it 1,000? Is it 10,000?

**The Mayor:** I cannot give you a global figure, because all this has been reported, and you have this vast empire of Assembly bureaucrats whose job is to monitor all this. You cannot come along and ask me to get my staff to do the job of monitoring me.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Okay, well, I want to ask you about your job as emperor of this grant empire. Do you think you are likely to remember a specific grant?

**The Mayor:** I thought you might have one or two in mind.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Yes, I do. There is a surprise. Grants of more than £100,000 – do you think you might remember those grants?

**The Mayor:** I could do. On a good day.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** I wonder if you would care to tell me, please, and to tell the Assembly and the people of London about the process you went through in determining how much The 1990 Trust should get, through your largesse.

**The Mayor:** It would have been on the basis of the services they provide to London, and very good value for money, they are.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** I wonder if you would tell us, Mr Mayor, precisely about The 1990 Trust. For example, one of your principal advisers' (Lee Jasper, Senior Policy Advisor, Mayor's Office) day job, before he became your adviser, was to be employed by this trust for five years. Were you aware of that before the grant was made?

**The Mayor:** Of course I have been aware. I was aware of that when I appointed him. You cannot say that I should not fund organisations if someone from that organisation then comes to work for me.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Was the interest of this individual declared to you, before you agreed to give the sum of £100,000 over 18 months to this organisation?

**The Mayor:** What interest would it have been, if he no longer works for the organisation?

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Clearly, this person will have had a special interest, and I would have anticipated, in a well-run organisation like the GLA, for him to say to you – and I daresay he calls you Mr Mayor – he would say, 'Mr Mayor, I worked for this lot for five years, and they are a pretty good bunch. Give them £100,000.'

**The Mayor:** No, Lee Jasper never raised the issue of funding this body with me. He has never come to me and said, 'I think you should give this money to the body.' The process has gone through the normal structure of coming up. He has never specifically lobbied for The 1990 Trust, nor have I ever sought his advice on this, because I do not think it would be right.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** I am pleased to hear you say this, because, of course, he is the policy adviser on grants to organisations of this kind. Can I draw your attention, please, to their website. When you agreed, with the assistance of your adviser, to give these people an additional grant, they were putting on their website the following statement: 'Act now. Blink' – which is what they call their website – 'is urging its readers to support Ken Livingstone by lobbying the Standards Board for England.'

Would you not say that was porkbarrelling of the worst kind? You give them money, so that they can help you personally.

**The Mayor:** We would give the monies to The 1990 Trust with specific objectives in mind. Rallying support for me would not be one of them, and they have a clear separation of those functions. I have to tell you, I do not read The 1990 Trust website. I had no idea they had done this, and therefore, it did not enter any of my calculations at all. I barely ever log onto anyone's website. I am too busy dealing with real problems.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** You had no knowledge, until I mentioned it to you just now?

**The Mayor:** No, I think I saw you had mentioned it in the press. That was the first time I knew about it.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** You were not even intrigued enough to turn it on yourself to see what it was saying about you?

**The Mayor:** If I turned on websites to find out what they were saying about me, I would need to retire and devote my life to it.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** The sooner the better, as far as I am concerned. Can it be right? Try to look at this objectively. Supposing it had been campaigning for Joan Wykes and the policies of Bromley Council, the London Borough of Bromley. Do you not think that you would believe that rate payers' money, that council tax payers' money should not be spent on something as partisan as that?

**The Mayor:** No, if The 1990 Trust was actively organising support for Bromley Council because of its leading role in breaking through on the equal opportunities frontier, setting new standards for London, I would be happy to pour money into it.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** I have to say, Mr Mayor, I find all of this quite unsatisfactory. £100,000 is a great deal of money. Looking at their website, you would think that the principal function of this organisation is to act as cheerleader for you. It cannot possibly be satisfactory. When one also considers the link that this organisation has had with your principal policy adviser, named by you as being connected with this organisation, then the whole thing is entirely unacceptable, and really, I do not think is an appropriate thing for a public body of this kind to support.

**The Mayor:** You know as well as I do, there is no question of any of the money we give to any organisation being diverted to provide support for this administration. That would be illegal, and the people doing it would go to prison. The fact that many organisations are able to do work which we support, and at the same time, in another guise, take a political stance on a whole range of issues is separate.

