

**London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 15 July 2015****Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Questions to the Mayor****2015/2216 - Summer Budget**

Len Duvall AM

*What will be the impact on London of George Osborne's 8 July Summer Budget?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thanks, Len. This is an excellent Budget and I welcome very much that it has several important changes that will help Londoners, such as supporting working people with lower taxes. You will be able from next year to earn £11,000 before paying any income tax at all. The figure before the Coalition Government came in was about £7,000 or perhaps even lower, which was a measure of the inequity of the taxation system in this country. They have also raised the threshold so that you do not pay the 40p tax rate until you are earning £43,000 and about 13,000 people will be lifted out of the higher tax rate.

It is good news for London that the corporation tax is being cut to a spectacularly low level of 18%, which is a real incentive to business to grow and to invest. Measures to take family homes out of inheritance tax will be particularly important in boroughs in this city where many people have seen the value of their home inflate through no fault of their own and face the real threat of being forced to sell the family home in order to pay death duties. That is a reasonable change that will help people on low and middle incomes in London who simply happen to be living in a very expensive property that just reflects what is happening in the London economy.

The changes to the Living Wage we welcome and the idea of a National Living Wage is one, clearly, whose time has come. It is very important and it will be good news for people on low incomes and low pay in the sense that over this Parliament somebody currently on the Minimum Wage will see their income rise by about £5,000. There is a further incentive for businesses to pay the Living Wage in the sense that the Employment Allowance has been increased by 50% and you can employ four people fulltime without paying any National Insurance at all if you are paying the Living Wage.

I think everybody around this horseshoe would agree that this may be progress, but we must in no sense abandon the goal of getting London businesses to sign up to the London Living Wage, which is a campaign that everybody has supported and it remains extremely important. It is a rate of pay that Londoners deserve. So far, 630 employers have signed up: we must not take the foot off the gas because of this progress in low pay across the board.

There are various other improvements in the standing of London and devolution of powers of one kind or another that Members will have seen in recent days over planning and over Sunday trading. We are getting £10 billion for transport investment, as the Chancellor announced in the long-term economic plan for London. Crossrail 2, the Bakerloo line extension, the east river crossings and all of that agenda will progress. I do think that it is a good budget for this city and I look forward very much to taking questions on it.

**Len Duvall AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. You have been a great champion for the real London Living Wage issue and, yes, the rise in the Minimum Wage nationally is to be welcomed. Mr Mayor, in terms of the Chancellor recognising in the benefit caps that there is a differential in terms of London, is there not a case, then, for you to lobby for a higher rate of the National Living Wage here in London differentially as well?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Len. What I have done is, as you would expect, I have already weighed in on this subject at the levels you would expect with the Chancellor and the Prime Minister. I do think that there is absolutely nothing to be lost from the point of view of any party - Conservative, Labour, whoever -in campaigning for the London Living Wage across the board. I really believe in it.

Whether the right way forward is, as you propose, a special London weighting for the new National Living Wage is open to argument because it might involve a further dilution of our focus on the London Living Wage. It is very important. The London Living Wage is something that, as everybody knows, is set by a team of impartial economists here in City Hall. They look at the costs of living in London. They calculate it now to be £9.15 per hour. We think that is fair. There are businesses across the city that are paying it. They are not all big banks, accountancy firms, lawyers or whatever: we have contractors paying it now; we have pubs; we have cafés; we have all sorts of businesses now starting to pay it. It is interesting that we were actually on the brink of a breakthrough with a major retailer to get it to pay the London Living Wage.

What I must say in all honesty to the Assembly is that I do worry now that that impetus will be diminished by businesses' ability to say, "It is OK now because we are paying this National Living Wage". Do you see what I am on about?

**Len Duvall AM:** Mr Mayor, you do accept that in terms of reductions in the welfare bill and making work pay, increasing the National Minimum Wage or the voluntary real London Living Wage, which I think is what you are saying, is the way forward? In that sense, will you not lobby for that and accept that there is a higher cost of living issue here in London in terms of normal workers? You can go away and think about that and your role in the final year of this mayoralty.

Can you also give an undertaking that as part of your renewed commitment to the real London Living Wage, you will undertake a study through the Greater London Authority (GLA) Living Wage Unit of what the National Living Wage in London will need to be set at to compensate for the cuts in in-work benefits announced by the Chancellor in 2015 --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. I understand, Len, yes.

**Len Duvall AM:** -- because that must have a say in terms of where you are coming from about the real London Living Wage?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Len, you are right that we should be looking into whether there should be a National London Living Wage weighting. The trouble is that this conversation is now going to get so complicated that people will cease to follow which living wage we are talking about. We could get to a new National London Living Wage weighting, just as there is under the existing Minimum Wage. There is a London weighting and I think that is what you are driving at. That is one conversation.

The second conversation is to tell not just businesses but also Whitehall departments. Some Whitehall departments pay the voluntary London Living Wage; some do not. They all should. All councils should. I would be very unhappy to see our effort being dissipated in that area.

On tax credits and the trade-off between bearing down on in-work benefits and tax credits and lifting wages, given all the cliffs and poverty traps that there are in the tax credit system - and everybody will talk to constituents who have been made absolutely miserable by being overpaid and then being forced to pay back - and all the difficulties that arise in the tax credit system, clearly, it is better to lift the wages of the low-paid

and indeed to reduce the tax burden. That has to be the right way forward. That is a much more equitable system, in my view.

There has to be some compromise here and there has to be a way forward and I appreciate that there is now, to put it mildly, a conversation going on within the Labour Party itself about how to do that. Some representatives of the Labour Party, notably Harriet Harman [Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP, Leader of the Opposition], seem to be more willing to recognise the difficulties and the reality than others.

**Len Duvall AM:** Mr Mayor, I am under pressure on time. I take it that somewhere in that answer was a yes to the study that you will do with the GLA unit to help us with the lobbying.

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

**Len Duvall AM:** Then there is one further group that I would ask you to consider lobbying for. In London's demographics, we have approximately 50% more 20-to-24-year-olds than the national average. Will you also lobby for a full or partial exemption for London from the rule that only people aged over 25 will receive the National Living Wage? There does seem to be a big problem here for London and for that section of our community and it makes no sense at all.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I understand that.

**Len Duvall AM:** Is that a simple yes or no?

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

**Len Duvall AM:** Will you look into it? Maybe there might well be some further support from the Assembly for these particular areas because they will have a major impact on our young people.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What I certainly will undertake, Len, is to look at the particular impacts of the Budget on under-25s. That is reasonable. People should bear in mind that on the whole in London, in spite of the costs of living here, people do better. They are paid more. There are more opportunities here in London. To put it mildly, there are considerable advantages of living in London, which we should not neglect as well. However, given the threshold that was established in the Budget for the National Living Wage of only over-25s, it is reasonable that we should look at the impacts for under-25s as well.

**Len Duvall AM:** Thank you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Jones?

**Jenny Jones AM:** Thank you, Chair. Mr Mayor, I want to agree with you that Osborne [Rt Hon George Osborne MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer] has muddied the waters by calling his Minimum Wage the 'Living Wage'. You should go and have a strong word with him about that.

There is a strong argument for the London weighting, do you not think, on this? The London weighting is on things like a higher pay-to-stay threshold for better-off social housing tenants, higher student loans and so on. Is that something you are going to make a case about? You say it is a sensible idea, but could you go a bit further and say, yes, you will support the idea?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As I have said just now, I will certainly look at what we can do there. My anxiety is that the waters, to use your metaphor, will become even further muddied if we enter into a great argument about that question when what I want everybody to focus on is the moral need to pay the £9.15. If we lose sight of that, we will have really lost a very considerable prize.

**Jenny Jones AM:** There is the fact as well that there are some people in London who are going to experience a gap. You are going to set the London Living Wage in November. In April the Government cuts are going to come in. There will be people living in London from April to November when you set the Living Wage again who will be experiencing real deprivation. What you could do is, when you set the London Living Wage this November, you could take into account those cuts next year. Is that something you are prepared to do?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Just to go over my last point again, I am more than willing to look at a London weighting for the National Living Wage and to try to see what --

**Jenny Jones AM:** No, this --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** On the second point, it is very important that the GLA Economics unit that sets the Living Wage should not be seen to be the tool of the mayoralty in any way and should be able to set that wage independently. Therefore, I would be reluctant to go down that line.

**Jenny Jones AM:** You could point out to them that there is going to be this gap for people.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am sure that they are more than capable of seeing that themselves.

**Jenny Jones AM:** All right. I will send them the little transcript from this meeting. Also, you say there is a moral need to pay the London Living Wage for employers, but I have urged you before to make it compulsory. It is not just a moral need but there is also a financial need because people who are not paying the London Living Wage actually put a burden onto the taxpayer. Surely it is good Conservative policy to make businesses pay a fair wage so that they are not taking loads of money from the taxpayer in terms of --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Absolutely. That is the purpose of what the Chancellor has brought in in the form of the National Living Wage. He is quite right because what you have is a situation, as you rightly say, in which big corporations are mainlining tax credits in order to subsidise low pay, sometimes to the tune of hundreds of millions of pounds. I saw that Next is getting about £250 million into its workforce's pay packets, effectively, out of its bottom line. That cannot be right. That cannot be the right way forward.

**Jenny Jones AM:** That is outrageous. Why not make --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Next is by no means alone: Tesco and all sorts of companies are now in this position. Really, it is because of the huge growth in tax credits. The way forward is, as you rightly say, to lift people out of low pay.

The coercive approach that the Living Wage adopts has its risks and has its downsides because there will be businesses that cannot cope and there will be businesses for whom it is simply too high. I am afraid there will be some companies whose business model does not allow them to do it and the risk is that they will lay off staff. You saw that in the Chancellor's statement. He made a calculation about the numbers that might be laid off.

**Jenny Jones AM:** I heard you say this on the radio, but actually we could exclude small businesses from this if they have fewer than ten employees, for example.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is the sort of thing that is worth discussing, but then you do not have a blanket Living Wage.

**Jenny Jones AM:** As a good Conservative, surely you do not support unviable businesses being propped up by the taxpayer? I simply do not understand why you do not think that a compulsory Living Wage is actually a good Conservative move --

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

**Jenny Jones AM:** -- to make businesses trimmer and more efficient.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I certainly agree - and this is why our campaign has been so successful in London over the last few years - that businesses broadly do accept that if they pay the Living Wage and if they treat their employees with dignity and respect, then they are paid back with loyalty and higher productivity. They end up with lower human resources (HR) bills, lower staff turnover and better results.

**Jenny Jones AM:** I completely agree with you, but there are more people now in London not earning the Living Wage than there were when you came into power seven years ago.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is because there are now more people in employment in London than ever before and there are more people in London than ever before.

**Jenny Jones AM:** For whatever reason, you are not keeping up.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As it happens, there are far more people being paid the Living Wage than there were when I came in and --

**Jenny Jones AM:** You are trying to encourage businesses but you are not making it compulsory, which means more and more people are living on poverty wages. If you make it compulsory, there would be more people lifted out of poverty.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As you know fine and well, Jenny, we do not have the statutory powers to make it compulsory. What the Government has done is introduce a National Living Wage, which is compulsory, which will involve some rigidities and which I warmly welcome. It is a huge step in the right direction. However, we must not lose sight of the simultaneous campaign for the London Living Wage, which, as everybody appreciates, is £9.15 rather than £7.20, which is the National Living Wage at the moment.

**Jenny Jones AM:** Osborne is being very tricky and he is competing with you on this. Thank you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do not mind. People can steal my clothes as much as they like, as far as I am concerned. Unprincipled scoundrels, they are! I am being heckled mercilessly [by John Biggs AM].

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** You have been heckled and I have been sent a love note!

**Jenny Jones AM:** It is from me.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** Not from me.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Whoever loves me, thank you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Knight?

**Stephen Knight AM:** Thank you, Chair. Mr Mayor, I was going to ask you about the Chancellor's announcements around the Vehicle Excise Duty. Given that you have been lobbying for reform to the Vehicle Excise Duty to ensure that it reflects not only carbon emissions but also pollution emissions from vehicles, are you as disappointed as I am that the Chancellor has effectively ignored those calls and missed the opportunity to use the Vehicle Excise Duty regime to encourage cleaner vehicles?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Broadly speaking, obviously, I welcome very much what the Chancellor is trying to do. Only zero-emission vehicles will pay zero Vehicle Excise Duty. It is a good step. It will tackle dieselisation --

**Stephen Knight AM:** Mr Mayor, the Chancellor's change only looks at carbon emissions, does it not?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Could I possibly just finish, if you would allow me? Where perhaps the policy needs work and needs discussion is in saying that vehicles costing more than £40,000 cannot be exempt even if they are zero-emission capable. Clearly, this is intended to capture very swish new electric vehicles (EVs) like the Tesla S or whatever so that you do not have the unfairness of rich people, as it were, not paying the Vehicle Excise Duty that falls on poor people. I can understand that completely.

