

## **Access Denied?**

Parking in Central London for people with mobility problems  
July 2002

Transport

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**Greater London Authority  
July 2002**

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## Foreword



Following our move to City Hall, London's new centre of Government, the Assembly has restructured its approach to scrutiny.

In addition to major pieces of work, such as scrutinies of road or airport policy, the Transport Committee now has the flexibility to respond quickly to Londoners' concerns by holding single-issue meetings which bring together government and community organisations. Essentially, these

meetings are intended to bring attention to certain transport issues and to encourage real action.

This, the first of the Committee's 'mini-scrutinies', addresses the difficulties motorists with mobility problems experience trying to find suitable parking in Central London. It examines the exclusion of many Londoners from the services and pleasures of Central London because their disability requires them to use a car and complex regulations make it difficult (at times impossible) to find parking. While this may seem an exotic problem to able-bodied Londoners, it means that for a significant minority, who already experience problems with access, London is even less open for business, and pleasure. It also challenges the value of good words about equality of opportunity.

This report is intended to draw greater attention to this problem and to initiate further action. It highlights that there are no easy solutions but, on a more optimistic note, also identifies considerable agreement on the way forward. We welcome the Central London boroughs' apparent willingness to create a simpler scheme and to review provision. We await progress with the Government review of the Blue Badge scheme and the Mayor's review of disabled parking provision in London, to which this report makes a contribution.

I hope this report demonstrates the value of our new approach. As we make clear, our role does not end with the publication of this report. We will continue to monitor progress in this area and will hold the authorities responsible to account for their actions (or lack of them).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Biggs".

**John Biggs**  
**Chair of the Transport Committee**

## Membership of the Transport Committee

John Biggs	- Chair (Labour)
Lynne Featherstone	- Deputy Chair (Liberal Democrat)
Tony Arbour	- Conservative
Roger Evans	- Conservative
Nicky Gavron	- Labour
Sally Hamwee	- Liberal Democrat
Samantha Heath	- Labour
Jenny Jones	- Green
Eric Ollerenshaw	- Conservative

The Transport Committee's general terms of reference are to examine and report on transport matters of importance to Greater London and the transport strategies, policies and actions of the Mayor, Transport for London, and the other Functional Bodies where appropriate. In particular, the Transport Committee is also required to examine and report to the Assembly from time to time on the Mayor's Transport Strategy, in particular its implementation and revision.

The specific terms of reference for its scrutiny into parking in Central London for people with mobility problems are outlined in Appendix B.

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## Executive Summary

London's services and its cultural, health, leisure and retail facilities should be accessible to everyone. Better public transport is one important means of improving access. However, for those with serious mobility problems, the private car remains an essential – sometimes the only – way of getting around.

People with mobility problems rely on parking concessions offered through the disabled persons' parking badge (Blue Badge) scheme which allows holders to park on yellow lines and to park free of charge and for extended periods in on-street parking bays.

These concessions do not apply within Central London. Instead, Blue Badge holders must either locate the few designated disabled parking bays (often taken by non-Blue Badge holders) or compete with everyone else for parking spaces. Since the Central boroughs and Transport for London Road Network operate their own disabled parking schemes, motorists with mobility problems face the added hassle of five different sets of parking regulations.

We heard that a visit to the West End or City for London's 215,000 Blue Badge holders can be frustrating, confusing and often result in parking fines. As a result, many effectively feel excluded from the heart of their own city.

Central London councils are reluctant to apply the full range of Blue Badge concessions given the existing pressures on parking and congestion in their areas. Most boroughs felt that the Mayor's Congestion Charging Scheme would not dramatically improve accessibility for people with mobility problems. However, they did concede that more could be done and we found a surprising degree of consensus amongst boroughs and disability organisations about the ways in which the situation could be improved.

This report recommends that the Mayor start by reviewing the need for the current Central London exemption from the Blue Badge Scheme. If it is to remain in place, we recommend significant improvements in:

- the guidance given to the boroughs about parking accessibility;
- the enforcement of existing disabled bays (including additional powers and training for parking officers);
- the amount of information provided about concessions in Central London (including TfL producing an updated map of disabled bays in Central London); and
- the level of consistency between the parking schemes within each Central borough.

Many of these improvements will require the Mayor to work cooperatively with the boroughs, the Government, disability organisations, Transport for London and the Association of London Government. We also recommend that the Mayor demonstrate leadership in other areas by promoting schemes which improve access to off-street disabled parking (for example, at supermarkets).

Our recommendations should be seen in the context of the national review of the Blue Badge Scheme and inform the Mayor's promised review of disabled parking schemes in Central London. We warn that disability organisations want to see improvements quickly. This report asks Transport for London to report back to the Committee on what progress has been made by October 2002 and commits the Committee to formally reviewing progress on this issue in 12 months.