**Bob Neill (AM):** Is not the key thing here, I am sure we would all agree, not only that everything is above board – and I am not suggesting otherwise – but that it is seen to be above board?

**The Mayor:** Of course, it is seen to be above board, because people trust me to take those sort of decisions.

**Bob Neill (AM):** You see, that is the problem. You promised the most transparent form of administration that this country had ever seen when you were first elected as Mayor. What we have, on any view, is a situation where your senior policy adviser in that field is, in effect, promoting a Mayor's decision – he is the officer who is responsible for bringing it forward, in other words – which involves the grant of £100,000 of public money to the organisation which he happened to work for, until he became your senior policy adviser when you were first elected and which, by pure chance, earlier this year was campaigning in support of you, when there was an issue of controversy involving you.

Under those circumstances, would it not have been much more prudent for him to have said, 'We will have somebody else in the Mayor's Office deal with this,' and for you to say, 'Well, perhaps the Deputy Mayor or the Chief Executive (Anthony Mayer) should sign off that decision'? You have delegated other things to the Chief Executive (Anthony Mayer) in the past. Why not just stand back from it, so nobody could say it was not transparent?

**The Mayor:** The reality is it is transparent, because here is all the information. You have not had to use the Freedom of Information Act to get this. It is just regularly provided to you because there is nothing wrong with it.

**Bob Neill (AM):** Is there not the danger of the perception that people will think that there is an ongoing and continuing cosiness between your office and some of these outside organisations with which they have a variety of contacts, and that you should be extra careful under those circumstances?

**The Mayor:** I am extra careful under those circumstances, and particularly as I had no idea they were actively engaged in supporting me in that struggle, it would not have had any effect.

**Bob Neill (AM):** You are saying you do not imagine that anybody in your office knew that they are actively engaged in supporting you?

**The Mayor:** If my office has time to browse websites, I suspect I am not giving them enough work to do.

**Bob Neill (AM):** You signed that Mayoral Approval Form on 8 August. You signed another one on 8 August coming from your Senior Policy Adviser for Economics, MA 2349. In that instance, you awarded a contract for only £28,000 – not a large amount, in the overall scheme of things, I concede – to an individual by single tender process and waiving the GLA Contracts Code to do so. Did you know anything of that individual's...?

**The Mayor:** You need to give me a bit more.

**Bob Neill (AM):** It is the appointment of Anne Kane (Socialist Action and Abortion Rights UK) to do two areas of work on understanding the role of women in the economy and support to the Mayor's Office on equalities issues.

**The Mayor:** The report came up to me. I read it. I signed it. No member of my staff approached me in any way whatsoever about any aspect of it. I relied only on the written report that came to me through the officer structure.

**Bob Neill (AM):** Given that this person was a member of the European Social Forum (ESF) organising committee – the organisation which had generated enormous controversy – do you think it wise to go through a single tender process when awarding a contract to someone who had been connected with such a controversial event?

**The Mayor:** I would have thought being connected with the ESF is a strength, not a weakness. I am very proud of our support for that. It engaged a whole layer of younger Londoners in debate about the future of this city, and everyone accepted it was a brilliant success. I know many Members here went to it and enjoyed it.

**Bob Neill (AM):** Appointing someone who has clear links – and nothing wrong with it, in itself – to organisations like Socialist Action, the Socialist Campaign Group – these are highly partisan areas. The ESF was criticised for being highly partisan. You might well want to do it, but why not go through a merit test, rather than do it by single tender, again, to make sure there was no political favouritism?

**The Mayor:** As well versed as you are in the law, you know I have no right to ask the politics of any employee or any contractor. I suspect to do so would put me in breach of the law. You offer this information about the private political views of an individual. I cannot confirm or deny that, because I do not know what her political views are.

**Bob Neill (AM):** Nobody in your office would have had an inkling? I understand your point there. The issue is that your office – we have established in previous scrutinies – had very deep involvement in the organisation of the ESF. That is the rub. Given that your office knew of the members of the ESF organising committee, why not then just be cautious? That is all I am saying.

**The Mayor:** As I say, I consider having been active in the ESF a great strength. It would clearly weigh in the balance, 'Is this somebody likely to do good work for London?'

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Is the Mayor aware that there is, in fact, a cross-party audit panel of the London Assembly, and there is a full programme of internal audit, which happens to be conducted by an external company, and an external audit programme, and that that audit panel and those auditors have consistently found good quality, good practices, and consistently high standards of probity within the GLA?