However, we are, as you know, trying to introduce new zero-emission-capable taxis and they will cost over £40,000. It is important that we have a proper exemption for them.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Mr Mayor, you have missed the point of the question and that is the Chancellor's new regime inasmuch as it still differentiates between emissions only looks at carbon emissions. It does not look at NO<sub>2</sub> or particulate emissions and that is what you have been lobbying for. Will you fight to get changes to this regime to help clean up London's air?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Certainly, you are on to something, Stephen. That is the honest answer. I broadly welcome what is going on, but we need to make sure that we tackle diesel emissions and that we tackle particulates. The whole problem was that the British public was invited to buy diesel vehicles without being properly alerted to their polluting impacts.

**Stephen Knight AM:** They are still being invited to buy diesel vehicles.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We need to go further to encourage people to buy low-polluting vehicles as well as low-carbon-emission vehicles.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Thank you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you. Assembly Member Twycross?

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Thank you. I am delighted that you think a National Living Wage is an idea whose time has come, but we have to be honest that this is not a genuine Living Wage. In November last year, GLA Economics suggested in the paperwork around the new rate for the Living Wage that without the tax

credits the rate for London would be around £11.65 and so we can already see that it is well short of what the Government is proposing.

I want to go back and just ask you a little bit more about the comments you made about the loss of impetus because this is a genuine worry and, from our side, we will do anything we can to help keep that impetus going. If I heard you correctly, you stated that we are on the brink of a breakthrough with a major retailer. This is one of the real issues we have been facing: getting people who employ large numbers of low-paid workers to sign up. It is absolutely tragic if, because of this announcement, we have lost the impetus and potentially lost a major retailer announcing later in the year that it will adopt the voluntary Living Wage rate, which in London, as you said, is £9.15 but should, as GLA Economics said, be around £11.65 without the tax credits being included.

What are you going to do and what can we do to make sure that this impetus is not lost? I am genuinely concerned about this.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I warmly welcome what you are saying there, Fiona. There are several things we can do.

The first is that there has to be a campaign to remind Londoners what the London Living Wage is. I have already talked, as you can imagine, to London Citizens, who originated this whole thing, about the impacts of the new policy on our campaign. Yes, they are worried that the wind is going to be taken out of their sails a bit here, but the answer is to get politicians and get everybody to put this higher up the agenda and talk about it.

As you know, we have the Living Wage mark that you give to companies that pay it. We should be doing events to publicise and to congratulate the businesses that do pay it. More and more are still coming forward to do it. I cannot give you the details off the top of my head now, but I am sure there will be further such events to celebrate the businesses that do pay it and to draw attention to what they are doing.

We should make it absolutely clear to London businesses that it is not going to be good enough just to say that they are paying the National Living Wage. That does not reflect, as you say, the costs of living in London and we want to step up our campaign.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Good. Has the Chancellor effectively firebombed the campaign with his use of the terminology, the 'Living Wage'? Has he effectively firebombed the London Citizens' and Living Wage Foundation's campaigns and the work that people have been doing to encourage employers to take up the London Living Wage?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Did you say 'firebombed'?

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Basically, he has completely undermined the impetus behind the campaign.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Undermined or firebombed in some way? All right. To try to subtract some of these metaphors: there is a risk of confusion. Let me put it that way. There is a risk of confusion. I want that confusion to be dispelled. I want everybody to be going for the London Living Wage.

This body and politicians across this place have played a big role in the last few years of expanding it. Kit [Kit Malthouse AM MP] when he was Deputy Mayor for Business and Enterprise ran endless campaigns to get companies to take it up. We are still running campaigns to do that and we mean to intensify that work.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** As also has been mentioned, the so-called National Living Wage has been linked to the proposition to cut tax credits for working families. Do you agree with the tax credits being removed before wages are increased significantly?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I noticed that this is something on which the acting Labour Leader, Harriet Harman, has said she is in agreement. I do not know whether it is the position of Members of the London Assembly to disagree already with their Leader, but she --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** I am asking for your view on this, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I agree with Harriet. It is time for Labour to wake up and smell the coffee. She is right and you should listen to her.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** We are having a very public internal debate on the issue at the moment.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do not know whether you agree. I have told you that I agree with Harriet Harman. Do you agree with Harriet Harman?

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Can you tell me how many of the 3 million families whom the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has said will be hit by this change live in London?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I cannot give you that.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** You should know.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I would be happy to write to you with the details. I do not have that figure off the top of my head.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** If you could establish it? Obviously, we know that previous changes to welfare disproportionately hit Londoners and about half of those affected lived in London. Can we conclude --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Let me give you an example. The withdrawal of the Child Tax Credit for families with more than two children does not affect those who are already in receipt of the Child Tax Credit. It would affect families who choose, 18 months from now, to have more than two children. They have a very clear option.

It seems to me that the Labour Party needs to work out what it really thinks about this. Harriet Harman has spoken for common sense and has spoken with large numbers of people in this country who think that £23,000 on benefits is quite a lot of money. I would like to hear, really, from you whether you agree with the Leader of the Labour Party.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** I am a third child. By definition, welfare cuts that affect working families affect children. Can I just ask you a little bit about child poverty? Can we talk seriously about child poverty for a moment?

London still has the highest rate of child poverty in the country and we recently heard that the level of child poverty has remained unchanged since you took office. Given this, can I ask in my concluding question why

you have refused my colleague Joanne McCartney's [Joanne McCartney AM] request that you introduce a child poverty strategy to tackle this very serious issue?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Actually, since I have been Mayor, 400,000 people in this city have been taken out of poverty. The number of people in poverty has gone down since I have been Mayor.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Will you introduce a child poverty strategy, bearing in mind that we still have child poverty in London?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As I have just said, since I have been Mayor, 400,000 people have been taken out of poverty - and Onkar [Dr Onkar Sahota AM] has a question later on about health inequalities - which shows that there are some very progressive changes happening in our city. Poverty is actually diminishing. Yes, insofar as you want a strategy on child poverty, you shall certainly have it. We have one already.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Four in ten children living in London are living in poverty. It is well time in your final year that you introduce a strategy on child poverty. Thank you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Copley?

**Tom Copley AM:** Thank you, Chair. Mr Mayor, I wanted to ask you about the impact of the Budget on housing in London, particularly on the ability of the GLA to deliver its affordable housing programmes. Could you tell me first of all if you support the Chancellor's decision to cut social rents by 1% a year for the next four years?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is a good idea to bear down on social rents. My general line on all these policies, Tom, is that they are acceptable if and only if they lead to the construction of more homes in London and more affordable homes. As we have discussed earlier on in this place, I do not want to see boroughs being deprived of the funds they need to build and that is why I do have very strong concerns that the receipts from council house sales, for instance, should not go outside the city. I want homes to be built here in London.

**Tom Copley AM:** Absolutely, and we are going to come to that later on. Just specifically on the 1% rent cut: you say that you do not want anything that will have a detrimental impact on the ability to deliver new affordable housing in London. Do you think that forcing housing associations to cut rents by 1% year-on-year will lead to more or less affordable housing being built?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Look, I am in favour of lower rents and I thought you were, too.

**Tom Copley AM:** I am. I am also in favour of lower rents in the private rented sector but no one in the Government is offering to cut those.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You are not in favour of lowering rents for the housing associations or for social housing? Are you?

**Tom Copley AM:** I hope you would support me, Mr Mayor, in saying to housing associations, "If we are going to have a 1% cut --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Are you in favour of lower rents?

**Tom Copley AM:** Yes. I am in favour of lower rents. You are the one who imposed affordable rents on this city of up to 80% of market rents. We on this side opposed your hike in rents. Do not come here and lecture us about rent levels, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am lecturing you. I am just pointing it out. I did not lecture you. I was just rather surprised to hear you were against a rent cut. That is all.

**Tom Copley AM:** Mr Mayor, as I have said, you and the Government imposed the 80% so-called 'affordable' rent on London.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You know perfectly well it is not --

**Tom Copley AM:** You said to housing associations, "You have to get your income from rents and from borrowing". By forcing housing associations to cut rents, you are reducing their ability to raise finance to build homes.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do think you have to get your story straight. You are either in favour of higher rents or in favour of lower rents. Which is it?

**Tom Copley AM:** I am in favour of lower rents, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Then you should vote for the Budget.

**Tom Copley AM:** I am also in favour of more housebuilding and I am also in favour of you answering the questions.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have answered the question. You should vote for the Budget and support the --

**Tom Copley AM:** You have not answered the question that I put to you, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have. I just have.

**Tom Copley AM:** Let me put it to you again. Do you think that cutting social rents by 1% year-on-year will result in more or fewer affordable homes being built in London?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We will have more homes being built in London irrespective of the rent cut and the rent cut is well tolerable provided we get other policies right.

**Tom Copley AM:** The Office of Budget Responsibility says that the rent cut will lead to 14,000 fewer homes being built across the country and the National Housing Federation estimates that it will lead to 27,000 fewer. What information do you have above and beyond what they have that suggests that you are right and they are wrong?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I would simply point out and look at the record, which is that we have been able to deliver a record number of affordable homes so far. Provided we get some things right - and I have alluded to one crucial thing, which is keeping the receipts from council house sales and other aspects of the policy - here in London, we will continue to build houses.

**Tom Copley AM:** We are coming to that later, but this is going forward, Mr Mayor. You have pledged to deliver --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As I might point out, if you had been at the meeting of the London Land Commission on Monday, you would have seen how dynamically we are now approaching house construction in London. Let me tell you. We are now building more homes --

**Tom Copley AM:** You have pledged, Mr Mayor, have you not; between 2015 and 2018, you have committed to building 42,000 homes. The Government's decision to cut the rents --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I thought you were in favour of rent cuts.

**Tom Copley AM:** -- which I would of course have welcomed, without any commensurate increase in grant, will take £3.9 billion out of housing associations across the country. How many of those 42,000 homes will now not be delivered?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I thought you were in favour of rent cuts. I am very surprised that you wish to raise rents for people in housing associations and council homes.

**Tom Copley AM:** I have no wish to raise rents, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The people of London deserve to hear that this is the new policy of the Labour Party.

**Tom Copley AM:** I have no wish to raise rents.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It does seem to me to be extraordinary, but if that really is what you are saying, Tom, it is one of the most staggering U-turns I have ever seen.

**Tom Copley AM:** I am in favour of building more affordable homes, which is what I thought you were in favour of, but clearly you are not. You cannot tell me how many homes this will result in not being built.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Let us stop this now.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I can tell you how many homes we are building and how many we are going to build. I can tell you about the record number of homes we are delivering, if you like. Shall I?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Mr Copley, do you have any more questions?

**Tom Copley AM:** No.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Boff?

**Andrew Boff AM:** Do you get a sense, Mr Mayor, that the Labour Party is having problems navigating around the great big tank that has been parked on its lawn?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I really have to say that we have heard this morning from the Labour Party a quiet insurrection against its own leader, who is being ruthlessly stabbed in the back by

Members of the London Assembly who refused to endorse or support her. They refuse to support Harriet Harman in her analysis of the changes to the benefit regime. It is quite amazing. Look at them all. They will not say it is not. Do they support the Leader of the Labour Party? They will not say. Do you? Does the Chair support her Leader?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Mr Mayor, just a moment. Mr Boff, we are on the Summer Budget. This is on the Chancellor's and the Government's Budget. Can we have a question on that, please?

**Andrew Boff AM:** Yes, I will get there.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** This is not about the Labour Party. Let us stay on the subject. I want a question on the Summer Budget or we will move on.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** If I may, through you, Jennette, what Andrew was using was a metaphor, which was that he was talking about the tank --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, you have spoken about inappropriate metaphors and so we will have fewer metaphors and just direct questions. Mr Boff, a question on the Summer Budget please?

**Andrew Boff AM:** You mentioned, Mr Mayor, the National Minimum Wage. That was a profound announcement and was much more than the Labour Party had actually planned for in its election campaign. It was, I suppose, welcome for the inconvenience that it caused the Labour Party!

However, there was no actual mention of enforcement, Mr Mayor. May I remind you, back in December last year, there was a unanimous decision of this Assembly about enforcement of the National Minimum Wage. You replied to that, saying, "I am fully supportive but it is not really my responsibility", which is factually correct.

However, Mr Mayor, now that you are in that other place [the House of Commons] as well, can I make the point again to you? Lack of enforcement of the National Minimum Wage does a number of things. Not only does it mean that workers are paid well below what they should or are entitled to be paid, but it also creates the effect of sucking in illegal workers into London. It means that it creates the environment for trafficked people to be used in London at way less than the Minimum Wage. We are talking in some cases about less than a pound an hour for employment. It creates that environment. Whilst HM Customs & Excise continue to rely on workers' complaints, they will miss the problem. A worker who either is trafficked or has questionable immigration status is not going to ring up the National Minimum Wage helpline. They are going to carry on. There needs to be proactive enforcement and it needs to be done now. Otherwise, those crowds that we are seeing at Calais and the human misery that comes from trafficking will continue to happen unless we shut off the opportunity for people to work in this country for less than the Minimum Wage.

Will you be a spokesperson for London? It affects London particularly, as I pointed out in my report *Shadow City* many years ago now. Will you use the forum of the House of Commons to argue that the enforcement of the Minimum Wage has to step up a gear? Otherwise, this situation will not change. It is a long question and I am sorry about that.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I completely agree with you. I am sure that many people around the country will share your view, Andrew. Yes, I completely agree with you. If we are going to have this thing, we have to enforce it. There are many reasons why we should be cracking down harder on illegal immigration and we should have done so long ago.