# 1 Introduction: An accessible city?

- 1.1 The Mayor of London has promised to make London an 'accessible city'<sup>1</sup>, largely through reducing car usage and promoting greater public transport provision. But for people with mobility difficulties, who are unable to negotiate stairs and escalators or board crowded buses, travel by private car is often their only option for getting from A to B.
- 1.2 In London there are 215,000 members of the national Blue Badge (formerly Orange Badge) scheme, which provides special parking concessions, such as permission to park on yellow lines, and the right to park free of charge and for extended periods in metered spaces. The scheme's concessions do not apply in the Central London boroughs (City of London, City of Westminster, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and part of Camden). These four boroughs each operate their own individual schemes, which are much more limited than the national Blue Badge Scheme.
- 1.3 As a result, more than 200,000 Londoners struggle to access the attractions, facilities and services in Central London which many take for granted. Furthermore, a motorist with mobility problems who drives into the centre of London will find themselves dealing with up to five different sets of regulations governing parking, without any readily accessible or clear information as to which rules apply on which street. Effectively, most drivers with mobility problems feel that Central London is closed to them.
- 1.4 The Mayor, in his Transport Strategy, acknowledged that the significant problems encountered by people with mobility problems needed to be sorted out. He promised that a review of the current situation would be carried out by the end of 2002.
- 1.5 In advance of that review, the Transport Committee invited representatives from the boroughs, and from non-governmental organisations, to a meeting on 18 June 2002 to discuss the problem and investigate what needs to be done to improve the situation.
- 1.6 This meeting's focus was narrower than the Government's current review of the Blue Badge Scheme nationally.<sup>2</sup> We concentrated on the specific plight of Blue Badge holders visiting Central London.
- 1.7 The following chapters outline the problems created by Central London's exclusion from the Blue Badge Scheme and our recommendations on how to improve it. We also discuss the likely effect of the Mayor's Congestion Charging Scheme on the availability of parking in Central London and briefly examine

<sup>1</sup> See for example *Mayor's Annual Report 2002*, p.20.

<sup>2</sup> The Department for Transport has commissioned a national review of the Blue Badge Scheme, examining eligibility, the role and function of local authorities, concessions and enforcement issues. The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee has been asked to co-ordinate responses to the review and is expected to submit a report to Secretary of State for Transport in Autumn 2002.

ways in which the Mayor can improve access to parking in off-street locations (for example, at supermarkets).

- 1.8 Some of the issues considered in this report are relevant only to Central London – for example, the impact of the congestion charging scheme or the need for consistency within Central London parking schemes. On the other hand, while congestion and lack of adequate parking are particularly acute in Central London, we heard that these problem are by no means unique.
- 1.9 Consequently, many of the recommendations contained in this report will help to strengthen the Blue Badge Scheme and improve access for people with mobility problems both in London and nationally.

## 2 Identifying the barriers

- 2.1 The private car remains a crucial means of transport for London's Blue Badge holders. Despite improvements, public transport is often overcrowded and difficult to access, taxis are expensive and hard to obtain and Dial-A-Ride schemes limited. We heard that many people with mobility problems must rely on their car to get around London; some, especially those with customised forms of transport, may have no other option.
- 2.2 Written and oral evidence to the Committee highlighted dissatisfaction with Central London's exemption from the Blue Badge Scheme. One disability organisation claimed that 'these [Central London] restrictions...amount to a form of apartheid on disabled people'<sup>3</sup>; another noted that extensive correspondence from badge-holders revealed parking in Central London to be a 'complete nightmare'.<sup>4</sup>
- 2.3 In Central London, Blue Badge holders are not generally allowed to park on yellow lines. Removing this concession means that Blue Badge holders must compete for available parking with other drivers or rely on finding dedicated disabled parking bays. Often, these disabled bays are taken up with motorists parked illegally, trucks unloading or other obstructions. As previous reviews of the Blue Badge Scheme have identified, and our investigation confirmed, too few abuses of disabled bays result in fines.
- 2.4 Disability organisations pointed out to the Committee that access is further restricted by an insufficient number of disabled parking bays, particularly near Central London hospitals.<sup>5</sup> For example, a count of disabled parking for University College Hospital in Camden<sup>6</sup> identified only eight disabled bays near the hospital, three of which were restricted to disabled Camden residents. Within Central London, the figures provided to the Committee indicate that there are fewer than 900 designated disabled bays in Central London for the city's 215,000 Blue Badge holders – approximately one disabled parking bay for every 240 London Blue Badge holders.
- 2.5 As a result, Blue Badge holders 'have to take a chance on coming to Central London and may not be able to park'.<sup>7</sup> We were told that where parking is available, it may be some distance from the intended destination which can be inconvenient and unpleasant, particularly in wet weather. Since much of the disabled parking in Central London is also time-restricted, parking further away from the destination means that badge-holders have less time to complete their task and a greater risk of incurring a parking fine.
- 2.6 The experience of one witness, whose daughter suffers from cerebral palsy, illustrates some of the typical concerns of Blue Badge holders. He told us that spaces were limited in Central London and that confusion about parking rules

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum – Greater London Action on Disability, p.1

<sup>4</sup> See Minutes of Evidence 18 June 2002, p.3

<sup>5</sup> See Minutes of Evidence 18 June 2002, p.1 and Memorandum – Age Concern London

<sup>6</sup> Conducted on University College Hospital's Gower Street/Grafton Way site on behalf of a Member of the Committee.