Does the Mayor think that if any Member of this Assembly had any serious concerns about a matter of probity within the GLA's expenditure that they ought to make that complaint and that information available to the audit panel? That is because to raise it in a public forum like this, without the opportunity of the auditors scrutinising it, could simply be interpreted as mud slinging and bids for cheap tabloids on the basis of unsubstantiated information.

**The Mayor:** It is all horribly reminiscent of the tabloid media nonsense of the 1980s. Questions to me after the audit panel has given it detailed scrutiny would have a lot more value than popping out here with the idea of getting a 10-second slot on the television. I would simply ask you to bear in mind the scale of the GLA family operation – £9 billion a year. That is something like about 8% of the London economy.

At any one time, a substantial proportion of organisations which are often controversial and those that are not will be doing business with us. The firewalls and the protections we have built in are very rigid. I sometimes think they are too bureaucratic and too time consuming, but they are administered very well by officers appointed by the Assembly, not me.

I even remember the nonsense regarding London First, an organisation which I denounced when it was set up, because they have no democratic basis. It was set up to campaign for inward investment, and I was very hostile to it. The moment I renewed the contract it already had, the Conservative Party was saying, 'These people are stooges of the Mayor.' Well, I have to say, given the lifelong standing of many of them as active in the Tory Party, it came as news to them.

**Brian Coleman (Deputy Chair):** You must be joking. You must be joking – not a Tory amongst them.

**The Mayor:** Was there not a certain Lord Sheppard (Former Chair, current President, London First) kicking around? Was he not in Mrs Thatcher's parlour on a nightly basis?

**1745/2005 - Youth**

**Valerie Shawcross**

*Does the Mayor see a direct link between the absence of youth services and anti-social behaviour and the growth of youth gangs in London?*

**The Mayor:** Yes, a key priority identified by young people responding to the draft Children and Young People Strategy is a lack of things to do and places to go. Access to cultural and sporting activities can make a real difference to the lives of young people, offering opportunities for a positive contribution and a diversion from possible anti-social behaviour. Funding for youth services has been highly variable, with expenditure bearing little relationship to local need.

The need for additional investment has been recognised in the Government's Green Paper *Youth Matters*, published in July this year. Free bus travel for under-18s will make access to a whole range of sporting, cultural, and leisure activities more readily available. In addition, prevention of youth crime is a key aim of the London Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy, which incorporates a variety of youth inclusion and diversionary projects by the MPS and local and central government.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Thank you, Mayor. In fact, I recently carried out a crime survey in two wards in Southwark, in Rotherhithe and Surrey Quays. We had over 1,000 responses, and it was absolutely shocking. It was stunning that 70% of the respondents made comments about problems of youth gangs, problems of scooters, and problems with anti-social behaviour. I do not think that area is typical of the rest of London, but there is clearly a lack of leadership facilities outlets for young people.

It presents itself to us at the GLA, I think, as a demand for more policing. In as much as we support more policing, which is very important, there is clearly a gap on the other side of the coin, the youth diversion activities. There is a Green Paper out now, called

*Youth Matters*, which is finally looking seriously at reinvigorating the youth services in London. Do you have any ideas for how the GLA family could or should be playing a role in trying to reinvigorate the youth services in London? We have some ideas, Mayor, if you have not.

**The Mayor:** Good, I am happy to work with those. I mentioned at a previous meeting my recollection that Steve Norris had promised to spend £25 million on youth activity and so on had he won the election. When I checked on the manifesto, he was going to take it out of the LDA budget. There might be legal problems with a simple community youth programme that was not linked to employment, so there is no easy way forward to that.

It might be that we could look at whether or not we do match funding from the GLA, and if this is not an area where we might get a cross-party consensus on a small increase in the precept in order to start to fund the schemes, if we could get matching funding, not just from local authorities, but also from firms in London.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** That would be very helpful. It is clearly the case that young people also do move around across borough boundaries, and there is a role for a larger entity in this. I would be interested to know whether you think there should be special planning guidance in the London Plan on youth and play facilities, particularly outdoor facilities. There certainly do not seem to be common high standards on those issues. I would be interested if the LDA does take control of the Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) whether or not there is some interface there, and also whether or not there are some opportunities using the Oyster Card for the proposal in the Green Paper – basically an opportunity card for young people, topping it up with credits for sports facilities, etc.