There are also those, of course, who argue that raising the Minimum Wage is in itself a magnet and itself draws in labour from overseas. There are people who argue this thing in all kinds of ways.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Dr Sahota?

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Mr Mayor, it was good that you started off this morning talking about public health issues in London. My question is related to the Chancellor's Budget statement in which he announced £13 billion of departmental savings, of which £200 million will be cut from local authorities and their ability to deliver a public health service. He has cut £200 million from public health budgets. Do you think this cut will help to deliver your Health Inequalities Strategy or hinder it?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Health budgets, as you know, are ring-fenced and I am not aware of a £200 million cut to the health budget. Indeed, one of the things that we are trying to do now, working on the devolution of healthcare in London, is to make sure that public health budgets are protected and deliver real impacts. I am surprised by the direction of your question.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Let me tell you and explain. The public health budget has been moved away from the NHS into local authorities. That is why it is being cut. Had it been part of the NHS budget, it would have been a cut in the NHS budget. The way you have managed to get this cut through while saying there will be no NHS cuts is because it is now with the local authority. Having said that, will this help you to deliver your Health Inequalities Strategy or not?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You have a question later on about health inequalities and if I --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Yes, you have a question later.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** This is a question relating to the Chancellor's Budget, you see.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have every confidence that we will continue to be able to deliver policies that combat health inequalities. We have had great success over recent years in doing that.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Also, the Chancellor said in his statement, "The NHS is our priority", but the reality is different. What we have in London is an increasing amount of diabetes, an increasing amount of alcohol, an increasing amount of childhood obesity and an increasing amount of cuts in the secondary health services. Do you think that this cut will help you to deliver your Health Inequalities Strategy?

Also, 20 Chief Executives from charities wrote to the Chancellor, saying, "Please reverse these cuts". Will you join those charities, which are stakeholders and partners in delivering your Health Inequalities Strategy or will you not back them up?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Of course, I will support all charities and campaigners who want to improve healthcare in London, but I must --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** You will speak up for Londoners and lobby the Chancellor to reverse the cuts?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Anyway, I am going to answer the question, if I may. The reality is that health inequalities have diminished in London over the last few years in this very important respect: everybody is now living longer in this city than ever before. In the last seven years, life expectancy has

increased by about 19 months for men and 18 months for women and the differential between men and women is evening out. Most important of all, the difference in life expectancy between the highest and the lowest socioeconomic groups is actually narrowing - not widening but narrowing - and that is a testament to the improvements in healthcare in London and to better diet. It is absolutely true. In tackling a problem such as coronary heart disease --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** The question, Mr Mayor, was that independent experts say these cuts will damage your Health Inequalities Strategy.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Let me complete the point. When I became Mayor seven or eight years ago, the difference in life expectancy between Kensington and Chelsea and Barking and Dagenham was about five-and-a-half years. It is now three years. That is still far too big a gap, but it is narrowing. It is the poorest and the lowest socioeconomic groups that are seeing the fastest and the biggest gains in life expectancy. That seems to me to be a material improvement in the life of our city that we should celebrate and progress towards equality of a most profound nature.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** We are going to get back to that subject because there is a question on the order paper. The next question is going to be recorded in the name of Assembly Member Bacon but I understand that Assembly Member Boff is asking it.

**Andrew Boff AM (on behalf of Gareth Bacon AM):** Thank you for your indulgence, Chair. Just imagine this delivered in a Bexley accent and you will be fine.

The Government is now accepting bids for enterprise zones. Will the Mayor make the case for more enterprise zones in the capital?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We always look at the case for enterprise zones all over the place. As you know, we have mayoral development corporations now in Stratford and at Old Oak and there are other areas that we are looking at as well.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Can we look forward to an announcement within the next year about --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Are you saying that you want Bexley to be an enterprise zone?

**Andrew Boff AM:** I do not think we are particularly asking for Bexley to be one, but can we --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am always willing to see the case. As you know, the Docks [the Royal Docks] are an enterprise zone. I am always willing to see the case.

**Andrew Boff AM:** You are welcoming bids from, say, boroughs that may wish to bid?

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

**Andrew Boff AM:** That is exactly the point. Thank you very much indeed.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Borwick?

**Victoria Borwick AM MP:** Thank you. Mr Mayor, just to take us back briefly to that other point, I am sure you were as delighted as I was that this Government undertook to honour Simon Stevens' [Chief Executive

Officer, NHS England] request for £8 billion in funding and to ring-fence the NHS funding. Just to put any clarification on the previous comments that were made, we have had an assurance that the NHS funding would continue and that Simon Stevens' request will be met in full.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Absolutely. The funding for the NHS continues to rise in London. What it needs to be accompanied by is reform. With the devolution programme that is underway now, London boroughs are really stepping up to the plate and they are much more ambitious about healthcare devolution than they were. That will offer real opportunities for improvement.

**Victoria Borwick AM MP:** Thank you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you. That is all the questions for the Summer Budget.

We are going to go on to the next question on the order paper. It is regarding the Davies Commission, but can I just say to Members and to anyone following: there will be a first question from Assembly Member Tracey and his follow-ups. There will be a second question from Assembly Member Shawcross and her follow-ups and then a third question from Assembly Member Johnson and his follow-up. Other Assembly Members can then raise questions if they want to about the Davies Commission.

## **2015/2165 - The Davies Commission (1)**

Richard Tracey AM

*How will you respond to The Davies Commission's report?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Dick. Yes, the Davies Commission [Airports Commission] report is already running into a great deal of trouble. It is very striking that one of the conditions that the Commission attached to going ahead with a third runway at Heathrow was that there should be no night flights. That has already been strongly contested by the airport. The thing is basically collapsing already. You only have to read it. If you read the whole report, it is staggering how thin the argumentation really is.

The key facts are very glaring. The increase in the number of people who will be affected by noise over 55 decibels is in the hundreds of thousands. A huge number of people will now have noise of more than 70 decibels and that is quite extraordinary. It is an amazingly retrograde step for a country and an economy to inflict that quantity of environmental damage for such a short-term solution. As Howard Davies [Sir Howard Davies, Chair, Airports Commission] himself says, he tries rather feebly to rule out a fourth runway because he accepts that that would be truly catastrophic and undeliverable. If the argument against the fourth runway is so powerful, the argument against a third runway is equally powerful.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am glad to hear that you are continuing to be robust about the failings at Heathrow. However, do you not think it is rather important that the whole of this Assembly supports your view? It is rather strange that the Labour Party seems to be shifting its ground not just in the Assembly but in London with various mayoral candidates changing their positions. Surely it is most important in London that we do remain robust about this.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, I strongly agree with that. It is sad and surprising that so many Labour Members of the Assembly seem to have executed another U-turn. I am not sure how many of them now adopt the policy of their leader. Most of them were elected on manifestos to oppose a third runway

at Heathrow: they are all looking a bit shifty now. Harriet Harman has taken a very different line. I wonder what the current Labour position is.

**Richard Tracey AM:** You have mentioned already the statement from the Chief Executive of Heathrow [Airport Holdings Ltd], Mr Holland-Kaye, which I heard. He made it to a lot of London businessmen on Monday. The very fact that Heathrow seems to feel that it has no power whatsoever to prevent a fourth runway is very worrying. You begin to wonder whether it would actually welcome the idea. What he said, as I heard it, was that he felt it was in the hands of the airline operators, totally. That is surely contrary to what the Davies Commission said. What is your view on that?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The reality is that the airline operators will have to build it. One of the facts that people do not realise is that it is the airlines themselves that will have to fund the third runway were it to be built and they are most unwilling to do that. The only conditions under which they might do that are if they have more of a say over night flights, mixed mode and other such issues. The whole thing is unravelling very fast.

One of the reasons EasyJet supported building a third runway at Heathrow was because, after all, it is not at Heathrow now and so it would not have to pay for the blooming thing but it could then go and use it after it had been built. That is its whole game. Companies like British Airways, which would be on the hook for absolutely huge sums of money to build it, will want their pound of flesh.

**Richard Tracey AM:** It has taken three years and heaven knows how many millions for the Davies Commission to produce this report. We hear that Sir Roy McNulty [Chairman, Gatwick Airport Ltd], admittedly, favours Gatwick and is tied in with the Gatwick ideas. He said that the whole report is faulty and is based on out-of-date data and so on. Also, it seems as though there is going to be enormous difficulty - and you have mentioned it this morning - for the Heathrow project to meet the emissions rules that [Sir Howard] Davies has called for.

What is the point of going on? Surely it has been a complete waste of money and the Government must surely and sincerely consider the alternative, which is obviously Gatwick.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have to say that I do think that it was inevitable that we would get this outcome. I have said it for many years. This is part of the *via dolorosa* that we have to take to get to the right solution. I am afraid that there are several more Stations of the Cross before we get to the right answer. We will eventually get there.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** Will it lead to crucifixion?

**Richard Tracey AM:** Those of us who live in west London are certainly waiting for your strong support to make sure that these faulty ideas do not go through. Thank you very much.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Can I have your answer, Mayor, to a question from Assembly Member Shawcross?

## **2015/2226 - The Airports Commission**

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM

*Given Sir Howard Davies' comments on the Estuary Airport do you want to apologise for the gross waste of Londoners public money?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** On the contrary, as Dick [Richard Tracey AM] has just said, it is very unlikely that the Davies report's recommendations in favour of Heathrow will be acted upon. Others mentioned Gatwick around the horseshoe. The real tragedy is that at this rate of fire, one of the most likely outcomes at the moment is that nothing will happen. I hear John Biggs [AM] saying that what we need is more airport capacity in the southeast and he is right, but I fear that nothing will happen.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Chair, could he answer my question?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, can we let the Mayor finish? Whilst I am speaking, can I ask Assembly Member Biggs to not --

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** Offer his opinion.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** -- speak unless I call upon him?

**Darren Johnson AM:** Do not mutter. Do not chunter.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you. Can I have the answer to the question?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The answer is no.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I do feel that there has been a lot of money wasted and a lot of opportunity wasted by your work on the Estuary Airport. Sir Howard Davies said to the BBC that you had not come up with a plausible proposal. The headline price tag was £120 billion. It would have been unfeasibly expensive and highly problematic.

However, the real issue is that with all of that time and that money, you have been directing yourself and your attention to this fantasy airport proposal in the estuary, which is never going to happen. You have wasted time. You have not done anything to actually improve Heathrow.

If one of the key problems we have with Heathrow is a need to expand and improve the public transport offering, while you have been saying, "Let us close down Heathrow", you have done nothing on the Piccadilly line. The Piccadilly line upgrade has been delayed and work will not start until 2019, after you are long gone, with no new trains until 2022. That is really serious. Crossrail 1 is not going to Terminal 5 [at Heathrow Airport]; a total disgrace. You have done nothing about it.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It will.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** High Speed 2 (HS2) has no spur to Heathrow: dropped without a peep from you, and nothing done on the Airtrack proposals. Everybody in southwest London will tell you it is really very difficult to get a train to Heathrow, yet there is an empty station box ready for use, sitting under Terminal 5. You have done nothing to help progress the linkage of Heathrow down to southwest London. It is almost as if you have wasted all your time and effort saying, "Let us close Heathrow", and the few things you could have done you have just ignored.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is complete rubbish.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** In your last few months as Mayor, are you going to do anything realistic and feasible to help the public transport access to Heathrow?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** First of all, obviously, we are progressing with the upgrades of the Piccadilly line and that will offer a superb service.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Nothing is happening until 2019, Mr Mayor.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Shawcross, you have put your question.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The public transport implications, by the way, of a third runway at Heathrow and the impact on the roads in that area will be absolutely colossal and disastrous.

What you need to explain is why you have changed your position from opposing a third runway to supporting it. We would like a bit of clarity on that. Are you now in favour of a third runway at Heathrow?

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor, we are a scrutiny body. Given a report three years in the making and £25 million worth of expenditure and a lot of independent forensic research, we are going to scrutinise this properly. We are expecting Sir Howard Davies in here.<sup>1</sup> Questions about the methodology, as Dick [Richard Tracey AM] raises, are things we are going to look at, but this paper deserves to be looked at properly before we make a kneejerk reaction. However, I do react to the fact that you have wasted --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Have you read it yet?

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** -- your time and our money and have done nothing to ease a terrible situation at Heathrow over the past eight years.

You mentioned the roads, Mr Mayor. This morning you said that 9,400 people a year are dying of poor air quality in London and yet you have done diddly-squat in terms of improving the air quality in Heathrow, which is a hotspot. Heathrow has proposed a congestion charge for the airport. Your response on LBC was, "I do not want to. I think it is the wrong thing".

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You want a congestion charge now around Heathrow?

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** There is no proposal for Heathrow to go into a bigger and stricter Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ) --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You need to tell that to the businesses of west London and to Labour candidates in west London.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** -- and you could have done something during your ULEZ consultations --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is a very interesting thing that you want a congestion --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** None of this is being recorded --

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is a development in Labour policy --

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<sup>1</sup> For the September 2015 London Assembly (Plenary) meeting

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Can I say to both of you that none of this is being recorded? It is impossible to record two voices at the same time. Can I have a question from Assembly Member Shawcross?