<sup>7</sup> Memorandum – Greater London Action on Disability, p.2

meant that he received, on average, two parking tickets per month. He told us that he had observed predatory enforcement by parking officers – even where the motorist was clearly a person with, or assisting a person with, a disability. The Central London boroughs categorically denied that there are incentives for individual parking officers to issue tickets. However, one borough did acknowledge that it was amending its contract with its parking enforcement company to remove the application of penalties if a certain number of tickets were not issued.<sup>8</sup>

- 2.7 All of these difficulties are further compounded by the existence of separate parking rules for Blue Badge holders within each of the four Central boroughs and on Transport for London's Road Network (see Appendix A for details). For example, on Brompton Road in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, a Blue Badge holder can park on yellow lines for up to 20 minutes to drop off or pick up a disabled person; three streets away in Westminster, there is no stopping at all permitted on yellow lines. Adding to the confusion, each of the four Central London boroughs operate separate disabled parking schemes (Red Badge in City of London, Green Badge in Camden, Purple Badge in Kensington and Chelsea and White Badge in Westminster) which give slightly greater concessions and specific bays to their residents and workers with mobility problems. Different parking rules also apply throughout London on major roads which are part of the Transport for London Road Network. As a result, a visit to Central London could involve complying with five different sets of parking regulations.
- 2.8 The combined effect is to make parking in Central London a frustrating and confusing experience for Blue Badge holders – and one with a real possibility of inadvertently incurring numerous parking fines.
- 2.9 The boroughs acknowledge that the current situation is not ideal. However, they argue that continued exemption from the Blue Badge Scheme is essential to avoid putting parking space under further pressure and generating additional traffic congestion. As one borough representative put it, 'we are constantly undertaking a balancing act between many, many competing demands.'
- 2.10 Each of the four boroughs provided evidence of the enormous demands on available space – for example, most cited the fact that the number of resident parking permits exceeded the number of residents bays. For example, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has issued 41,000 resident parking permits and has only 27,000 bays (a ratio of 1.7 permits per bay).
- 2.11 The pressure on parking space means that yellow lines have often been replaced with parking bays. In Westminster, for example, yellow lines now exist for three reasons only: to protect a loading space, because parking would be unsafe, or because parked cars would impede traffic flows, contrary to statute.<sup>9</sup> Further kerbside space can be lost due to the introduction of longer bus stops and red routes. For example, the Corporation of London noted that 10 per cent of its highway changed to a red route regime and a further 20 per cent of kerbside parking was removed to allow greater access for buses.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of Evidence 18 June 2002, p.20.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of Evidence, 18 June 2002, p.11

<sup>10</sup> Minutes of Evidence, 18 June 2002, pp.14, 18

### **3 Making Central London more accessible**

- 3.1 The boroughs face an unenviable task trying to balance the competing demands on parking space within Central London. We were pleased to hear of some small increases in the numbers of disabled bays and particularly heartened to learn of an increase in bays on the TfL Road Network over the last 12 months (from 237 to 280 bays for Blue Badge holders).<sup>11</sup>
- 3.2 However, our investigation revealed that the situation is still unsatisfactory and, on the evidence we heard, is deterring Blue Badge holders from accessing the cultural, health and leisure facilities in Central London. We also heard that Blue Badge holders were experiencing difficulties accessing other parts of London.
- 3.3 The Government's response to the Blue Badge Scheme review may address some of our concerns. There are, however, some London-specific issues which should be addressed now. Most will be resolved not through the Mayor's statutory powers but through the Mayor exercising his political leadership and giving priority to ensuring London is a genuinely 'accessible city'.

#### **Review the current Central London exemption**

- 3.4 As a first step, the Mayor's review of parking schemes within Central London should carefully consider the case for removing the Central London exemption from the Blue Badge Scheme.
- 3.5 Members of the Disabled Drivers Motor Club and Greater London Action on Disability unanimously oppose the restrictions on Blue Badge Concessions and the use of local parking schemes. As members of the Committee noted, congestion and pressures on parking are not unique to Central London; other boroughs manage their parking without requiring an exemption from the Scheme.
- 3.6 The Mayor's review should also consider the effect of reducing the restrictions rather than total application of Blue Badge concessions. For example, DaRT suggested giving badge-holders free parking in metered bays and up to one hour on single yellow lines within Central London. Others have suggested that, where parking on yellow lines would constitute a traffic hazard, specific signs could prevent Blue Badge holders from parking there.
- 3.7 If the current exemption is to remain, we believe several improvements need to be made:
- Clearer and stronger guidance from TfL to boroughs on improving accessibility, particularly regarding disabled parking;
  - Greater, if not total, standardisation of the Central London parking schemes;
  - Better dissemination of information on parking concessions; and
  - Stronger enforcement and better training for parking enforcement officers.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of Evidence, 18 June 2002, p.22

### **Recommendation 1**

We recommend that the Central London exemption from the Blue Badge Scheme be carefully considered as part of the Mayor's commitment to review Central boroughs' parking schemes. We would expect the Mayor to consult with Central boroughs and disability organisations on this issue.

