

newsforum



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

The London Forum of
Amenity and Civic Societies
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Heathrow

Heathrow – Betrayal

The Government has betrayed the electorate with its decision to expand Heathrow. **Peter Eversden** and **Helen Marcus** report

Parliamentary approval for the third runway and sixth terminal at Heathrow represents a shocking betrayal of the electorate by the government. The decision continues a disgraceful succession of broken promises, concealment, and undue influence from vested interests that goes well beyond mere "lobbying". Neither the government nor BAA can be trusted.

Undue influence

The most sinister aspect is the emergence of information about the behind the scenes links with government, described in The Observer as a "revolving door" policy between Downing Street, Whitehall and BAA. The Observer reported that senior MPs are demanding a Commons investigation into the evidence that an intricate network of contacts between BAA, British Airways, the government and the Labour party, several of whose senior figures are involved in the pro-runway campaign, was able to "crush the environment lobby". They list such examples as:

- BA's PR firms: Brunswick, headed by Gordon Brown's friend Alan Parker: Lexington Communications, run by Mike Craven, a former Labour press chief.
- A financial PR company, Finsbury, employed by BAA is headed by Roland Rudd, a close friend of business secretary Peter Mandelson.
- BAA's group director of corporate and public affairs since 2007, Tom Kelly, was formerly the official spokesman for Tony Blair.
- Julia Simpson, is another former adviser to Blair, now working for BA.
- Joe Irvin, former head of corporate affairs

at BAA, and involved with one of the main aviation lobby groups, Freedom to Fly, is a key adviser to Gordon Brown,

- Stephen Hardwick, ex-head of public affairs at BAA, was a former adviser to John Prescott.
 - Lord Turner, chairman of the supposedly independent Climate Change Committee, is a former director-general of the CBI, whose current president, Martin Broughton, is chairman of British Airways. Turner said it would be possible for aviation to be expanded while still meeting the target of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 80%.
 - The government kept important data secret from the public and local authorities while environmental impacts were being assessed - yet it was freely shared with the owners of Heathrow (BAA) who stand to gain most from its expansion.
 - Lord Soley, former chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, is campaign director of Future Heathrow, (successor to Freedom to Fly) funded by the aviation industry to support the expansion. For Lord Soley, when interviewed on BBC Radio, to disparage the Greenpeace campaigners as "well heeled types", is truly offensive. Are not the people he represents – the business lobby – "well heeled types"? What point is he trying to make – that the right of lawful protest be removed?
- Revelations of a similar nature now emerging in the financial sector call into question the fundamental integrity of the British democratic system and its practitioners. Lobbying is undermining democracy throughout the British government.

A string of broken promises

Every promise made by government has been broken.

- When Terminal 4 was approved in 1978, the Inquiry Inspector recommended a cap on the number of flights at 275,000 a year.
- In February 1980 Aviation Minister, Lord Trefargne announced in the House of Lords that there should be no further major expansion at Heathrow: "The Government concludes that the idea of a fifth terminal at Heathrow and a second runway at Gatwick should not be pursued. This effectively limits expansion at these airports."
- The cap was never enforced. By the time T4 was opened there were over 300,000 flights.
- In 1999 BAA said in a letter to residents: "We do not want, nor shall we seek, an additional runway."
- Terminal 5 was approved in 2001 despite that 1980 assurance. The planning inspector stated that a third runway would be "totally unacceptable". BAA agreed.
- But the Department of Transport was already planning for 700,000 flights, a third runway and a sixth terminal which they proposed in the 2003 aviation White Paper
- It pledged this would only go ahead if there were "no net increase" to the size of the area around Heathrow affected by 57 decibels of aircraft noise, the level deemed to mark "the onset of significant community annoyance"
- But for 3 years civil servants have been working out ways round the noise and pollution limits that a third runway will break, even to the extent of considering applying to Brussels for a five-year exemption from the European Union limits on air pollution (see report in Newsforum Issue 51 Summer 2008)
- 2009 the third runway and sixth terminal given the go-ahead

Pledges by the Minister, Geoff Hoon

- Noise and traffic impacts have been robustly carried out
- Expansion could only take place if agreed air pollution, noise and emissions levels were adhered to
- flights will not be allowed to increase if there is any risk of the air quality limits being breached
- "Environmental targets will be met" and extra capacity on the new runway will be allocated according to "a new 'green slot' approach to incentivise use of the most modern aircraft."
- A new high-speed rail link to Heathrow will be built

Asked for clarification on the "green slots" the Department for Transport said: "The detail will be worked up in the future."

Similarly the "commitment" to the rail link is only to carry out another study into a possible line. It appears only to have been included as an afterthought. Nine years ago the last study on the same topic was commissioned and then shelved.

The Cranford agreement, which generally prohibits easterly take-offs on the northern runway will be ended. While this will benefit the residents of Windsor and others to the west of the airport, and Hatton and North Feltham to the east, it will be a disaster for the residents of Cranford whose village is at the end of the runway.

The union Unite, which has 85,000 members working within Civil Aviation trade groups, promotes "Mixed Mode operations [that] would immediately end the misery of cascading delays and cancellations that strike this airport whenever even the most minor of problems occurs". So millions of Londoners must suffer permanent daily misery so that a few thousand people are not occasionally inconvenienced?.

And how air traffic control, already pushed to the limit of safely, will handle the massive increase in traffic, or where safe air space will be found for ever increasing numbers of aircraft, is not even mentioned.

The government's assurances simply cannot be believed. The "conditions" are unenforceable and were clearly simply inducements to keep the Cabinet together and try to pacify the Labour rebels. Most of the information in the consultation document was from BAA, and it is the Civil Aviation Authority, funded by airlines, that will decide whether noise and air quality limits have been met.

Lord Smith, head of the Environment Agency has said it would be impossible to meet legally binding targets on air pollution if the third runway went ahead.

The only question is how long will it be before these promises are also broken?

Ministerial resignations

28 Labour MPs backed the Tory motion

"It is outrageous for the Government to hide this study, which reveals how the impact of aircraft noise has been seriously underestimated".

2M group of 12 local authorities

opposing a third runway reducing the Government's majority to 19. They included former ministers Nick Raynsford, Frank Dobson, Frank Field, Andrew Smith, Kate Hoey and Peter Kilfoyle. Two junior ministers, Virendra Sharma and Andy Slaughter resigned.

The Anase study

The Anase study (Attitudes to Noise from Aviation Sources in England) was commissioned in May 2001. The then Aviation Minister, Bob Ainsworth, said: "This study underlines the Government's commitment to underpin our policy on aircraft noise by substantial research that commands the widest possible confidence."

In 2007 the study findings undermined the case for building a third runway at Heathrow on the grounds of noise and the Government attempted to conceal it.

- Aircraft noise causes much more annoyance than previously thought;
- Measurement of aircraft noise, is outdated and fails to take account either of the huge growth in the number of flights or the public's growing demand for quietness;
- Significant annoyance starts at around 50, not 57 decibels: 258,000 residents live in the 57-decibel area; ten times that number live inside the 50-decibel area.

