

newsforum



The London Forum working to protect and improve the quality of life in London

The London Forum of
Amenity and Civic Societies
Founded 1988

In this issue

Spotlight on
Living Streets
Page 06

02 The Shard London Bridge Tower

03 The Forum's AGM – reports

03 Tony Travers AGM guest speaker:
Where is London Heading?

04 London Borough Websites
The results of a survey

05 A new use for old iron What
should happen to the King's Cross
gasometers?

05 The Green Arc A new concept
for London's countryside

06 Spotlight on Living Streets

08 Round the societies

09 The Seeing eye The new
Trafalgar Square

10 Recent Consultations

11 News briefs

12 Forum events

Chairman's remarks

There are changes to the appearance of 'newsforum' which we know our readers will welcome.



In technical 'speak' this means that a new grid for the layout of pages has transformed the production side, making it more visually attractive and more readable. A new title format – 'newsforum', emphasises the 'forum' basis of the London Forum, while the logo has been up dated to include the London Eye. The latter subliminally refers to the London Forum's watchfulness over London.

Our thanks are due to Ross Shaw, graphic designer, who has joined the team and given of his expertise to create the new image, and has agreed to assist and monitor the development of all our printed matter. Ross has helped Helen Marcus who assembles and prepares the paper for photocopying – all under the watchful eye of Editor Michael Hammerson.

On behalf of the Membership and all readers "Thank you team".

The influences upon planning in the capital, which we covered in our last issue, are now upon us (see page 10). The Mayor's London Plan was published early in February and the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act could be in place by the summer. Civic societies and community groups will have to find out how their Council plans to respond and make sure they influence local strategies and policies. We will cover the implications in our open meetings, as indicated on the back page. Look out for more details in future mailings and let us know of the issues that you want to raise at those events.

That leads me on to my second point. I want to help you to keep members of your

committees and local residents updated on the news and information that we provide, and to tell them about the popular and informative events that we arrange. Would it help to have extra copies of News Forum, at a modest charge, to ensure that more people see it? Is the postal mailing address we have for you the best one for ensuring effective and speedy communication? If not, please leave a message at our office.

We want to build up a list of e-mail addresses for each of our member societies, so we can send you information that way also, for you to pass on through your own distribution lists or use in your publications. A better-informed membership will be a more concerned and active one. Do let me have your group's e-mail contact address.

Please make sure you publicise our meetings – especially the boat trip on 24th June, which will not only be a wonderful way to see that part of the Thames but will also enable you to find out what is planned for the "Thames Gateway" region which will have such an impact on London's future. Attending our meetings will also enable you to meet people from other London Forum members' organisations – and, of course, the speakers themselves, as well as many of the London Forum officers. Do ask your society members to book early by telephone or e-mail to be sure of a place.

Times, as I have repeatedly emphasised, are changing rapidly, and it is now even more important that the Forum's membership

"The Forum's member societies have a total membership of some 100,000 Londoners – larger than the membership of all the London political parties put together."

Peter Eversden Chairman

works together to ensure that these changes are for the best. The Forum's member societies have a total membership of some 100,000 Londoners who are perhaps those people most concerned about all aspects of our living and working environment and most experienced in its problems and their solution. This is a massive constituency – and immensely larger than the membership of all the London political parties put together.

Benjamin Franklin's words are still, in a sense, as relevant as ever: "We must all hang together, or we will assuredly hang separately." I urge you and your members to support the London Forum as much as you can, and to make sure that all your members are aware of the Forum's work and encouraged to take part in it.

Peter Eversden Chairman ■

The Shard – London Bridge Tower

Tom Ball comments on the implications of the decision for London as a whole.

The proposal to build the tallest building in Europe – 305 meters – was given permission by The Secretary of State in November 2003. Despite recognising “that the proposed development conflicts with Policy E.2.2 in the adopted UDP which states that ‘Southwark is not considered to be an appropriate area for high buildings,’” he accepted the Inspector’s recommendation that “there are material considerations which indicate that he should determine the application other than in accordance with the development plan.”

In his overall conclusions, he stated that he “considers that for a building of this height to be acceptable, the quality of its design is critical, in line with Government’s commitment to the achievement of good design. In this case, like the Inspector, he is satisfied that the proposed tower is of the highest architectural quality. Had this not been the case, the Secretary of State might have reached a different decision, but he considers the quality of design of this particular building is a very strong argument in its favour.”