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** I am trying to put my question and my question is: you have nothing to improve air quality --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is not a question.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** -- in Heathrow over the last eight years. You have done nothing on a congestion charge and nothing on the ULEZ. Actually, if you visit the bus station at Heathrow, it is full of dirty old diesel buses. Transport for London (TfL) has done nothing to improve the air quality at Heathrow.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** This is total rubbish.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** What are you going to do to improve the air quality at Heathrow between now and your departure as Mayor of the Authority?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The first thing is that you are talking total nonsense in virtually every respect. We have improved the buses. We have 1,300 hybrids on the streets of London. We have --

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** They are not going to Heathrow, Mr Mayor: the buses are dirty at Heathrow.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Would you let me complete the point? We have introduced further changes to the Low Emission Zone (LEZ), which directly affects Heathrow. We introduced stage two and stage three of the --

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** That does not cover Heathrow.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It does cover Heathrow. We have taken that action. What you are absolutely right to say is that a third runway expansion of Heathrow would have catastrophic impacts on air quality. Most people would agree that we have done a great deal to resist that disaster. What I do not hear from you is whether you want to consider that resistance. As far as I understand your position, you now want to inflict truly appalling air quality on the people of west London by expanding runway capacity at Heathrow. That seems to be what she is now saying.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, Mr Mayor, that is not --

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Chair --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, the question has been noted and we will note that you have not answered the question.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, you will not. I have answered it.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Thank you, Chair.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, can I move on.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You will note no such thing.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** I am moving on. I now want to move on to the supplementary question.

### **2015/2045 - Airports Commission decision**

Darren Johnson AM

*With the overwhelming noise, air pollution and climate change cases against a third runway at Heathrow and your resolute opposition to the Airports Commission decision, can you update us on what course of action you are planning to take in order to prevent a third runway from going ahead?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** A lot of this has been covered, Darren, in the previous exchanges. The most important thing is to keep up the pressure and to try to get a sensible solution.

**Darren Johnson AM:** It is disappointing that Labour Members on that side of the Chamber are wobbling now on Heathrow after such a long period. For the last seven years, we were all working together to oppose Heathrow expansion.

I am just wondering what thoughts you have given to working with the majority of the Assembly, which still strongly opposes expansion, to make that case. For example, will you ask TfL to examine the case for a legal challenge around the issue of air pollution?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We are going to be watching that space, Darren. I do not want to make any particular commitments on legal challenges, although you will recall that in the past City Hall has funded, both under the previous mayoralty and under this mayoralty, the 2M movement and other groups that have campaigned for better air quality and for no more runways at Heathrow.

**Darren Johnson AM:** Yes, I can understand why you do not want to go into the legal possibilities now. However, given that there could well be some sort of legal challenge from someone, can you get TfL to examine the evidence in light of the Supreme Court's air pollution judgment and what the Davies Commission's recommendation means in light of that recent Supreme Court judgement?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. Certainly, the Supreme Court judgment on air quality was extremely damaging to the case for Heathrow. As I think even Howard [Sir Howard Davies, Chair, Airports Commission] acknowledges, it is very difficult to square with the expansion of the airport.

**Darren Johnson AM:** Could you, for example, commission an independent assessment of the local air pollution implications of a new runway at Heathrow Airport? We have precious few months left now in this term to really make the case on this. I am urging you as Mayor to deploy all the resources of the GLA group available, to speak up for Londoners on this, to make the case for London on this and to do everything to ensure that a third runway never goes ahead.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am grateful to you, Darren, for that --

**Jenny Jones AM:** We are on your side.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- and you have my absolute assurance that we will go ahead on that basis. I have to say that many west Londoners - and indeed many people in south London and people across the city who have not yet experienced aircraft noise but who would under these proposals experience very serious aircraft noise - will be listening with incredulity and deep disappointment to what is now being said by the Labour Party, which is proving once again to be the tool of the trade unions.

**Darren Johnson AM:** Can I just finish my questions?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Yes. Can Assembly Member Johnson just finish his question? Then I will take a point of information [point of personal explanation], was it, Mr Duvall?

**Darren Johnson AM:** Thank you, Chair. Obviously, there has to be some serious campaigning on this, but there also has to be some serious evidence-gathering and some serious research done. I hope we can all work together on that to put the case.

Can I also stress that it is not simply a west London issue? There are many people in south London and southeast London now who are hugely affected by the noise from Heathrow. Together, we really need to make the case against Heathrow expansion on the grounds of noise, on the grounds of air pollution and on the grounds of climate change.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I wholly agree. I will see you at the barricades, Darren. It is going to be a campaign. I have to say genuinely that the single most likely outcome is that nothing will happen anywhere at present. That is very sad.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Can you stand and put your point of information, Assembly Member Duvall?

**Len Duvall AM:** Thank you very much. On what has just been said about the --

**Kit Malthouse AM MP:** I do not believe standing orders contain 'a point of information'?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, it does not but Chair's action gives me the ability to take the decision. I can make the decision and I have been spoken to by Assembly Member Duvall and I have agreed that he has a point of information that will bring clarity to a number of things that have been said. Can I have a brief point of information from you?

**Len Duvall AM:** Can I just say? Much has been said of the Labour group position and I agree with the point that Darren Johnson AM said. I just want to put into the domain that we asked for more scrutiny and evidence to be done since the publication of the Davies Commission. None of the political parties opposite want that scrutiny to take place. We said, before you rush to condemn, let us see what [Sir Howard] Davies has said and then actually dissect it in the way that maybe Richard Tracey AM outlined earlier on. It is wrong of this Assembly to portray that as us changing our position.

**Jenny Jones AM:** U-turn!

**Len Duvall AM:** What we have asked for, Chair, is more scrutiny and evidence, which Darren Johnson AM has decided to call on the Mayor for. This Assembly should be doing it. That is the job that Londoners expect and that is the point of information that others may not fully be aware of and it is documented.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you. That is well documented in the minutes of the Plenary session that was had at our last meeting.<sup>2</sup>

Before I take Members, I have already missed them because I was waiting for the opportunity. I just wanted to say that they have just gone but we did have with us Richmond Park politics summer school pupils. Through their Assembly Member, can I ask you to thank them for their visit to us?

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** Yes.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Can I also welcome elected members from the Nairobi City Council. Welcome.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Hello. Greetings, Nairobi.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** See, that is what a good Chair brings you: information. Let me call upon Assembly Member and Deputy Mayor Evans.

**Roger Evans AM:** Thank you, Chair. That was a proper point of information that we just had there. Boris, can I take this opportunity on behalf of my constituents in Havering and Redbridge to thank you for your opposition to the expansion of London City Airport? Can I seek your assurance that you will continue to be opposed to the expansion of the airport --

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

**Roger Evans AM:** -- which will cause huge noise and pollution problems for east London and that you will seek to ensure that your successor opposes it as well?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, of course. What is sauce for the goose has to be sauce for the gander. It is totally unfair on the people of east London to be subjected to more noise and more pollution from aircraft while we protect the people of west London. It is complete nonsense.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member O'Connell?

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Thank you very much, Chair. Mr Mayor, I admire very much Len's [Len Duvall AM] very elegant attempts to disguise the policy U-turn of the Labour Party. I am pleased very much that my Labour comrades in Croydon are still very much supporting Gatwick and are opposing Heathrow. Mr Mayor, this is a good debate, but we must acknowledge that after Davies' [Sir Howard Davies, Chair, Airports Commission] decision, anything around Heathrow is going to collapse into a quagmire of conditions, objections and challenges. It is just not going to happen and will be pushed back many years.

To irritate you, Mr Mayor, I still believe the Estuary Airport remains and will remain only a twinkle in your mayoral eye. I believe it is not going to happen. Therefore, logically, the only thing that will suit will be Gatwick. I know that was not something to your taste earlier on, but we are talking about practicalities. We can discuss this and scrutinise this for many years to come, but there is a need for capacity. Gatwick is ready to go. It requires a small fraction of the public funding that Heathrow would do, if Heathrow ever happens. There are some political objections, but not to the degree that Heathrow has. Gatwick could be built within

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<sup>2</sup> London Assembly (Plenary), 1 July 2015

seven or eight years. Therefore, logically, we should be pushing for Gatwick and of course this will assist jobs and opportunities throughout south London.

Mr Mayor, can I again ask you to support, to put your weight behind and also to urge any incumbent-to-be to support a further runway at Gatwick?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Absolutely. I will qualify that by saying that I admire what you have done to campaign for your constituency, for the whole area and for the Wandle Corridor as a massive growth opportunity area. I can see Gatwick's advantages from that point of view. However, there remain very considerable environmental difficulties with Gatwick as well and is something that local Members of Parliament (MPs) in the area have certainly drawn to my attention. That will not be a walk in the park at all.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Madam Chair, the point I am making is that there is an immediate need for capacity. You have said, or your Aviation Advisor has said, that Gatwick will probably only cater for the coming 20 years or 30 years. Beyond that there may need to be another solution and that may be where an extra airport will come in, but for the next 20 years I would suggest we need a further runway at Gatwick.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The tragedy of the Heathrow cul-de-sac is that if you were to expand it - and I am grateful for Len's [Len Duvall AM] clarification about where Labour is at the moment - you would be consigning hundreds of thousands more Londoners to greater pollution, greater noise and a real degradation of their quality of life for a short-term gain because, come 2030, as the Commission acknowledges, you would need to think again. That is only 15 years away now. The thing is not going to be built. No plane can conceivably take off from a third runway at Heathrow before 2029; it is just not going to happen even if you started now and we are not going to start now. The whole thing is wrongly conceived, in my view.

I disagree with you about the estuary, as I am sure you know. We need to go for a long-term solution now. Many people in the Government looking at the nightmare of choosing between Heathrow and Gatwick and the environmental disaster in both areas - Heathrow obviously much worse than Gatwick - are now thinking, "Why on earth did we not, a few years ago, take that estuary option and run with it?"

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you very much.

Question number 2015/2044 has been withdrawn by Assembly Member Jones, thank you very much, and she received the answer to her question during the first part of the meeting.

## **2015/2124 - Electric Buses and Taxis in London**

Stephen Knight AM

*How many electric buses and taxis are currently operating on London's roads?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Stephen. I can announce today that we are stepping up our electric bus fleet by introducing a further 51 all-electric vehicles in the London fleet from the autumn of next year on routes 507 and 521. That means that there will be over 70 zero-tailpipe-emission vehicles in the capital in just over one year's time. There are currently ten vehicles in the fleet; that will grow to 17 in September and 22 in October, when the first double-deck electric bus in the world arrives on our streets. By 2020 all 300 single-decker buses operating in central London will be zero-emission, either electric or hydrogen, and all 3,000 double-deck buses in central London will be hybrid.

On taxis, although the numbers of electric taxis are currently low, as you know, by January 2018 all new taxis will have to be zero-emission-capable and we expect to have 9,000 of these on London streets by 2020 thanks to a fund of £65 million that we are putting in to encourage the take-up of zero-emission-capable vehicles.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor, and I am encouraged by the growth that you project in the future, particularly of the single-decker electric buses. We have been a bit slow in taking up electric buses until now because we have been outdone by several other British cities, leaving alone elsewhere in the world, which have more electric buses currently operating than we do at the moment. York, Nottingham and Milton Keynes all have more electric buses currently operating than London. Have we not been a bit slow on the uptake of fully electric buses?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** One of the crucial points that you need to bear in mind is that of the 8,000-odd buses that we have, three-quarters are double-deckers and they are the workhorses of the fleet. It is only now that we have an electric double-decker going. As you know, we have --

**Stephen Knight AM:** We still have a fleet of over 2,500 single-deckers, do we not?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, we do and some of those, as I have said, are going electric. You will appreciate that one of the most important things about serving the London population is that your bus should be reliable, it should have stamina, it should turn up on time and it should not conk out and we are very reluctant to commission vehicles that are not going to do the job. They have to work continuously for 18 hours or more without refuelling; that is a lot to ask of a vehicle. I remember vividly going out with David Brown, the then head of Surface Transport [at TfL], on one of our first hybrid buses and the poor thing conked out at Westminster Bridge, as I seem to remember. You do not want to have vehicles that are unreliable but we are moving in that direction.

**Stephen Knight AM:** I appreciate that, Mr Mayor. I want to move on to the double-decker trial that you have announced starting in October. Mr Mayor, I noticed that you launched this trial standing in front of a diesel bus, not an electric one.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Actually, no, it was a hybrid. It was a New Bus for London.

**Stephen Knight AM:** It was a diesel-powered hybrid; you are quite right, Mr Mayor. Given that so far we have not seen any evidence that there is even a prototype of this Chinese bus in operation anywhere, how confident are you that that trial will be able to take place in October?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You are asking a very reasonable question. I am slightly incredulous myself but I am told that it is going to be there. I am told that in October - and Leon [Leon Daniels, Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL] absolutely assures me - that we are going to see a double-decker electric bus. It sounds extraordinary to me but October is not long to wait; we will have to see.