The 2M group of 12 local authorities, covering two million residents living under Heathrow's flight paths, said: "It is outrageous for the Government to hide this study, which reveals how the impact of aircraft noise has been seriously underestimated. They are trying to sneak through the third runway consultation without giving the public the full facts."

The economic case

Apart from a report commissioned by the

GLA, on the DfT's White Paper, *The Future of Air Transport in the United Kingdom*, by Colin Buchanan and Partners, (December 2003), there has been no independent study of the economic impact of Heathrow. The economic case for expansion is widely regarded as being wafer-thin. Buchanan finds "little analysis or explanation of wider economic benefits of airport capacity"; "unrealistic assumptions"; "benefits have been overstated"; and "no attempt has been made to quantify or detail the benefits of the impact on productivity and foreign direct investment". "What matters here is not where expansion takes place, but how easy and quickly it is to get from the airport into London. Good surface access links to the centre of London is therefore more the issue."

He recommends that more analysis be undertaken "before suggesting expensive infrastructure investment projects"; and that "other ways of dealing with capacity constraint by increasing operating efficiency, as well as the possibility of introducing or modifying existing market rules governing air travel in the UK and the EU need to be assessed before considering additional runways."

BAA's £25 billion of debt

BAA's Spanish owner, Ferrovial, is laden with over £25 billion of debt, throwing doubt on the Airport's ability to raise sufficient funds for these projects. In recent press reports, Joaquin Ayuso, Ferrovial's chief executive, said that work on the third runway and other projects "can't be financed with bank debt. It will be financed with bond issues once the market has calmed down."

Many of the airlines are also in deep trouble. BAA admitted that passenger numbers at Heathrow had fallen last year by 1% and the decline had steepened towards the end of the year. Lufthansa reported a year-on-year 6.7% fall in passenger numbers; premium business traveller demand at British Airways, one of its most important sources of profit, dropped 13.7% in January; Virgin is planning to reduce capacity by 7 to 10% in the next 12 months and even Ryan Air has reported a fall in passenger numbers. Cargo traffic fell by 16.7% year-on-year in January. With talk of the worst financial crisis for a 100 years, even supposing there is any money to build a third runway, will it still be needed?

The truth about the hub claims

One of the most disputed and contentious

claims is the Airlines argument that Heathrow must remain a hub airport, and that this benefits the British economy. Buchanan points out that even the White Paper contradicts this:

"Our assessment suggests that the greatest economic benefits are obtained by providing capacity in locations which are convenient for as much as possible of the total demand. That is better achieved by a more dispersed pattern of capacity than by concentrating all additional capacity at one location." suggesting that there is no specific need to increase capacity at Heathrow in order for it to maintain its hub role.

Bob Ayling, former chief executive of British Airways, goes further: "Transfer traffic in its own right is loss making - transfer passengers, for whom such a hub would be built, spend no money in Britain". The truth is that they are profitable for BAA, because they spend money in its shops, and possibly for British Airways, because they fill around a quarter of its seats. But they bring nothing else to the UK economy. On the contrary they cost the Treasury millions in lost potential revenue because transfer passengers do not pay air passenger duty.

Misleading claims justify hub activity:

- The union Unite, claims that: "In terms of connectivity from UK cities to a hub....Heathrow is lagging behind and now being surpassed by five European rivals". Recent research shows that London is actually the busiest city in the world in terms of passengers travelling through its airports. In 2007 a combined total of 139 million passengers used Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton and City airports. That compares with 88 million who used all of the Paris airports, London's closest European rival.
- Foreign transfer passengers are essential to maintain the high number of destinations served by Heathrow. In fact the rapid growth in numbers of transfer passengers – at 18 million, more than a quarter of all passengers - has coincided with a decline in destinations, from 227 to 180 since 1990.
- Expansion will generate tourism benefits. The UK's global share of tourism receipts has fallen by 20% over the last 10 years and VisitBritain reported

a 12% fall last year despite sterling's decline against other currencies. The tourism deficit - UK tourists spend more overseas than foreign tourists spend in the UK - has now reached £20bn.

- 65,000 new jobs will be created. This is questionable. The union Unite states that "Terminal 5 averaged about 8,000 jobs at any one time, but over 50,000 individuals worked on the site at one time during the construction process. These new services and the staffing of Terminal 6 will probably require another 15,000 to 16,000 staff". So it would appear that the majority of these jobs are connected to construction and that the real permanent figure may well be much lower.

Buchanan finds that: "expansion of airport capacity in the South East will generate similar employment, regeneration and agglomeration benefits irrespective of where that expansion takes place..... at Heathrow or any other airport."

The real economic disbenefits

Unlike other transport modes such as rail or car, aviation is exempt from tax on fuel, potentially £9 billion a year, and VAT on ticket sales, and is allowed to sell duty-free products to extra-EU passengers.

As Norman Baker, the Liberal Democrat transport spokesman, said: "These are devastating figures which show that the third runway is being built to help international transfer passengers who never leave the airport. If the number were reduced, we wouldn't need a new runway..... we don't need foreign transfer passengers to make routes viable. They are there simply to satisfy the greed of BA and BAA.

Spreading out the misery

The reality for millions of Londoners is that flights at Heathrow will increase from 480,000 to 605,000, with an extra 600 flights a day over London. From 2020, total flights will be allowed to rise to more than 700,000. Evidence is already emerging that BAA has quietly drawn up plans for an extra 7,500 night flights over London each year once the third runway is built, and is forecasting a jump in night flights of almost 30% once the third runway is operating at full capacity.

Flawed arguments

The arguments for Heathrow expansion

are flawed and the noise impact underestimated. The proposals would result in serious levels of pollution, gridlock on roads around Heathrow and noise along new flight paths that would harm to those living, learning and working there. Tens of thousands of extra cars will add to congestion on nearby roads; more than 2,000 people will lose their homes when the village of Sipson is demolished; thousands more will be forced to live within a few hundred yards of the new runway; and hundreds of schools would be adversely affected with local authorities unable to afford to soundproof them. All this so that a few rich businessmen can get even richer.

If BAA were forced to pay appropriate compensation to the millions of Londoners whose lives are made a misery so that they can make profits, the whole enterprise would be shown up as unviable.

Too many of the Heathrow flights are not necessary: short-haul, some transfer and charter flights should be moved to other London airports. The third runway makes it impossible to meet the government's commitment to reduce carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050. Buchanan found that "Environmental concerns and modifying assumptions used in the economic appraisal weaken the case for Heathrow expansion in relation to expansion at other London airports".

The democratic deficit

London's residents resent the fact that their elected Members were denied the opportunity of debate and voting on Heathrow expansion by the Prime Minister and that their own lives will be affected without sufficient justification.

