

**London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 12 October 2011**

**Transcript: Question and Answer Session with the Mayor**

**2029/2011 – Road Safety**

**Jenny Jones**

*On what dates have you met with Transport for London officers to specifically discuss why there has been a rise in the total number of pedestrian and child pedestrian casualties since 2008 and were you happy with their explanation?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Jenny. You asked when I last met with TfL officers specifically to discuss total number of pedestrian and child casualties. The last meeting that we had specifically on this subject was on 11 March of this year. Obviously, Isabel [Dedring], Deputy Mayor for Transport has met officers many times to discuss these matters. Just for the benefit of people who are not aware of the background to the question, and we had a good discussion, I think with Val [Shawcross], about this last time. It is very encouraging to see the number of killed and seriously injured is coming down, but the number of slight injuries is showing a slight increase. That is a matter of concern. We are trying to analyse it. All I can tell you at the moment is although we are pursuing that question we do not have any detailed explanation yet.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** This has been happening for two years now, since 2008. I did write to you in May this year asking you what you were doing about it, so I am slightly concerned that it has been going on for two year, because if we look at child casualties 1,200 children injured on the roads. That to me just seems horrific. You were just talking about your passion for young children. It seems to me that if 1,200 children were assaulted outside the school gates or something you would be doing something.

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

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I am just slightly concerned that you have delayed so long in actually tackling this.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I understand why you are saying this, Jenny, but just to get back to the point, the killed and seriously injured are both coming down and well down. I know that the slight [injuries figure] is going up. We do not have an explanation. I would love to be able to give you a pat explanation for it now. The numbers are not causing us huge alarm obviously because we continue to make the inroads in serious injuries. What I --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Hold on. You do not have alarm that 151 children more were hurt last year on the roads in London than the year before?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Fewer were seriously injured.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Yes, but 551, that is more than the previous year.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** 551 had minor injuries, but fewer were seriously injured and fewer died.

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

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is important to stress that because then people listening to you might not get that impression.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I advised the previous Mayor for many years on road safety and I do not want to say that I was great and you were rubbish, but actually since I have stopped doing it you have halved the road safety budget and it is a huge matter of concern. 150 more children; we should be pushing that number down, it should be 150 fewer children.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is, but I just repeat fewer are being seriously injured and fewer being killed.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I know that and you have said that twice already; that is the third time. I am asking you why there has been a rise for two years. You have kept the budget at half what it was three years ago. You have also initiated various measures like smoothing traffic flow, which potentially are hurting people. I do not understand why you have not moved on this.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Hang on. It is not clear that the measures that we put in place to go for shared space solutions or to a smooth traffic flow are in any way associated with the slight rise in slight injuries. People need to understand it is that which we are talking about. I cannot repeat it too often, the number of people being seriously injured or killed are still coming down. One suggestion that I have heard and one explanation that has been raised with me, and I just want to stress that we have not data, is that it may be that we need to get out a stronger message to people about paying attention when using handheld devices of all kinds.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** In cars as well, people driving their cars using mobiles, for example.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am afraid I see too many cyclists with iPods, earphones in both ears, which I think is wrong. I do not agree with that. I am worried. Speaking as one who cycles all over London, I see a lot of people using handhelds, using BlackBerry devices and not paying proper attention to the road.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** You are using anecdotal evidence, instead of looking at hard facts. I cannot believe you are just quoting somebody you have seen on a bike using an iPod. We are here to question you about what you are doing about the fact that more children are being injured on our roads that have been in the last, well, two decades. You are not taking this seriously.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Hang on. You cannot say that. It is not true that more people have been injured on our roads than there have been in the last two decades.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I said more children.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Jenny, you must not mislead people. That is absolutely outrageous.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Mr Mayor, I know the figures better than you and what I am telling you is 150 more children injured this year than the year before. That means --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No. There has been a very substantial reduction overall in the last two decades, and London overall is doing extremely well. There has been a slight increase in slight injuries and we are looking at the reasons for that. Actually over the last period from 2000 to 2010 there has been a 37% reduction in all casualties and a 53% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured. To say that --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** In the rest of --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Hang on. Five minutes ago you said that levels were now higher than they had been over the last two decades. That was completely wrong.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** They are rising.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That was completely wrong. They are now 37% lower than they were in 2000 and you should acknowledge that.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** In the rest of Britain the numbers are going down. Here in London alone the figures are rising. Why do you think that is? You have brought in all sorts of transport measures. You have absolutely no idea of the impact and so why are you not, please, looking at this more seriously? You last met in March. I asked you in May what you were doing about it. You still have not produced a road safety plan. You promised that in 2009. Where is your updated road plan, where is it?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I said, it cannot be repeated too often, that the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads of London are coming down.

Although there is a slight increase in slight casualties, and you are right to draw attention to it, the answer is that we are studying it and we do not know the reason for this increase and we cannot --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Where is your road safety strategy you promised two years ago? 2½ years ago you promised a road safety strategy and you still have not produced it. This is not an issue you seem to care about.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I care about it very much indeed and that is why I am pleased --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Will you please do something?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is why I am pleased that --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Will you please do something?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is why I am pleased that the numbers of people killed or seriously injured on our roads, including children, continue to come down.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Thank you, Chair.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Jenny and I have both had conversations with you about this because I think it is one of those things that falls below the radar. People do not notice. You have used the word 'slight' in two contexts there and I think neither are appropriate. The figures that TfL will give you will show you that. These are available on the website that since 2008 traffic accidents in London have been rising in some boroughs, Redbridge, there has been a 27% increase in one year of pedestrian accidents, in Bromley 19%, in Richmond 25%, in Ealing 21%. Something is clearly going wrong on our roads in London and we do need to nip it in the bud. Jenny is quite right, in Manchester slight accidents again have reduced dramatically over the last two years. In Birmingham they have gone down dramatically, 18%, 17%, in Edinburgh they have gone down. There is something special about London. Something is going wrong. I put it to you that it could be the case that your programme of smoothing the traffic, rephrasing the traffic lights could be having an impact here because you have rephrased over 2,000 traffic lights. You have adjusted the timings on over 2,000 traffic lights. It might not be the problem.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It might not be the problem.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** It might not be the problem, but if accidents are going up what are you doing to make sure that the criteria for selecting sites for removing traffic lights, as you are, and rephrasing traffic lights are not high accident areas and are not areas where accidents are likely to be happening?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Obviously where we do put in traffic smoothing measures of any kind or where we take out guardrail, we do make sure that we monitor it to see whether it is having an impact on safety. I want to stress that obviously any accident in London is one too many. We are trying our best to minimise them. There has been a small increase, as I said, in slight casualties. People will be pleased to know that the number of people being killed and the number of people being seriously injured continues to fall. We are doing everything we can to get to the bottom of what it is. If it was obviously removing guardrail, which I know that you care about, and it looked as though the removing guardrail or this removal of traffic lights or rephrasing of traffic lights was behind it then that would be a simple thing and we could say, "Ah, that's the problem, we can deal with it". The evidence we have does not support any

particular conclusion one way or the other. At the moment there is an investigation going on by TfL into what exactly the causes of this slight increase might be and we will then bring forward appropriate measures.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Mr Mayor if you are saying you do not know why these accidents are going up, and they are going up in some areas very dramatically, why do you not suspend your intervention of taking out traffic lights and rephrasing traffic lights, if you do not know if that is a contributing factor or not. When will we see this research and how many more people have to have accidents before you do look seriously at whether this programme is contributing to it?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. The evidence is not there yet, Val, I will happily share with you whatever we get in, but I think it would be irrational in the absence of evidence one way or the other to go around doing a series of interventions that may or may not have any connection with the problem.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Chair. Mr Mayor, will you give us an assurance now that you will continue your programme to remove traffic lights and to reduce congestion in this City and help to get the City moving again, and that you will take the opportunity to challenge Jenny Jones, who aspires to be Mayor of this City, and Valerie Shawcross, who aspires to be Deputy Mayor of this City, to see if they would do anything different?

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

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. I certainly think that what you would have under Val I am sure you would have loads more traffic lights, loads more guardrail, congestion charges all over the place and a complete nightmare. That would be the general manifesto. It is not something I would support. I do not think it is the way forward. I am pleased that there has been a massive increase - you have to face the fact there has been a massive increase in cycling in London - I am proud that that increase, 15% in one year, has been accompanied by an absolute fall in serious injuries and fatalities involving bicycles. It is a great achievement and a real tribute to the London motorist, by the way, who I think people are showing an increasing understanding that you are going to find cyclist on the road. Jenny and Val, I appreciate your concern in this area and I do understand it because it is very important. I cannot give you an answer, but it may be that in addition to all the other things that we have discussed the increase in cycling may have something to do with the small increase in slight injuries, perhaps. I cannot confirm that. I do not know whether you are in favour of cycling or against it. The last time Jenny and Val and I got on a bicycle together, not the same bicycle I hasten to say. Shall I stop it there?

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Yes, that would be --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** All I can say is they did not know the route to Elephant & Castle from City Hall.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr Mayor, it is interesting to listen to Jenny Jones and Val Shawcross and we all share a concern where there is an increase in accidents involving children, but isn't the reality that this a multi-agency issue? It is not just something which can be pinned on yourself, as well known as you are across London I know that you are not omnipresent at every school at going home time. There is a responsibility with the schools, with the children themselves and also with the parents. I am a governor at a couple of schools and the most dangerous time in and around those schools are when parents are dropping children off or collecting them at the beginning and at the end of the school day.