There were many considerations to be taken into account, including views of St. Paul’s, but London’s citizens should be extremely vigilant about what may happen from here on. We are experiencing a time and attitude which considers tall buildings an essential requisite by the Mayor and a number of his advisors, as in the present case at Vauxhall, where the Mayor seeks to override the opinions and wishes of the local community. This situation while not necessarily illegal,

shows a wilful disregard of local interests. It can also be argued that it shows a fault within the Greater London procedures.

I regard the decision on London Bridge Tower as one of the most problematic and potentially damaging to London’s character that we have seen since Abercrombie’s time. No part of Greater London can be considered ‘safe’ from tall and large buildings, since the decision has set aside the views of the local UDP and rates the assessment of design quality as virtually the determining criterion. The precedent has been set. We do not have the wisdom demonstrated in Paris which protects its historic centre and safeguards its character. Nor, it should be said, should design quality have such overwhelming significance as to override major planning concerns. All constructions should be of the highest design standards, but ‘planning, and ‘urban design’ criteria cannot be set aside, as has been done in this case.

Readers should study carefully the perspective representations produced by the developer and make up their own minds as to the actual size of this 1000-foot building. It is not only the height which is of concern, but its width at various stages above ground level. The building is of a huge size and mass and illustrations show its enormous thickness at a height equivalent to the top of Guy’s hospital. It is a truly dense, thick building, completely out of scale with its surroundings and setting. In this respect, no case can be made that the proposal is satisfactory in scale, urban or civic design terms.

Regrettably, English Heritage and CABE’s joint “Guidance on Tall Buildings” makes little recognition of the relationship of mass, size or scale to tall buildings. Where the word ‘scale’ is included as in Paragraph 2.6 under Planning Policy, it urges the identification of suitable locations for tall buildings “after a detailed urban design study” has been carried out, which would consider “historic context, ...scale, urban grain, natural topography...” Under paragraph 4.4, Evaluating Tall Building Proposals, “CABE and English Heritage will therefore assess proposals in terms both of contribution and any adverse impacts which they may bring. These proposals should be considered as pieces of architecture in their own right, and as pieces of urban design sitting within a wider context; and in this respect they should be assessed in the same way as any other project and against the most

“Should a proper considerate planning process prevail within the London Assembly which would genuinely be able to curb its Mayor? Were we not promised that we would have such an establishment?”

demanding standards of quality.” It was clear at the enquiry, and has been borne out, that the understanding of mass and scale were not properly taken into account by the Inspector nor the Secretary of State. An understanding of the real size and mass of the building could not conceivably accept the London Bridge Tower as being in scale, either with its immediate surroundings, nor further off, for example with the City. The Tall Buildings Guidance did not work to protect or assist London.

It is even more alarming, since the notion that tall buildings should be in clusters was peddled out by Lord Rogers during cross-questioning at the enquiry. Rogers, while not being able to say precisely how many tall buildings form a cluster, maintained not only one tall building but a number should be built at London Bridge and that it would be acceptable/desirable/suitable/appropriate. The impact for the future is likely to be truly devastating. The pressures behind the opinion that design exceeds all criteria and that the current proposal is one of the highest quality in design terms, is dangerous and mischievous. However brilliant architects may consider the work of another, this does not override the first principles of scale, mass and context.

If the proposed London Bridge Tower does not proceed, due to a downturn in office demand for instance, nonetheless the fact remains that by this decision, precedent has been set and all London is at risk. Is the uniqueness of London to be destroyed for ever, to satisfy an ego trip of a handful of powerful people, urged on by a few self seeking developers? Or should a proper considerate planning process prevail, which would include a balance within the London Assembly which would genuinely be able to curb its Mayor? Were we not promised that we would have such an establishment?

Tom Ball ■



“The suggestion that there should be only five boroughs would be a catastrophe for those interested in civic issues...serious consideration should be given to establishing a tier of urban parishes or community councils.”

Tony Travers Director of the Greater London Group

→ Continued from page 03

government. Should the Mayor be given more powers? The suggestion that there should be only five boroughs, possibly as weak as those in New York, would be a catastrophe for those interested in civic issues.

London remains successful, even in the face of government inaction (witness the failure to implement the recommendations of the 1989 Central London Rail Study). But adaptability may have its limits. Is there a cliff edge over which London could fall? And, if so, where is it?