And of course we do not yet know what impact the new Planning Act, brought in under the guise of speeding up the planning process so that Britain can move to a low carbon economy, will have on the outcome of any inquiry – or if there will even be an inquiry. Greenpeace purchased land on the proposed site, to divide it between thousands of individuals in an attempt to delay the process with legal challenges. But government now has the powers to fast-track big, polluting projects like the third runway without any concern for climate change or local people's views.

The only light on the horizon is that both the two opposition parties have declared themselves against the expansion plans. But can they be trusted to keep their promises? ■

For Sale – Crystal Palace Parkland

John Payne, Chair of Crystal Palace Community Association warns of a potential threat to public parks and green open space across the country.

On 9 December 2008, Bromley Council approved a planning application that could threaten public parks and green open space across the country.

Crystal Palace Park, former home of Sir Joseph Paxton's world famous glass masterpiece, is to be 'regenerated', courtesy of the Mayor's London Development Agency (LDA). The Park, owned by the London Borough of Bromley, is Grade II* registered, lies within a conservation area and is designated Metropolitan Open Land.

Initially, LDA intervention was welcomed, with its promise of worthwhile investment. In November 2007, it submitted an 11,000-page, £67.4 million 'Masterplan' application - the largest Bromley has ever received.

Replacing trees and grass with concrete and brick

Controversially and disregarding the Park's protected status, the Masterplan includes sale of public parkland for 180 private luxury apartments to provide match-funding for "basic Park improvements." The application includes 132 flats in five-storey blocks, replacing London's only caravan and camping club, considered an acceptable use of the Park's MOL. The Club brings significant numbers of visitors and revenue to the area - a claimed objective of the Masterplan. Elsewhere within the Park boundary, six four-storey blocks will replace park-related facilities.

The estimated £12 million from selling this parkland to developers excludes the cost of relocating the Caravan Club, the One O'clock club, the replacement of the Park maintenance depot recently built with HLF money, consultants' fees and VAT.

Widespread objection ignored

The neighbouring four boroughs, Lewisham, Southwark, Lambeth and Croydon, objected to the housing, recognising the adverse precedent that would be established.

Public opinion has been equally unequivocal. The LDA concedes that its own consultation demonstrates substantial majority opposition to the sale of any parkland, as has a 7,000-signature petition to the London Mayor, results of a poll in the local press and polls conducted by local ward councillors. Letters of objection received by Bromley to the Masterplan far outweigh the handful of letters of support.

Giles Dolphin, Head of Planning Decisions at City Hall, wrote in support of the

A planning application that could threaten public parks and green open space across the country

Masterplan: "The Mayor has concluded that... the inappropriate residential development is justified by the unique and exceptional characteristics of this park which have led to the urgent need for the improvements (which themselves have widespread public support)." The London Mayor made no reference to his widely-publicised pre-election pledge to: "protect London's green and open spaces" and his written statement that he "did not feel the building of houses on the precious parkland is a suitable way forward."

Bromley's neglect of Crystal Palace Park can now be copied with impunity by other councils who wish to build private developments on public parks. Instead of absolute presumption against such misuse of public open space, it can now be exploited on the spurious claim of 'regeneration'.

Cheap transport options

Parkland grab does not stop there. Transport for London proposes to route the Croydon Tramlink Extension through the Park, construct a tram terminus on the Park's hilltop and double the size of the existing bus station. Mayor Boris Johnson has, for the moment, halted proceedings due to lack of available finance, but a planning condition keeps this area available to TfL for 10 years.

TfL has discovered elsewhere that routing tramlines and associated infrastructure through a park dispenses with compulsory purchase orders, land costs and interference to the road network. The tram will bring no cash benefits to the Park and no evidence has been provided by TfL to support their claim that the tram extension would help local trade in Upper Norwood. Empirically it is more likely to take business away to larger town centres.

The future for our parks?

The LDA does not hide its ambition to make Crystal Palace Park as self-sufficient as possible. But should our public parks be funded with commercial investment? Will

this Park be the model for future funding of all our parks? How can these vital green lungs in our intensely urbanised landscape be protected from inappropriate development when commercial enterprise must see a worthwhile return on its investment? Already developers have spotted the opportunity and are proposing a 'rebuilt Crystal Palace' on the Park; in reality a vast hotel, conference, retail and leisure centre, marketed as a fairy tale, but in truth a desecration of public parkland for private profit.

Local authority spending on park maintenance has dropped by a staggering 35% in the last 17 years. National Audit figures show that expenditure on green space has not kept pace with the increasing level of overall local authority spending, or the increasing amounts spent on other environmental and cultural services.

We need a new initiative to fund our failing green spaces - one based on national policy. With ever-increasing housing densities built with limited or no amenity space, the Government and the London Mayor must accept the vitally important role that parks play, recognise the very real problems they face, and devise a strategy to ensure these precious open spaces in our urban environment are protected for all time, benefiting both us and future generations.

Will a call in save the day?

As a departure from its local plan (UDP), the application was referred to the Government Office for London for a decision by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Hazel Blears, whether it should be subject to call-in and public inquiry. On the 30 January 2009 The Secretary of State did indeed call it in because she considers that "the proposal may conflict with national and regional policies on important matters."

A local public inquiry will be held by a Government appointed Inspector and a final decision made by the Secretary of State.

If it fails Bromley's neglect of Crystal Palace Park can be copied with impunity by other councils who wish to use private developments on public parks as part of a funding strategy. Instead of absolute presumption against such misuse of public open space, it can now be exploited on the spurious claim of 'regeneration'. ■

Follow events at: www.cpcpa.org.uk

News from the Mayor and GLA

Issues of concern to Londoners

Continuing concern about tall buildings

The London Forum continues to be concerned about the way the Mayor, Boris Johnson, appears to be breaking his pledges about tall buildings. The last Newsforum had details on the adverse impact on the South Bank and historic views caused by the Mayor's and Hazel Blears' concessions to developers. Since then, the Mayor has changed his mind again, this time he has withdrawn his earlier opposition to a tower by Ealing Broadway station.

A letter for the London Forum was published by the Evening Standard in response.

The Mayor also approved the 31 storey skyscraper that would remove east London's Queens Market in Upton Park.

Member societies are urged to watch the Mayor's Planning Decisions Unit reports for their borough carefully on the Mayor's website:

http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/planning_decisions/

Economic forecasting

If economic forecasting and financial analysis for the GLA is of interest to you, there is a section on the GLA web site for the Economics Unit's studies, planning projections, a monthly newsletter 'London's Economy Today', reports and forecasts.

There are workstreams on various business sectors and social issues. The latest London Economic Development Snapshot for January 2009 is available through

http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/economic_unit/

New Deputy Chairman, Transport

Daniel Moylan, who was an outspoken Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning and Housing Policy in Kensington and Chelsea has been appointed Deputy Chairman of Transport for London.

His approach to streetscape improvement has been one of raising the quality, clearing the clutter and taking a much more sensible attitude to risk. It is hoped that he might bring some of that same vision to dealing with the streetscape of London. Councillor Moylan's promotion may also provide opportunities – a step-free underground system, station improvements, and clearing up the signs on Red Routes.