If the Central London exemption is to be continued, it needs a serious overhaul. We look to the Mayor's proposed review to examine supply and demand, current provision of disabled parking, standardisation across the Central area and the resources put into enforcement and policing of dedicated spaces.

We will be closely monitoring progress on this review and request that the Mayor give the Committee early sight of the review's draft proposals on parking in Central London.

### **Clearer guidance to boroughs**

- 3.8 Under the Mayor's Transport Strategy, the London boroughs should produce a Parking and Enforcement Plan which reviews the existing disabled parking at key locations.<sup>12</sup> The Mayor's Draft London Plan commits the Mayor to provide supplementary planning guidance on achieving an inclusive and accessible environment for people with mobility problems, following the Government's response to the Blue Badge Scheme review.<sup>13</sup>
- 3.9 There is clearly a need for greater information on the supply of, and demand for, disabled bays. One borough told us that there are few mechanisms to quantitatively assess the need for on-street disabled parking and that assessment was often 'pretty ad hoc'.<sup>14</sup> For its part, TfL stated that it was monitoring the demand for disabled parking spaces in London 'as far as one is able'.<sup>15</sup>
- 3.10 TfL are planning an initial scoping study on the level of parking available to underpin its guidance to boroughs. We would like to see more work done in this area, possibly in cooperation with disability organisations. DaRT suggested that local authorities could use Blue Badge holders within their boroughs to conduct parking audits; apparently, this is already occurring in several boroughs. This information could be used to inform parking plans and provide more reliable data on the level of misuse of designated disabled parking bays.
- 3.11 We would also stress that London boroughs are still waiting for guidance and the green light from TfL on their parking plans. We heard that this delay has resulted in at least one borough starting to prepare its parking plan without appropriate guidance.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *The Mayor's Transport Strategy*, Mayor of London, July 2001. p.300

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p.357

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of Evidence 18 June 2002 p.18

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of Evidence 18 June 2002 p.23

<sup>16</sup> Minutes of Evidence 18 June 2002. p.14

### **Recommendation 2**

We call on the Mayor and Transport for London (TfL) to issue clearer and stronger guidance to the boroughs on improving accessibility for people with mobility problems, following consultation with boroughs and disability organisations. In particular, we recommend that guidance to boroughs is provided as soon as possible and that particular attention is given to the siting of sufficient disabled parking near hospitals.

TfL has a key role to play in gathering information on the current provision of disabled parking bays and the level of demand. TfL and the ALG should consult with boroughs on how best to measure and monitor London-wide access to parking for people with disabilities.

### **Greater standardisation of parking concessions in Central London**

- 3.12 A more consistent and transparent system of the parking concessions available within Central London will reduce the level of confusion and the likelihood of fines being incurred inadvertently. However, greater consistency across Central London must be accompanied by better enforcement, greater information and where appropriate, more disabled bays.
- 3.13 The ALG has noted that 'there may be scope for encouraging the Central London boroughs to modify their schemes to create a consistent approach in Central London.'<sup>17</sup> Central London boroughs told us that they are open to the idea of making the concessions available to badge holders under each of their schemes more consistent.
- 3.14 We support greater consistency and transparency and would like to see the boroughs explore the option of a single scheme for Central London - although not at the expense of existing concessions. To ensure that this issue receives priority consideration, we believe TfL, the Association of London Government and the boroughs should set out a clear 12 month action plan on this issue.

### **Recommendation 3**

We recommend that Central London boroughs achieve greater consistency and transparency between their disabled parking schemes. We welcome the boroughs' apparent readiness to standardise their scheme and we call on TfL and the ALG to work with these boroughs to facilitate a 12 month action plan.

We will be monitoring progress on this issue and request an update from TfL by October 2002.

### **Stronger enforcement**

- 3.15 Enforcement is essential to ensure that disabled bays are not misused and that Blue Badges are only used by those who are entitled to them. This issue is particularly pertinent to Central London where disabled bays represent the main parking concession offered to Blue Badge holders.