**The Mayor:** Now we are moving to having a youth Oyster Card, that becomes a possibility. Certainly, we were always thinking that once the Oyster Card had rolled out to a pretty extensive use in London, we would get deals with borough councils about leisure facilities and so on, and also with the private sector.

One of the areas where Nicky (Gavron) is most active on the planning side is that far too often, we see major developments coming up with, really, no play provision at all or wholly inadequate play provision. As we come up for the first full review of the London Plan – not the rapid interim one – we may need to go for a much-improved standard across development in London to recognise this.

**1778/2005 - Environment**

**Murad Qureshi**

*Do you agree that it is contradictory to argue that London government has done nothing to tackle pollution on the one hand, and to simultaneously oppose almost all measures likely to reduce pollution and congestion, such as the West London Tram, the 20 pence extra per cab journey to clean up cab engines, the Extension of the Congestion Charge, the increase in the Congestion Charge, and every single budget that has paid for the expansion of the bus service?*

**The Mayor:** Yes, I do agree. As we saw earlier today, the position of the Liberal Democrats, whilst always denouncing me for not doing more on the environment, is very often to side with whatever is the latest populist uproar against whatever changes I am proposing. When, if we proceed with it, we do extend the Congestion Charge to west London, there will be benefits that we saw in central London, where we saw a 20% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, a 12.5% reduction in nitrous oxides, and a 12.5% reduction in particulates. We also saw reductions in noise, reductions in accidents, and increases in cycling.

All of these are massive benefits, many of them not thrown into the normal cost-benefit analysis. At the end of the day, if you want to improve the environment, there are difficult choices to make. It really is not good enough demanding, as the Liberal Democrats do, that I improve the environment, whilst usually managing to oppose about 60-70% of the actual measures I have to take.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Thank you for informing us of that, Mayor. Could you also tell us what will be the likely impact on reducing pollution in west London with the West London Tram?

**The Mayor:** The West London Tram is now undergoing a major, six-month modelling exercise, because we will clearly have a huge public inquiry. The technical details will be gone into in major detail, in a way that we are seeing around the traffic modelling debate at the Thames Gateway Bridge inquiry. That is a slight delay, and we will not be in a position to make the sort of firm predictions you want until we have had the results of that traffic modelling, which should be reported to the TfL board in April.

I inherited the tram scheme, and the reason the tram had been proposed for Uxbridge is because the increase in population in west London means that unless there is an improved public transport system, we will have virtual gridlock on the Uxbridge Road sometime in the middle of the next decade, with all the problems of pollution, noise, and traffic accidents that flow from that.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** That is true. Another aspect of your strategy which the Liberal Democrats have opposed has been the cleanup of black cabs. Could you just outline what...?

**The Mayor:** Well, I think to say 'oppose' is a strong word. It is sort of a bit of whining, noises off. Our problem there was that this is something we want to do, but the private sector was not geared up to do it, in this rapacious capitalist society, where capitalism, we are told, can solve all our problems. They had not geared themselves up to be able to come along and clean up our black cabs, even though there is good profit in it.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** The final area where the Liberal Democrats have opposed TfL is the expansion of the bus service. Lynne Featherstone (MP, former AM) said that that the Congestion Charge was being increased, because the Mayor had a very expensive bus policy to keep going.

**The Mayor:** I have noticed all the way through on this that, whilst individual Liberal Democrats come to us and say, 'Can you give me a new bus line? Can we have more buses here? Could it make a diversion here, round to pick up this, that, or other group of my constituents?', there is a general whining about the scale of the transport budget. Of course, the transport budget has been in balance each year since I was elected.

We have been able to get out of Government major extra funds in order to expand the bus service, so that now – joy of joys – we are running the best bus service since 1957 and carrying nearly 6.5 million people, when it was only 4.25 million when I was elected. Nevertheless, there is this constant whining. I think it is very depressing, and it keeps me awake at night.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Yes, indeed, and it will probably continue now.

**Sally Hamwee (Chair):** Do you wish to continue depressing us further, Murad (Qureshi)?

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** No, thank you.