Open House London

London's great architecture festival 19-20 September 2009

As usual Open House would be delighted to hear from you about any interesting buildings that could be included. They are also seeking new volunteers as guides.

Story of London Festival – June 2009

A new capital wide cultural Festival produced by the Mayor of London's office. History, architecture, art, theatre, music, food, film and fashion.

For more information or to get involved with these events, contact Jeni Hoskin on 020 7383 2131

email: jhoskin@openhouse.org.uk

www.openhouse.org.uk

The Priority Parks project

London boroughs have nominated almost 100 green spaces in their areas that are in need of extra care. In this new scheme funding will be available for improvement to ten parks. 47 were shortlisted by a panel of experts and Londoners were given the opportunity to vote on them by the end of January. The winners will be the two parks in each of the five London sub-regions, which get the most votes.

Find more information at:

www.london.gov.uk/parksvote

Recently announced Strategy documents *Open Space Strategies - Guidance*

The updated best practice guidance aimed at ensuring best use of open spaces was published jointly by the Mayor and CABI Space in December. It can be seen at http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/sds/open_space.jsp

Time for action is a youth crime action consultation paper aimed at tackling the long-term causes of criminality and violence by young people. The main proposals are: to work with young offenders to help them into employment; to reduce truancy; to increase the number of children in care going to university; increase young people's self-respect through organisations such as the Scouts and Girl guides; increase sports activities for young people in London. Details at <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/crime/timeforaction/>

Climate Change Adaptation Strategy

has been published for consultation with the Assembly and GLA functional bodies.

The draft is available at

<http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/publications/2008/docs/climate-change-adapt-strat.pdf>

A draft Housing Strategy for London

was announced in November promising investment of more than £5 billion on a range of measures including: shared ownership schemes; making properties in private developments available for social housing. Details at:

<http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/housing/hca-board/index.jsp>

Way to Go!

The Transport for London's ten-year business plan includes £2.4 billion in efficiency savings which are to be used to deliver a 30% increase in the transport network by 2018. The following schemes will not be taken further

- Thames Gateway Bridge;
- Cross River Tram;
- Croydon Tramlink extension;
- Oxford Street Tram / Transit;
- East London Transit
- Greenwich Waterfront Transit;
- Public space redevelopment as had been suggested at Parliament Square, Euston, Victoria Embankment;
- Docklands Light Railway Dagenham Dock.

However TfL News announced that £18.5M extra funding will be provided from DCLG and Department for Transport for the second phase of the East London Transit from Ilford through Barking to Dagenham Dock.

Completion of orbital rail system

On 12 Feb 09, Geoff Hoon announced an extra £64M for TfL to extend the East London Line to Clapham Junction from Surrey Quays, providing four trains an hour between Dalston Junction and Clapham Junction by May 2012. That link will complete the orbital rail system.

Details at

<http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/publications/>

TfL News is available as a pdf file via email or in printed form by request through

gsrc@tfl.gov.uk

Clean Air in London

European Commission has launched legal action against the United Kingdom for failing to comply with the EU's air quality standard for dangerous airborne particles by **Simon Birkett**, the Founder and Principal Contact of the cross-party Campaign for Clean Air in London.

Live in a big city and you risk suffering from fumes, breathing difficulties, even premature death. Yet the government has spent 10 years in denial about the United Kingdom's (UK's) air quality problems. The rest of us know differently and action is long overdue.

For change to happen, UK citizens may have to rely on the European Union's (EU's) legal framework that first put legal force behind World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines for air quality in 1999. That framework was updated on 11 June 2008 when a new EU directive on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe entered into force (the new AQ directive). These EU laws are reflected in UK laws.

On 29 January 2009, the European Commission used the new legislation to start infringement proceedings against 10 Member States, including the UK, for failing to comply with the EU's air quality standard for dangerous airborne particles known as PM10. These particles, emitted mainly by industry, traffic and domestic heating, can cause asthma, cardiovascular problems, lung cancer and premature death.

Of the 10 Member States mentioned, only the UK, Cyprus, Estonia, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden had made no effort to request, under certain conditions, limited extra time allowed under the new AQ directive to meet the PM10 standard in force since 2005.

Environmental, social and economic cases for action

Poor air quality has serious implications for public health resulting in between 12,000 and 24,000 premature deaths each year in the UK – those with asthma, lung diseases and heart conditions, particularly the very young and the old, are most susceptible. These numbers compare with some 617 such deaths per annum from workplace-related passive smoking before recent legislation came into force and up to 22,000 premature deaths per year related to alcohol consumption.

The Rogers Review in 2006 stated that, in 2005, the UK's annual cost of health impacts from PM10 alone was between £9.1 billion and £21 billion per annum. Aside from the terrible human cost, the economic case for action was made in the government's own Air Quality Strategy in 2007 when it stated that 'policies in the road transport sector and

The government has spent 10 years in denial about the United Kingdom's air quality problems.

electricity sector have been shown to be very cost beneficial with benefits estimated to have exceeded costs by up to a factor of 24'.

This public health crisis is not surprising when air pollution near our busiest streets is so bad. During 2008 in London, for example, the average annual concentrations of another air pollutant, a toxic gas called nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), in Marylebone Road, Kings Road and Brompton Road were 102, 92 and 91 micrograms per cubic metre (mg/m³) respectively (and they have started at a similar level or higher in 2009). These measurements compare with the WHO's guideline, set in 2000 and re-confirmed in 2005, and backed by EU and UK law, of a maximum average annual concentration of 40 mg/m³. The air we are breathing hardly bears thinking about.

Article 22

Nearly 10 years on, the government has failed to deliver WHO recommended standards of air quality throughout the UK. Fortunately, as well as ensuring protections on PM10, the new AQ Directive provides in Article 22, amongst other things, that the UK cannot get a time extension from meeting its legal obligations for NO₂ by January 2010 unless it ensures that average annual concentrations of NO₂ remain below 60 mg/m³ thereafter. This means that air pollution near London's busiest streets, for example, must be reduced by more than one-third within a few months. The government has known about this obligation since early 2008.

One result of the recent infringement action and Article 22 is that they could still stop the Heathrow expansion in its tracks. This issue should also concern London Mayor Boris Johnson as he launches his formal consultation in mid-2009 on the possible removal of the western extension to the Congestion Charging Zone. Then there are the London Olympics in 2012. The organisers are already facing a public

relations disaster now that the European Commission has launched infringement action to protect public health in the UK (in contrast to Beijing which broke no air quality laws). The legal obligations rest on the UK as a Member State.