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

**Richard Barnes (AM):** To get them to observe 20 mph is almost an impossibility.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I mean, Richard, it is very, very important that we do not minimise this phenomenon. There is something going on. I think Val and Jenny are right to point out. If you see a blip in statistics you have got to think about it. All I am telling you is in all intellectual honesty we do not yet have the answer. It may be that it is about more information at school gates. It is about being much more voluble with parents and teachers about road safety. It may be that some new campaign is required there. It may be Val is right and some of the traffic-smoothing measures are implicated in this. You have to be intellectually honest about it. What you cannot do is lunge around just because you hate motorcars and you hate people who drive in them, and decide you are going to inflict traffic lights everywhere, all the around. You have to look at the evidence.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** Mr Mayor, I was interested in your comments about cyclists wearing earphones and iPods. As a resident of Central London this is a growing and alarming menace. Do you think that the wearing of earphones when you are cycling should be made illegal?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am not in favour of banning things, Kit, as you know, nor I think are you by instinct, but I do think that Jenny is wrong to be so shrill in denouncing this as a potential cause. I think there are questions in my mind when I see quite how many people are mentally abstracted by whatever it is that they are concentrating on. We all know what it is like to be in the middle of trying to think of how to phrase a text to someone, a delicate matter or whatever it is and you may well step out into the road in a way that you would not do if you were not trying to use a mobile or a BlackBerry. I think there is also a problem with people having both ears blocked with headphones. I think it is crazy to cycle like that. I would not do it myself, and I strongly advise others not to.

## **2865/2011 - Pledge to Commuters**

### **Navin Shah**

*During your time as Mayor, have you kept your pledge to put commuters first?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, thank you. I hope you will forgive me, since this is an open-ended question, if I give some detail, Navin, in the answer. I am proud that we have

secured the biggest upgrade of the Tube network in history. The Metropolitan line, the Hammersmith, City and Circle lines and the District line will all be getting air conditioned trains. The Victoria line and Jubilee line upgrades have been delivered and they are already producing faster, smoother and more reliable journeys for hundreds of thousands of commuters every day. On the Jubilee line alone we are now running 27 trains an hour at peak time, which I said that we would do, and we have reduced journey times by 1½ minutes. We now have new trains on the Victoria line, which I think are greatly appreciated, even though of course there were teething problems there as well.

On rail we have delivered great improvements to London Overground, whose customers now have the air conditioned S-stock trains. It is a very popular service. I think it is a fantastic service now, the orbital Overground route and obviously we are going to extend that further. In spite of all the difficulties that people foresaw and all the budgetary pressures we were under last year we did secure funding for Crossrail and it is going to be delivered in full. I pay tribute to all the work of Assembly Members here across all parties who supported us on that. I think it was absolutely right. Oyster Pay As You Go is now accepted on all rail services in Greater London, which is a benefit to commuters, especially in outer London. We are continuing to argue with Government that we in City Hall should have more of a say in running the Overground services in London overall.

We have begun a process of reducing the number of road works in our City, or reducing the delays caused by road works with a permit scheme and we are working up to lane rental next year. We have been discussing already. We are rephrasing traffic lights. We have introduced a bypass scheme.

**Navin Shah (AM):** Can you allow me to ask a question, Mr Mayor?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** By Christmas there will be no more bendy buses on the streets of London.

**Navin Shah (AM):** We do not have very much time I am afraid.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I said I would get rid of the western extension zone of the congestion charge, following a consultation. We had such a consultation and we got rid of it. Overall I think the record that we have produced I am very proud of it indeed. I have no doubt at all that we will be able to take it forward over the next five years with more improvements to the benefit of Londoners and vital transport infrastructure improvements will keep this City moving and make London more competitive for generations to come.

**Navin Shah (AM):** Mr Mayor, I hear what you say but let me contend that you have let down London's commuters because you have failed to deliver on your promises. I will give you three reasons why. Since your election the fares have gone up by 56%. In terms of Tube delays there has been an increase of 10% and, thirdly, the worst week of delays and closures was last week. It has been really deteriorating very fast. A Travelcard now costs my constituents almost £400 a year more. Londoners are actually paying more and getting less. Is this still your policy? Let me

ask you this question. Is it still your policy to raise fares above inflation every year for the next 20 years?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Let me tell you, Navin, that thanks to the policies that we put in place Londoners maintain the benefits and the concessions that they had and we have added to them with a 24-hour Freedom Pass, which did not exist before. It exists only in London.

**Navin Shah (AM):** Can you please answer my question, are you going to continue to --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will come to the answer. We have protected concessions for young people. We have instituted concessions for those in search of work and for disabled veterans. These are important advantages that Londoners enjoy. In addition, bus fares are cheaper in London relative to most other cities in this country. I think all other big cities in this country, bus fares in London remain cheaper. I would remind you that if you look at the average of fares over the last 60 years, it is certainly the case that with a fare increase we have not gone above average. What I do not think you can do is go into an election promising to cut whole fares down, which is what the previous Mayor did in 2004. In 2004 he told Londoners he would cull whole fares down. He came in and he cynically whacked them up at RPI (Retail Price Index) plus ten.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Mr Mayor. Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** In doing so I think he completely undermined any credibility Labour may have in this matter. In the end I think Londoners well understand that if you monkey around with fares and you cynically try to hold them down for party political advantage all that happens is that you are obliged --

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Mr Mayor. Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am answering the question about RPI plus ten.

**Navin Shah (AM):** Can you answer it now please? You are wasting my time.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** All that you are obliged to do is to put them up even more and in the long run because what you do is you undermine the creditworthiness of TfL and you have to borrow at higher costs.

The policy that I think this side of the argument is now committed to is fundamentally inimical to the interest of the London travelling public. I will not go down that route it is grossly irresponsible. It is party politicking with fares and it would not allow us to make the investments we need.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Mr Mayor, you are answering a question that is on the order paper, which we have not got to yet.

**Navin Shah (AM):** I do not think that the kind of comments that you made are shared by my commuters. Let me quote one of my constituents who say, "An average day Travelcard zone one and six used to cost around £7.50, now it costs me £15. This is overpriced." He says, "People like me struggle trying to cope with the price of transport in this City". Why are you still, having got major under spend in TfL, continuing to pursue your policy about increasing fares?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The policy that I believe that you are committed to of a cut followed by a freeze in perpetuity of, or for the foreseeable future, in fare revenues would lose £850 million from TfL budgets. It would be catastrophic for London. We would not be able to go ahead with upgrades at Bank, at Tottenham Court Road of the Northern line, you would see huge cuts in busses in outer London. It would be, I think, the last thing that Londoners want or deserve. It is not a sensible policy for this City. It is cynical electioneering, it has no credibility whatever. Of course I would love to cut fares. Nothing would be more congenial to me as a politician, but it is not right. It is not right for this City.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Mr Mayor, let us get to the nub of this. After nine strikes on the Tube in the last six months of last year, putting commuters first, would that not be better interpreted by making this sort of irresponsible, illegal strike action, by raising the threshold, the ability to go on strike by these unions, to over 50% of the members? They would have to vote for it. Over half of Londoners in a YouGov poll have supported this policy and it has been put to the Assembly by my colleagues on this side and opposed by the people over there.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Who is it? Are they in favour of strikes, your colleagues on the Assembly?

**Richard Tracey (AM):** They would seem to be.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Do you ever see them on picket lines?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Is that right? Do they take money from the unions that are going on strike? Do they? Do they actually have their headquarters in --

**Richard Tracey (AM):** It has been known, it has been known.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Is that right? What I want to say is there is a case for indispensable public transport systems that are of vital importance to a city like London, to have arrangements that protect the commuter, protect the travelling public from irresponsible strike actions; a point I have made repeatedly to Government. They are not minded to go down that path at the moment. They have the legislative tools. I think we have a good deal at the moment with London Underground (LU) and with the LU staff and I am very confident that we will go through and I know that people who run the Tube, who I think do a fantastic job in tough circumstances dealing with very, very antiquated machinery and equipment, will want to deliver a fantastic Olympics for London and the world next year and that is what we are going to do.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Mr Mayor, in the years running up to the last election in 2008, we were constantly told by your predecessor that he was going to introduce Oyster Pay As You Go on the mainline services into London but, of course, it didn't happen and we had to wait until quite recently for that. My residents, travelling in from places far afield like Romford and Ilford, are very pleased to be able to use Oyster Pay As You Go on the mainline services into Liverpool Street and --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Yes, I cannot understand. We did it quite --

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** He has not finished his question yet.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Do you think it is odd, Mr Mayor, that residents at Harrow do not feel able to share their pleasure with their own Assembly Members?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Yes, that is a very good point, Roger, and I don't know whether Navin has been sufficiently diligent in putting that point to his constituents in Harrow who may well agree with you that it has been a benefit of this Mayoralty that they are able to use Oyster Pay As You Go. I don't know whether Navin has had any comeback on that point from his residents in Harrow. I find that most people are happy with it. They are happy with the 24-hour Freedom Pass. I think it is a great benefit to older people in our city who need to access services before 9.00am in the morning. They are happy that we secured that and I think most sensible people, I think huge numbers of people understand that when you look at the graph of fares over the last 60 years, the average is RPI plus 2 because you have to invest in transport, you have to invest in infrastructure and what they don't believe anymore is the cynical nonsense of people who say, "I'm going to come in, cut fares" because they know that sooner or later, either they will simply lie and then whack them up as soon as they get in, which is what happened last time, or if they do keep their word, they will jeopardise important improvements to transport in this city which we need.

### **3075/2011 - Games - Driving Ban**

#### **Dee Doocey**

*It has been reported in the Evening Standard (27 September) that the International Olympic Committee would like a city centre driving ban during the Games. Do you agree with them?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Thank you very much, Dee. As I understand it, there is no basis whatever for this report. No such suggestion has been made to me and the last conversations that TfL had with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was that they thought we were doing very well and that they thought London's rail network was going to be well capable of coping with the impact of the games, so we're a bit mystified by where this one is coming from.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** OK, that is good news. Can I just ask you, if such a suggestion were made, are you able to give a categorical assurance that you would not allow this to happen?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** It may be that there are people. I mean, I notice some hostility to drivers and motorists in this Chamber today and maybe there are some people --

**Dee Doocey (AM):** No, just answer the question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** -- who want to ban cars during the Olympic Games; that is not me. I think it would be crazy.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Sorry, would you give a categorical assurance?

