

**London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 2 July 2014  
Transcript of Agenda Item 4 – Mayor's Report**

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Since we last met, we have launched a new £175 million programme of investment in London's high streets and a Mayor's High Street Award; a big programme to support high streets, particularly in outer London town centres where, as everybody knows, they are under threat from big supermarkets. This will support 2,200 businesses, create 1,400 new jobs, support 1,500 existing jobs, deliver 220 apprenticeships and get 430 people into new jobs. The key thing is that we are continuing to support our outer London high streets, the potential motors of the outer London economy. It is very, very important to keep those places alive and bustling and do what we can to boost them.

We launched a programme on 26 June to release some Greater London Authority (GLA) land for 11 new schools in London. Some of them will be free schools, one of them will be a University Technical College (UTC) and one will be an academy. Obviously that is a drop in the ocean in terms of London's school places need, but it is 7,300 places. That is getting us some way towards the 90,000 that we need by 2016.

We welcomed David Goldstone, whom many of you will remember for the excellent work he did at the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA). He is joining us as the Chief Executive of the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC). We had a wonderful citizenship ceremony here in City Hall just the other day, which some Members attended.

You want to know about what is going on with cycling on the Garden Bridge. I just think that this is going to be a fantastic new amenity for London. It is something that is heavily supported. I have never seen a project that attracted such strong support from Londoners across all groups and backgrounds. Everybody supports this proposal. The issue is whether we allow cyclists to tear across it or whether we conserve it as a place of quiet repose, a place where you can stand in a meditative kind of way and look at the gorgeous view, surrounded by bosky nooks and bowery corners of the garden bridge. We should go for that. I would rather have a quiet Garden Bridge rather than one where pedestrians feel that they constantly have to whisk round to watch out for a cyclist.

**John Biggs AM:** I was interested in the first instance on your update on the bridge. We have a number of anxieties there. The first one is that if you do not design it with provision for cyclists, they will probably use it anyway. We know that there are badly behaved cyclists everywhere. If you design it in a way that is meant to prevent cyclists, they will probably use it anyway and that will cause greater nuisance than if you do not.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is a fair criticism and it is a reasonable anxiety. I do not happen to share it. You could create an environment quite readily where people understood that this was not a place where you were going to tear through on a bike. Everybody will be familiar with parts of, for instance, Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens where that rule is

enforced pretty effectively - very effectively, actually - just by public pressure. People get off their bikes where they are meant to get off their bikes, so it will be all right. A more difficult question, frankly, is going to be dogs. The issue is going to be between dog lovers and those who think that dogs would degrade the amenity of the environment. This is the sort of thing that I think this brilliant Assembly might bend its vast brains to and consider what you think would be the right way forward for London.

**John Biggs AM:** If I could just stretch the question a little bit eastwards, then. In your oral update, you spoke about the great glory of investment in London's wider infrastructure. There is a cycling issue here, however, which is that the Silvertown crossing will have no provision for cyclists and pedestrians and we are told that they can use the cable car. We all know that that presents a number of challenges --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, it does not. I took my bike on the cable car yesterday.

**John Biggs AM:** -- in terms of cost and in terms of speed and efficiency of the journey. Of course, a solution at hand, which the London Chamber of Commerce reminded us of this week, is the other bridge crossing of the Thames, which, had you not stopped it in the first year of your mayoralty, would be pretty close to completion by this point. That would have provision for cyclists.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are absolutely right that it is essential to get more river crossings east of Tower Bridge and we are now proceeding with a very ambitious plan for several river crossings. The consultation on that will begin on 7 July on a number of additional options for new river crossings east of Tower Bridge, including at Gallions Reach and a bridge further east, connecting Rainham and Belvedere. The idea is that by building several river crossings we would alleviate the congestion and the pressure on each individual crossing. That is the way we want to go.

I accept and we have had conversations many times about the Thames Gateway Bridge (TGB). That was not a good plan from an environmental point of view. It was turned down by the Planning Inspectorate, as many will recall. What we are going forward with now is the right way.

**John Biggs AM:** Let us move on constructively, then, because we live in a world of politicians who regret nothing. You and I are both far more grown up than that and recognise that we do sometimes make mistakes. Do you regret delaying the --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I can tell you I do. I tell you what I regret. What we should have done, in retrospect, is proceeded faster with a better plan than the one that was there. The problem with the TGB was it was a bad scheme and what we should have then done is advance this whole series of bridges faster. Yes, if you ask me whether I wish we could accelerate these things, yes, I certainly do and I would like to have them there by the end of the decade.