At the Campaign for Clean Air in London, we expected the European Commission to take robust, early enforcement action against the UK for three reasons. First, without it, the EU's broader air pollution strategy, including its post-Kyoto climate change negotiations, would be a 'laughing stock'. Second, with the new AQ Directive being a hard-fought compromise between those who wanted to achieve all the WHO's standards for air quality and those who wanted delay and greater flexibility, it would have been unthinkable for the European Commission to fall at its first enforcement hurdle. Third, the UK (and London in particular) can be singled out for the scale of its NO₂ breaches. Legal action on PM10 could be followed as early as Spring 2010 on NO₂ breaches.

Problems and solutions

The government has admitted that road transport is the cause of all breaches of air quality laws in the UK with diesel emissions being by far the biggest single component.

The solutions involve two overlapping 'circles' of measures – one for congestion and the other for emissions - that target the most polluted areas with technology-based solutions and create a 'tipping point' of behavioural change backed by awareness, persuasion, incentives and regulation (when necessary). In one 'circle', road pricing is essential, fair and much needed in areas like central, east and west London, to tackle congestion and 'make the polluters pay' since vehicles produce less than half as much air pollution once their speed reaches 30 kilometres per hour. It should operate seven days per week.

In the other 'circle', we need one or more additional, inner, Low Emission Zone (LEZ) to reduce harmful emissions. It will join dozens of others around Europe which target the most polluted areas of large cities. Unless the government sets, belatedly and soon, national standards for the abatement of emissions of oxides of nitrogen from older diesel vehicles of all the main types, these vehicles must be banned soon by LEZs from the UK's most polluted streets.

Three recent London Forum meetings

After nearly 10 years, the government must take action

There are clear environmental, social and economic cases for improving the UK's air quality quickly. Despite this, the government has shown itself incapable, over 10 years, of mustering even the political will needed to meet its environmental obligations. It has listened to the same siren voices that argued against the creation and enforcement of the Clean Air Act introduced in 1956.

We need a new approach urgently from the government and Mayor Johnson that will give stakeholders of all types, whether from business, the non-governmental sector or citizens generally, the certainty and time necessary to play their full part in delivering the required changes in the most cost effective manner. Failing that, we shall have to rely on the European Commission and others to pursue legal action to defend WHO-based air quality laws. ■

For more details please see
www.cleanairinlondon.org

Transport Trends

Transport Trends 2008 was released on 12 February 2009

It presents an overview and analysis of trends in transport and travel in Great Britain over the past twenty five years, and highlights some of the key issues.

Freight moved by truck accounts for 68% of all goods moved in the UK, compared with just 8% moved by rail and 20% by water.

The average truck journey is 87km, while rail carries freight an average of 207km. Water journeys tend to be longer at 403km.

At the 'Keep London Moving' conference at the NLA on 12Feb, Michele Dix said RfL policy is for consolidating deliveries and having an electric London Lorry.

You can download a PDF version from the introduction page or e-mail publicationgeneral.enq@dft.gsi.gov.uk for a free copy of the publication. ■

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/trends/>

Transport Strategy January 2009

Garrett Emmerson, Transport for London's Director of Strategy and Policy, was the speaker at London Forum's Transport Strategy open event at the Gallery in January.

Garrett Emmerson summarised recent transport improvements and explained future challenges posed by growth in population, businesses and visitors in relation to the Mayors' 'Way to Go' document. The consultation and transport priorities in the TfL Business Plan to 2017-18 will contribute to a new Mayor's Transport Strategy replacing the 2001 version.

The aim is to improve transport capacity by 30% - including transformation of the London Overground network, smoothing traffic flows and encouraging cycling and walking. There will be improved transport accessibility, better safety and security

There is still overcrowding on some Tube and Network rail routes, busy pavements in shopping areas, road traffic congestion, competition among road users and poor air quality. It is intended that the new Transport Strategy will pre-empt the problems expected by 2026 in crowding and congestion, and provide a start to tackling climate change by a 15% reduction in emissions (a 60% carbon dioxide reduction from the 1990 level).

The Mayor has said he will respect transport choice but Garrett assured the London Forum members and guests that did not mean an approval of car usage. There would be projects to help inform people about transport options and more travel plans.

A lively question and answer session

His talk was followed by a lively question and answer session including some interesting discussion about treasury rules and funding. Simon Birkett for the campaign for Clean Air and Mayer Hillman emphasised the adverse effect of emissions upon quality of life and climate change. Other concerns were the need to upgrade to Ealing Broadway station; schemes to persuade people to give up their cars; problems associated with free transport for all children; the proposed new Routemaster; the merits or otherwise of gyratory systems; inadequate analysis of pedestrian volumes and movements, railings at traffic lights and the long delays on red phases, and the impact of the Olympics.

There was general agreement that improvements achieved in High Street Kensington were exemplary and should be considered everywhere. ■

Stephen Thornton's full report can be seen on the London Forum website

London Forum's third survey

The results of responses to London Forum's 20th Anniversary survey of members were presented by Moira Forrester, at a meeting in November last year.

It is one of the most comprehensive surveys we have done and will help all of us in the civic and voluntary movement. There was a high response rate, so the results are a very good picture of important achievements, significant issues and challenges.

The meeting discussed the implications and how the information should be used to plan the activities of the Forum in the years ahead. We need to decide suitable priorities for the Forum and its members in future in the light of the results and of government and GLA policy changes; and how London Forum members will work with boroughs following the Government's proposals for empowerment in the Communities in Control White Paper, a summary of which can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/885997.pdf> ■

Open Spaces & Parks

Open Spaces & Parks was the subject of the London Forum's event last December when the speakers from the GLA London Plan team were Jane Carlson, Jan Hewlett and Tony Leach. The Mayor's Priority Parks programme covering the 97 parks in all boroughs was described; the winners of the keen competition by boroughs for part of a £6 million fund to assist local development and improvement will be announced in February 2009. There are some 600 Friends groups in London for which boroughs provided start-up funds.

Among topics raised during a lively discussion were: the need for open green spaces; maintenance of parks by out-sourcing versus in-house; the desperate need for adequate resources to arrest the deterioration of many parks. ■

Spotlight on English Heritage - London Region

A new approach to heritage protection - and a plea to societies and London Forum to help with comments on conservation areas

by **Tony Aldous**

Two paradoxes confront us when we look at English Heritage's London Region.

First, it is older than its parent: English Heritage came into being in 1984, bringing together responsibility for historic buildings and ancient monuments, which had been parts of two different governments departments, and taking them out of Whitehall and into a semi-autonomous "quango" – and, incidentally, allowing Michael Heseltine to claim a big reduction in the number of civil servants employed by his department.

But an effective body for policing and promoting care of historic buildings in London already existed in the Greater London Council, and on the GLC's abolition in 1986. The government was persuaded to transfer its functions and expertise to EH. Those functions and expertise had begun life in the mid 1950s under the GLC's predecessor, the London County Council. Ergo, child is older than parent!

The second paradox stems from EH being a two-headed animal: it is both the Secretary of State's lead advisor on all aspects of managing the historic environment, and the guardian of buildings, monuments and landscapes which the state has taken into care. This, says its London region director Paddy Pugh, gives it a real understanding of the financial realities of owning historic properties, which in turn underpins its statutory work in controlling change. But, he adds, it also calls for great care to ensure that income-generating activities at properties in care don't erode high standards of conservation and presentation.