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

**Dee Doocey (AM):** You will not give a categorical assurance?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** I give a categorical assurance that I won't do it.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** That you would not allow it to happen. That is really good; thank you very much. Can I just ask you about traffic levels during the games. The Olympic Bid document said that in August, travel was reduced by 20%. It also said that the games will add an extra 5%. Those figures were done by TfL. TfL is now saying – it is actually issuing dire warnings – that traffic needs to be reduced by a further 30% a day which means that Transport for London has miscalculated the number of journeys during the Olympics by more than two million journeys a day.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Obviously, I disagree with the implication that TfL --

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Sorry, just before you disagree, can I tell you that these figures come from the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), the latest traffic management. Can I ask you what you have done as Chair of TfL to make sure that the TfL figures that it is quoting now are actually correct and that these are not out by another two million journeys a day?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** The important point is that provided business understands what the roads are going to be like and how their particular part of London is going to be affected, they will be able to plan, they will be able to prepare for that period when usage of the roads will be at its maximum, which will actually only be a very brief period, and they will be able to profit from the Olympic Games. The message I want to get out, Dee, with your help, and thank you for asking this, is that I do think there is a risk that we will all start to get a little bit millennium buggish about traffic on the roads during that time.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Sorry, excuse me, Mr Mayor; you are not actually answering the question. So could I rephrase the question so it is maybe clearer?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** You asked me what I was doing as Chairman of TfL, what we have done is hold a series of meetings with business, with boroughs, to educate them --

**Dee Doocey (AM):** To make sure that TfL is not miscalculating its figures.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** -- about the Olympic Route Network (ORN), its implications and what they need to do to prepare.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Sorry, Mr Mayor. Let me repeat the question. First of all, are you concerned that TfL got its figures wrong by more than two million journeys a day?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** That is not right.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** No, it is right.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** That is not right.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Actually, you really should know me better.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** That is not right.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** If I quote figures, they are right and they come from the Olympic documents.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** I have to tell you, as much as I respect you, Dee, that is not my experience.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** It is right. Well, it might not be your experience, that I absolutely accept, but they are correct. The second thing is I wanted to know what you have done, as Chair of Transport for London, to make sure that the figures it is quoting now are correct.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** What we are doing --

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Not what you are doing with business. What have you done as Chair of TfL to make sure its figures are correct?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Well, as I say, what we think is right is to make it clear to people that there will be times, there will be days when congestion will be an issue and they may want to think about reducing their number of journeys and 30% is the figure that has been quoted for some businesses in some places at some times and that is entirely sensible. The crucial thing here is that people understand in detail where the Olympic Route Network is, how it is likely to affect them and they prepare.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Mr Mayor, I didn't speak about the ORN but if you want to talk about the ORN, maybe you can explain then why 82,000 people are allowed to use the ORN of which only 18,000 are actually officials who are necessary for the games and athletes. So what have you done to make sure that the rest of them, who are not necessary for the running of the Games, are not using the ORN?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** We have, as you know, and we discussed this repeatedly, they are under strong, strong urgings and the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) has accepted it, Jack Rogge [President of the International Olympic Committee] has accepted it, everybody understands that they will get travel to the games with their tickets on public transport; they should use that. The Javelin will be there. Six minutes --

**Dee Dooney (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I think your answer is nothing.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** -- to Stratford from Kings Cross. They are urged to use public transport. What we cannot do is, I am afraid, alter the terms of the Bid Book, which I did not negotiate, perhaps you did but I didn't negotiate them, and told people who have paid up to sponsors and others who have paid a total of £2 billion to enable London to put on the games that they can't have this entitlement that was negotiated in the Bid Book. Just for the benefit of people because I know this is causing a lot of --

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** No, Mr Mayor, we must move on.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Londoners need to know about the ORN and the --

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** No, the question wasn't about the ORN specifically.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** All right.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** No. Can we now move on to the next question and that is question number 3146 and that's about the 5% fare cut but can I also call on Assembly Member Coleman and bring your question forward and your question is specifically about the Northern line upgrades?

### **3146/2011 - Fare cut**

**Richard Tracey**

*Will the Mayor please outline the impact a five per cent fare cut would have on London's transport systems?*

### **3184/2011 - 5% Fares Cut**

**Brian Coleman**

*Will the Mayor outline the effect that a universal 5% fares cut would have on the Northern line upgrade?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Thank you. This will give me an opportunity to repeat, I think, what we were already saying in conversation with Navin [Shah, Assembly Member] about this issue. There is a real threat to capital upgrades that are of massive importance to London. There is also a threat to bus routes particularly in outer London. There is constant pressure from people

who say, "Well, these bus routes aren't sufficiently used." That is absolute nonsense. We're going to keep those bus routes, but if you lost £850 million, as you would, over four years by such a policy, you would have absolutely no choice but to cut services and that is not what I want to do. I know that there are some beachings, some bus route beachings, on the other side who want to slash services. That is not our approach.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Mr Mayor, this whole idea of 5% would effectively create the same black hole that you faced in 2008. From the person who made the suggestion that this was possible, which has been indeed questioned by the Commissioner of TfL and by one of his senior managers yesterday at the Transport Committee, has this person who made the suggestion made any other suggestions of how he would find £850 million savings from the TfL budget to do this?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** I don't know, Dick. I suppose you could whack up the congestion charge to some absolutely excruciating level. You could double, actually even if you quadruple council tax, you wouldn't achieve it. I suppose you would get rid of all the concessions for young people; you could do all sorts of things. I don't think they would be in the interests of Londoners. I also fundamentally object because I don't think it is honest; I don't think it is honest. In the end, all you do is you do it one year and then you whack them up the next as soon as you think you can get away with it and because you've weakened the borrowing position of TfL, you actually have to whack them up by even more and so it is not a policy that I think Londoners should support.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** So economic illiteracy; is that a reasonable description?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Yes, I think it is. I think it is because, as I say, it undermines the borrowing ability of TfL. In the end, it makes it necessary to raise fares by even more in the medium term.

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

**Brian Coleman (AM):** Mr Mayor, will you, therefore, confirm that a cut in fares and the result of the ongoing affect on TfL's performance, it will mean that the multimillion pound upgrade to the Northern line, so desired of many of my constitutes and other colleagues on this side, just couldn't happen?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** I think that is very likely. As I say, I think the reality is, certainly, if I had to guess, the policy is so bad that it is almost certainly just being offered as a desperate expedient rather like the fares' freeze of 2008 you remember. Actually, there were hilarious emails, you may recall, between the previous Mayor and TfL in which it suddenly became aware to the Commissioner that a fares' policy that had been already agreed by the TfL board was being deviated from in the desperate hope of getting the previous Mayor elected. I don't think that is the right way to go. It would lead to a serious cut in our ability to deliver capital upgrades for London for the benefit of millions of people and also the benefit of the UK economy. It is completely the wrong thing to do.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** It would, in fact, be a return to the bad days of when the Government directly controlled London Transport and didn't invest any capital and that is something both you and your predecessor tried to address over your mayoralties: the lack of investment in the 1980s and the 1990s. Would you not, therefore, say it is rather hypocritical for other candidates for Mayor to try and cut investment and to return to those dark days where commuters suffered?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** I think it is a mistake. I think it is a mistake, yes.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Mr Mayor, certainly in places like Upminster, we are looking forward very much to the upgrade to the District line and to new stock and new signalling which is much needed on that line. It would also be a great benefit, of course, to Mr Biggs' constitutes further into town. Can you confirm that will go ahead as long as there isn't an £850 million cut in TfL's budget?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Yes, it is absolutely right. Anybody who uses Bank at the moment will know how absolutely crucial it is that we get that station upgraded. The District line signalling has to be changed. We need the new trains. If you cut investment in these things, you are greatly reducing the quality of life for Londoners who pay for those services because they will be more crammed, they will be more hassled, and they will be more exhausted as a result of using our Underground network. I want the system to flow smoother. I want to be realistic with Londoners and I want to hold fares down as much as I possibly can. That is why to have sensible moderate increases rather than lurching around according to the political timetable is the right way forward.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Yes. I think I should also take this opportunity to let colleagues know that Mr Livingstone visited Havering last week. I think he has now been to Havering more often than he has been to his own which is very welcome. He promised people in Havering that he was going to extend the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) to Rainham which I think we would welcome but do you think that is compatible with a cut of £850 million in the budget?

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** No. Mr Evans, let's not go to the --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** I think people will legitimately ask themselves how such a project could be funded with a massive, massive black hole and not just over the next four years' time; forever, in TfL's budget. You would not only jeopardise the ability to deliver future projects such as extending the Docklands Light Railway which I think a lot of us are interested in doing but also you'd stop in the tracks our ability to do the essential things that Londoners want.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** Mr Mayor, one of the characteristics of the TfL budget over the last three years that has been of importance certainly to my residents and I know to the whole of London is that you directed TfL to maintain the funding for the police on the transport network and, indeed, augmented funding for the police over the last three years. Do you think that budget approaching £100 million, more police officers on the transport network, they will have 50 extra British Transport Police, would that be sustainable under a 5% cut?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** No. That is the kind of investment in transport I think Londoners really value. Crime on the buses has come down 30%, Kit, since you took over running the MPA. Well, actually, no, I took it over first and then you took over; I can't remember the exact chronology since we jointly started doing it and I think that is important and crime on the Tube is now down 20% and it can't be said too often, this is something that I think all Members of this Assembly, bow, should rejoice in and should tell their constituents. Navin, the Tube is now the safest Metro system in Europe. That is a very credible achievement for London. That is thanks to the hard work of thousands of people on LU and thanks to the policing measures that we have put in place. It would be a real shame if those policing measures were jeopardised by irrational and irresponsible funding decisions.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Mr Mayor, you are putting the fares up. They are already too high and we will bring them down yesterday.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** That is what you said in 2004. You said that in 2004 and you put them up by RPI plus ten, two years in a row.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Mr Mayor, are you aware that the IFS predicted that poverty is forecast to rise dramatically in this country? Thousands more families are suffering because of Government cuts and economic incompetence and yet, as the Mayor of London, you've been adding to the staggering costs of living in London by pushing up fares more than inflation. I think an interesting fact in your accounts, Mr Mayor, is that the fare increase on bus passengers, basically the fare take from bus passengers has actually gone up by 10% which includes an awful lot of the 500,000 people in London who earn poverty wages let alone those who are unemployed. Do you know how much of an operating surplus TfL made last year out of charging these dramatically high fares?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** There is no mythical pot of money, Val. There is no pot of money that is somehow available for keeping hacking back fares artificially. All that you would do is jeopardise our ability to continue with important upgrades or to provide benefits for older people or children and people in search of work. Bus fares, I would remind you, when you were responsible or when you had anything to do with; I can't remember exactly what your role was from 2004 to 2007, but they went up, I think, about 40% in that period. We have made sure that we keep bus fares as competitive as we possibly can and they are cheaper in London than many other, indeed, most other cities in this country. When you speak of economic incompetence, I really think that most people will look at the debts that were accrued in this country under the Labour administration that you supported and I think the wrong course now would be to starve London of investment, cut employment in vital infrastructure projects.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Mr Mayor, the question was about operating surplus, as I understand it.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Mr Mayor, I was asking about operating surpluses and I am not talking mythology. I am actually referring to TfL's own accounts because I know you deny figures unless they are actually published by TfL, so everything I refer to is published by TfL. In

