

Team London Bridge

Business Improvement District Company

Response to the London Assembly Environment Committee investigation: Facing the challenge of severe weather and climate change



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This report constitutes the formal response of the [Team London Bridge](#) (Business Improvement District) to the London Assembly investigation 'Facing the challenge of severe weather and climate change..

Team London Bridge

Team London Bridge Business Improvement District (BID) represents over 300 businesses in the London Bridge area stretching south of the Thames River from London Bridge to Tower Bridge. These businesses range from large blue-chip organisations such as Ernst & Young, PWC and Norton Rose through a diverse community of small and medium sized enterprises. The executive team reports to the BID Board made up of business representatives. Our comments are within the context of the work we carry out as a BID, ensuring agreed business objectives for the BID area are met and the business investment (£850,000+ capital per annum) through the BID levy is well spent.

In November 2010 Team London Bridge secured an extended term of five years from 2011 – 2016 following a successful business ballot. 78% support by number and 88% support by rateable value. As part of our renewal campaign the following strategic objectives were agreed for the area:

- a first class transport interchange
- a world class pedestrian-focused public realm
- restoration of the historic railway arches
- an increased and varied retail offer

Quite obviously facing the challenge of severe weather and climate change within London requires a strategic approach from the government, GLA and public bodies at legislative, infrastructural, fiscal and monetary levels. All such responses play out at the local level and it is at this neighbourhood level that BIDs have a great deal of knowledge and expertise. The comments that follow therefore concentrate on the 'public-realm' and how the London Assembly and GLA can work with local communities and within local areas to help contribute to adapting to and mitigating climate change challenges in London.

Each of the following recommendations are evidenced in more detail in the main body of the report.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The London Assembly should recognise the value of Green Infrastructure audits and action plans as galvanising support locally for GI projects and aiding their financing and delivery.

Recommendation 2: The London Assembly should recognise that small public realm projects are readily embraced by local communities because they tackle climate change & improve the quality of life locally.

Recommendation 3: The London Assembly should recognise the opportunity presented by partnering with the London BID community so as to both help tackle climate change and improve local areas.

Recommendation 4: The London Assembly should recognise the importance of the Cross River Partnership Greening the BIDs partnership as a forum for spreading best practice and helping finance and deliver innovative climate change adaption projects.

Recommendation 5: The London Assembly should work with the GLA and Cross River Partnership to develop a Drain London 3 funding programme.

Recommendation 6: The London Assembly should work with the GLA to investigate to opportunities afforded by the EU LIFE programme to invest in a greener future for London.

Recommendation 7: The London Assembly should work with TFL to ensure that their Roads Task Force focused investment strategy contributes significantly to helping tackle climate change challenges.

Recommendation 8: The London Assembly work with Team London Bridge, TFL & local partners to realise the sustainable & place oriented objectives outlined in the 'London Bridge Future Streets' report.

Recommendation 9: The London Assembly and the GLA should work with Team London Bridge to deliver a London Bridge Plan that helps future proof the area against climate change challenges.

Green Infrastructure (GI) audits

The Mayor has stated in the London Plan his ambition to increase green cover in central London by 5% by 2030 and 10% by 2050. This is in keeping with the [All London Green Grid](#) and Mayor's green infrastructure strategy.

In 2012 Team London Bridge worked with the Ecology Consultancy and Green Rood Consultancy to publish the [London Bridge Green Infrastructure Audit](#). The report was part funded and coordinated by the [Greening the BIDs partnership](#) of Cross River Partnership and the GLA Urban Greening & Biodiversity team. The report presents a clear picture of existing green cover and identifies specific sites and interventions that can help increase both the quantity and quality of GI within the wider neighbourhood which would deliver multiple benefits, including flood alleviation, climate adaptation, public realm improvements, visual enhancement, biodiversity, food production and community cohesion.

Key opportunities identified in London Bridge audit include:

- The potential to green 3.7ha of flat roof space which is 7% of the BID's total land area.
- 49 sites were identified as being able to accommodate a rain garden.
- Over 33 sites were identified as being able to accommodate green wall treatments.