In the following discussion, Harley Sherlock (Islington Society) contrasted the quality of 18th century developments, in which aristocratic landlords retained an interest through leasehold, with the short-term gain sought by present-day developers. How could the public play the role 18th century landlords had played?

Jim Nicolson (Vauxhall Society) criticised lack of money for public services. Only a small proportion of people benefit from the growth of London's economy, and they do not have to experience the problems caused.

Tom Ball (Westminster Society) said small retailers were being forced out of central London by the highest business rates in Europe; the congestion charge may aggravate that. As the quality of life is highest in suburbia, the Mayor should seek to spread growth to town centres in the outer boroughs. London might then become even more successful.

Michael Bach (Chelsea Society) said London had suffered from top-down government; how could that be overcome? Tony Travers suggested a reduction in the power of central government, which at present has (in addition to the Government Office for London) 9 departments and 25 quangos exercising functions in relation to London. He would not change the boroughs, but serious consideration should be given to establishing a tier of urban parishes or community councils. Some of these ought to straddle borough boundaries, for example in Fitzrovia.

Peter Eversden (Bedford Park Society) highlighted the lack of consultation or accountability when the Mayor decides to intervene in planning cases. Looking ahead to the mayoral election, Tony Travers predicted that second preferences would again be very important. Ken Livingstone had received only 37% of votes on the first ballot in 2000, and it seemed unlikely he could increase that proportion significantly. But a change of mayor would not overcome the weaknesses of the present system, or the pressures on any directly elected mayor to concentrate on those parts of a city which have the highest profile ■

The results of a survey carried out by Peter Pendleton & Associates Ltd

The survey placed Wandsworth top both in London and nationally, meeting 20 of the 21 criteria. Improvements by Camden, Southwark and Richmond move them ahead of Kingston Upon Thames, Lewisham and the Corporation of London since the last Survey. Hounslow, Enfield, Barking and Dagenham, Hammersmith & Fulham and Greenwich remain at the bottom, only scoring between one and three of the 22 criteria. All London Boroughs now have a planning webpage, 85% provide easy and quick access from the Council home page, and 82% now have their application registers online. However, very few councils put their decisions online. The provision of committee reports, minutes and schedules is generally good with over 75% providing committee schedules and almost 65% providing meeting minutes and Officer's Reports. Interactive planning services remain disappointing, with 25% offering online application submissions and 9 Boroughs allowing online representations about individual applications.

Of the 18 Councils with decision registers only Wandsworth, Camden and Hackney provide the statutory decision notice online and only a further two list the conditions of the permission or reasons for refusal. The remaining 10 state whether approval was granted but not details of reasons or conditions.

While statutory registers and planning case files held by Boroughs provide the planning history for individual properties, sometimes as far back as 1949, only three websites had registers dating back more than 10 years, 33% only covered less than six months and over half less than one year.

Only Enfield, Greenwich, Hammersmith & Fulham and Hounslow, Barking & Dagenham – do not give details of planning committees on their websites. Provision is otherwise generally good, with 27 providing online meeting schedules and 21 giving past meeting minutes. Officer's reports for individual applications were available on 19 websites. Only Wandsworth and Southwark enable users to submit applications electronically.

22 Boroughs provided the full UDP text, usually broken down into downloadable chapters.

14 provide a UDP proposals map online but over half are difficult to use, the test being whether a user can locate an individual property or identify a particular street on the map ■

Spotlight on Living Streets

Streets should be places full of vitality and interest – not just railed-off corridors for cars.

Living Streets is the organisation that used to be known as the Pedestrians' Association. Though a national body, it is a London Forum associate member, and its new name expresses a very positive and proactive approach to public space which local amenity societies in London are likely to empathise with. In short, Living Streets is about turning most streets from being mere traffic, corridors where people on foot are second class citizens often venturing at their peril, into civilised, shared spaces.

The director of this campaigning organisation is himself a tough, non-nonsense campaigner who survived a spell as leader of one of London's more troubled boroughs, Lambeth. Now 34, he was then London's youngest council leader. All too aware that motor vehicles are voracious consumers of space, both for moving and parking, he expresses his organisation's conviction that the urban environment need not be, and must not be, traffic dominated.