fact, the operating budget has swung into a large surplus. It was £727 million in the last financial year.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** £728 million.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** That would more than cover off the £215 million income reduction that TfL anticipate on a 5% fare reduction. As well as wasting money on frivolous things like the Routemaster bus and a very nice cable ride across the Thames, you actually also managed --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Hang on, we have just been over that.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** You also managed to underspend despite all these things that are waiting to happen, the Croydon Tramlink extension we want to see happen. You managed to underspend on your serious capital budget last year, Mr Mayor. Do you know how much you underspent by last year?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Can I just explain to you that you are completely wrong. All these mythical sums that you wave around, of course, in an ideal world, I would love to ply them into fare cuts. All that would do is that we would starve capital investment of the sums that it needs to keep London moving. It would be a historic mistake. I understand the political reasons why you say what you say. I understand that you think that is the only argument that Londoners in their present mood will listen to. I don't think it is right for the city. I think, when you look at what happened in 2004 and beyond, where the last time you promised to keep fares down, you put them up. Your candidate put them up having said exactly what you are saying this time; you put them up by RPI plus ten.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Mr Mayor, do you know how much unused surplus there is on your own capital project? You did tell me once that you are TfL. If you are TfL, can you tell me what your underspend was on capital last year? If it was, in fact, £273 million --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** It is irrelevant. It is completely irrelevant because that cash has to be spent on upgrading capital projects.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** That was an underspend, Mr Mayor, an underspend.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** You are talking absolute nonsense, Val.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Can I just talk for a minute about reserves, Mr Mayor. Our policy of cutting the fares doesn't, in any way, dip into the reserves but I want to give you a more realistic view of the financial health of TfL. Let's take a look at the reserves, Mr Mayor. How much money does TfL hold in reserves, would you say? It is a factual question. How much money have you --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** The purpose of holding reserves is to enable us to get on with spending on capital projects and if you cut £850 million --

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** How much do you have in reserves, Mr Mayor?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** The number varies from time to time. If you cut £850 million --

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Let us just say the figure that was reported in your annual accounts. How much was it Mr Mayor?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** If you cut £850 million from TfL's projects over the next four years, which is your plan, you would make it impossible to deliver for you, Val, and for your constituents; you would deprive them of the advantages that go with a Northern line upgrade.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Sorry, Mr Mayor. I am asking you how much you have in TfL reserves right now. If you are saying to Londoners that inflation busting fare increases are absolutely justified, you ought to know how much TfL has in reserves. It is a pretty big, high level figure. How much do you have in reserves?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Don't be ridiculous. You are being completely ridiculous. If you are suggesting that we turn --

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** No, I am not. Give me a figure within £100 million. That is a nice broad target, Mr Mayor. How much do you have in reserves, Mr Mayor?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** It is irrelevant. It is completely irrelevant.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Mr Mayor, are you willing to answer the question without the figure and then if you are not then we can move on?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** I am willing to tell you that it is completely irrelevant because what is being proposed is the reserves are there for the purpose of investment in capital infrastructure. If we were to take £850 million out, which is exactly what you are proposing, we would make it impossible to deliver for your own constituents --

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** We are not proposing; we are not suggesting you take £850 million out Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** You would make it impossible to deliver the Northern line upgrade and you would be getting rid of a huge number of community bus services around London and I think it is incredible that you are advancing this argument.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Mr Mayor, we have heard this before. You are not answering the Member's question.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Mr Mayor, just off the top of your --

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Ms Shawcross.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Sorry, Chair.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Can we have one last question from you so that we can get on to other questions?

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Chair, he hasn't actually answered the question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Well, if you had not --

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Do you wish to go on with this line of questioning?

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** I do very briefly if I may, Chair, because I just think, TfL report, statement of accounts this year reported total reserves of over £4 billion of which the usable portion of these is £1.19 billion.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** You are economically illiterate, Val.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Don't you think that while we are in a recession and there is hardship and there is poverty in London, why don't you --

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Some quiet in the Chamber, please. A Member is speaking.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Why don't you afford to match our policy of a 5% reduction? I challenge you to do it, Mr Mayor. I think you should put something back into Londoners' pockets during the recession.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Assembly Member Boff.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Am I allowed to answer the question?

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Well, there was no question. Can I have Assembly Member Boff?

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Mr Mayor, will you please acquaint yourself with the precedent of your predecessor's cuts in investment by the Greater London Council (GLC) in the mid-1980s in order to keep the fares low and their contribution to the Kings Cross fire which killed 31 people?

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** How is that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** I do not want to get into a blame game about the Kings Cross fire. What I do think is wrong is to go to an electorate on a manifesto that is completely cynical, to promise to cut fares when you know that you can't do it without seriously jeopardising improvements in services and indeed, in capital infrastructure programmes. We have seen it before. I think it is a cynical con trick and I won't be supporting it.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Mr Mayor, it is quite clear that the standard of questioning from Members opposite is deeply flawed, so will you make available, will you instruct, as Chair of TfL,

senior branch managers at TfL to sit down with Ms Shawcross and any friend or colleague she may wish to bring with her to explain the difference between capital spend and revenue spend, to explain the difference between unspent funds and unallocated funds and explain the implications in detail, which is what she was asking for, exactly what would happen if £850 million was taken out of the --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** All you have done --

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Ms Jones.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** Take Jenny Jones along with her. She never claimed to understand finance.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Yes. Mr Coleman. Have you finished your question, Assembly Member Cleverly?

**James Cleverly (AM):** Not quite, and explain the implications to the infrastructure improvements so desperately needed around London and once that lesson has been learned, perhaps we could then have a grownup debate based on the reality of the financial situation rather than the cloud cuckoo financial implications because you don't understand them though; that is the point.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** I am grateful to you. It is important --

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Excuse me.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Let us not be patronising to each other.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** No, let us only be patronising to the women.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** I never patronise.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** No. I am going to take two more interventions on this question --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** I am not patronising.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** Mr Mayor, my question is similar to Mr Cleverly's. One of my secret attributes is that to my shame, I'm a chartered accountant by qualification. Therefore, I understand that a revenue surplus is not the same as a cash surplus and that reserves are not the same as a bank account full of money. It is quite obvious from this afternoon that there are various Members of the Assembly who don't understand that important difference and would you support us, as an Assembly, in perhaps organising some basic financial training of the Members so that they understand the --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Provided we do not breach the no patronising rule.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Absolutely. It is not the Mayor's role to provide training for Members.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** The difficulty is --

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** I was asking a legitimate question. I was going to ask if he would --

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** He would support it?

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** -- be happy to fund it from Mayoral budgets.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** I certainly think an education about the difference in capital and revenue, what cash reserves are there for would certainly be of great advantage. I think there is a more profound point though which is to do with the politics of all this and we have been here before where the Labour Party promised their cuts, or their freeze, and then simply whack it up because they recognise the importance of investing in London. The other thing I would point out - I think someone mentioned the Travelcard - the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) have to have RPI plus three. You can't tell them what to do. It is very, very difficult to institute the policy, in fact, impossible to institute the policy that they claim to support. I don't happen to think that they seriously mean it but if they did, it would be the wrong policy.

**John Biggs (AM):** You inherited reserves of £4.8 billion from the previous Mayor. That was part of a massive financial settlement negotiated by him, inherited by you from the Government to fund capital investment. The second part is the way TfL works, its reserves are partly for capital purposes; they're partly also because it is a massive revenue operation. It depends on fares' income, number of people travelling and what has happened in the last couple of years is that more people have travelled and paid more fare income that was anticipated which is why you have the leg room to not levy your fares' increase. That is a matter of fact and you need to recognise and respond to that. If you want to bleed Londoners dry, if you say, "Vote for me, I'll whack your fares up" that is --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** It is not true, absolutely untrue. I think what you could certainly say, John, to invite people to vote for you under the policies that you are advocating and you would certainly end up putting fares up by more than I would. There is absolutely no question of it because you would be undermining TfL's ability to borrow on the markets by a patently irrational and counter indicated fares' policy and, in the long run, all history shows is that you would be exposed as having cynically gone into an election in the hope of getting elected and even if you were successful in getting through and being elected, you would end up whacking the fares up by more. So I do not think that your policy is one that I can support; I do not think it is one that Londoners will support. What you would also do, I suppose, which I think is very unlikely if you were either to get elected or to bring it about, if you were to do it, you would seriously undermine our ability to deliver major upgrades in the Tube. You would have cuts in bus network or you would have to get rid of some other concessions or benefits and I am afraid £850 million is a lot of money over four years. It would seriously undermine our ability to deliver the services.

**John Biggs (AM):** Here is the challenge. It is a very simple challenge and we don't need to respond to it now. It is can you publish your rationale for your fares' decision and spell all of those facts out so that they can then be challenged and publicly debated and we can understand, as Londoners, who is telling the truth?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Yes, of course, and I think most people will understand that when you look at the graph of fare increases over the last 60 years, it has basically been RPI plus two. That is because it is necessary to invest in transport infrastructure to keep a great city moving and where it leaps around, it is because politicians get their hands on it and think that they can get themselves elected by promising fares' cut and then they would be forced to whack it up.