**Stephen Knight AM:** I hope you are right, Mr Mayor. We look forward to seeing it and hopefully will be buying large numbers of them. Are you aware, Mr Mayor, that actually --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Hang on, before we commit to buying large numbers of them --

**Stephen Knight AM:** We need to know they work; I appreciate that. Mr Mayor, are you aware that there is currently already an electric double-decker bus operating in York with plans for five more of them and it has been operating for almost a year? Are you aware of that?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am not aware of that and you bring me news because I am told that this is a world first.

**Stephen Knight AM:** I am afraid you have been beaten to it by another British city.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am shocked by what you tell me, Stephen.

**Stephen Knight AM:** York has had one operating since September last year, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am shocked and disappointed and I will make enquiries but, if that is the case, then bully for York and I hope it is a British-made bus.

**Stephen Knight AM:** I believe it is, Mr Mayor. It is a converted existing bus.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is a conversion of an existing bus. The question will be, whatever double-decker electric bus there is, whether it can take the punishment of London's roads 18 hours a day and provide a truly reliable service. That is what we want to have.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Thank you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Mr Mayor, at Assembly Member Cleverly's request, I am going to bring his question forward on the electric bus trial. Can we have an answer to his question?

## **2015/2163 - Electric Bus Trial**

James Cleverly AM MP

*How will the new electric bus trial be evaluated, and what contribution will this make to your ongoing work to clean up London's bus fleet?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thanks, James. As you heard, we are going ahead with more electric buses on the streets of London. There are already ten pure electric buses following the arrival of two Irizar single-deckers on routes 507 and 521 this month, 17 in September and the first electric double-deckers in October. I did not know about electric double-deckers in York; we will have to look at those. That is where we are and we will be constantly seeing whether they are good enough in terms of performance and reliability and cost and all the rest of it.

**James Cleverly AM MP:** Actually, my first supplementary question was going to be on the cost. Obviously there are well-rehearsed advantages to having zero-tailpipe-emission vehicles in London in terms of air quality, noise pollution, etc. How confident are you that the cost-benefit analysis of a fully electric double-decker bus will be put in place ahead of any wider commitment to procure them?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We have to get value for money and there is no point in having EVs if they are simply too expensive, but the technology is getting better all the time, the battery is getting smaller and so I am optimistic.

**James Cleverly AM MP:** With regard to the Clean Bus Summit, it is very exciting sounding --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Were you there?

**James Cleverly AM MP:** I was not there.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It was very good.

**James Cleverly AM MP:** I was not there.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It was a very clean summit as well as the Clean Bus Summit. The adjective 'clean' covered every aspect of it.

**James Cleverly AM MP:** My failure to be there will be one of those life regrets I will take with me to the grave, I suspect. Obviously with the New Bus for London you have not failed to take every opportunity to highlight actually the economic benefit that is spread throughout the United Kingdom (UK) by the procurement here in London of the New Bus for London. Can I ask you to ensure that you take a similar approach to the national and, I suspect, possibly international business advantages that could be derived from being seen at the cutting edge of mass transit technology?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, absolutely, and it does madden me that some of this technology is being developed apparently in China rather than in Britain. At the Clean Bus Summit we had Chinese manufacturers and we had Volvo but we also had Wrightbus and Alexander Dennis (ADL), which are the big bus manufacturers in this country, from Falkirk for ADL and Ballymena obviously for Wrightbus. I hope very much that when the electric buses come on they will be at the forefront of making the parts for them and indeed making those buses. Perhaps the battery technology may come from China but I see no reason at all why the chassis and the bodywork should not come from this country.

**James Cleverly AM MP:** Finally, it strikes me that if we are close to getting the battery technology and the drivetrain technology right for a fully electric bus, there should be no reason why other heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) cannot look at that technology for implementation in non-public transport uses. We have spoken about the number of HGVs that are cutting around London particularly now that we are getting a renaissance in building and civil engineering. If we could find a way of pushing that technology further into the vehicle market, then actually London could be seen - and I would very much like it if London is seen - as the green vehicle city globally.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. I totally agree with that, James, and that is a fine ambition for the city. One of the things we are doing in September is a big step forward on safer buses, safer lorries or safer trucks, but we also need to have cleaner trucks. Again, the arguments will be very similar. HGV fleet operators will say, "These vehicles are required to have an incredible amount of torque and drive and you need a lot of power in these things". That can be supplied by electric motors. There is no reason why you should not have big vehicles being powered in a very clean green way.

**James Cleverly AM MP:** Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you. Assembly Member Tracey?

**Richard Tracey AM:** Thank you, Madam. Mr Mayor, of course we have also been moving forward with the hydrogen buses and taxis, I believe, for some time with our colleague, Kit Malthouse [Kit Malthouse AM MP], very much promoting that. We have surely already a number of electric courier vans operating around London.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, we have had electric milk floats for years.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Yes, we have certainly milk floats, indeed. Yes, we all know about them.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The fastest milk floats in the west, we have.

**Richard Tracey AM:** While I am on my feet, as it were, were you aware that two or three weeks ago the first Formula E Grand Prix in this country was held?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Not only was I aware, but I drove one.

**Richard Tracey AM:** I believe I saw you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, that is right.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Not in the race.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You would not have seen me. You would blink and you would have missed me because I was going extremely fast and I zoomed round. I congratulate Wandsworth [London Borough of Wandsworth], by the way, and everybody involved because they did a very good job of turning Battersea into a Formula E Grand Prix circuit and we should do it again. It was a great success.

**Richard Tracey AM:** It does rather suggest that the future is electric, perhaps.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The future and also it shows that London is the electric vehicle capital; the place to come.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Yes, indeed.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Malthouse?

**Kit Malthouse AM MP:** Thank you. I just wanted to return to the procurement of these electric buses. Am I right in thinking that the first ones that arrive will be entirely manufactured in China?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I cannot give you that information now. I can tell you that the electric buses that we now have on the streets are, I am afraid, Spanish-built. Iriza has made them. To get back to my previous point, which is rather James' [James Cleverly AM MP] question too, I do think British companies should be taking up the challenge.

**Kit Malthouse AM MP:** I thought you had two on trial from BYD in China. TFL took two on trial last year from BYD in China.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We may. If we are going to have them from Spain, I do not see why we should not have them from China.

**Kit Malthouse AM MP:** Do you know whether the procurement of the buses that are coming later this year in waves, as you said, was a competitive procurement?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am sure it was done in compliance with the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) rules and was fully competitive, yes.

**Kit Malthouse AM MP:** Could you possibly write to us about that or write to me about what the procurement is because I am anxious, obviously? As I understand it, one of the leading manufacturers and the suppliers of these things is BYD in China and obviously one of the things you will be keen to ensure is that they operate on a level playing field with British and indeed European manufacturers. I just wondered whether TfL will be satisfying itself that the working conditions in China around the manufacture of these buses would not give it an advantage. I would hate for Londoners to be driving around in buses when the workers were not getting the same level of care perhaps that they might in this country.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** On that basis there would be a great many products, for instance - the very iPhone that you have on your desk in front of you - that perhaps you should send back to China in protest. If I may suggest, you are raising an important point but a complex one. We do not know of any reason why we should not buy these buses.

The procurement was competitively tendered. The question for me is how we make sure that British manufacturers are in the frame. Electric vehicles are the way to go and hydrogen vehicles as well and you have done great work on that, but Wrightbus had done brilliantly with the New Bus for London. Alexander Dennis is coming up with new designs the whole time. We want our manufacturers to be first in the queue; I will make no bones about it.

**Kit Malthouse AM MP:** Is it your intention for the New Bus for London shape essentially to stay the same but that you would like to see it become an electric vehicle in time?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Ultimately, yes. The New Bus for London shape is actually being adopted by other manufacturers as well. The intellectual property for the New Bus for London shape resides with TfL and is being used in various forms by others.

**Kit Malthouse AM MP:** Thank you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you. OK, just some more information. The next question, number 2015/2171 - Super Recognisers in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), has been referred for a written answer. That is a really interesting question and I look forward to reading the answer.

## **2015/2213 - Fibre Optic Broadband**

Victoria Borwick AM MP

*Many residents and businesses say that they are constantly promised that their internet speeds will be increased, but in fact there has been very little progress. Can the Mayor therefore give a borough by borough update on what is happening with the installation of fibre optic broadband in London?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thanks, Victoria. We are giving boroughs updates on what is happening with the installation of fibre optic broadband, although you will appreciate fibre optic is not the only way of getting broadband; there are all sorts of ways in which people can now access data very fast. As

demand changes, the supply changes the whole time. People endlessly want more data faster, they want movies, they want all sorts of things, faster and faster, more and more of it, and we have to run to keep up and you would expect that.

London is now equipped with a connectivity map on the GLA website and you can see where all the hotspots and the not-spots are. That is helping to drive up improvements in performance and showing people where there are market failures and where the connectivity problems can be addressed. There is a connectivity ratings scheme so that the ice cream thing - the cone with the bars - is going to be used by estate agents and property companies to indicate whether a building, residential or commercial, has a good broadband connection. We are regularly now holding connectivity summits to bring together the boroughs and all the other players, the broadband companies, to try to bang heads together and get more progress.

London's supply of broadband has been something of a real concern to me and to many. We are getting better but there are still areas where we need to move faster.

**Victoria Borwick AM MP:** Thank you very much indeed. Yes, Mr Mayor, I certainly welcome your detailed map of the black spots because you have to appreciate that certainly, I believe, it is in the city where less than 1% have access to high speed internet. There seems to be some sort of preferential treatment here as the people in Hillingdon seem to be doing rather well, but never mind. The point is that all of London should be doing better.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Nothing is too good for Hillingdon, nor indeed the rest of London.

**Victoria Borwick AM MP:** What I am lobbying you for is to use the good offices here. I am sure all my colleagues around this horseshoe will also say how their residents will have written in to complain about the fact that we seem to be lagging behind in London and it is ridiculous that Openreach, which lays the cables, has failed us in London. Hundreds of thousands of Londoners are stuck with internet technology that is over a decade old and so we certainly need your map in order that we can all around this horseshoe lobby for better speeds for London.

My colleague Andrew Boff AM in the past has highlighted the need for people who want to work from home and for people who run small businesses and entrepreneurs who work from home - we are after all a country of small businesses - do need the opportunity of having better internet and fibre access. It is not about watching catch-up TV online: it is people's livelihoods, it is small businesses, and so I would urge you to use your good offices to continue, please, with those meetings in order that we can drive through for the benefit of London as a whole.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Do not forget that, as I am sure you know, there is already a connectivity voucher scheme for small businesses across the capital and 9,000 of them have taken that up so far.

**Victoria Borwick AM MP:** Excellent, but it is not just the voucher; it is the fact that we need the cables and the fibre in the ground.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** We need the infrastructure.

**Victoria Borwick AM MP:** I am sure we all receive letters saying that actually Londoners should not be playing catch-up.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, obviously. The benefit of the voucher is it gives the providers a market and they are able to make the investment and the connections that you want. One of the difficulties about Openreach and fibre optics is of course that it does involve excavation and adds to roadworks, which is something that we all want to diminish if we possibly can.

**Victoria Borwick AM MP:** It is both the access to the boxes and to the cables and to people's properties. Certainly, we hope that modern technology will resolve that, but thank you for your assurance that you will continue to lobby on behalf of London. Thank you.

## **2015/2220 Local Government Asset Sales**

Tom Copley AM

*Given the Government's proposals to force London's local authorities to sell high value assets, do you think the revenue generated should be hypothecated for building homes in the capital?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Tom. I am indeed supportive of this policy but I have made clear that the receipts from the council house sales as well as the right-to-buy sales should stay in London. If a council home is sold or a housing association property is sold, then that should lead to the creation of two new homes in each case.

**Tom Copley AM:** I am pleased to hear you say that you want any receipts to be retained in London. Are you aware of the fact that last year over £90 million - are you paying attention, Mr Mayor - from council house sale receipts were siphoned off by HM Treasury? None of that stayed in London. It went to HM Treasury and was placed in the general pot of funding. Would you agree with me that that money should be returned to Londoners and to local authorities so that they can help to replenish the homes that have been sold?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Where you are right is to say that the receipts from these sales should stay in London because that is where the crisis is.

**Tom Copley AM:** Would you support the Government returning the £90 million that it took from right-to-buy sales last year?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I certainly think that housebuilding in London needs to be properly funded.

**Tom Copley AM:** That was not quite, with respect, the question that I asked. The question that I asked was whether you would support the return of the £90 million of receipts that was taken from Londoners last year.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I certainly think that the receipts from - and I have answered the question - sales in London should stay in London and housebuilding in London should be properly funded.

**Tom Copley AM:** Specifically the receipts from not just the future sales that are coming up, but should the previous receipts come back?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** All these sums are fungible. I want to see London housebuilding properly funded by the Government.

**Tom Copley AM:** You say all those things are fundable, Mr Mayor. I am still not --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Fungible, I said, yes.