Pugh's 45-member London Region staff – made up of architects, archaeologists, architectural historians and related conservation specialists and based (with other EH departments) in the Grade II listed Prudential's former Holborn headquarters, Waterhouse Square – are the "policeman". But that description is misleading. Its activities and ethos are much more positive than "policeman" implies. Its *raison d'être* is not static preservation, but the overall enhancement of the historic environment – achievement of which requires creative compromise.

Current projects

Thus Paddy Pugh points with pride to the role his team played working with developer

London & Continental and its architects on St Pancras International and the seven years spent with developer Argent and its team hammering out a redevelopment and conservation package for the 53 acres of King's Cross Central. This includes retention and adaptation of Lewis Cubitt's splendid six-storey Granary of 1852 as a home for the University of the Arts and imaginative re-use of a gasholder as the "curtain wall" for new flats. It is currently working with developers to find a way of preserving the supposed "white elephant" Commonwealth Institute while giving it a new and useful life.

But these are not for the most part the activities that get Paddy's team into the news. Fighting public inquiries is. It had a notable success when, with others including the Twentieth Century Society, it defeated the Thornfield and the City of London Corporation's plan to demolish Smithfield's General Market Building. "The inspector rejected every single argument they put forward," he says, adding that he was saddened that a local planning authority with a statutory duty to conserve went along with its estates department's wish for clear-and-rebuilt development. Architects McAslan are now working on a conservation-led scheme.

Other inquiry appearances

Other inquiry appearances have been less successful. EH's case that the 1000ft high Shard of Glass would have a damaging impact on the Tower of London World Heritage Site failed to convince the inspector; and though another inspector concluded that Coin Street Community Builders' scheme for a tall tower just south of the National Theatre would damage the setting of Somerset House, St James's Park and Lasdun's Grade I listed National Theatre, the Secretary of State overruled him. Westminster City Council and EH have now secured a judicial review which they will fight in March. Perhaps influenced by warning noises from UNESCO doubting whether the English planning system adequately protects World Heritage Sites, the minister has called in another tower scheme to replace Elizabeth House next to Waterloo station, and EH will fight that.

EH's duty to fight damaging development

Paddy Pugh notes that there have been Freedom of information Act inquiries asking

how much EH's inquiry battles are costing, as if it were a waste of taxpayer's money. He makes two points: first, as the government's statutory adviser on the historic environment, EH has a duty to make the case against damaging development, especially at a call-in inquiry like Elizabeth House. Secondly, if there were an effective, comprehensive strategy for testing the impact of tall buildings, some at least of these cases would never have got to inquiry. Ken Livingstone's enthusiasm for super-tall buildings as a symbol of economic virility got in the way of including an effective high buildings policy in the London Plan; the present mayor is reviewing this and Pugh has hopes of a more robust framework. Meanwhile EH has itself published draft national guidance, *Seeing the History in the View*, which sets out a methodology "for assessing heritage significance within views". Perhaps Boris can be persuaded to use it and move at least London away from ad hoc decision making. "It is, after all," observes Pugh ruefully, "supposed to be a plan-led system".

Bill to reform heritage protection

One recent disappointment is that the economic crisis pushed legislation to reform heritage protection out of the Queen's Speech. The bill prepared by EH was designed to replace the current rather confusing regime for designation and management with one which would consider the historic environment as a whole. For the first time, statutory control of proposals to change historic buildings, areas, monuments, landscapes, battlefields (London has one: in Barnet) and marine wrecks. This will be exercised through a single "heritage asset consent".

So the loss of this measure from the current legislative programme is a disappointment; but the government has given assurances that it is still committed to the measure. The measure is postponed, not dropped. And Paddy Pugh says EH can achieve 60% of what is intended without legislation. One change it is making builds on the success of the Buildings at Risk Register, which in London started in 1991. EH has been able to take 92% of buildings then registered off the list as satisfactorily dealt with. It is now applying the same approach to the entire historic environment – "It's a modern Domesday Book," he says.



Paddy Pugh

English Heritage London Region

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Improving conservation areas

But the big push this year is on conservation areas. EH has sent a questionnaire to all local authorities in England asking about the state of their conservation areas: are they in good health? What needs to be done to improve them? It plans to back this up by asking local amenity societies for information and comments. "Perhaps London Forum could help coordinate this," he suggests.

His 45-strong London organisation operates in four teams, three of them geographical: East, led by Nick Collins, a surveyor by training; North, with conservation specialist Mike Dunn; and South, with Timothy Jones, a historian. The fourth team, Policy and Planning, led by Graham Saunders, is concerned with the statutory planning process and its activities include reviewing local plans. They work closely with CABE and national amenity societies, including SPAB, Georgians, Victorians, Twentieth Century, and SAVE.

Paddy Pugh himself is a surveyor by training, who quite early on became a planner. He describes himself as "a Londoner through and through" and previous postings have included 12 years in Camden and a spell as a conservation officer in Westminster. He and his colleagues are greatly helped by the expertise and authority of EH's London Advisory Committee – something it inherited from the GLC. Chaired by former Government Office for London chief planner Joyce Bridges who is both an EH and a CABE commissioner, it includes such respected professionals as architects Graham Morrison and John Allen, planners Peter Bishop and Andy Karski - and London Forum's landlord, lateral-thinking engineer and environmentalist Alan Baxter. ■

St. Pancras Station -the iconic hotel frontage



Its raison d'être is not static preservation, but the overall enhancement of the historic environment – achievement of which requires creative compromise.



Smithfield General Market Building

Age: 25, going on 54; born English Heritage born 1984; subsequently inherited GLC's Historic Buildings section, established under the London County Council in 1955

Circumstances of birth: Michael Heseltine wanted to be able to say he had reduced the number of civil servants employed in the Department of the Environment. Moving historic buildings and ancient monuments staff into an arm's length quango allowed him to do this. It had the real longer-term advantage of greater independence.

Biggest successes: (1) EH's role in restoration and extension of St Pancras into the Eurostar terminal and in shaping the adjacent Kings Cross Central development, with historic buildings imaginatively reused. (2) Public inquiry success in saving Smithfield's General Market building. (3) Publication of its policy document Seeing History in the View. (4) Drafting of a parliamentary bill to reform heritage protection.

Biggest disappointments/ frustrations: (1) Not yet won arguments about impact of tall buildings on London's historic environment. (2) Omission of heritage reform bill from Queen's Speech – shelved because of economic crisis.

Present preoccupations: (1) Move from Buildings at Risk register to Heritage at Risk register. (2) Health check on conservation areas

Working details: EH's London Region (director: Paddy Pugh) is responsible for heritage protection and heritage grants in Greater London. Its current budget is just over £5m (£2.7m of it earmarked for grants). It benefits from the recommendations of its 15-member London Advisory Committee. Publications range from its recent policy document on high buildings to its four-times-a-year series Changing London. The prestigious Survey of London volumes come from another part of EH.