<sup>17</sup> ALG Response to review of the Disabled Person's Parking Badge, March 2002, p.19



- 3.16 There was consensus that cars parked in disabled bays which do not display a Blue Badge should be issued with a penalty notice. Local authorities must give greater consideration and resources to the policing of disabled bays and, where relevant, emphasise the importance of rigorous enforcement to their contractors.
- 3.17 We heard that fines for illegally parking in a disabled bay are comparable to other parking infringements (for example, outstaying the time limit on a parking meter). Some organisations would like to see steeper penalties for non-Blue Badge holders who park in disabled bays as opposed to other parking infringements. We believe there is some merit in considering this approach but note that higher penalties without proper enforcement may be an ineffective deterrent.
- 3.18 Attempts to quantify reliably the level of misuse of a Blue Badge (for example by a family member who is not entitled to it) are hampered by an inability to inspect Blue Badges. Despite anecdotal evidence and broad estimates of up to 700,000 motorists abusing the scheme nationally<sup>18</sup>, hard evidence of misuse is thin on the ground. For example, one witness noted that consultants on the government's Blue Badge review had been unable to find one clear example of prosecution for the abuse of a badge; similarly, Greer Nicholson (DaRT) reported that her investigations into allegations of misuse over two years had identified only two clear cases of misuse.
- 3.19 That said, there remains a widespread perception that the scheme is being abused and general agreement that this perception is damaging the credibility of the Blue Badge Scheme. Better enforcement could not only ensure available disabled bays were reserved for those in genuine need, it could also restore faith in the scheme and reduce the recourse by boroughs to localised parking schemes.
- 3.20 Support for powers of inspection for police officers, traffic wardens and parking attendants was unanimous at the meeting. We note that greater powers of inspection were recommended in the 1992 review of the Blue (then Orange) Badge Scheme. We would like to see the Government fulfil its commitment to introduce the necessary legislation<sup>19</sup> as soon as possible.
- 3.21 The power to inspect badges must be accompanied by a more robust means of identifying the Blue Badge holder. We heard strong support from disability organisations and TfL for a national database of Blue Badge holders. Encoded information on the front of the badge could then be scanned by parking officers to ascertain badge-holders' details. As the Government discussion paper identified, photo identification is necessary but has implications for motorists' safety and privacy (particularly if placed on the front of the badge). We were attracted to DaRT's suggestion that this concern could be addressed by having a separate photocard (carried by the badge-holder and produced on request) which would be linked to the badge through a serial number or barcode. This proposal and the development of national database could have implications for

<sup>18</sup> See 'Revealed: Mass Fraud in car disabled badges', *The Sunday Telegraph* 9 June 2002, p.3

<sup>19</sup> *Blue Badge Scheme Discussion Paper*, DTLR, 11 January 2002. Paragraph 5.2.1

the administration of the Scheme. We call on the Government to consider these issues in detail as its response to the Blue Badge review.

- 3.22 The Government should also consider whether further powers or penalties may be necessary. As the Disabled Drivers Motor Club pointed out, the power to inspect a badge is one thing; proving the badge is being abused may be far more difficult and time-consuming. TfL and the Association of London Government<sup>20</sup> have similarly noted the legal complexities surrounding abuse of the badge. Further thought should be given to this issue.

#### **Recommendation 4**

We recommend that the Government introduce legislation as soon as possible to enable traffic wardens and parking attendants to inspect badges. Enforcement is a particularly complex area but it is evident that far greater resources need to be invested if provision of disabled bays is not to be abused. In particular, we believe the Government should consider the merits of a national database and photo identification to aid effective enforcement.

The Government should also examine what further powers and penalties are necessary to ensure that the Blue Badge Scheme is sufficiently enforceable. This should include consideration of higher penalties for those parking in disabled bays as compared to other parking infringements and provisions within the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*.

Within their current powers, we recommend that the boroughs consider the priority they currently give to enforcement action directed at abuse of disabled parking bays.

- 3.23 We also heard that greater powers for parking enforcement officers should be accompanied by greater training and an emphasis on assisting Blue Badge holders where possible. For example, TfL called for a review of parking policies and practices and advocated 'better training of people like traffic wardens.'<sup>21</sup>
- 3.24 We support the Corporation of London's suggestion that TfL and the ALG should work with boroughs to explore the scope for using parking attendants to work in a 'more sympathetic way', giving guidance and information rather than simply enforcement.
- 3.25 The Central London boroughs receive considerable revenue from parking enforcement. We were told that this revenue is ring-fenced for spending on transport, particularly public transport initiatives (for example, funding concessionary fares and school transport).<sup>22</sup> We suggest that the boroughs review whether there is any scope to use this income to devote greater resources to better enforcement and training.

#### **Recommendation 5**

We recommend that TfL and the ALG work with London boroughs and their contractors develop a code of best practice to ensure that parking officers are sensitive to the needs of Blue Badge holders.

<sup>20</sup> See *ALG Response to review of the Disabled Person's Parking Badge*, March 2002, p.19

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of Evidence 18 June 2002 p.22

<sup>22</sup> Minutes of Evidence 18 June 2002, p.17

We will be monitoring progress on this issue and would like to receive an update from TfL by October 2002.