**John Biggs (AM):** OK, thank you, Chair.

## **2867/2011 - Air Quality and CO2 Targets**

**Murad Qureshi**

*Do you remain committed to your air quality and CO2 targets?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Thank you. Thanks, Murad. I do think that this is a real issue for lots of Londoners and it is something that I take very seriously. I think people need to understand much more clearly the benefits they can have from fighting fuel poverty with insulation systems and that is why I think the Renew programme has to be rolled out much more thoroughly and I know that you are keen to see that as well. It is something I would like to encourage. I think I am right in saying that an average household can save £154 per year in fuel bills as a result of Renew but I would also pay tribute to what Richard Barnes is doing with his 'Know Your Rights' campaign which is very important for drawing people's attention to the benefits that older people, disabled people, carers and low income families have in this city.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I raise this question because I think it is quite clear when household incomes, in real terms, are falling. It is not going to be council tax or your fare increases in January which is going to hit them hardest; it is going to be the energy prices. London councils have suggested that one in four households already lives in fuel poverty and the *Financial Times (FT)* only yesterday suggested that the average household is likely to be in fuel poverty by 2015 if this trend continues with energy prices. I just want to be clear though what you are going to do about it. As Mayor, you have a very key role to play in the London context and I am not sure or clear from what I have just heard that you have that absolutely clear in your mind as we come into this autumn and winter.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** No. I wanted to reassure you, Murad, that I do take it very seriously. I think fuel poverty is a real issue around the capital. That is why Richard has been doing what he is doing with 'Know Your Rights'. We don't obviously dispense those benefits but we are and we do take a role in trying to make people aware of what they can get and also I think it is important. I think it was the Liberal, Chris Huhne, who said that people were lazy with what the Liberal Democrat Member of this Coalition Government said about people insulating their

homes. I wouldn't use that kind of hard edged, judgemental Liberal Democrat language but I would say that there are opportunities that people need to grasp to insulate their homes and to save money. If people understand the Renew programme it can save them personally very substantially in their fuel bills; that would be a very good thing.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Mr Mayor, you have responded to my previous questions on this issue, on this low lying fruits in this arena but quite clearly, the figures in your targets are not substantially going to make a dent in the London context. If you reduced your 200,000 target down to 55,000 and, of that, you have delivered 10,000-odd, that is not even 0.7% of the total housing stock of London. So we do need renewed, hugely bigger efforts on that front. If we'd had it earlier in the year, we could have had quite a good knock-on effect in the economy. What I do want to move on to now is your imprint on the energy companies and I think that is the critical place where we need to concentrate. Chris Huhne, I don't think, is fully focused on this job and he is still trying to sort out his domestic affairs but it is quite clear that --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** No, he is very good at getting his point across.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** No, here is an example. EDF Energy is the biggest supplier of energy in London. When we won the Olympic nomination, the main contract was let to them to take the pylons down. Recently, when they were in front of the Health and Public Services Committee, they were in denial that they were going to increase the prices and they are one of your sustainability partners. I just want to know what conversations you are having with them to break their grip on the London wholesale energy markets as others have responded in auctioning their wholesale market today in Scotland.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Obviously if I controlled the energy markets in London, it might be a different matter and actually, Murad, I think you are thinking very credibly now and I think there are things and we are also at looking at this. In my view, it is wrong that people should be paying quite what they are paying in energy bills at the moment. We are looking to see what we can do in addition to urging people to retrofit their homes, which I think is vital, and in addition to informing them of their rights and the benefits that they are entitled to, we are looking to see what we can do to try to move to a different system in London that would not only guarantee security of supply which is, by the way, another issue and something that is of increasing concern, but we would ensure that people aren't gouged or don't face excessive prices for energy. So I can't give you the details of what we are thinking of yet, Murad, but I can certainly tell you that you are on the right track and I think that this is something that Londoners would expect us to try to deal with if we can, even though, technically speaking, we have no immediate levers at our disposal to try and deal with it.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Just read the *FT*. It gives credit to Ed Miliband on its front today.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Good. Well, I am delighted. Ed, of course he and I went to the same school; it is a very important point.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Deputy Mayor Barnes.

**Richard Barnes (Deputy Mayor):** Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr Mayor, Murad Qureshi has raised this issue on fuel poverty a number of times. The question, which we skipped over which he was also posing, regarded air quality and CO2 targets. Now, I understand that there is a conflict in policy in achieving CO2 reduction and reducing fuel poverty charges because it is estimated some 15% of energy charges are so called green taxes. If we wished to impact everybody and list everybody in this capital city, could we recommend that the Government reduces the green tax on fuel? Would Murad then support you?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** These are difficult issues. You certainly want to restrict carbon outputs. I think the better way to restrict carbon outputs is to show people how they can retrofit their homes in order to save money and help the planet at the same time and that is what Renew is all about.

### **3164 / 2011 - Tramlink**

#### **Steve O'Connell**

*What levels of revenue protection and security staff currently operate on the outer areas of the Tramlink beyond central Croydon? Will TfL look to increase its security presence as residents have voiced concerns for their safety on these parts of the network?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** Thank you. A very good question about the Croydon Tramlink which we have added six new trains I think, haven't we? Fantastic and we are looking to extend it thanks to your representations. Many thanks, and I can tell you that crime on the Croydon Tramlink, it is an excellent service I have used a lot recently, is down substantially over the last three years. It is down from 15.1 crimes per million passenger journeys to 13.2 crimes per million passenger journeys; from 411 to 367 crimes all told and I think that is probably thanks to some of the measures we are putting in place to make sure that transport is properly policed in this city.

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. I think that is no small measure to the fact that, thanks to you, we have I think something like 50 extra transport police out on the network. Yes, indeed, crime is going down on our trams and I thank you very much for that. Part of this question stems from approaches from residents who live and use the branch lines out in the new Addingtons etc who do often feel, although they are grateful for the fact that crime is going down, sometimes they do feel somewhat exposed when they are out on the branch lines and there is perhaps an impression that much of the policing and the support is around the central areas, Croydon Hub for example. So what I would ask of you, Mr Mayor, is if you could look at that particular issue.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor):** OK, we will have a look at it. I will get the figures and we will see what we can do. I don't know whether the crime is going up on the new Addingtons.

**Steve O'Connell:** Through you, Chair, leading on from that, and clearly I would welcome indeed an expansion over time with the Safer Transport Teams and that is something that will be very much welcomed by residents for the reasons I have stated, but what worries me, of

course, clearly that if there was any potential cut in revenue income, perhaps say 5%, is how that could possibly affect the safety on our trams and other parts of the network. Would you like to comment on that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are making a very good point, Steve, which is one that I think Kit was also on about. You have got to find this money from somewhere. TfL contributes £100 million to transport policing. That is one of the budgets that we would be told was not core that we had to think about cutting. I do not want to see that. I think it is a great attraction of London that the transport network is safe and many other cities around the world cannot claim that. It is a great thing that you have got a metro system that is the safest in Europe and we should be trumpeting that and preserving it and making it safer.

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** Lastly, on that subject, I was at a public meeting last night in Sutton, and the good people in Sutton are very keen to share in the good story that is the tram, as you are aware, and clearly if we are to extend the tram to Sutton, and indeed, Crystal Palace, that we would want to do. There would indeed be capital borrowing that will need to be funded by revenue income.

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

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** I would worry - and perhaps you would share my concerns - if we cut our revenue, we cut the potential to borrow to extend the tram in areas that we require. Would you not agree with that, Mr Mayor?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Absolutely. Absolutely right, and what you do is you raise the cost of the borrowing as well, so in the long term, you jeopardise your ability to deliver improvements such as the tram that you are talking about.

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** Thank you very much.

## **2870/2011 - London River Park**

**Len Duvall**

*How much has been spent on the London River Park so far?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Oh, yes. Len, I think you have asked whether there is any public funding going into the proposal for a river park and the answer is no.

**Len Duvall (AM):** I think it was associated cost, but no doubt, Mr Mayor, you can supply that later on. Let me just give you two quotes and I will ask you to comment. Lord Stern, the former Chief Economist of the World Bank, says,

*“The likelihood and consequence of financial failure should be considered carefully. It would appear difficult to reconcile the cost of this project with any plausible five-year revenue stream.”*

That is Lord Stern,

*“The financial credibility of the developer to deliver the project is not a matter for the Mayor.”*

That is the Mayoral spokesperson. Who is right and who is wrong?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I have got to be careful what I say. This isn't a project that we are developing. It is not like the cable car, it is not a TfL project. It is something that if you remember the river park idea won the Mayor's Design Award prize - it is a beautiful idea - to make use of the north bank of the river in a way that is currently impossible. Most people cannot have any access at all or very limited access to that stretch of the river. You cannot very easily walk up and down it. The river park would be a substantial or potentially a substantial benefit to London, and everybody liked the design. There is now a decision, a discussion going on obviously between the planning department of the City of London and the proponents of the scheme. In principle I support the scheme, I should make it clear. I think if we could do such a thing it would be an advantage to the City, and that is why I think you need a GLA and you need to have a Mayoralty to push things forward if they are controversial, if they are difficult, if we think that they could be good for the city. There is no financial exposure on our part or on the taxpayers' part and it is very, very important to understand. I think Lord Stern, who is obviously a very distinguished economist, as I understand the position, Lord Stern is in fact a resident of that part of the north bank and has reasons for wishing to make his views known, and that is perfectly reasonable.

**Len Duvall (AM):**

*“We have no real idea who these people are or where their money is coming from. It is not the sort of agreement that the Mayor of London should be entering, but Boris would not be dissuaded.”*

An unnamed GLA official. If it is the case that we are not involved in this project, why are we signed up to a Memorandum of Understanding, and will you make that public?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I say, I support the idea in principle, but a decision has got to be taken by the planning authorities and I have made it absolutely clear that I am not going to put taxpayers' money into the scheme. If it works, if the deal works, if they can develop it in a way that I think is good for London, then that will be a fantastic thing, and I think you have got to be realistic about these things. In tough times - we have discussed already extensively in connection with the cable car - it is our job to leverage in as much private sector investment as we possibly can.