**Geoff Pope (AM):** It is sense that opposition parties, in opposing certain parts of your annual budget, have no choice, in the way this Assembly is set up, but to vote against the whole budget, and that in fact, the Liberal Democrats' own budget proposals have always strongly supported expansion of the bus services. Are you aware that in opposing the West London Tram proposals, the Liberal Democrats have repeatedly called for TfL to look seriously into the use of trolley buses, which have much more flexible use of road space and, indeed, are just as pollution-free as trams are?

I would like to contrast that with your own proposals for using a diesel-guided bus in the areas of Thamesmead, which is an award-winning ecological corridor. How can you justify that?

**The Mayor:** Let me say, first of all, I do think your appearance here in the Liberal group may have shifted the balance of power back towards the progressive wing of the Liberal group, and we are looking forward to a more positive tone.

Although I think you, generally, have a long, detailed, and honourable record of campaigning for public transport – and I know that, because you send me endless tomes about it, and have done even before you were an Assembly Member, in the various groups you campaign in – it was quite clearly the case that in my hearing and in the debate, Simon Hughes at the last Mayoral election said we could not continue with the present level of the bus service, and it would have to be reviewed. He broadly was inching up towards Steve Norris on that. I am looking forward to a much more positive working relationship with you than I had with Lynne Featherstone.

**Geoff Pope (AM):** Would you not agree that the Congestion Charging scheme in the central zone has been a success, and we have supported that all along? It has reached the 21% target of traffic reduction, but in today's world, people are now moving forward to road pricing as a much more effective way of controlling congestion, without all the knock-on disbenefits that the existing scheme has.

**The Mayor:** The leading work on road pricing is actually being done by us. We are doing the trial on behalf of the Government within the existing zone. I suspect it will be us that carries it forward, if it ever sees the light of day, but we are still dependent on Government passing the legislation to ensure we have transponders in cars.

Therefore, the earliest we will get road pricing will most likely be about 2012, and we had to do something in the short term to tackle the particularly urgent problems that we had in central London. We are keen to press ahead with road pricing at the earliest possible opportunity, and I have offered to Government that we should be the pilot for the whole UK.

**John Biggs (AM):** Very briefly – and perhaps a little mischievously – would you agree with me, and I think you have begun to answer this question, that the underlying problem behind the question is that the Liberal Democrats have a problem in working out whether they are a party of the Left or the Right? They tend to reconcile this by trying to be both at the same time. While we welcome Geoff Pope's comments about investing in public transport, could you perhaps give some further guidance as to how they could resolve this conflict? It would be very helpful to Londoners, as well, to understand whether they are a party of the Right or the Left.

**The Mayor:** I have friends on both wings of the Liberal Democrat party, and they both tell me about the great struggle for the soul of Liberalism that is going ahead. Although I had disagreements with him at the Mayoral election, I have to say I do think as long as Simon Hughes hangs there as a great big, left-wing, Liberal Democrat presence, all those ghastly little Orange Order boys running around Charles Kennedy (MP, Leader, Liberal Democrat party) hoping to take the Liberal Democrats over to a free-market, Free Democrat Party (FDP) (German political party)-type right-wing party are not going to be able to get away with it. Therefore, although I would not vote for him for Mayor, if I had a vote, I would vote for him for leader of the Liberal Democrats when Charles Kennedy goes.

**Sally Hamwee (Chair):** I think you mean 'hangs in' not 'hangs.'

**The Mayor:** Oh, right, right. That is 'balanced,' is it not, rather than 'hung.'

## 1601/2005 - Remembrance Service

### Brian Coleman

*Do you think it would be appropriate for the families of the London bombers to attend the 1 November Remembrance Service at St Paul's Cathedral?*

**The Mayor:** This is not an event that is being organised by my office or any other part of the GLA family. It is being arranged and coordinated by the Dean and Chapter of St

Paul's Cathedral and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and they have responsibility for deciding upon the content of the service and the invitation list. The purpose of the Remembrance Service is to provide comfort to the grieving families and friends of the victims and to affirm the commitment and unity of Londoners to our diverse city.

It is quite remarkable that in a situation in which no one even suggested inviting the relatives of the bombers, and none of the relatives of the bombers expressed any desire to come, this story – which was wholly manufactured by the media – was given legs. When I spoke to relatives of the families who had lost people in the bombings, they had been completely disturbed by this.

**Brian Coleman (Deputy Chair):** Well, Mr Mayor, of course, you will know where the story came from. It came from suggestions from certain Church of England Bishops – the Bishop of Newcastle (The Rt Reverend Martin Wharton), the Bishop of Sheffield (The Rt Reverend Jack Nicholls), and other figures.