## **Better information**

- 3.26 All of the Central boroughs provide separate maps and pamphlets giving details of the concessions available to Blue Badge holders and the location of disabled parking bays. However, we heard that there is no single up-to-date document which brings all of this information together.
- 3.27 The most recent consolidated map of parking spaces in Central London<sup>23</sup> was very popular with Blue Badge holders. We were told that 20,000 copies of the map were requested in six months and 'almost every person that took the map said this would help them stop getting a ticket now.'<sup>24</sup> In response to a suggestion by the Committee that TfL could fund or publish an updated version of this map, Derek Turner agreed that he was 'very keen to co-operate in that'.<sup>25</sup> The Committee notes the Association of London Government's previous work in this area<sup>26</sup> and suggests that TfL and the ALG work with the boroughs to develop a map as soon as possible and disseminate it widely.
- 3.28 We also believe that TfL should explore the idea of putting more information about the Blue Badge Scheme and the concessions available within London on the TfL or GLA websites. This should include material which raises awareness of the Scheme and the effect that abuse of disabled bays and Blue Badges has on those in genuine need.

### **Recommendation 6**

We recommend that the Mayor work with the boroughs to improve the quality of information available to Blue Badge holders about parking concessions in Central London. TfL has a key role to play in disseminating information on access to Central London. In particular, we recommend:

- TfL take the lead on updating a map of disabled parking provision in Central London;
- TfL consider the use of its website to disseminate information and raise awareness about the Blue Badge Scheme.

<sup>23</sup> *Central London Map for Orange Badge Holders*, Transport Committee for London, 1999.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes of Evidence 18 June 2002 p.2

<sup>25</sup> Minutes of Evidence 18 June 2002 p.23

<sup>26</sup> *ALG Response to review of the Disabled Person's Parking Badge*, March 2002, p.19

## 4 Other issues: congestion charging and off-street parking

### Effect of the Congestion Charging Scheme

- 4.1 Under the Mayor's Congestion Charging Scheme (CCS), Blue Badge holders will be eligible for a 100% discount – provided they register their vehicle and pay a £10 fee. Submissions to the Government review of the Blue Badge Scheme indicated that the expected reduction in traffic could permit an increase in the number of disabled bays. At the same time, concerns were expressed that the discount may increase the 'value' of the Blue Badge and lead to greater misuse and theft.<sup>27</sup> One submission suggested that the scheme should not be extended to Central London until the CCS is up and running.<sup>28</sup>
- 4.2 The introduction of the CCS will increase the importance of proper enforcement. TfL can strengthen enforcement – not only through its own checks on the way that discounts under the CCS are used by Blue Badge holders but also by advocating improvements to enforcement (for example, the establishment of a national database and machine-readable badges) and more rigorous assessment of Blue Badge applications.
- 4.3 We were unable to ascertain clearly the likely impact of the CCS on the level of available parking. The Corporation of London expected the impact to be negligible; Camden expected there to be some easing of pressure and are currently examining the scope for designating more bays as disabled; Westminster expected the need to provide more space for motorcycles (due to the exemption for motorcyclists from the CCS) may reduce its capacity to provide more disabled bays; the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea felt that the effect of the CCS was simply too difficult to predict.

### Off-street parking

- 4.4 While our investigation focussed on on-street parking, Blue Badge holders face similar problems with parking in off-street bays (for example, shopping centres and car parks). According to the Disabled Drivers' Association, surveys of shoppers regularly identify abuse of disabled parking as a priority problem. Although planning guidance can dictate the provision of disabled parking bays as part of a new development, Central Government, the Mayor and the boroughs have far less control over ensuring that these bays are not abused.
- 4.5 We were interested to hear about the 'Baywatch' campaign conducted by major retailers in consultation with disability organisations which seeks to raise awareness of the abuse of disabled parking bays and change customer behaviour. As we heard, this is an area where supermarkets must be left to develop their own policies and processes. However, we believe the Mayor could have a role in encouraging retailers to improve enforcement of disabled bays and promote existing good work in this area.

<sup>27</sup> See for example, Transport for London and Greater London Action on Disability responses to review of the Disabled Person's Parking Badge.

<sup>28</sup> London Transport Users' Committee, *Responses to DTLR Blue Badge Scheme Discussion Paper*. p.2

**Recommendation 7**

We recommend that the Mayor encourage the private sector to improve the enforcement of disabled bays in off-street parking, including promoting the existing work done by some retailers and disability groups in this area. Greater engagement with the private sector has the potential to improve significantly the access for people with mobility problems to shopping, leisure and health facilities.