Motorists' duty to give way

It has, however, always been a campaigning organisation. Set up in 1929 as the Pedestrians' Association for Road Safety, it campaigned successfully for regulation of road vehicles. "At that time," says Franklin, "You could get into a car and drive it anywhere, at any speed, without a licence and without insurance. The level of pedestrian casualties on Britain's roads was shooting up". The association played a key role in bringing the use of motor vehicles under more effective control. And a 1934 act promoted by its president, Lord Cecil of Chelwood, laid the statutory basis for pedestrian crossings where the motorist had a legal duty to give way to people on foot.

"That seemed like a good idea at the time," says Living Streets' president, transport consultant Terence Bendixson. The aim now is broader and bolder: to make most streets places where drivers rather than pedestrians feel they are there on sufferance – where the whole designed environment signals to a motorist that he is entering other people's drawing room and should conduct himself in an appropriately civilised manner.

Parking on pavements

A step in the that direction was taken in the 1970s when a later Pedestrians' Association president, Gerald Ellison, Bishop of London, succeeded – again in the Lords - in writing

into a Road Traffic Act a requirement that police prosecute anyone parking on a London pavement. Amazingly, this still doesn't apply outside London.

The re-launch of the organisation as Living Streets in 2001 marked not so much a change of direction as a change of gear. All sorts of strands, says its director, have been coming together: Concern not only about erosion of people's environments by traffic and road building, but about the health of a population which increasingly goes everywhere by car (witness the 4x4s in the school run); about the fragmentation of a society whose various elements no longer meet or understand each other; and about the way in which crime, anti-social behaviour, vandalism and graffiti increase when streets and other public spaces are not fully used or well managed.

Walking to school

A key strand in Living Streets' work is about demonstrating how you can use public space to bring vitality to a place and to a community, says Tom Franklin. Civilised public space is the social cement which brings together people who in some case might not otherwise meet each other. "It's partly about feeling safe, but also about places which have interest and beauty," he says. One of the organisation's undoubted successes has been its Walk to School campaign. Its aim is to persuade parents who would normally drive children to school to find the time to walk with them, not necessarily every day but on a regular basis – which makes for healthier children, allows parent and child to talk in a way they probably wouldn't during a car journey, and permits children to learn about the urban environment through which they pass. "We really played our part in getting a new government focus on this, and in persuading councillors to see streets differently," says Franklin. "The tide is beginning to turn away from seeing them simply as traffic corridors. It takes time to change, but we know we're now heading in the right direction". The Walking Bus initiative, in which younger children wearing reflective clothing join an adult-supervised "crocodile" at "bus stops" along the route to school, has also been very popular and is important where busy parents cannot fit in the whole school journey. But, says Franklin, it has the disadvantage that it marks out walking as something slightly eccentric and also only concerned with

Living Streets

Contact Tom Franklin, Living Streets, 31-33 Bondway, London SW8 1SJ

Telephone 020 7280 1010

email info@livingstreets.org.uk

www.livingstreets.org.uk

getting from A to B – rather than a natural, enjoyable activity in its own right.

Excessive safety culture

Councillors and their officials have not always been good at encouraging the use of streets for community events. Some councils who previously permitted closure of streets for this purpose have taken to charging such high fees that it has made these activities unaffordable. Another barrier to people-friendly streets, says Franklin, is an excessive safety culture. It is an essentially negative approach, whose logic would lead to everyone staying at home in bed. There would be no road casualties, but people's lives wouldn't exactly be enriched.

This super-cautious approach to street design may be driven by fear of being held responsible for accidents and finds typical expression in railings which cage in pedestrians so that traffic can speed by without hitting them. In practice drivers will often drive more slowly and safely in a street without barriers but with skillful traffic calming, both physical and psychological – the "You are now driving in our living room" effect. This may require councillors to say to cautious officials, "We will take responsibility for doing this". Which is what has happened on one major London shopping street, Kensington High Street. The balance of power between vehicles and pedestrians has been radically altered in favour of people on foot. "That's thanks to some very brave local people, brave local councillors," says Franklin.

Double diagonal crossing

Living Streets' very active consultancy arm has recently assisted Wandsworth in a notable example of pedestrian empowerment. Busy Balham High Street now has London's first double diagonal pedestrian crossing. People on foot can cross straight to where they want to go, rather than having to wait for lights on the two legs of a conventional crossing. It also runs community street audit workshops on how to carry out a "street audit" to identify what changes are needed, and for £15 will sell you a DIY kit – something local societies might usefully try.