**The Mayor:** Who have nothing to do with it.

**Brian Coleman (Deputy Chair):** Indeed. Do I take it from that you do not think it is appropriate?

**The Mayor:** I have never been consulted by the Government. I imagine I will be invited to go, and I will go in my role as Mayor. No one has sought my advice at all, and as I say, this is a completely manufactured story. I do really think simply because some Bishop in the north of the country makes a comment, it does not necessarily have to lead on all the news items, given the distress it caused the families.

I spoke to one of these families at great length and explained the position to them. They were absolutely convinced that the families had been invited. It took me about 15 minutes to explain to them they had not, and they have expressed no desire to come. I suspect that many of them are actually in safe houses under police protection.

**Brian Coleman (Deputy Chair):** Well, indeed. Mr Mayor, as the issue perhaps hinges around forgiveness, have you forgiven the men and women, possibly, who planned this attack on 7 July, as Mayor of the city?

**The Mayor:** Hang on. I am not in a position to forgive. My job is to defend. Let us leave it to the Bishops and the Imams to deal with the issues of morals and forgiveness. I am just a grubby old politician, whose job is to try to make the machinery of government work. I never wander round invoking anybody's god or claiming any great moral guidance or leadership.

**Brian Coleman (Deputy Chair):** Can I take the opportunity to move on?

**The Mayor:** I am not a spiritual leader, you may have noticed.

**Brian Coleman (Deputy Chair):** You are certainly not my spiritual leader, Mr Mayor. Tell me about the workings of the London Bombings Relief Charitable Fund.

**Sally Hamwee (Chair):** Brian (Coleman), this is a long way off the question. Can you bring it back to the Remembrance Service in your usual imaginative way?

**Brian Coleman (Deputy Chair):** Are you content that the families of the victims who will be present on 1 November at the Remembrance Service are receiving appropriate support from the London Bombings Relief Charitable Fund?

**The Mayor:** You should get an award for twisting the question round in that way. I have had no complaints. The Assembly and myself are in agreement here about focusing the funds. All I have seen – which is largely based on press reports – is that they are proceeding down this route of providing substantial sums to bring immediate help to deal with the problems of those who have either been injured or have lost loved ones in this. I suspect we should try to have regular reports to the Bureau of Leaders on this as a way of keeping tabs on it.

**Sally Hamwee (Chair):** Thank you. We have not quite exhausted the two and a half hours from the start time. I am not going to finish, but can I just ask now, whether Members agree under Standing Order 136 to extend the time by half an hour. I am hoping we will not have to use a half hour to complete the business. [General consensus of Members] I am going to take one more question from the Labour group, which has time left.

#### **1795/2005 - Buffer Zones**

##### **Jennette Arnold**

*Further to our discussion at May's Mayor's Question Time, can you tell me more about the buffer zones that you intend to add to the existing Congestion Charge boundary, if the Western Extension is put into place? Will this benefit my constituents who live immediately outside the zone, but have not been given the discount proposed for west Londoners?*

**The Mayor:** It is proposed to extend the residents' discount zone in cases where the Congestion Charging Zone boundary lies between one-way diversionary routes, such as the Aldgate Gyratory. Currently, the residents' discount zone boundary is drawn at the inner arm of one-way routes, and it is proposed that this will be extended to include the area up to the outer arm of one-way routes, as well.

This applies in seven locations around the existing central London Congestion Charging zone, as shown on the map provided for the recent consultation on the proposed extension. They are: King's Cross one-way system at Pentonville Road and Penton Rise; the Angel one-way system at Goswell Road and Wakley Street; the Aldgate Gyratory, Leman Street, Prescott Street, and Mansell Street; Vauxhall Cross; Old Marylebone Road, and Chapel Street; Victoria transport interchange; and the area enclosed by Bressenden Place, Lower Grosvenor Place, Grosvenor Gardens, and Victoria Street. I believe some of these will be of benefit to your constituents.

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** Thank you, because, yes, I identified three out of those seven areas. You would say that I should be satisfied and shut up and go away...

**The Mayor:** Good.

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** ...but I will not. I have a map to pass on to you, because there is another area, and that area is around Shoreditch. I just wanted to bring that to

your attention. It seems to me that this area falls within the sort of rationale that has been used for the other seven, in that it has a convenient boundary line, if you use the Old Street-Shoreditch High Street-Great Eastern Street triangle, and then the enclosed Hoxton Square. Therefore, it is just a small triangle, but it would mean so much for the people in that area.