## 5 Maintaining the momentum

- 5.1 Blue Badge holders in London want to see an action plan developed which will address their problems accessing facilities and services in their city.
- 5.2 This report sets out some elements for that action plan. We acknowledge that some changes may rely on the Government's Blue Badge review. Nevertheless, there are things that the Mayor, in cooperation with TfL, the boroughs and disability organisations, can start doing now which will make a real difference to the lives of Blue Badge holders.<sup>29</sup>
- 5.3 The Transport Committee will be closely monitoring what action is taken on addressing this issue. This report will be sent to the Mayor, TfL, the ALG and the boroughs seeking their comments on its recommendations. We have also asked to be consulted on the Mayor's review of Central London parking schemes and to be kept informed of borough efforts to achieve a more consistent approach to concessions within Central London.
- 5.4 While the evidence to the Committee didn't directly address this issue, we understand that the problems of demand in Central London are not unique. We are therefore keen to hear about how demand problems are tackled elsewhere in London, and about the problems of exclusion experienced by disabled drivers elsewhere in congested parts of London.
- 5.5 Disability organisations suggested to the Committee that a year provided a reasonable period of time in which to assess whether access to Central London has improved.
- 5.6 **We will review formally the situation for Blue Badge holders in London by June 2003. By that time, we want to see evidence of significant improvements in the consistency and transparency of rules across London, the level of information about Blue Badge concessions and the availability of disabled parking bays.**

<sup>29</sup> Westminster Council has suggested that an extended version of the annual Central London Disabled Parking Group, which includes disability organisations as well as representatives from each of the four central boroughs, could provide an appropriate forum for taking forward these improvements.

## 6 Summary of recommendations

### Recommendation 1 (page 8)

We recommend that the Central London exemption from the Blue Badge Scheme be carefully considered as part of the Mayor's commitment to review Central boroughs' parking schemes. We would expect the Mayor to consult with Central boroughs and disability organisations on this issue.

If the Central London exemption is to be continued, it needs a serious overhaul. We look to the Mayor's proposed review to examine supply and demand, current provision of disabled parking, standardisation across the Central area and the resources put into enforcement and policing of dedicated spaces.

We will be closely monitoring progress on this review and request that the **Mayor** give the Committee early sight of the review's draft proposals on parking in Central London.

### Recommendation 2 (page 9)

We call on the **Mayor and Transport for London (TfL)** to issue clearer and stronger guidance to the boroughs on improving accessibility for people with mobility problems, following consultation with boroughs and disability organisations. In particular, we recommend that guidance to boroughs is provided as soon as possible and that particular attention is given to the siting of sufficient disabled parking near hospitals.

TfL has a key role to play in gathering information on the current provision of disabled parking bays and the level of demand. **TfL and the ALG** should consult with boroughs on how best to measure and monitor London-wide access to parking for people with disabilities.

### Recommendation 3 (page 9)

We recommend that Central London boroughs achieve greater consistency and transparency between their disabled parking schemes. We welcome the boroughs' apparent readiness to standardise their scheme and we call on **TfL and the ALG to work with these boroughs** to facilitate a 12 month action plan.

We will be monitoring progress on this issue and request an update from **TfL** by October 2002.

### Recommendation 4 (page 11)

We recommend that the **Government** introduce legislation as soon as possible to enable traffic wardens and parking attendants to inspect badges. Enforcement is a particularly complex area but it is evident that far greater resources need to be invested if provision of disabled bays is not to be abused. In particular, we believe the Government should consider the merits of a national database and photo identification to aid effective enforcement.

The Government should also examine what further powers and penalties are necessary to ensure that the Blue Badge Scheme is sufficiently enforceable. This should include consideration of higher penalties for those parking in disabled bays as compared to other parking infringements and provisions within the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*.

Within their current powers, we recommend that the boroughs consider the priority they currently give to enforcement action directed at abuse of disabled parking bays.

**Recommendation 5** (page 11)

We recommend that **TfL and the ALG work with London boroughs** and their contractors develop a code of best practice to ensure that parking officers are sensitive to the needs of Blue Badge holders.

**Recommendation 6** (page 12)

We recommend that the Mayor work with the boroughs to improve the quality of information available to Blue Badge holders about parking concessions in Central London. TfL has a key role to play in disseminating information on access to Central London. In particular, we recommend:

- **TfL** take the lead on updating a map of disabled parking provision in Central London;
- **TfL** consider the use of its website to disseminate information and raise awareness about the Blue Badge Scheme.

**Recommendation 7** (page 14)

We recommend that the **Mayor** encourage the private sector to improve the enforcement of disabled bays in off-street parking, including promoting the existing work done by some retailers and disability groups in this area. Greater engagement with the private sector has the potential to improve significantly the access for people with mobility problems to shopping, leisure and health facilities.

**Commitment** (page 15)

We will review formally the situation for Blue Badge holders in London by June 2003. By that time, we want to see evidence of significant improvements in the consistency and transparency of rules across London, the level of information about Blue Badge concessions and the availability of disabled parking bays.