Special characteristics: Increasingly works with developers and their architects to manage change so as to preserve but give new life to the historic environment.

Last word: "London is one of the world's great cities. Its historic environment lies at the heart of its success as a place where people want to live, visit and work. Change is inevitable, welcome and invigorating. English Heritage has a crucial role to play in managing change so that it reinforces, rather than undermines, the qualities which make London a very special place. My team are working to secure the best of London's past while helping to shape its future." ■

Seven Dials - urban regeneration in the city centre re-inventing a lost neighbourhood

An exemplar of modern conservation, that brought the local community, the conservation bodies and the local council to work together on the restoration of an important urban landscape in the heart of London. by **David Bieda** Chairman, The Seven Dials Trust

Seven Dials in the West End is the only quarter of London remaining from late Stuart England. In the creation of our capital city we have a small pantheon of well known architects, but those who actually laid it out and created it in the 17th and 18th centuries are now largely forgotten – whether Thomas Neale in Seven Dials or John Meard Senior and Junior in Soho – famous at the time and now forgotten.

By the early 1970's Seven Dials had lost its identity and population. Over 90% of the area's residential units had lain empty for more than 40 years in the expectation of wholesale demolition and if you mentioned 'Seven Dials' you were likely to be referred to Agatha Christie's novel of the same name. In spite of the plethora of late 17c houses, the magnificent early 19c ex brewery buildings in both Camden and Westminster, and the unique layout, this was a forgotten neighbourhood.

We began life as the 'Seven Dials Housing Action Area' Committee (1977-1984) became the 'Seven Dials Monument Charity' (1984 – 2003) and are now the 'Seven Dials Trust'. The process of regeneration has been long and is ongoing. Our interesting journey has involved history, architecture, gnomonics, conservation, horology, street improvements, lighting, battles against demolition, establishing a partnership between the voluntary sector, local authorities and the private sector and much else.

Creation - Thomas Neale

Seven Dials was one of the many creations of Thomas Neale, MP (1641-1699), 'The Great Projector'. An extraordinary man, one of the most influential figures of late Stuart England, and one of the least chronicled. An MP for 30 years serving on 62 parliamentary committees, Master of the Mint and the Transfer Office and Groom Porter under three kings, gambler and entrepreneur and husband to two of England's richest widows. His projects ranged from the development of Seven Dials, Shadwell, East Smithfield, and the Pantiles, to land drainage, steel and papermaking, and mining in America. He was involved in writing numerous tracts from the idea of a National Land Bank, the year before the Bank of England was founded, to issues relating to coinage. The range of his



St. Giles Parish Map of 1723 by John Strype, showing the final layout of Seven Dials and the orientation of the Sundial Pillar. Courtesy of the Guildhall Library, London

interests and activities in a short life of 57 years is difficult to comprehend.

By the early 1670's he was described as 'a person of Vast Estate and of great Interest as well at Court as in the City and Country'. He was one of the small group who went to welcome William of Orange (William III) on his arrival in England on November 5th 1688, hence the unveiling of the new Sundial Pillar at Seven Dials in 1989 by HM Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands as the finale of the 1988/9 William & Mary Tercentenary celebrations.

In 1690 William III granted him the freehold of the land then known as 'Marshland' or 'Cock and Pye Fields' (after a public house on the site) in return for his raising over £1m for the Crown via England's first lottery – 'the talk of the town' according to Pepys and based upon 'lotteries after the Venetian manner' – also leading to Venetian sash cord windows.

A clever design to maximise value

Plans for a building licence submitted to Sir Christopher Wren, the Surveyor-General, in 1692 showed six streets, at least 311 houses and an estate church but Neale cheated by adding a street and failing to build the church, thus increasing his land value without providing the "social facilities"! The streets were forty feet wide and the Sundial Pillar forty feet high. Neale did not copy the then fashion for squares because rents were charged by frontage and this layout maximised rentals and thus the land value.

Neale commissioned England's leading stonemason, Edward Pierce, to design and construct the Sundial Pillar in 1693/4 as the centrepiece of the development. He laid out the area in 1692/3 but the development was not completed until 1713 and Neale sold out 1695.



lay empty and in a state of dereliction - quite difficult to recall today. Many of the houses in Monmouth Street still had (charming) gas lighting and my own house at No. 1 Shorts Gardens had one cold tap in the rear yard in 1976.

Resurrection

In 1974 and after much lobbying, Seven Dials was declared an Outstanding Conservation Area (only 36 existed in the UK out of 7,000) and in 1977 a Housing Action Area, within the GLC's Covent Garden Action Area. Between 1977 and 1984, the HAA Committee (6 residents, 6 businesses and Camden Council Officers in partnership meeting every six weeks for seven years) brought back into use all 198 vacant residential units, encouraged major private and public housing schemes and new businesses began to move in. Both the housing and employment base of the area were regenerated as a sustainable community. The HAA was an exemplary partnership and the most successful of the HAA's in Camden at the time. The population increase was maybe 5/600% with many examples of outstanding housing and was a national exemplar of economic regeneration through active conservation of the built heritage.

Re-creating the Identity & the Space The Sundial Pillar at Seven Dials

The Seven Dials Monument Charity was established in 1984 at the request of Camden Council, to restore the Sundial Pillar, and to promote major environmental improvements on the expiry of our Housing Action Area. Our first task was the Pillar – the first project of its kind since Nelson's Column in the 1840's.

The search for the Pillar

Every book on London says that the Pillar was pulled down by the mob in 1773 in a search for buried gold. Our founder trustee Sir John Summerson told me I would be wasting my time researching otherwise and I was pleased, as an ex history student, to find the truth after three days going through newspapers at the BM. The Pillar was deliberately pulled down by order of the Paving Commissioners in 1773 in an (unsuccessful) attempt to rid the area of undesirables who congregated around it as recorded in the 'Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser' in June 17th, 28th and July 10th 1773, and to considerable protest at the removal of 'this great public ornament' (Morning Chronicle 10.07.1773).

Its remains were eventually purchased via public subscription and re-erected on The Green at Weybridge as a memorial to the Duchess of York. Various attempts were made in the last century to have the Pillar returned to its original site in Seven Dials, but Weybridge DC refused to return it, especially when we persuaded Camden to write demanding proof of purchase from 1842!

Fortunately, Edward Pierce's original working drawing from 1692 was held in the British Museum. However our architect AD 'Red' Mason (Whitfield Partners) found that neither the drawing, nor the marked dimensions, nor the remains at Weybridge quite tallied. One of the greatest problems was how to design the foundations so as to satisfy all the authorities whose services ran underneath. For example, how could the main sewer be repaired without the Pillar falling down?