Team London Bridge developed the rather technical finding within the report into a '12 Point GI Plan' for London Bridge. The objective of this document is threefold. Firstly, to present GI in layman's language to local businesses, developers, landlords, planners, residents and decision makers. Secondly, to generate debate locally such that GI becomes part of the regeneration remit and conversation. Thirdly, to translate the report findings into actual projects on the ground. This approach has been very successful to date both helping finance and deliver GI projects and in terms of getting decision makers to realise the popularity, feasibility and efficacy of GI projects.

Recommendation 1: The London Assembly should recognise the value of Green Infrastructure audits and action plans as galvanising support locally for GI projects and aiding their financing and delivery.

Public realm projects

'A world class pedestrian focused public realm' continues to be a core objective for the business community in London Bridge. To this end TLB commits circa 50% of our annual funds to public realm projects. Highlights include:

- planting approximately 80 mature trees
- [Melior Street community garden](#)
- [Gibbon's Rent secret garden](#)
- [Estates in Bloom](#) programme to green two large housing estates
- placing circa 80 hanging basket and 80 planters
- a world first [vertical rain garden](#) on Tooley Street
- 75 bird, bat and bug hotels across the area
- [Dinner from Our Back Garden](#)
- [Greenwood Theatre pocket park](#)

These projects are examples of how low key, relatively low cost, neighbourly and micro GI projects can help transform local areas. These projects have been embraced by local businesses and residents because they make London Bridge a more convivial, safer, more bio-diverse and distinctive neighbourhood. They all also contribute to adapting to and mitigating climate change in a way that improves people's quality of life in the locale in which they live and work.

This aspect of the climate change debate is often missing. The consequence of this is that people and businesses perceive climate change solutions as outside of their understanding and their ability to make significant positive interventions. It also sidelines that fact that GI interventions improve both the quality of the environment and the quality of life locally and are therefore both easily understood and embraced locally.

The [Landscape Institute's](#) 2013 research report [Public Health & Landscape](#) positively correlates investment in landscape and GI with improved with health and well being and therefore as being key in tackling climate change in the years ahead.

Recommendation 2: The London Assembly should recognise that small public realm projects are readily embraced by local communities because they tackle climate change & improve the quality of life locally.

London's Business Improvements Districts

There are currently thirty seven Business Improvement District (BID) companies in London. The Mayor of London has publically stated his support for BIDs and his wish to see 50 across greater London by 2016.

The focus on a world class, green and friendly public realm is shared across the London BID community. Variations on the green projects delivered by Team London Bridge are being taken forward and financed by London BIDs on an ongoing and increasingly confident and ambitious basis. Stand out projects include the Better Bankside [Urban Forest framework](#), the Vauxhall One [Missing Link strategy](#) and the [Rubens Hotel green wall project](#) in the Victoria BID area.

The cumulative impact of these green BID investments and their often ground breaking nature are making real the Major's greening ambitions for central London These projects are also beginning to positively change the look and feel of central London.

Locally, we are particularly excited about our [TFL Innovation Fund](#) bid, in partnership with King's College London and Vauxhall One BID for a series of '[Fresh Air Squares](#)' across London Bridge. These are modular parklets that combine place making, pocket parks, air quality monitoring and mitigation and sustainable urban drainage features in one package. Moving forward we would welcome the opportunity to work with London BIDs through the Greening the BIDS forum to spread our prototype 'parklets' across central London. Such funding streams perfectly compliment the entrepreneurial and innovative thinking within the BID community and are very much welcomed.

Recommendation 3: The London Assembly should recognise the opportunity presented by partnering with the London BID community so as to both help tackle climate change and improve local areas.

Greening the BIDs

The [Greening the BIDs](#) partnership and forum brings together [Cross River Partnership](#) (CRP) and the [GLA Urban Greening & Biodiversity](#) team with the majority of the BIDs in central London. It was this partnership that coordinated and funded the aforementioned GI projects. The partnership also coordinated [Drain London](#) funding projects which helps to predict and manage surface water flood risk in London. In London Bridge this funding allowed for the delivery of a world first [vertical rain garden](#) (with Tree Box, the Ecology Consultancy and the Green Roof Consultancy) two rain garden planters on a hard landscaped housing estates and a more tradition rain garden within that estate.