A key factor in changing local council attitudes is the fact that the Mayor of London generally supports the new approaches. His transport agency, TfL, is funding more pedestrian-friendly approaches. It doesn't however always get them right. Just outside

A round up of news from our members

By **George Parish**

Dowding not Harris

The Stanmore Society have charitably overlooked my blunder in the last issue, when I described RAF Bentley Priory as the former Bomber Command HQ. It was in fact Fighter Command. The Society have been organising visits to the base and have alerted their members to the possibility of infringements of the Green Belt here and elsewhere in Stanmore.

Classical Pinner

The Arts Correspondent of The Independent, who is a Pinner resident, was horrified to find his neighbours' musical tastes described in a recent survey as "light classical." Clearly the wrong people were asked, given the full houses at recent opera and jazz performances. For example there were three sell-out performances in July of Britten's *Noye's Fludde*, featuring 60 local schoolchildren as the ark's passengers.

London's top rat run

Dukes Avenue in Muswell Hill has been adjudged the second worst rat-run in the country (the "winner" was in Scarborough) and the worst in London. Transport 2000, one of the organisers of the contest, are now helping residents to find solutions.

Reassurance

The Waltham Forest Civic Society has offered the following guarantees to potential volunteers amongst its members:- "WFCS is a voluntary organisation. Nobody is paid for what they do. Nor can anyone be made to do anything against their wish. We go further than that: we agree not to make any member or officeholder feel guilty for not doing something or not spending more time on something. Every member thanks the other members for what they are doing, even if that is limited to paying the subscription due for membership."

Boulevard

The South End Green Association report a claim that Camden's Boulevard Project is perhaps the most ambitious street improvement scheme in Europe, picking up a string of awards. At its heart is a continental cleaning regime where streets are washed as well as swept. Streets in the worst condition or with the highest footfall are usually at the top of the list but the availability of matching funding is also a consideration.

Finsbury's own modernist

The Amwell Society's October newsletter carried a feature on the modernist architect, Berthold Lubetkin (1901–1990). Trained in the Soviet Union in its early idealistic years, he worked in Berlin, Warsaw and Paris, then from 1930 in London, where he formed the group Tecton. His projects included Spa Green Estate opposite Sadlers Wells, the Penguin Pool at the London Zoo, the Highpoint flats in Highgate and, above all, the 1938 Finsbury Health Centre, based on the principle that "Nothing is too good for ordinary people."

Volunteers

The Bexley Civic Society reported major events last year at the borough's two Grade I listed buildings. On 16 July the National Trust opened Red House to the public, while on 1 September Prince Charles

presided over the first steaming of the Crossness engines. Both of these events owed a great deal to the work of voluntary bodies: the Friends of Red House and the Crossness Engines Trust, in both of which Bexley Civic Society members have played a prominent role.

Brixton's sex philosopher

One of Brixton's blue plaques commemorates Henry Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), physician and writer, who lived at No.14 Dover Mansions in Canterbury Crescent. He pioneered the scientific study of sex with his seven-volume *Psychology of Sex*, published between 1897 and 1928. His autobiography shows him to have been a very strange person but he had a liberating effect on many unhappy people in his day.

The power station

The World Monuments Fund recently listed Battersea Power Station as one of only four sites in the UK on its list of 100 most endangered sites in the world. Plans for its redevelopment have both fascinated and frustrated local residents for over 25 years. The Friends of Battersea Park report that enabling work has now at last started in readiness for the main works to start in mid-2004. By 2008 the project should be completed with three hotels, restaurant, cinema, theatre, shopping malls, offices, housing and conference facilities. There are fears of traffic congestion but a vast increase of local transport options is planned. The site will be green in both senses, with a quarter of it landscaped and open to the public and the South Thames Walkway opened all the way through to Battersea Park.

Morris remembered

The Putney Society's contribution to last year's Wandsworth Arts Festival was a talk in All Saints Church, given by David Rainger, the immediate past-Chairman of the William Morris Society. Bone china mugs depicting three of Morris's stained glass windows were on sale in aid of the church restoration fund and a book on *The Flowers of William Morris* with some rare illustrations.

A cuckoo flies the nest

The Kingston upon Thames Society received confirmation last year that Surrey County Council is selling its County Hall and moving to Woking. This will end the anomaly of Surrey being administered from a building in the middle of a Greater London borough about a mile beyond the county boundary. When the new Surrey County Council was first seeking a headquarters in 1889, Kingston was one of several eligible Surrey towns and more convenient than most for lobbying Westminster. But Woking now has the faster trains and Kingston University has its eye on this desirable building.