**Len Duvall (AM):** Is it true that you signed the Memorandum of Understanding within four days of meeting these people without any due diligence of their background or their ability to deliver?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I say, it is their project.

**Len Duvall (AM):** No, but you signed it without due diligence.

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

**Len Duvall (AM):** Did you do any due diligence at all because my understanding is that it has been reported that we may get 30% net revenues from this. That sounds like we are entering into a financial agreement. Is that what is likely to happen once planning permission is gained then?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** If the river park were to be constructed, then as it happens, I do not think it would be right for the successful developers simply to make money out of a scheme without any benefits to London. There should be some way in which Londoners benefit from a scheme that I think will be advantageous to whoever were to go ahead and do it. So one of the things that is in the Memorandum is that if there are revenues from the scheme, then they should not go entirely to the private sector, but that good schemes across London could be supported from the revenues from the river park. I think that is entirely reasonable.

**Len Duvall (AM):** So is it true that you signed this agreement without any due diligence?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, that is not true.

**Len Duvall (AM):** So has due diligence been done, and you signed it within due diligence that was done between your meeting of their representatives and the four days that has been quoted both in *The Sunday Times* - that no one, I checked, has gone back to *The Sunday Times* within four days - and the book, the infamous or the famous book, I don't know which, that says within four days of your meeting, you signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a group of businessmen without any due diligence?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There was due diligence. There was due diligence done, but the key point I would make to you is that it is --

**Len Duvall (AM):** Before or after? Before or after?

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

**Len Duvall (AM):** Before?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I just point out to you that it is not strictly speaking relevant because we are not making any financial commitment, and I will not make any financial

commitment to this project. I am not going to invest public money in it, and if the proponents of the river park can get it done, I think that would be a great thing, and if they can get it done at no expense to the taxpayer I think it would be a fine thing.

**Len Duvall (AM):** Will you disclose not the commercial confidentiality, but the board agreements that you have entered into and give sufficient detail around when due diligence was carried out to clarify matters that have been reported both in the press and in publication in the book?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I understand it, the --

**Len Duvall (AM):** It is a yes or no, Chair. It is a yes or no.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I understand it, I am perfectly happy if and when the river park actually comes to fruition to share with you all the details about it.

**Len Duvall (AM):** No, no, no. Chair, Chair.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** OK. I am sorry, but --

**Len Duvall (AM):** Chair, that was not my question.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** No. I am sorry, but the Labour group is out of time.

**Len Duvall (AM):** Right, OK.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Can we now go on to --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not know why you are so incredibly hostile to anybody trying to do anything. It is unbelievable.

## **3173/2011 - Letting Agent Clearing House**

**Victoria Borwick**

*Are you able to use your influence and/or the London Housing Strategy to help residents affected by the changes to benefit levels in accessing letting agents or creating a clearing house system across London to help identify homes within the new thresholds?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, thank you, Victoria, and thank you for all the work that you are doing on this, and all I can say is that it is important that early signals of problems should be relayed to us, and I am grateful for that. We don't have evidence that things are going wrong on a big scale yet for families, but clearly we have got to make sure that councils have the funding they need, and we got that, the £10 million that they need to help to rehouse

people elsewhere and obviously we are working to make sure that we mitigate the impacts of the benefits cap as far as possible across London.

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I think while many of us may actually support these Government plans, I see our role is obviously helping residents find alternatives that meet their budgets. Yes, we have got the transition grant, but in a way, that is also a bit of a delay, it postpones the inevitable. So what I am really asking you to do in using this form is to highlight the fact that estate agents out there do not like dealing with housing benefit clients for all sorts of reasons, so I am asking you really to use your influence and shed some light on this topic by raising it here. It is very difficult for people out there to actually find help. You know, it means at the moment that they have to trek around each and every borough, each and every council of possible places, and actually I think we could be doing better than that to help people who are having the drama and trauma of having to be re-housed. So can we encourage people to look upon this and not just denigrate these people who are on a restricted budget and obviously having difficulty finding a new home?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Absolutely right, yes. That is why I said what I have said some months ago about this issue, and I am very concerned to make sure that we mitigate the impacts for London families, and you are right to raise it.

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

### **3182/2011 - Invest Bromley**

#### **James Cleverly**

*Do you agree that the type of regeneration scheme highlighted at the Invest Bromley conference is exactly the kind of regeneration that should be funded by the Outer London Fund?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, James, for your question. Yes, Invest Bromley, it was a good conference that we did, and I think that this is exactly the sort of thing that should be encouraged through the Outer London Fund. Bromley bid for funds for Bromley town centre, for Orpington and for Penge. They were unsuccessful for Beckenham, for Crystal Palace. That does not mean that there might not be great futures for both those projects down the road.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor. Obviously I was very pleased that you were able to attend the Invest Bromley conference. I would also make the point that you should be expecting - if you have not already received - some exciting proposals sponsored by the London Borough of Bexley as well, and I am very pleased that your commitment to outer London through things like the Outer London Fund and your attendance at this conference goes considerably further than your predecessor did in recognising the importance of economic development. Would you confirm that in your second term, which we have no doubt you will enjoy, that you will redouble your efforts to support the economic development in areas of Bromley, in areas of Bexley and other Outer London areas?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will, absolutely right. That is where London's sustainable economic future lies. Yes, I will, and by the way, since we are talking about the DLR extensions, let us look at what you could do with the DLR to Bromley. You might be able to do that. These are the kinds of things that you should be looking at and of course will be made more difficult, if not impossible under the policies supported - I mean, I think with tongue in cheek, if we are honest - by the party opposite. If, by the way, we followed their approach, you would never get anything done.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Indeed. Thank you, Mr Mayor. Also one of the things which is often identified by the businesses that I speak to in the local Chambers of Commerce, for example, is the availability of super-fast broadband, high-speed broadband capability, so will you also use your bully pulpit position to encourage the internet provider, including the spine providers of broadband capacity, to ensure that the various sub-regional hubs in outer London are properly connected up, so that businesses can operate successfully. Not just things which are typically defined as local businesses, but those premier league high-paid serious businesses can have regional headquarters out and about, freeing up office space in Central London, which will be very important, but also ensuring that serious high-quality employment opportunities are made available to people to walk and cycle from their suburban homes and thus reduce the pressure on outer London traffic and heavy rail traffic.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Absolutely right, James, and it is one of the causes we are taking up with Government to think about outer London for the location of offices. Croydon has got fantastic potential there. I want to see people thinking much more constructively about outer London centres as drivers of economic growth. That is where there is real massive potential now for outer London town centres to be areas of economic activity that will drive London and drive the economy out of recession.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Much obliged, Mr Mayor. Thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is what the Outer London Fund is there to do and I am sure that Bromley will be coming back on Crystal Palace in particular. There are lots of things that we can develop there.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor.

### **3100/2011 - The cost of the Jubilee line upgrade**

**Caroline Pidgeon**

*What will be the final cost of the Jubilee line upgrade?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thanks, Caroline. The final cost of the Jubilee line upgrade is £721 million, which is of course vastly more than was projected with the Public Private Partnership (PPP) started in 2003, thereby graphically I think illustrating the truth

of what Tim O'Toole used to say, that it was a licence to steal by some of those involved in the whole system, the PPP, which I think probably will be commonly agreed around this horseshoe - with the possible exception of John [Biggs], who is a backer of it, from memory. It was, I think, a mistake and it was right of us to unbundle it, and 85% of those costs, if not more, were incurred under the PPP.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** OK. I am going to ask you some specific questions, not about the PPP, and I hope you will be able to give me some precise answers.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I hope you will forgive me, if you have got a lot of very detailed questions that go beyond that question --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Well, let us ask them and see how you get on.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- then why don't I agree to get back to you with the details?

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Well, let us ask them and see how we get on. Does that total cost include the replacement bus services and the lost fares revenue?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will be more than happy, Caroline, to get back to you with detailed breakdowns, if you wanted a detailed breakdown.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Because I have asked questions about it before. I am just asking if it is included.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Then I would be happy. You know, if you want a detailed breakdown, then --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** So you do not know?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- what you can do is ask all the questions you have in a written form or you can detail them, but I can't off the top of my head give you that kind of detail.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** OK, let's move on then. You cannot answer that, OK. What I would really like to know, which I would hope as Chair of TfL you would know, is what about the cost of compensating the Canary Wharf Group every month?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I say, Caroline, if you are asking these questions rhetorically, then that is one thing. If you genuinely want an answer, then you know how to do it, you know how to put the question and I would be more than happy to do.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Mr Mayor, I would have thought TfL would have given you a breakdown of what the £721 million covered in terms of broad figures, and given that London Underground, I understand, is having to pay out millions of pounds every single month

to Canary Wharf Group for the delays for the completion of the Jubilee line upgrade, I would like to know - and I think Londoners would like to know - how much has been paid to date to Canary Wharf Group.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** OK. I mean, Caroline, I am not remotely questioning your right to ask the questions. All I am saying is that procedurally, if you want to get the answer, rather than just to make a point, then the easiest thing to do is to say what you want to ask and we will give you the answer.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** I think it would be quite clear that I would be asking for a breakdown.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am afraid I do have a breakdown here, some breakdown of the costs, but I don't have that particular item here on the sheet in front of me.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** So your costs may not include Canary Wharf Group payments, millions and millions of pounds? It may not include bus services and it may not include the lost fares revenue?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I can't give you that answer now, because I could not tell you whether the particular costs to which you are alluding are comprised within any of these lines that I can see in front of me. I can't give you that kind of breakdown, but I would be more than happy, Caroline, to - if we can - winnow out those details and give them to you.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** I am quite surprised, given you have got some breakdown, that you haven't got the information there, but I will accept that you will put in writing clearly exactly --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Let me give you the breakdown. Would you like me to read out the breakdown?