**Tom Copley AM:** Fungible? I am sorry. I am still not quite clear whether or not you want that £90 million returned. This is £90 million from sales of London council homes --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You might as well ask --

**Tom Copley AM:** -- that has been sent to HM Treasury. Should it come back?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As far as I can remember, the Labour Party took colossal sums from the sales of council homes and did absolutely nothing to return them, something for which you have asked. More specifically, the Labour Party--

**Tom Copley AM:** Mr Mayor, I am asking you a very specific question about the funding from the previous year. Will you stand up for Londoners? Will you write to the Housing Minister and ask that this £90 million, which could be used for affordable housing in London, is returned to Londoners? Will you do that?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** If you will now apologise for the receipts from council house sales in London that the Labour Government did not --

**Tom Copley AM:** I am terribly sorry, Mr Mayor. I cannot apologise for something I was not responsible for.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I see. Actually, you can because you called previously --

**Tom Copley AM:** What I can ask you to do, Mr Mayor --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Stop it.

**Tom Copley AM:** -- is to actually stand up for Londoners and to ask for this money to be returned.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As I have said, what you are asking for is essentially meaningless. What I want to see is housebuilding in London properly funded.

**Tom Copley AM:** Meaningless? I do not think Londoners who are sitting on housing waiting lists will see £90 million for new housebuilding as meaningless, Mr Mayor, but clearly that is your view.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, I want far more than £90 million. The point you are making is meaningless. What we want is to ensure that homebuilding in London is properly funded and that receipts from sales in this city stay in this city.

**Tom Copley AM:** Can I turn to the four red lines that you have set out in relation to this policy on housing associations and council house sales? You have said your red lines are: that the money raised should be spent in Greater London; the policy must preserve mixed communities; the policy must have no detrimental impact on housing supply; and it must have no detrimental impact on affordable housing supply. If, when the Housing Bill is presented to Parliament, it does not satisfy your red lines, will you vote against it?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is a work in progress and I will continue to negotiate with --

**Tom Copley AM:** It is a work in progress, Mr Mayor, but I am asking you to imagine a hypothetical situation in which one or more of your red lines have not been satisfied. Given these are red lines, will you then vote against the bill and stand up for Londoners?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. I will, I am sure, be able to get a policy that makes good sense for our city--

**Tom Copley AM:** If you cannot, will you stand up for Londoners and vote against the bill?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is not a hypothesis I am willing to contemplate and there is every reason to be confident and to be optimistic about this. Are you in favour of allowing people the right to buy?

**Tom Copley AM:** I just want to finish there but, Chair, can I just offer a point of clarification? Is this session called Mayor's Question Time or Assembly Members' Question Time?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Come on. Would you vote for the right to buy or not?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, I am glad you made that clarification, Mr Copley, because your question was about his role in another place.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You do not want to answer it? Fine. I am just giving you the opportunity. If you do have an idea in your head, this is your chance to show that you can think.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** I will have fewer questions about his role in another place and more questions about his role as the Mayor of London. Do you have another question?

**Tom Copley AM:** I have finished now anyway, Chair.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you.

**Tom Copley AM:** That is me told, is it not?

## **2015/2221 - Viability in Planning Decisions**

Nicky Gavron AM

*Developers use viability assessments to drive down the number of affordable homes they build as part of projects. Will you produce planning guidance to help local authorities secure as many affordable homes for Londoners as possible?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Nicky. As you know, the London Plan and the Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) provide a lot of guidance on this, we try to maximise affordable housing delivery and sets out ways in which boroughs can evaluate viability assessments. The Draft Housing SPG is out for consultation at the moment and states which benchmark land value is the most appropriate for planning negotiations and provides guidance on the use of review mechanisms and contingent obligations. I have also made clear in the London Plan that viability appraisals should be submitted as part of the planning applications to demonstrate that schemes will deliver the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing.

I appreciate that the whole viability assessment business is something of a dark art, Nicky, but it is, in my view, much better to have 25% of something than 50% of nothing, which is what we were getting before and that is one of the reasons why we are now seeing affordable homes being built in record numbers.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Thank you for that response, Mayor. I do indeed of course welcome the SPG and in fact the Planning Committee tomorrow is scrutinising it, investigating it and discussing it, but I do notice that it is generally about housing and out of the 200 pages it has two pages on viability. As you say, it is a sort of dark art and what we are seeing is that viability assessments are actually meant to demonstrate how much affordable housing you can get from any project. However, what we are seeing is developers gaming the system. They inflate the costs and that includes, too, at the point of buying the land. The land value is inflated, too. They inflate the costs and then play down the value of the scheme until it is built out. What happens is that they then say, "We do not have enough, do we? We do not have enough for affordable housing". London and Londoners are being ripped off and they are just not getting the affordable housing.

My question to you is a very serious question. Would you provide now a dedicated SPG on viability, rather than the two pages? I admit that is a good start, but I could speak for a long time about where it fails and what is not in it. Could we have a dedicated SPG on viability?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am certainly willing to look into that. I do worry continually about Three Dragons, whether it works, the number of units that it produces and whether or not we are being short-changed by developers. There is no question that it is something that is of great benefit --

**Nicky Gavron AM:** I am very glad you agree with that.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** When the planning proposals come to me, I do interrogate officers and developers very closely about this because, as my planning department would testify, I very often send them away to try to get more affordable housing because sometimes these algorithms or whatever they are do not really reflect the reality that there is a huge opportunity to build more. Sometimes I would have to agree with you, Nicky, that developers are getting away with it.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** You do agree with me?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do. Sometimes developers do get away with it and it is very frustrating.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** In that case then, do you agree that another way, of course, that it could be seen they are getting away with it is that they now --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Sometimes. I do not want to cast general --

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Let me finish my question.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Sorry.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** There is now an industry norm of a 20% to 25% profit margin or rate of return. That is extraordinarily high. There is no other industry that has a profit margin like that, backed by law, because you have a government inspector behind it. Do you think that is obscenely high? Do you think it is too high?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Of course it is very high now, but do not forget that it was only a few years ago that there were no cranes at all in London. There was no building at all because they were all under water and we were facing an absolute crunch of epic proportions. They were not building a thing. It is a very cyclical business.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Can I just go to my last question?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We are now in an upturn. I agree with you that we are now in a big upturn and I do not want to see them getting away with it.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Sure. You are now the biggest property owner and you are going to do lots of joint ventures as Chair of TfL.

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

**Nicky Gavron AM:** I am just asking you now. You have these 50 sites and you have a massive opportunity here to show leadership. What sort of profit margins –

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** By the way, sorry, I will just clarify that point. We always have been a massive property owner, but it is under this mayoralty that we are going ahead and developing them.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** You are going to become a developer. What sort of leadership --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Why do you think we were not before?

**Nicky Gavron AM:** You have been a developer.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What were you doing before?

**Nicky Gavron AM:** I am sorry, Mayor. Do you remember, Boris, Earls Court? Do you remember Earls Court? Do you remember there and your housing joint venture?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I thought you were opposed to that. We are going ahead with it.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Not one additional rented flat. Not one additional one.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There is just as much affordable housing as there was before.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** An under-estimate.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There is just as much affordable housing as there was before.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** That was you gaming the situation.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There is just as much as there was before, and you would have done nothing to redevelop the site.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** That was you gaming, as a joint developer there. Now what we need is different leadership from you, when you are now looking at being a joint-venture developer on all those TfL sites. Will you please, first of all, show the leadership and, secondly, bring out an SPG, an dedicated one?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** On the second thing, I will look at it. I will discuss it with my planners and with Eddie [Sir Edward Lister, Mayor's Chief of Staff and Deputy Mayor for Policy and Planning] whether there is any real advantage in that.

On the first point, we have built a record number of affordable homes and we will continue to. It is still the case in London that 32% of the housing stock in central London is social housing and I do not think people fully appreciate that fact. That is a huge quantity of social housing.

The people we need to be helping are not just people who qualify for social housing, but people who do not and who need help to get on the property ladder. That means building huge numbers of new homes and that is what we are doing. We are now building more homes than at any time since the 1980s and the figures I saw earlier this week suggest that we are going to get up to levels not seen since the 1930s. There is huge building going on now.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Assembly Member Boff?

**Andrew Boff AM:** Mr Mayor, do you think the confidentiality of viability assessments should come to an end?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Viability assessments should be as transparent as possible. They are shared with planning authorities and I do not see why they should not be shared more widely.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Would you take action to end the confidentiality of viability assessments?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I would have to take advice on the effect of that and whether it would have the benign effects that we want.

**Andrew Boff AM:** You will try?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I will certainly discuss it. I do not know whether it would have the positive effect that we want.

**Andrew Boff AM:** There are no good arguments for confidentiality of viability assessments that I have heard. I would welcome you submitting some to me that make any sense whatsoever.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am willing to look into it. What I do not want to do is introduce into the whole planning process, unwittingly, things that give developers an excuse not to go ahead, and that is always the problem. I would not want to see that.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I do not see an absence of people wanting to develop in London, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am sorry: there is a tragic absence of people wanting to develop in London. We are dominated by a small number of very big corporations, when there used to be before the crash about 8,000 small builders who simply have gone out of business. We need to bring them back to the

table. We need to have them building on sites across the city. That is why the London Land Commission, which I have set up, will be looking to bring in small builders as well.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Of course those smaller developers are much more willing to be totally transparent with their financial arrangements than the larger corporations.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do not know if that is so, but I am willing to take it on trust from you.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I welcome that, Mr Mayor, and welcome the undertaking that you will at least look into it.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Certainly.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I say that I think it is a given. I cannot understand why we are keeping something of such importance to the public away from their eyes. Thank you.

## **2015/2200 - The Threat of Terrorism in London**

Tony Arbour AM

*What measures have been taken to protect London following the tragic terrorist attacks in Tunisia?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Tony. Obviously the events in Tunisia were absolutely tragic and appalling, and our thoughts are very much with the families of the victims and the survivors. We do not know of any immediate read-across or implications for London from those events. There is no particular indication of any such outrage being prepared against London, but it goes without saying that all sorts of work is done to prepare for a Tunisia- or Mumbai-style attack. In fact, there was a big operation only the other day, which some of you may have spotted, Operation Strong Tower, where we had lots of Cabinet Office Briefing Room A (COBRA) meetings and there was lots of work done by the police, fire, ambulance and everybody on how we would respond to machine-gun types of attacks, hostage-taking and so on.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman)** It is quite clear that British subjects, who of course include Londoners wherever they are, appear to be targets of these murderers. I wonder, Mr Mayor, if you can indicate what support you are getting from the Home Office to keep Londoners safe. Indeed, it is clearly not just Londoners because the feature as far as Tunisia was concerned was that it was striking at the heart of the Tunisian economy, the tourist industry, as well as British citizens.

Clearly, tourism is very important in London as well and manifestly, therefore, if international tourists are affected by this kind of thing, London should have particular assistance. I wonder if you can tell us what assistance we are getting from other international organisations to alert us to possible acts of terrorism. Secondly, what assistance you are getting from the Home Office in terms of finance to ensure that Londoners and indeed visitors to London are kept safe?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As you know, there is very considerable support from the Home Office for all kinds of terrorism in London. The thing that we must never neglect is the front-line role played by the MPS in dealing with terror and in working with communities that might have people who are being infected by this toxic ideology and who might become home-grown terrorists. A lot of the frontline work has to be done by the MPS, and that needs proper funding, and that is a point that we have made quite powerfully over the last couple of years.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman)** I wonder if I can press you on this because your Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime has publicly said to the Home Secretary that he does not think she is providing sufficient funds for this.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As you know, that was an argument that we had last year. We then did get some funding, which was very welcome, and we will continue to press for funding in the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR).

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman)** Does that mean you think we are getting enough?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is important to stress that funding for the MPS is absolutely paramount for the city and you can rely on me to be making that case in the discussions in the CSR.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman)** Thank you, Chair.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member McCartney?

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Tony [Tony Arbour AM] has asked the question that is next on the order paper as well, which is mine, and so if I can go straight into my supplementary, it would be helpful. Mr Mayor, your Deputy Mayor has previously said that he thought the Home Secretary is not giving sufficient to London's policing. You said that you did get a little bit more, but the Commissioner [Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM, Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis] actually has said, "We were pleased that we received some help, but we did ask for far more". He has previously said that he needs extra funding in the tens of millions. How far are you getting with your case for that tens of millions of extra funding that the Commissioner says he needs to keep London safe?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We did get £20 million, from memory.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** It was £13.9 million. You asked for £20 million but the Commissioner put it at tens of millions more.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am sorry. We initially put in for £30 million. There is always a negotiation between us and the Government about funding for the police and particularly for counterterrorism. My information at present is that obviously Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley, who is responsible for counterterrorism, feels that he has enough to keep London safe at the moment, but we have to make sure that in the current spending round, as we go forward to the CSR in the autumn, we keep that pressure very much on.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Thank you. We have also had Wimbledon over the last couple of weeks and I do know from the MPS that extra security was put in place there because of the threat from Tunisia. However, obviously, across the summer we do have increased tourist numbers and we particularly, for example, have the Rugby World Cup taking place this summer.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We do.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Is it the case that we do actually need some extra short-term funding from the Home Office to recognise London's role in keeping people safe during those events?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do not think it is so much a question of short-term funding, Joanne. The issue is more to do with making sure that in the CSR we do not see substantial reductions in funding. That is how the position is being presented to me at the moment.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** The MPS has recently said that it wants to increase its overseas counterterrorism deployment. I believe there are about 30 MPS police officers based overseas and assisting local law enforcements in countries that do have issues.