George Parish ■

→ Continued from page 11

this. One might almost say what lighting? It certainly does nothing for the spirit and, apart from the fountains, relies on the floodlighting of the surrounding buildings to give any kind 'world square' setting, while remaining a 'black hole'. It is a dismal failure at night time, which in winter is from 5pm onwards.

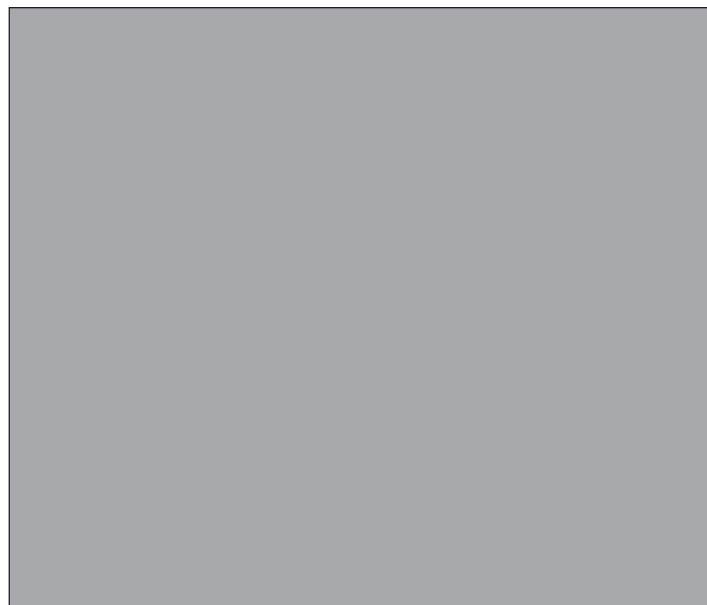
As for the design of the lighting columns themselves and their glaring output, they are an appalling apologia for some nightmare image of history, made worse by being painted black. It is regrettable if the lighting fittings carry an 'approval certificate' of English Heritage because they are not heritage nor good design, but a travesty where twenty-first century design should be in place.

Conclusion? The reader may accept none, some or all of these points. All I urge is that the reader looks with a "seeing eye", and by that process is more ready to be critical of other proposed treatments to the public realm – some 100 spaces according to the Mayor, in addition to the other World Square projects. Contemporary quality design does blend in historical settings when carefully controlled, and the responsibility of one person in charge. Think for example of the Louvre in Paris, where the pyramid contrasts superbly with the surrounding historic buildings. We must not be forced into accepting alien so called historic or 'heritage' approved design.

Tom Ball ■

“Contemporary quality design does blend in historical settings when carefully controlled, and the responsibility of one person in charge.”

Below



The London Plan, Local Development Frameworks and news of a DCMS paper: Protecting our Historic Environment

Consultations mentioned in the Chairman's remarks on page one

The London Plan was published on 10th February and **Sub Regional Development Frameworks** will have to be prepared by groups of boroughs. You will need to find out which Boroughs yours will be working with to do this and participate in the process.

Government proposals for replacing Councils' Unitary Development Plans with Local Development Frameworks.

This will be yet another major resource demand on our local authorities, who will have to adapt their own policies to meet the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill which is intended to become an Act of Parliament by the summer and which will significantly alter the way in which our environments will be planned.

Protecting our Historic Environment: Making the system work better

This consultation paper was issued in July 2003 by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The Minister's introduction described it as:

“A Review to improve and refocus the way in which England's historic assets receive statutory protection. The consultation paper marks a further step in engaging wide public interest in the systems we use for deciding what we value most in our historic environment, and sets out a package of suggestions for change. Some of the proposals would require primary legislation.... The package is designed to bring benefits to all who use the system. Citizens would have greater opportunity to participate.”

(Does that last phrase sound ominously familiar?)

Among the many questions were the following:

- Should there be an independent committee to make the designation decisions?
- Is a power at national level to designate areas of historic importance necessary or useful?
- Were the suggested safeguards sufficient and what other options might there be?
- What criteria should be used to determine what items should be placed on the List?
- Should the present gradings at I, II* and III be retained?
- What planning guidance on protection of the local historic environment would be of most value to local residents, authorities and developers?
- How would CABE's advice on post-war buildings be factored in?
- Should there be a right of appeal?