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** I have asked you about the three - no, don't just read that - I have asked you about three specific things. You can't find them in your list, so I am presuming your list is not complete, but I think Londoners have a right to know about the huge amount of money that has been given to Canary Wharf Group in compensation. You are happy to compensate big business, partly due to legal cases, but up until next March, late March, when you predict there will be 30 trains now on the Jubilee line. Is that correct? Are you aware of those payments, yes or no?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are asking me about the payments to the --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Are you aware of the payments to Canary Wharf Group every month?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Canary Wharf. Well, as I say, the --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Yes or no.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- breakdown I have does not include those payments, Caroline, so --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** You are Chair of TfL. You are not aware of them?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- I cannot give you the quantum.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** No, no, I think we are clear on that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think I have done my best to be fair to her question.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** OK. My final question then is given that you are quite happy to compensate big business, will you commit to compensating the millions of Jubilee line passengers who have suffered over the last decade and what compensation will you be giving them?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As everybody remembers, there were some serious problems with the Transmission Based Train Control system, but also with some unacceptable issues that took place earlier in the year, and when there were these unacceptable delays, full offers of compensation, as I remember, were made.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Will you give proper compensation for the ten years' suffering that Jubilee line passengers have; perhaps a week's travelcard or something?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, Caroline --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Yes, I am proud to be a Lib Dem, Kit. Yes or no? Yes or no?

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** OK. Now --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Yes or no? Simple question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The simple answer is that it doesn't sound to me like a very easy idea to realise, Caroline, but that is --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Will you look into compensating them, yes or no?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- typical of many otherwise fine-sounding Liberal Democrat ideas. I understand where you are coming from. We try to compensate people for when there are particular incidents and particular disruption. We do what we can. I think a general travel card for all users of the Jubilee line over the last ten years is the kind of policy I think it would be hard to draw up a basis for.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Will you look at some form of compensation for Jubilee line passengers, yes or no?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There is some form of compensation. I tell you what, I will respectfully look at your suggestion.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Thank you very much.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I am a little surprised, Mr Mayor, that Caroline Pidgeon and Valerie Shawcross, who have asked some very detailed questions today, did not ask them to you in written form, where they might be able to get detailed answers. Do you share my surprise that they didn't even raise them at the Transport Committee yesterday, which they chaired and deputy chaired, when they had the Commissioner of Transport, Peter Hendy, in front of them? Maybe they thought them up overnight.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No. Look, it is part of the natural hurly-burly of party politics that Val and Caroline are entitled to ask questions where they think they can make a party political point and I understand that and I respect that. The more I think about it, I can't really see how Caroline's idea would work, but I just would remind her that I hope she will be telling people - and I am sure she will, because she is a naturally optimistic type of person, in spite of being a Lib Dem, and a naturally good-natured person - that the Jubilee line is now, in spite of the difficulties that we had, running 27 trains an hour at peak. It is a considerable achievement. I know people are working flat out on that line and we want to get up to 30 trains an hour. It will be the most frequently - just about the most frequently - running service on the network. It is a fantastic new piece of kit that has been put in. It has taken a long time to do, but Londoners will reap the rewards. They will reap the rewards in terms of faster, more comfortable trains, a more efficient service and it really underscores, I think, what has been the theme of this whole morning, that it is vital to keep up levels of investment in transport infrastructure. If you are supporting me on that, Caroline, then I will be much, much obliged to you.

### **3060/2011 - Plastic Bags**

**Darren Johnson**

*Will you press the Government to enact their powers in the Climate Change Act 2008 and introduce a compulsory charge on plastic bags handed out by all retailers?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. Darren, I am grateful to you for your intervention on this. I think you are right that on the issue of plastic bags, actually we are going backwards and I am not satisfied with the way things are at the moment. When I stood for election in 2008, it was the London Council's plan to ban plastic bags. They then ditched it. I think that was a shame. I think it would be a good thing if we could do more on plastic bags and I have asked my people, led by Kulveer [Ranger, Director of Environment and Digital London], to have a look and see what more we can do to make this happen, because the figures I have seen seem to show to me that the usage of plastic bags, having gone down a bit with the introduction of

the permanent bags that people were having, is actually now going up again, and I don't think that is the way forward.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** There is actually reserve legislation in place under the Climate Change Act 2008 which gives the Secretary of State the powers to introduce a levy, so the legislation is already there, it just needs activating. Will you push the Government and lobby the Prime Minister and the relevant Secretary of State to use these powers immediately rather than pursue more dithering?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. I mean, the issue is who would benefit and who would be harmed by such a levy. Murad asked a good question about fuel poverty: who ultimately pays the price for plastic bags. Are you adding another tax that falls disproportionately on lower income people. This is something that needs to be considered. You need to look at all sorts of issues around that.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** Well, it was considered. The Assembly's Environment Committee looked into this in great detail. The Irish Government introduced this, and plastic bag use went down by 90%, so rather than people being hit by a tax, they simply stopped getting the bags.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I see, yes.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** It actually achieved its objective, so I urge you to look at the Environment Committee report, and I urge you to lobby the Government to use their powers now --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Darren, I will.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** -- rather than pursue more dithering on this issue.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will, I will, and as I said to the team earlier on, I do think there is more that we could do. Obviously we don't have the powers here in London, here in the GLA, unilaterally to impose a tax or a ban or anything of that kind, but we can certainly look at how it will work and we can lobby for it, and that is what I think we should be doing.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** Thank you.

### **3183/2011 - Proms Disruption**

#### **Brian Coleman**

*Will the Mayor condemn the disgraceful interruption of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra Prom on 1 September by anti-Israel protestors? And will he write to the Orchestra to express his sorrow at the disrespect with which they were received in London, and convey to them that they are welcome to return to London at any time?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, thank you, Brian. I mean, this is about the Proms disruption and my general answer here is that it is disgraceful for any cultural event in London, any orchestra, to be interrupted and for innocent artistic performance to be the subject of abuse, and I strongly deprecate it.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** Mr Mayor, will you accept that many of my constituents were upset that the visit of such a distinguished artist as Zubin Mehta, who has been in the forefront of calls for just Middle East settlement, were disrupted in such a manner by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign<sup>1</sup>, an organisation which sadly day by day across London is picketing shops that sell Israeli goods and is leading campaigns against British companies that happen to have business interests in Israel, as well as pursuing those politicians who speak out in favour of Israeli causes? Are you aware, Mr Mayor, that the patrons of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign include of course Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn, Bob Crow and of course Baroness Tonge, and that believe it not, a number of trade unions affiliate, including the Fire Brigades Union - who are often discussing Palestine more than they do terms and conditions at their conference - and of course the RMT? Will you confirm your support for the State of Israel for legitimate business contacts and artistic and cultural contacts with Israel?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Brian, what I would say I think one of the things I don't want to do as Mayor, I don't think it is the function of the Mayoralty to get dragged into geopolitical questions that are not within my power to solve. What I can say is that I strongly deprecate and condemn people who seek to abuse the right of performers, musicians to come to the greatest cultural capital on earth to play. I think it is utterly disgraceful and I am appalled by that disruption.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** Can I make clear I am not asking you to intervene in world affairs. I am asking you to deal with activities that are happening on the streets of London, the streets of my constituency on a weekly basis.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, and I do, and I pay tribute to the work that you do for your constituents and to the Community Safety Trust and everybody who works in that interest, and I think it is absolutely right that they should do so. I think the strong point I want to make is it is a city that supports cultural activities of all kinds, people have a right to come and perform here and they have a right to come and perform here without having politics dragged into it and becoming the subject of abuse that they do not deserve.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** So you would welcome future performances in this City by the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I welcome performances by all orchestras from around the world in London.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Mr Mayor, will you review the police decision not to prosecute those who bought a ticket for the event for the concert on the understanding that they were going to a

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequent to the meeting, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign clarified that it was not responsible for the concert disruption but had in fact organised a protest outside the venue and had proposed a boycott of the performance.

concert and then proceeded to ruin that concert for everybody else who had paid for a ticket? I am not in any way getting in the way of people's rights to demonstrate, of course I am not, and I understand there were demonstrations outside that concert, and I am not saying anything about those at all. I am saying when somebody deliberately buys a ticket in order to disrupt that event that that, as far as I am concerned, is a crime and the police should have prosecuted in this event, and it ruined that event for all the others. Lest anybody else talk about free speech, there is also the freedom of expression for artists to express themselves through the medium of music, and that was the freedom of expression which these demonstrators trampled on.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I understand that, and obviously I think it is disgraceful, as I have said, that this performance was interrupted. In an ideal world, anybody who abuses an orchestra, stops the enjoyment of a performance in my view should be subject to prosecution. As I understand the matter, just looking at it - and obviously this is an operational matter for the police, apart from anything else - the Royal Albert Hall were aware - this is what I am told - that police resources were available, but they didn't actually request the police to come in and support them in ejecting or arresting these characters. You might want to take it up with them. It seems to me that if people are going to disrupt a performance and they are going to abuse an orchestra and the police are on hand, then maybe the organisers of the concert, the people putting on the concert, might think it fitting to call them in.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** I shall avail myself of your invitation, Mr Mayor, but I somehow feel they will listen more if you take it up with them rather than me.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. I have sat long enough in this chair to know that it is not our function, it is not my function to give operational instructions to the police from this seat.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** No, I agree with that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think they will have heard, and members of the MPA who also sit here, will have heard what you have said, Andrew, and the points that you raise, Brian, and I am sure that the MPA will be thinking about it.

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

## **3194/2011 - Forest Road Bridge**

### **Roger Evans**

*Following yet another collision involving an over height lorry at the Central line bridge at Fairlop, what does London Underground plan to do to reduce the frequency of such incidents and safeguard pedestrians, drivers and Central line passengers in future?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Roger. This is about Forest Road Bridge, and people keep crashing into it, even though it is very, very clearly painted, as I understand it, with black and yellow hazard stripes and it is absolutely clear to - you would have thought - the meanest intelligence that it is not a thing to drive in with a vehicle over 14 feet in height. We are doing our best to assess, in consultation with the London Borough of Redbridge, to what we can do to give better early warning to drivers, perhaps by raising their IQ by some measure that we have yet to discover.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I think, Mr Mayor, the problem is that a lot of them are drivers from abroad who are using sat nav systems which are more suitable for ordinary motor vehicles --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is very interesting, right.