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

**Joanne McCartney AM:** It wants to, I believe, almost double that. Are you making the case for that to the Government as well?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There are 23 in Tunisia, from memory, and it is an amazing feature of the MPS that it does everything around the world. Yes, one of the arguments we make to the Government is that because the MPS has this national and indeed international role, it has to be properly funded, and you cannot just compute the bill on the basis of what London policing needs. It is far more than policing London's 33 boroughs.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Thank you. We will return to this subject but there has been one subject that has popped up this morning and that is that the Home Secretary has now said she will make a statement to Parliament at 1.30pm about water cannon. Has she informed you of her decision yet?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am happy to tell you that I am going to have a conversation with the Home Secretary very shortly and if I am released from this meeting --

**Darren Johnson AM:** Phone her!

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Phone a friend!

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Through you, Jennette, if that is what you would like, I am more than happy to do that but I do not know --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** We will allow you to phone a friend! Thank you.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Can I take it that you have no idea what the Home Secretary is going to tell you yet of her decision?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am sure whatever she says will be very welcome and very interesting and I will see what she has to say, but the position that London takes - and that I take - on her decision is unlikely to be substantially changed. We will have to see what she says.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Yes. Mr Mayor, of course you have been at the forefront of pushing for water cannon against the wishes of the majority of this Assembly. We hope that she will say no this afternoon. Thank you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I can tell you since you have raised the subject that I do not know what the Home Secretary is about to announce but, as far as I am concerned, it will remain the case that water cannon have been requested by the MPS. Both the Prime Minister and I decided that was something that had

to be taken very seriously that, therefore, we have those devices in reserve. The police will continue to train on them and, in the vanishingly unlikely event of there being such serious disorder as to require their deployment, I have no doubt a licence would be readily procured.

## **2015/2222 - Knife Crime with Injury**

Joanne McCartney AM

*Knife Crime with Injury in London is nearing the level it was when you were first elected. In your final year as Mayor what plans are you implementing to bring this down?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, thank you. Back to you, Joanne. Yes, I am afraid you are not quite right in what you are saying. We can never be complacent about this. Any knife crime is a terrible thing and deaths from knife crime are appalling, but knife crime is down overall. Knife crime with injury is down 12% since I was elected and overall knife crime last year is at its lowest for seven years. Deaths are well down as well.

Yes, there are problems and there are challenges and the plans we are implementing to bring this down include weapon sweeps. We have done a lot of them in the last nine months and we are very much supporting the approach of Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe on stop-and-search. As you know, he decreased the volume of stop-and-search very substantially and that was the right call, but it does have its place and it does have a deterrent effect.

Even more powerful as a deterrent effect, I hope, will be the enactment of 'Enfield's Law' introduced by David Burrowes MP [MP for Enfield Southgate] and my former colleague, Nick de Bois MP [MP for Enfield North] that if you are caught with a knife for a second time, you will receive a custodial sentence. I hope that will be very effective when you consider that similar measures for carriage of guns in London really did drive down possession of firearms. I hope we will have that kind of success with knives.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. The figures I have are your own figures about knife crime with injury and that is what I want to concentrate on. A particular concern is the fact that knife crime with injury, ie stabbings, is on the increase again. It is particularly concerning is that over half of them are now on victims under the age of 25. In that category of victims under 25, last year alone it increased by 23%. Just to bring home the scale of this, if we take the month of June that has just gone, last month, six children under the age of 18 were victims of stabbing in London. Two of those have died. One is critically injured still; another seriously injured. If I look at the ages of them, there is one 12-year-old, one 13-year-old and two 14-year-olds. The age of these victims appears to be getting younger.

I want to know what action you and the MPS are taking with regards to this. I am particularly concerned that we have the summer months coming up and what are you doing about diversionary activities to make sure young people are actively engaged?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, OK. I totally agree; it is absolutely sickening to hear about kids of that kind of age being involved in this sort of nightmare. I repeat all my tedious but important points about how the overall levels are down but there is no question that there is a problem at the moment.

I have talked about it extensively to Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, to everybody involved in the mentoring side of things, to Ray Lewis [youth worker and former Deputy Mayor for Young People] and to everybody involved in the interventions with young people to see what we can do to work out what is going on with the gang

strategy. Possibly what happened was two to three years ago, if you remember, there was that big anti-gang launch. We might be getting back to the stage where we need another one of them. That did have a big effect on the gangs.

The choice has to be the same. To the young gang members we say, "It is up to you. If you are going to be involved in this kind of gang and this kind of knife crime, we are going to come down on you very hard, but we are simultaneously going to offer you routes out", apprenticeships, jobs and all the things that really make a long-term difference to the self-esteem of these kids. It is very sad to see this kind of problem in an environment where the London economy is growing so strongly and when, actually, you would hope that these kids would find other ways of feeling good about themselves than getting involved in this kind of disaster area. It has to be a twin-track strategy. We are getting on for another big anti-gang push. The problem was dramatically suppressed. The number of deaths is still down and that is good but what you say, Joanne, cannot be denied. There are stupid, vicious stabbings going on of young kids in our city and it is absolutely intolerable.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you. I would personally like to thank Assembly Member McCartney for raising this because a number of these tragic incidents took place in my constituency and the corollary to this is that two 14-year-olds have been charged. Therefore, it is not just the injured; it is the perpetrators.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is terrible and every week I see the lists of the stabbings. It is absolutely terrible.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Yes, it is tragic.

## **2015/2042 - Cyclists killed by HGVs**

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

*What action are you going to take to tackle the spate of cyclists killed by HGVs at peak periods?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Caroline. You are right to draw attention to the problem of HGVs, although I would stress, rather in the spirit of my previous answer, that cycling is overall getting much safer. Last year, the number of cyclists killed or seriously injured (KSIs) was down 12% despite the huge increases in the number of people cycling. We are investing £913 million in cycling infrastructure. Last year was the safest year on record for cycling in London in the sense that the numbers of KSIs per journey were at record lows.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** I was asking what action you are going to be taking. I know I am aware of a number of your infrastructure investments. Given that cyclists are still being killed all too often and there are professional young women killed by HGVs, I would like to know what new action you might consider taking around HGVs. I know in the past you have ruled out a rush-hour ban on HGVs and I share your concerns that that could result in a flood of lorries immediately after the ban but, given these recent deaths, will you consider a trial rush-hour ban?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** First of all, what we are doing with lorries is that from 1 September all London HGVs have to be equipped with basic safety equipment to improve visibility. You will be familiar with the things I am talking about: the Fresnel lens mirrors, the sidebars and other measures to improve visibility. We want to go further. When we launch the Safer Lorry scheme, we will be setting a target for a

date by which all lorries in London will have to have cabs that enable the driver to be fully aware of what is going on in the road. It is already possible; there are bus-style cabs that make a huge difference to the driver's ability to see what is going on around them. We want to set a target and a deadline by which all new lorries on the streets of London have to have those types of cabs. That really is the issue.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** I would like that to be soon but what about the trial of a rush-hour ban? Is it something you will consider?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Sorry, on peak hour lorries, I will look at this. I have to tell you that this is something that, as you rightly say, TfL has traditionally rejected because it would just drive lorries into the surrounding periods of the day and you would have real congestion. You would have all sorts of unseen consequences. You would have lorry drivers flooring it --

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** You will look at it?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- flooring it to beat the ban and causing even more accidents. All sorts of objections like that are raised. However, we are actively studying that option now. I can tell you that.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Fantastic. I really go with that.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Whether it leads to a trial I cannot promise, but we are actively looking at it.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** OK. Finally, given that the City of London seems to have refused TfL's plans for Quietways there, will you consider using what powers you have to force the City to accept safe infrastructure? This includes Bank junction. Quite frankly, it is a medieval institution that is not prepared to make its junctions safe despite the work TfL has done. Will you try to force the City to make safe the dangerous junctions there?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have had reassurances from Cllr Mark Boleat [Chairman, Policy and Resources Committee, City of London] and the City that they have been inaccurately represented. It was a *London Evening Standard* article saying that they contest that very strongly and that they are determined to go ahead with the cycling --

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** With the Quietways?

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

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Good. Thank you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Assembly Member Boff?

**Andrew Boff AM:** Mr Mayor, I do understand the fine judgement there is when you have calls for a ban during peak hours but I do think it is fair to make yourself familiar with the statistics. I am indebted to the London Cycling Campaign for giving me the stats for this. This is data compiled over the last five years. In the two hours between 7.00am and 9.00am, 38% of the fatalities have occurred between those two hours. I do not want to be sensationalist about this. I just want us to look at the data and look at the wisdom of introducing such a ban, not through gut reaction because we all have that gut reaction when we hear of the fatalities on London's roads that happen to cyclists. I want us to make an intelligent decision.

I would also like you to, if you could, Mr Mayor, undertake to look not so much at HGVs but specifically at tipper trucks, which have made a disproportionate contribution to the fatalities amongst cyclists when you do reach that decision. I am not urging you to take one course of action or another but what I am urging you to do is acquaint yourself with the data and make an intelligently formed decision with regard to that.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. The data is very clear and Caroline has alluded to the problem. By the way, this affects cyclists of both sexes and it is a terrible thing.

### **2015/2225 - The Night Tube**

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM

*Are you confident that you will be able to begin the Night Tube service on 12 September as promised?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. I am not particularly hung up, as I have said, on the date of 12 or 13 or whatever date in September. I do not mind when it is this autumn but I am very confident we will go ahead with the Night Tube for London, which will cut average journey times by 20 minutes and in some case by more than an hour. It will play a vital role in opening up London's night-time economy with 2,000 permanent jobs boosting the economy by £360 million. It is something that is strongly supported by customers and by businesses in our city.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. You are right. People very much want this and, in particular, they would like it before the dark nights set in. We certainly would like to see you doing more personally to try to end the dispute so that the Night Tube comes into play.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do not want to be pedantic but the Tube runs considerably long after sunset.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor, what exactly are you going to do in order to bring this dispute to a satisfactorily negotiated conclusion?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am interested that you think the advent of nightfall should be an important consideration. I have to say the Tube at any of time of year runs long after sunset. We do not live in Scandinavia. That is not the issue.

I have every confidence that there ought to be a deal on this package because it is excellent. The offer is an average of 2% increase this year made up of a rise of 1% and a consolidated £500 for all roles, Retail Price Index (RPI) or 1% next year and the year after, whichever is the greater; a £500 launch bonus to all staff and a £2,000 transition bonus to train operators.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor, we all understand --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Do you think that is not good enough?

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** We all understand that people who are being asked to work all night would want to negotiate the terms and conditions. I have some concern that there have been reports that there has been no informal contact at all between the TfL negotiators, you and any of the unions.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is nonsense.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** That offer was made very late in the day. We all want to see a negotiated solution to this and, indeed, there is no evidence at all --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Do you condemn their strike?

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** -- that anybody wants to block the Night Tube.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Really?

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** My concern is that you have personally applied a lot of time to going round the television studios, ramping up the rhetoric, being somewhat divisive and creating bad feeling --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Who, me?

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** -- when actually it would be so much more helpful if you could push along the negotiations by having some informal contact with the unions.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Do you think we should be offering more money? Are you in favour of this strike?

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Are you going to make sure, Mr Mayor, that this deal is done because Londoners expect a deal to be done?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Are you in favour of this strike or --

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor, I would love to swap seats with you and you can ask me the questions and that would be a great situation.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** In that case why do you not stand? Why have you not put yourself forward, Val? If you want to swap seats with me, you have an opportunity next year.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Now is the moment. What has happened?

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor, what are you doing to make sure that this dispute comes to a satisfactory negotiated conclusion quickly?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I will tell you what we will do.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** What are you personally doing?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What we are doing is making a very good offer, which I will repeat.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Are you going to pick up the phone, Mr Mayor, to anybody?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am urging all sensible people to look at that offer and I urge the unions to put it to their workforce and it is quite untrue to say that this has all been rushed through. On the contrary, there have been talks going on for five months.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor, I did not say --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There is nothing new about our plans. Most people can see this is an entirely politically motivated protest against what is a Government that the union leadership may not necessarily like and, indeed, against proposals for union reform and reform of ballots, which are --

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Do you know that that is exactly the kind of rhetoric, Mr Mayor, that is ramping up the conflict? It is not the approach we need in order to get a deal done and all we are asking is whether you have an inexperienced negotiation team in there. That has been well aired in the media. There has been no informal contact between TfL and any of these unions.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Rubbish.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** You have not made any personal contact with any of these unions.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You always say that. You always say that. You have said that for the last eight years.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Could you possibly do something more to get a deal done? I have run out of time.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. What I would like to do is I would like to hear from the Labour Party active condemnation of any strike that puts --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Have you finished? OK.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** In order to get this strike averted, I appeal to the Labour Party to use its good offices and to denounce this strike.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Let us go to the next question.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Will they? Will the Labour Party denounce this strike?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Mr Mayor, there is a next question.

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

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Dismore has a follow-up question and then Mr Tracey [Richard Tracey AM].