Borough	Blue Badge concessions	Other concessionary schemes
<b>City of London</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cannot park on yellow lines.</li> <li>175 disabled bays which allow three hours parking between (7am-12am). Some bays allow 6 hours.</li> <li>Can park on parking meters for free after 10am.</li> </ul>	<p>Red Badge scheme for disabled residents and those working within 3 or more days in the City – disability eligibility is same as for the Blue Badge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free parking on meter and pay and display bays.</li> <li>Can wait for a maximum period of 30 minutes on a single yellow line where a loading ban is not in force.</li> </ul>
<b>London Borough of Camden (partial – West End of London)</b>  <b>Outside “Green Badge” zone, normal Blue Badge rules apply</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cannot park on yellow lines.</li> <li>Cannot park in resident’s parking bays, pay and display or meter areas without payment.</li> <li>Can park in designated 10 Green Badge disabled parking spaces outside working hours.</li> <li>16 disabled bays which are free to use for an unlimited time.</li> <li>Can apply for parking dispensation for hospital visits.</li> </ul>	<p>Green Badge scheme for disabled residents and those working or studying in the borough – disability eligibility is the same as Blue Badge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can park free and for an unlimited time in a resident’s bay, park and display or parking meter area.</li> <li>Cannot park on any yellow lines.</li> <li>Can park in both Blue and Green badge disabled bays.</li> </ul>
<b>Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can park on yellow lines (providing there is no loading limit) for up to 20 minutes to drop off or pick up a disabled person or collect goods.</li> <li>One hour’s free parking at pay and display bays provided minimum payment has been made.</li> <li>110 disabled bays – up to four hours during working hours and indefinitely for rest of the time.</li> </ul>	<p>Purple Badge scheme for disabled residents and those working or studying in the borough – disability eligibility is same as the Blue Badge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free parking without time limit in any on-street parking bay or pay and display bay, providing there are no restrictions.</li> <li>Can park on yellow lines for 20 minutes to pick up or drop off a disabled person or collect goods.</li> <li>Can park in both Blue and Purple badge disabled bays (193 dedicated bays for Purple Badge holders).</li> </ul>
<b>Westminster City Council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cannot park on yellow lines.</li> <li>280 disabled bays which are free to use but have either a 2 or 4 hour maximum stay period. Others have an unlimited stay period or are only available at certain times of the day.</li> <li>One hour’s free parking at pay and display bays provided minimum payment has been made.</li> </ul>	<p>White Badge scheme for disabled residents and those working or attending hospital in the area – disability eligibility is same as for the Blue Badge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can park in residents bay or meter bay free of charge unlimited period.</li> <li>Car parks operate a reservation scheme for disabled parking with bays close to or near the entrance.</li> <li>Can use disabled bays for free but have either a 2 or 4 hour maximum stay period.</li> </ul>
<b>Transport for London (TFL) Road Network (applies throughout London)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can park free in parking ‘boxes’ (availability may be only outside rush hours) and 2,000 loading ‘boxes’ for up to three hours on a red route.</li> <li>Can stop to pick up or set down person with disability on a red route.</li> <li>280 disabled bays.</li> </ul>	

**Source:** Parking pamphlets from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Camden and Westminster Councils and Corporation of London. Updated with information provided at 18 June 2002 meeting with Transport Committee by representatives from the boroughs and Transport for London.

## **Appendix B: Terms of Reference**

The Transport Committee agreed to a scrutiny into parking in Central London for people with mobility problems on 18 June 2002. The terms of reference were agreed as follows:

- To examine the parking concessions in Central London available for people with mobility problems.
- To make recommendations for reducing confusion in the implementation of the Blue Badge scheme in London and for improving access to Central London for people with mobility problems.

## **Appendix C: Witnesses and written evidence**

### **Witnesses at evidentiary hearing, 18 June 2002**

#### **Disabled Drivers' Motor Club** (Ed Passant, Chief Executive)

A national organisation representing the interests of disabled motorists. The Club recently conducted extensive consultation with its 19,000 members on the Blue Badge Scheme and provided a submission to the DTLR Blue Badge review.

#### **DaRT - Accessible Transport Users Association** (Greer Nicholson, Development Manager)

An organisation of over 10,000 disabled and elderly people in London concerned with promoting accessible transport in London.

#### **Mr Charlie Salem**

Member of the public who has found it difficult to find disabled parking within Central London for his daughter who has cerebral palsy.

#### **City of London**

Iain Simmons, Local Transport Planning Manager

#### **London Borough of Camden**

Alan Butcher, Principal Traffic Planner

Abou Mehdi, Head of Parking Solutions

#### **Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea**

Cllr Jeremy Edge, Lead Member for Environment

Kevin McKee, Performance Monitoring Manager

#### **Westminster City Council**

Cllr Ronnie Raymond-Cox, Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport & Infrastructure

Martin Lowe, Head of Traffic and Transportation

#### **Transport for London**

Derek Turner, Managing Director of Street Management

Andrew Braddock, Head of Access and Mobility

### **Written Evidence**

Two pieces of written evidence were specifically submitted to the Committee:

Age Concern London

Greater London Action on Disability

The Committee also drew on documents submitted to the Government's Review of the Disabled Person's Parking Badge from the following organisations:

Association of London Government

DaRT - Accessible Transport Users Association

Disabled Drivers' Motor Club

Greater London Action on Disability

London Transport Users Committee

Transport for London

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greg.norton@london.gov.uk  
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**Greater London Authority**

City Hall

The Queen's Walk

London SE1 2AA

**[www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)**

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