**Roger Evans (AM):** -- light vehicles, and they come out of industrial premises and the sat nav says, "Turn right along the road" and they go off and they get themselves stuck on to the bridge, and there is a history of this happening. Would it not be better perhaps for TfL to work with Redbridge perhaps just to restrict the road to lorries in the first place so that they cannot get down there at all?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will look at that and I will ask TfL to look at that. I think, as I understand it, they are doing their very best to communicate the height of this bridge to drivers. If there is something we can do with the sat navs of drivers coming from the Continent, then maybe we should look at that too, but it is a very interesting point you raise.

## **3186/2011 - Cost of free fares for warranted police officers**

**Tony Arbour**

*What is the annual cost of 'free' fares for warranted officers of the MPS for this financial year and next financial year?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Tony. The answer is that the cost is hard to compute. It is a marginal cost or a very small cost to the MPA or to the Metropolitan Police Service. That is for officers travelling free on TfL services, but I think that what you are driving at is your idea of officers travelling in uniform, which I think is the thing you raised last time, and that is certainly an interesting idea, which is something that we are looking at, but it might be technically difficult to deliver.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Mr Mayor, it isn't a trivial sum because of course we pay fares on the Overground for officers who live for 50 miles outside Greater London, and the last estimate I have for that was in 2008, and the figure was £24 million. I don't think that that is an insignificant --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Sorry, that is on TfL, I gave a figure for TfL services, yes.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Yes, indeed, but my question was what is the total --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. No, that is absolutely right.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** OK. I make no apology for reintroducing this matter, Mr Mayor, because last time I think that the answers that you gave as to why officers should not wear a uniform going to work were pretty pettifogging. They were not dissimilar to the answers which we were given by the Metropolitan Police Service when it was proposed. One of your most successful measures during your administration that was proposed in relation to police was having single patrolling, the kind of answers that you gave last time, "Difficulty with lockers, difficulties with logistics" and so on were precisely the sort of things which the Metropolitan Police Service said when you wanted to reintroduce single patrolling, not dissimilar to the answers that we have been given before. Given that that was one of the most successful things, given that at the party conference --

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

**Tony Arbour (AM):** -- this year one of the things that you lauded, one of the triumphs which you lauded and received massive applause, was the reduction in crime on London transport because of the introduction of uniformed TfL Police Community Support Officers (PSCOs). Do you not think that this should be given really rather more impetus than you simply saying that you will look at it? This is your opportunity to do something which is really popular and which, on the face of it, does give police officers a choice. They don't have to take advantage of the free fares. I am only suggesting that it is those officers who take advantage of the free fares who should be wearing uniforms.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I see your point. I see your point. As I say, I did take it up and I must say, all sorts of objections were raised of one kind or another. It may still be that that is something that Bernard Hogan-Howe and I will want to look at more closely. What I can say to you today, Tony, is that I will undertake to have further conversations with Kit, who is looking enthusiastic. Tony, Kit says he already talked to you at length about it. You know, it is a creative suggestion. There are problems and you do not need to be a genius to work out what they are. Maybe you are right, Tony, and they are surmountable problems, maybe we can do it. Let us not give up. We are going to thrash it out. You know, the Police Federation will have issues, there will be questions that will be raised, but let's see if we can put it on the agenda and come back to you.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** That sounds very long grass to me, and I have got a long experience of long grass answers. Can I have a timetable on this? I am happy to accept your assurances. I know that you want to do the right thing and I know that you will do the right thing.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You want a timetable?

**Tony Arbour (AM):** I want to know when you are going to do the right thing.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I always do the right thing in due course.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** All right. Well, let me --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Kit, give the guy a timetable.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** We could give him a position within a week.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We will give you a detailed answer one way or the other within a week, and if you are dissatisfied with whatever we come up with within a week --

**Tony Arbour (AM):** You can be sure I will come back.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- then I have a terrible feeling that you will come back.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** I will, I will. OK, thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** All right.

### **3208/2011 - *Guardian* journalist arrest under Official Secrets Act**

**Andrew Boff**

*Would the Mayor tell us in what circumstances the Metropolitan Police Service should charge an individual with breaking the Official Secrets Act, and can he tell me on what basis the Metropolitan Police Service attempted to charge Guardian journalist, Amelia Hill, with such a contravention in relation to information she received concerning the hacking of Milly Dowler's mobile phone by the News of the World?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. I mean, I characteristically bring the question, I am told that the journalist in question has not been charged with offences under the Official Secrets Act or any other legislation. I have got to be very careful what I say about these things, and if I start freewheeling or extemporising, it all goes wrong, but my understanding is that they are carrying out an investigation into wrongdoing by a particular officer and they needed to establish whether or not this journalist knew anything about it. My information is it was unclear whether the Official Secrets Act or any other had been broken.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Are you saying, Mr Mayor, that the Official Secrets Act was not used as a motive for further investigation and considered in this particular case?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, that seemed to be the gist of what I am being briefed, that the journalist was not charged under the Official Secrets Act, nor did the police attempt to charge her with any offences and she was never arrested as part of the inquiry, I am told.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** That makes this question completely futile, if that is the case, which I am happy to see, but could you perhaps acquaint the Assembly in writing at what level the Official Secrets Act has been cited within the Metropolitan Police, because the accusation that I have heard or the police have since said is that this was taken by a relatively junior officer. Should we be having the use of the Official Secrets Act at that junior level, because it is rather tempting, because it gives you a bit more power than you would have otherwise.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** OK, I might be able to clarify this by saying that it is perfectly right, in my view, they should be investigating bad behaviour by a particular officer. It says here,

*“At the time when the MPS made an application for a production order, it was unclear what, if any, offence had been committed and breaking of the Official Secrets Act was one of these possible offences.”*

After further consideration and legal advice, the reference to the Official Secrets Act was withdrawn, so presumably the reference to the Official Secrets Act was contained within something called a production order. It doesn't seem to me that the person in question therefore was arrested under the Official Secrets Act, but there was a reference to that Act under the production order. In the production order, that reference was withdrawn following legal advice.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** I am grateful for that clarification, but you will understand why there is public concern about the possible uses of the Official Secrets Act in cases like this.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do, and if I can give you any more detail about the use of the Official Secrets Act in this case, and if officers feel that there is more that you need to know about this, then of course we will make sure you have it.

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

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Within a reasonable delay.

### **3138/2011 - GLA Precept**

**Mike Tuffrey**

*Are you planning to cut the GLA's Council Tax precept for 2012/13?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Mike, the answer is - it is your annual - you always ask this question.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** It is the annual Tuffrey question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The annual question.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** What is the annual Boris answer?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The annual question, and what a shame it is, by the way - can I just repeat that?

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** No, no, let's get on and answer the question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** What a shame it is that you won't be joining us at the hustings to put this question to me, but there you go.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** So go on and not answer the question if you are not going to answer the question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The answer is I never give you the answer to this question because I reserve that decision until later on.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** You are still cogitating, but do you agree that you could cut the precept if you wanted to, because you are sitting on £50 million or more on LFEPA reserves? Councillor Coleman has gone. In TfL, we are still shelling out £30 million for friends of staff to travel free at other fare-payers' expense. In the Metropolitan Police Service, we are still featherbedding the senior officers with their chaffeurs and their limousines and there is still lots more to get costs out of the Metropolitan Police Service. There is plenty of scope, isn't there, to bear down on council tax and deliver Londoners a cut, a real cut?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am grateful to you, Mike, for allowing me to repeat that over the last three years, we have frozen the council tax every year.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Yes, thanks to Government grant and thanks to Government freezing.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We have therefore effectively cut it by 10% in real terms. We have cut the council tax by 10% in real terms.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** How about an actual headline cut in time for the election?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thanks to our thriftiness and our sound --

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Isn't that what you are planning?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- management of public finances, the Department for Communities and Local Government has rewarded London with a £90 million windfall --

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Subsidy.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- grant which we will use to good effect.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Isn't the truth that you are planning to cut the headline rate?

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** OK.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Which we will use to good effect, but what I can certainly say is we will deliver value for money and we will bear down on council tax.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** I am going to take that as a yes, you are planning a cut.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** OK.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am not going to give you my plans now, though I am sure that had we had the joy of doing about 98 hustings together, we would have been able to --

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** With Jenny [Jones]?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** With Jenny.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Drafty churches all across London.

### **3192/2011 - A12 Footbridge**

#### **Roger Evans**

*Can the Mayor please provide an update on progress on the replacement road crossing at the junction of the A12 and Mawney Road? Why has the new road crossing been closed and will TfL now reconsider their decision not to replace the footbridge which served this location well for many years?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Roger, it is a very good question. I am told that it is a pedestrian crossing on the A12 junction. People were doing u-turns, as you know, and we are looking at measures to fix that problem and I am told that it will be solved by next month.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Chairman, I am relieved to get the opportunity to ask this question, which has survived a number of attempts to drop it down the list this morning - possibly because I was going to use the opportunity to say what an absolute TfL fiasco this has been - to ask you, Mr Mayor, to find out why it is that they actually put a crossing in place and spent two years doing it, without realising that u-turns were taking place at that location in the first place.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I congratulate you, Roger, on the diligence in representing your constituency. We will look at it. I will make sure that we fix it as far as we possibly can and clearly if there were problems that TfL ought to have been aware of in advance about doing u-turns, then I regret that, but I am told that we are going to fix it by next month.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I have to say, Mr Mayor, this is urgent. The problem has been around for a number of years now and it has even come to the attention of former Labour councillors at Havering who are making a fuss about it now, so under those circumstances it is definitely something that needs sorting out.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Roger, for bringing it up. It is a serious point and we will do what we can to sort it out as fast as possible.

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

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Thank you for your attendance here this morning, Mr Mayor.