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Thank you, Chair. Can you tell me why there was no consultation with residents whose homes back on to the Northern line about the additional noise problems that emanate overnight?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It has been drawn to my attention that one of the impacts of the Night Tube may be extra noise. We are looking into that, particularly at Baker Street. In that type of area, I

have been alerted to possible consequences. Murad [Murad Qureshi AM] drew it to my attention last time<sup>3</sup> and we are working very hard to mitigate all such impacts and to make sure that the unquestioned benefits of the Night Tube do not disadvantage some people in the city.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** You did not actually answer my question about why there was no consultation with residents.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I cannot say. I am not certain there was no consultation.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Let me put this to you. My constituent, Julie, whose home backs on to the Northern line at Colindale, says this,

*“The noise currently emanating from the Tube rattling on the tracks is already a considerable nuisance. Were it not for the fact that they stop around 1.00am, most of us would have sleepless nights. The thought of them running all night, every weekend, is frankly appalling.”*

She has been in contact with TfL. They are talking about potentially looking at the tracks to see what they can do to quiet them down but that will not happen at least until January. People are going to be, throughout the autumn and early winter, subject to this additional noise because no thought was given to the impact on them at an early stage.

When you first announced the Night Tube a long time ago, why did you not think about the impact on residents when you were bringing this in?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The answer will turn out to be that TfL was not aware of a very substantial number of residents who might be so affected. We are now getting reports of this and thank you for drawing the complaints of your constituents to my attention. We will obviously be doing whatever we can to mitigate it. I have to say that in eight years of being Mayor, this is the first time I have ever had any protest from any of you about nocturnal noise from the Tube. Not in this in this Question Time.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Frankly, I find that answer incredible, Mr Mayor. Are you simply telling me that TfL had no thought about the impact on people who back on to the many miles of over ground Tube line where they are going to be disturbed at night?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What I have been saying --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Are you seriously telling me that the TfL had no thought about it? It presumably had no thought about it because it made no attempt to consult people in the first place. If it had done, it would have heard.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I cannot tell you about the consultations that were made.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** There were not any.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I would be happy to get back to you on that. What I can tell you is that in the course of doing this job for a long time, Night Tube noise is not something that has really been

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<sup>3</sup> London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time), 17 June 2015

raised with me, but I am listening to you now and I am going to do what I can to sort it out. It is not something that has been raised with me before.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** There is a difference between Tube lines that stop at 1.00am and those that go on all through the night, is there not? That is the problem here. People will put up with a degree of Tube noise; they have to because that is where they live. There is a difference between having it late at night and all through the night, is there not?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, and you are making a very fair point, Andrew, to be honest. If we can do something to mitigate the noise impacts on residents, then obviously we should. I am grateful to you for drawing this to my attention. All I am saying is that it is not something that John Biggs [John Biggs AM], for instance, although he is continually interjecting and chuntering, Chair, has raised. He says he would raise it but he says, "I am never here". I might point out this is a bit rich coming from 'Two Jobs' Biggs! When is he going to resign as an Assembly Member and stop taking--? Do the people of Tower Hamlets get what are you doing here?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Mr Mayor, no, we have stopped the clock.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Why does he not quietly evaporate or disintegrate?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, we have stopped the clock and, really, quite a few of you are in no position to be talking about the number of jobs that are being held around this horseshoe.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is because I am here.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** It is going to be a rarity --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I work much harder than you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** -- those of us who only do one job.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The more people that understand me.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Now, have you finished, Mr Dismore?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is not what the people in London say.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Can I ask the Assembly to suspend Standing Order 2.9B in order to complete the business on the agenda?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You can see what the problem is.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** We only have four questions left.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** They know.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Tracey?

**Richard Tracey AM:** Thank you, Madam. Mr Mayor, on this point about the start of the Night Tube, can I remind you that we are --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No one can accuse you of being entertaining.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Can I remind you that we are hosting the Rugby --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You can be and I am sorry. Sorry, Dick.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Shall I start again?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am so sorry. I have been distracted by my friend --

**Richard Tracey AM:** By the chain gang.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- my fellow Mayor, who is absent.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Are you aware that the operation of the Night Tube actually coincides with us hosting the Rugby World Cup? There will be a number of people in London who will very much welcome some extra transport facilities.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. Not Andrew's [Andrew Dismore AM] constituents, obviously. He opposes the Night Tube and I understand he has objections and Val [Valerie Shawcross CBE AM] has objections, but it is a great project for the city and we will get it through. I cannot say exactly what date it is; I do not particularly care. We will get it through this autumn.

**Richard Tracey AM:** The rugby fans care. The Rugby World Cup starts on 15 September.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We will see. We will see how we get on.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** As you have mentioned Assembly Member Dismore, he has a point of clarification to make. Can you stand and give it?

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Yes, thank you, Chair. I never said I opposed the Night Tube. What I said was that I was concerned about the lack of thought about the interests of the residents with the night noise.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** OK, I am sorry.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** It should have been dealt with before now.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I trust you will say that to your residents.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you. Clarification and point of information?

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** I also never said I oppose the Night Tube. In fact, we strongly support it and my point was rather that we would like you to handle it competently.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK, thank you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** If they both support it, the people of London might want to know why, when they were in office for eight years, they did absolutely nothing to bring it about. If they think it is such a great idea, why did they not do it? They are hopeless, that is why. They are absolutely hopeless.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** I do believe, Mr Mayor and Members, can we just focus on the questions because you do have to be in another place.

## **2015/2189 - Public Houses**

Steve O'Connell AM

*Following your landmark protections for pubs in the London Plan, in your capacity as mayor would you support similar action at a national level to strengthen rules on Assets of Community Value and other planning regulations?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you. Steve, the scheme we have going is very valuable and I obviously would like to see any national strengthening of those rules on assets of community value (ACVs), but I am very pleased you have led in Croydon and elsewhere by championing local pubs. I vividly remember going with you to a pub. Was it in Carshalton?

**Steve O'Connell AM:** The Hope.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It was the Hope, which was at risk of being closed down, I think I am right in saying, and it is now an absolute mecca for sales of real ale --

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- if you can have a mecca for sales of real ale.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** That is a contradiction, actually. Mr Mayor, I thank you for your work and placing of protection within the London Plan. Would you agree to lobby the Government both as Mayor and as an MP to support the campaign by the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) and others to change the national planning rules to enable it to require planning permission for all types of redevelopment and change of use of pubs?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We have quite a good balance going now, which is that under the ACV idea that we introduced into the Further Alterations to the London Plan, local communities can apply to their local authority for this designation and they then have 56 days under the Community Rights to Buy to see whether they want to save the pub under this measure. So far, we have had the Ivy House in Nunhead, the Chesham Arms in Hackney, the George IV in Brixton Hill, the Royal Vauxhall Tavern in Kennington Hill, the Honor Oak Pub in Forest Hill, the White Swan and the Bugle Horn, both in Charlton, and the Plume of Feathers in Plumstead. They all have that status.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Yes, I am aware of that. I am aware of the advantages of the ACV, but the fact of the matter is that planning permission is only required when a public house is turned into flats. What we are talking about here is a wholesale destruction of community pubs to be switched into supermarkets, mosques, etc. That, at present, does not need planning permission.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, I understand, like the threat to The Hope.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Yes. I am urging you to use your influence to enable us to have the requirement for planning permission any time a community pub is closed, notwithstanding the ACV.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** OK. It is not just to residential but to any other use other than the pub?

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Yes. That is the campaign. That is what I am asking for your support on.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** OK. I will certainly – What I don't want to see --. You see an awful lot of pubs abandoned, shuttered and not being used for anything.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** This is only for proven community pubs of community use.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That would be the issue, yes.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** I move on to the second point. You mentioned ACVs. Many boroughs at the moment are actually rejecting applications for ACVs and at the moment there is no appeals process against these borough decisions. Do you share my concerns around that and would you, again, support a campaign whereby, if an ACV is refused by a borough, there is an appeals process by the community groups against that decision?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do not know quite what that appeals process would be and to whom they would appeal but --

**Steve O'Connell AM:** The council.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** The council makes the decision to grant the ACV and some councils - I have an example of Enfield's decision regarding The Green Dragon - have quite shamefully decided against granting the ACV.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The council did or the planning officers did?

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Well, the council planning officers.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Then the people of Enfield, obviously, could vote to remove the councillors concerned.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Good point. However, there is no appeals process. It is a one-way system. What we want is an appeals process whereby, if the council or planning officers refuse it, the community group that applied in the first place can appeal properly against that decision.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** To the whole council?

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Would you support that in principle?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, but who are they appealing to?

**Steve O'Connell AM:** They would have to appeal to a third party. They would go back to the planning process. They would have to work it through. We would need to work it through, Mr Mayor, but would you agree in principle that an appeals process, to be worked through, is a good idea?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. You would need to work out on what basis they were appealing, to which higher authority, how exactly that would work and what the ramifications of that would be for the whole planning process and indeed for local democracy.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** I get that. It is just --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Let me think about that. The best thing to do is to kick out the councillors who close down pubs.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Exactly. My last point - and this is really something that you do have some responsibility around - is talking about the Great Beer Festival this year, which we had upwards of 50,000 people enjoying. It was a fantastic event in London. TfL this year decided not to run the Earls Court-to-Olympia Tube line during that beer festival. It has done it in previous years. This is something that is very disappointing. There are upwards of 50,000 Londoners going and enjoying themselves. Apparently TfL has made the decision not to run it this year. I have written to TfL and to you. Can I urge you to look at that decision and see if you can rescind that?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Sorry, a decision?

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Each year, there is an extra shuttle service during the CAMRA beer festival to run the Earls Court-to-Olympia Tube line. TfL has decided - on cost reasons, apparently, I am told - not to do it this year and I am appealing you to review that decision.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Let me look into it. I am sorry. I will not give you that guarantee now but I will certainly raise it with TfL.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** I would like you to look into it.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I certainly will.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** That is all I need.

**Victoria Borwick AM MP:** The Transport Committee would support that.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Good. I have the hefty weight of the Transport Committee behind me.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Yes. No, that is lovely. I love the link with CAMRA beer festival. OK, let us move on to the next --

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Thank you. Have you --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Have you finished?

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Yes, I have. Yes, thank you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Let us move on to the next question.

### **2015/2224 - Cycling in Outer London**

Navin Shah AM

*The number of cyclist casualties for Outer London has increased by 15%. How will you increase the safety of cyclists in Outer London where the use of cars as a mode of transport is profound?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Navin. You are absolutely right in what you say about those statistics in outer London, although of course I should point out that those KSIs in outer London fell by 11% compared to the previous year. There was a rise in slight injuries, which affected the statistics. Overall, last year, as I said, was the safest year on record for cycling.

What we are doing to increase the safety of cyclists in outer London is all sorts of stuff: the Mini-Hollands in particular, and we want to see some more progress on those in some boroughs; we have already discussed the Safer Lorry Scheme, which will be important; cycle safety tips campaign; Operation Safeway; all the things that we are doing to improve the safety of cycling in London.

**Navin Shah AM:** Mr Mayor, I have no further time to pursue my supplementary questions but one thing I would like to point out is that Mr Clifton James, a cyclist, was killed in a car collision in Harrow only a month ago. The statistics do show that in outer London boroughs there is a disproportionate amount of cycling fatalities compared to the actual take-up of cycling. I will be writing to you about how you can promote better cycling in outer London boroughs, which you are not doing currently, and also the need to make cycling safe, particularly in outer London boroughs. Thank you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am grateful to you, Navin, and that is what we are aiming to do.

**Navin Shah AM:** Thank you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is, indeed, what we are doing.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Question number 2015/2158, Assembly Involvement in Devolution Negotiations, has been referred for a written answer. He has also referred his question 2015/2155, National Unit Tracking Online Hate Crime, for a written answer. That leaves us with one question left on the order paper.

### **2015/2211 - Teddington Sports Ground**

Tony Arbour AM

*Given your concerns about the loss of playing fields in London, do you share my concerns about the potential sale and development of the 13-acre Teddington Sports Ground owned by Imperial College, in breach of covenants designed to ensure that the Ground be used for sport in perpetuity, and will you do all you can to ensure that these valued playing fields are protected?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. Thank you very much, Tony, for raising this with me. The London Plan policy is absolutely clear that you cannot have a loss of open space unless you have equivalent or

better provision. No application has been made for this site. I note that it was donated to Saint Mary's Medical School by Lord Beaverbrook [20th century British businessman] and later taken over by Imperial College London in 1937 specifically for use as rugby union pitches. It would be an absolute scandal and an outrage if that land was lost for that purpose. However, I hope that has not prejudiced any discretion I may have if the matter were to come before me.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chair):** Mr Mayor, thank you for using the phrase 'absolute scandal and outrage'. That is exactly what the locals feel.

I know that you do not want to prejudice your position on this. However, given that this is a public body dedicated to sound mind and sound body that wants to close down a sports ground, which was left to them, as you have rightly said, to continue to be a sports ground in a borough which despite its wonderful name and wonderful provisions actually has a shortage of play space, in the place where the Rugby Union World Cup is to be played, I wonder if you could possibly use your moral suasion - which has nothing to do with your planning powers - to say to the great and the good who serve on the board of Imperial College that they are betraying their trust in seeking to dispose of this property, which was left, as I say, for sporting purposes?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do not want to go any further than the already colourful language I have used in this matter. My general view is that you should keep green space in London and rugby pitches should be regarded as sacrosanct.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chair):** Thank you, Mr Mayor.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you. Mr Mayor, thank you for your answers to all the questions this morning.