We would like to reiterate Team London Bridge's commitment to working with CRP, the GLA and our BID colleagues across London through the Greening the BIDs partnership. BIDs are exceptionally well placed to trial GI and climate change projects and the partnership offers an excellent vehicle to take such projects forward, to fund these projects, to share best practice and celebrate that best practice.

The [LIFE programme](#) is the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action. The general objective of LIFE is to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of EU environmental and climate policy and legislation by co-financing projects with European added value. While the administrative requirements of this programme are too onerous for BIDs or CRP this is most certainly a funding programme that the London Assembly and GLA should give serious consideration to bidding for. Thereafter the Greening the BIDs partnership would be well placed to help deliver climate change projects on the ground in London.

Recommendation 4: The London Assembly should recognise the importance of the Cross River Partnership Greening the BIDs partnership as a forum for spreading best practice and helping finance and deliver innovative climate change adaption projects.

Recommendation 5: The London Assembly should work with the GLA and Cross River Partnership to develop a Drain London 3 funding programme.

Recommendation 6: The London Assembly should work with the GLA to investigate to opportunities afforded by the EU LIFE programme to invest in a greener future for London.

TFL Roads Task Force Report

The Transport for London [Roads Task Force](#) (RTF) report in July 2013 noted "at least £30bn [investment programme in London's streets and roads] is needed over the next 20 years" to bring the capital's road network into the 21st century. This level of investment represents an amazing opportunity for Transport for London to help contribute to London facing the challenges of severe weather and climate change.

In December 2013 Team London Bridge submitted our '[London Bridge Future Streets](#)' response to the RTF and TFL. We wholeheartedly welcomed the report's focus on the need to make London streets more place and people focused. Unfortunately the RTF made little other than a cursory note of the challenges facing the city due to climate change. Given the levels of investment under consideration this is a real missed opportunity and should be revisited by TFL, the GLA and the London Assembly.

In London Bridge we are particularly concerned about a sustainable future for Tooley Street, St. Thomas Street, Borough High Street and Tower Bridge Road all of which are TFL red routes. Our London Bridge Future Streets report has been formally supported by the majority of the landlord, business and resident groups in the area. The report cogently argues that without significant investment and imagination St. Thomas Street, Tooley Street, Borough High Street, Tower Bridge Road and Bermondsey Street will not realise their potential as exemplars of network management and sustainable urban design. Further to this all local stakeholders agree that given the completion of the London Bridge Station in 2018 there is an urgent need for TFL to work with the noted partners to investigate delivery of our shared objectives.

Recommendation 7: The London Assembly should work with TFL to ensure that their Roads Task Force focused investment strategy contributes significantly to helping tackle climate change challenges.

Recommendation 8: The London Assembly work with Team London Bridge, TFL & local partners to realise the sustainable & place oriented objectives outlined in the 'London Bridge Future Streets' report.

Planning

Much of this response has focused on place specific public realm investment opportunities that would make a positive impact on climate change at the local level. At the strategic level the London Assembly need to realise the potential and challenges of taking forward climate change solutions through the planning system.

Team London Bridge are currently working with Southwark Council to help write a [London Bridge Plan](#) with the aim that this becomes part of the New Southwark Plan due for publication in 2016. Team London Bridge has brought together a genuine partnership of public, private, business, developer and resident communities to inform this plan. We would welcome input from the London Assembly and the GLA into this plan process so as to ensure that climate change challenges are acknowledged, evidenced and built into the final plan report.

Recommendation 9: The London Assembly and the GLA should work with Team London Bridge to deliver a London Bridge Plan that helps future proof the area against climate change challenges.

Research material

Document	Author	Date published
London Bridge GI Audit & Report	Team London Bridge	April 2012
Better Bankside GI Audit & Report	Better Bankside	April 2012
Green Infrastructure	Landscape Institute	March 2013
Public Health and Landscape	Landscape Institute	November 2013
Roads Task Force report	Transport for London	July 2013
London Bridge Future Streets	Team London Bridge	December 2013
Fresh Air Squares – TFL Incubator Fund Application	Team London Bridge	July 2014
Green Infrastructure reports	Natural England	Ongoing
www.inlondonbridge.co.uk	Team London Bridge	July – December 2014

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