The London Forum responses:

- it would help everyone if there was a unified List for England but saw severe problems in creating it and keeping it up to date.
- responsibility for listing should remain with the Secretary of State. The prestige and public acceptability of listing and designation is due in no small measure to their being performed by a Government Minister, elected and democratically accountable.

→ Continued from page 11

Heritage in peril?

'Heritage Counts', launched in November, is English Heritage's audit of the state of the whole historic environment. It shows both that much of England's heritage is at risk, yet it could be our greatest asset and, if properly cared for, can bring social and economic regeneration and enhancement of all our lives. The heritage lobby has had its opportunity to make this point to Government with the revival of the ODPM Select Committee's inquiry into the ROLE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN REGENERATION. The Civic Trust submitted a lengthy written proof of evidence, and was invited to give oral evidence to the Committee in January.

Living Spaces is the name of a scheme to provide money and advice for environmental change – community gardens, parks, ponds, nature areas, etc. Any group can apply for grants from £1,000 - £100,000. Contact Living Spaces, Caversham Court, Church Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 7BR (0845 600 3190; email info@livingspaces.org.uk).

Interphone payboxes

English Heritage have written to OFTEL about the dilapidated condition of Interphone public payphone kiosks around London, asking them to invoke the terms of the license to secure either proper maintenance or removal. They are poor condition, frequently derelict, mostly fly-posted and all damaging to the appearance of the areas where they are located.

A Thames National Park?

This was the idea launched on 3rd December by Sir Terry Farrell. His concern is that new homes on brownfield sites cannot form the sole vision for the Thames Gateway and, in any case, the proposed new development can mainly be accommodated on brownfield land and will only add 5% to the built-up area; the rest will remain countryside. We have an opportunity to create a new landscape asset for London and the Thames Gateway – a Thames National Park. For further information contact Catherine Murphy at Terry Farrell and Partners (020 7258 3433; email cmurphy@terryfarrell.co.uk).

Lawworks for community groups is a project launched by the Solicitor Pro Bono group, which aims to provide free business law advice to community groups through a network of voluntary lawyers from law firms and in-house business legal departments. For details contact Heidi Newbigging at 1 Pudding Lane, London EC3R 8AB (0870 777 5601; email heidinewbigging@probonogroup.org.uk) ■

For information about the London Forum contact:

Peter Eversden Chairman
London Forum, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ
Telephone 020 7250 0606
email londonforum@wayahead.demon.co.uk

Peter Pickering Assistant Secretary
3 Westbury Road, London N12 7NY
Telephone 020 8445 2807 email pepickering@virgin.net

Helen Marcus Membership Secretary
Telephone 0207722 1414 email helenmarcus@britishlibrary.net

Meetings at Cowcross Street

Diary dates for 2004 – make a note, details to follow.

22nd March

Olympics for London and the Lea Valley

19th April

London Transport Users Committee

11th May

Planning issues – Planning Bill and new legislation, LA's performance

8th June

Housing issues – including the Barker report

8th July

The Mayor's Plan for London – a presentation and review discussion

23rd September

AGM – Guest speaker Simon Thurley – the importance of heritage to regeneration

Planned for October and November

Public Open Space – jointly with CABE-space and Landscape Institute
Crossrail and Channel Euro link

24th June – Special treat

A summer evening Thames cruise – bringing all Societies and Associates together

– From the Embankment Pier at 6.15 pm, returns 10.15 pm
– Delicious buffet, pay bar, excellent company aboard
– Commentary between Embankment and Woolwich will be given by those who know what is happening along the river

– Tickets £25

– A minimum of 80 passengers is required, so make sure you are one; to avoid disappointment let **Tom Ball** know now that you intend to join. Telephone **020 7834 5173** or email bouncer@waitrose.com

newsforum

Editorial team Michael Hammerson, Helen Marcus, George Parish, Tony Aldous

Design Ross Shaw

Print CLP London, Telephone 020 7278 4461

Published by the London Forum, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ. Telephone 020 7250 0606

Member societies are encouraged to use London Forum news in their own newsletters.

While the London Forum is concerned that the views written in articles are relevant and honestly held by the contributor, the opinions stated by individuals may not necessarily be held by the London Forum Executive, who are not in a position to vouch for their factual accuracy.