Let me share with you just one example. That community then finds itself wedged between Hackney proper and the city, so their day-to-day lives are spent crossing this boundary. For one of my constituents in Shoreditch, he has to take his daughter to the nursery school in Barbican – this is just an example – which is inside the zone. Now, the question he would like me to ask you is: would you agree that if you are to prevent divided communities in west London through buffer zones, then residents of northeast London – specifically his area – should be treated the same?

**The Mayor:** I presume I have received representations on this point in the consultation, but I have not yet reached them. Perhaps it would be useful if you forward those to me, so I can make sure I do not miss them or anything. Have you any idea roughly how many people live inside the area you are talking about?

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** I can find out by the end of the day.

**The Mayor:** Okay, and I will come back and revisit that.

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** Right, well thank you for that, and thank you on behalf of those three areas that you have already outlined. They will welcome this, because their campaign has been worthy.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Can I ask you, then Mayor, if you would be willing to...

**The Mayor:** No, I know the answer, so I will tell you.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Would you be willing to read in detail the detailed research document that I put into the TfL Congestion Charging review on Kennington? All of the research does include demographic research, car ownership, number of disabilities, and the difficulties people are having parking in their own area, because of the mismatch of parking policy and Congestion Charging in some areas.

I did get a quarter-page reply – I think, or half-page reply – from TfL which, essentially, had not analysed my argument, had not analysed my data, and said, if you want it in summary, 'No.' That is the polite version. Would you be reading that representation, as well?

**The Mayor:** I have read the stuff relating to the particular area round Kennington that you are talking about. The real problem there is the sharp nature of the turn as you start going north again. That was always a bigger problem than the rest of it, but I will go back and have another look at it.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** The proposal, Mayor, is not that we should amend the zone, but that we should create a small triangular pocket of buffer zone discount charges, because of the impact of the split community. That area is also geographically isolated, not in this instance as it is in west London by railway tracks, but by the Oval and the

Kennington Park below it. Therefore, it does merit looking at. I do not think they have looked at it.

**The Mayor:** Where we would have a disagreement on emphasis is the use of the word 'small.' If you look at the ones I have already listed, some of them are a reasonable size in area, but not in population. I will go back and have another look at it before I close my mind after the end of the consultation, as opposed to closing my mind now.

**Sally Hamwee (Chair):** Thank you. I think the Labour group thought that I was being malign in saying it would be the last question. I meant I would give them their time.

## 1747/2005 - Injuries on Buses

### Len Duvall

*Further to my question (No. 1123/2005), would the Mayor agree with me that, if injuries on buses are so rare, TfL should set up a compensation fund for those bus passengers who are injured when the operators are not liable? Passengers pay to travel on London buses and should not find themselves permanently injured and out of pocket through no fault of their own.*

**The Mayor:** TfL is giving thought to the possibility of such a fund and will communicate its findings to you in due course. The answer is not 'no.' It is not 'yes' either yet.

**Len Duvall (AM):** Well, that is better than the answer they gave me before, which was 'no.' Can I just ask, Mr Mayor, in your briefing note, then, does it say then that they realise that there is a loophole? There is a legitimate issue here of where bus passengers are injured, through no fault of their own and not the fault of London Transport, that it may be possible for them to receive compensation.

**The Mayor:** One of the issues we are looking at on this is who would qualify for it. This is the sort of situation where the case that arose in an incident such as somebody ran in front of the bus, and the bus had to stop suddenly. There was, therefore, an injury to a person inside – a broken leg or arm. Of course, the insurers ruled that the bus was not liable, and they fall into a crack in the insurance system.

At the moment, we are looking at: who would qualify for an award; under what circumstances; would a different severity of accident lead to the award of more money; what criteria do we use; how much would we award; should the fund cover all surface transport, all of TfL, including the Underground; are there any legal implications to making an award; should the fund be retrospective, and if so, how far back it would go?

I suspect there is several weeks, if not months, of work in there, but the implication I get from that is it is being looked at positively, rather than how we can just move on from this as rapidly as possible. There are, however, clearly big legal problems.

**Sally Hamwee (Chair):** That concludes the questions.