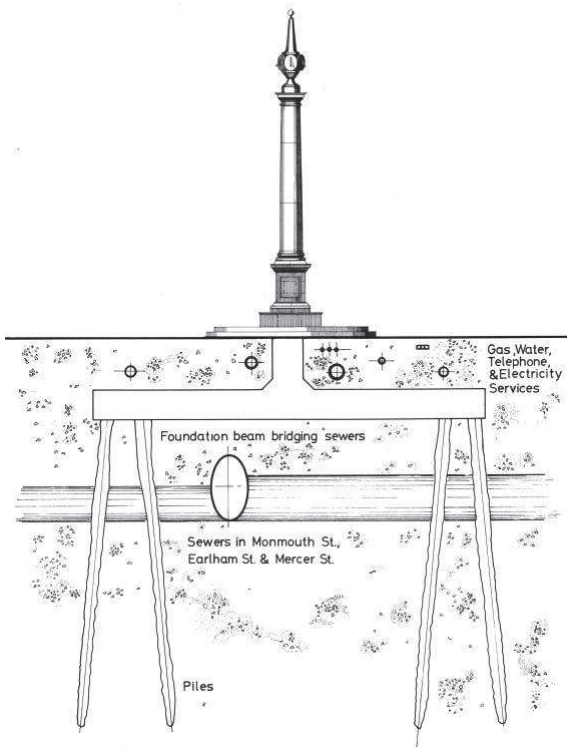


Top: Seven Dials by William Hodges c. 1775, just after he returned from Captain Cook's second expedition to the South Seas in the Resolution
Above: The only known portrait of Thomas Neale on a rare Medalet of silver and copper *Courtesy The British Museum*

Decline

The first inhabitants were "respectable", gentlemen, lawyers, and prosperous tradesmen. However by the middle of the 18th century, 39 night-watchmen were needed to keep the peace. By the early 19th century the area became famous, together with St. Giles to the north, as the most notorious rookery in London, shown on Charles Booth's poverty map of 1889.

In 1974, when the Covent Garden Fruit and Vegetable Market moved after two centuries, many of the buildings in Seven Dials



The drawing showing the Pillar's foundations

The ingenious solution can be seen in the drawing above with the Pillar's foundations three times as deep as its height of 40'.

The Pillar was made largely by hand, as in 1693/4, using traditional wooden mallets to drive fine sharp steel tools. Machines were only used on the larger stones to cut the blocks for the outline shapes. It is made from 'Whitebed', one of the finest natural beds of Portland Stone, chosen because of its weathering qualities and for the ease of working some of the finer details. The bulk of the work was carried out by trainee masons at Vauxhall College and Ashby & Horner Stonemasonry Ltd, one of the largest youth training projects for many years in England. Caroline Webb designed, carved and gilded the Dial-faces in her studio in Wiltshire, each face carved exactly to the astronomer's calculations.

The erecting process alone took two and a half months and planning consent had to be obtained. It was essential that the Dialstone, weighing 1 tonne, was placed accurately so that each face enables different hours of the day to be read. Three days were spent with the astronomer on site, raising and lowering the Dialstone, with the result that each of the 6 faces is now accurate to within ten seconds.

Unveiling ceremony by HM Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands

The unveiling ceremony was performed by HM Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands and Prince Claus, to mark the UK finale of the year long 1988/9 William & Mary Tercentenary celebrations. The reconstruction of the Sundial Pillar and a great deal of media coverage began the process of restoring the name Seven Dials and thus re-creating its identity. Beyond that it also began the process of re-creating a more civilised public realm – as the AJ wrote:

'The re-erected column now serves as a wonderful object lesson in the creation of urban space and of street life. What had degenerated into a mere crossroads has once again become a Classical circus and, thanks to the built-in stone seating at the base of the column, it has also become a popular place for meeting, sitting and conversation.' (AJ - 27.07.1989).

The Seven Dials Renaissance Project 1992 Façades | Streets | Lighting | Public Spaces

Although Seven Dials was a Conservation Area with Outstanding Status, had been a HAA and within the CG Action Plan none of these mechanisms provided an overall and holistic mechanism for improving the totality of the public realm and the mostly privately owned building façades.

We decided to explore the possibility of a comprehensive mechanism to encourage all the property owners and authorities to co-operate in works which are historically appropriate to enhance the character of the area as a whole.

Praise for a ground breaking Environmental Study

An Environmental Study of the area was commissioned and a multi-disciplinary team, including architect and town planner, Peter Heath, and architectural historian Dr. John Robinson, was appointed, with funding from the Kleinwort Benson Property Fund. The first version of the Study was published in 1992 and, to the Charity's surprise, was described as the first publication of its kind in the UK, followed by a short congratulatory debate in the House of Lords. The study sets out a holistic action plan for every element of the built environment from façades to street furniture, lighting, footway and carriageway treatments. It also includes a major exhibition – 'Architecture, History, Horology', which is available on free loan (36 display boards). It attracted praise from all quarters:

'If the proposals for Seven Dials were carried out they would lead to a national show-piece and something to which many could turn as a source for guidance.' The RTP1

'... this is the first time an holistic approach has been adopted to provide a detailed framework for the development of the total environment of an historic district of London... for this reason it could act as a model for other historic areas across the country' EH And from Camden Council (rather unusually for a local authority):

'I write to congratulate the Seven Dials Monument Charity... this initiative... is a first for Camden and I believe for possibly for Greater London... It seems the financing of a Study by local interests can produce a degree of discussion on issues affecting the character and appearance of an area, and a commitment to proposals for enhancement, which the received wisdom of the Local Authority preparing proposals for consultation, will not match.'

Ironically just as the study was published P&O Properties applied to demolish half of Monmouth Street South and half of Earham Street East – which would have destroyed the area. At the subsequent appeal this work played a key role in the Inspector's decision to reject the appeal. Shaftesbury PLC bought the sites and much else in the area and our success has much to do with their unusual and enlightened approach to managing their West End estates including China Town and Carnaby Street.

The Study was re-written and re-published in two volumes in 1998 with the aid of a three year grant from the Department of National Heritage/ Department of Media Culture & Sport, and the Foundation for Sports and the Arts, as a national exemplar. This led to similar nearby studies – 'Caring for Covent Garden' (the Covent Garden Area Trust, 1996 and 2003), and 'Historic St James's' (the St. James's Conservation Trust). It falls into three broad sections – a historical

analysis and the current planning context; a survey and drawings of each façade with individual recommendations and sections dealing with signage, paint colours, shopfronts etc; a section with proposals for street improvements, furniture, lighting etc. We are in the process of up-dating it for our website.

To realise the action plan we formed a partnership between the parties who have the power to implement it – the area's main freeholders and the local authority on the Camden side. Initial works were carried out in 1991-3 and Kleinwort's who funded the original study voluntarily increased their then S.52 planning agreement from £100,000 to £450,000 to fund works in Shorts Gardens and Earlham Street.

The Study has encouraged private investment of c.£3million by Shaftesbury using the Study recommendations for all their many façades and we began on the final stages of the project in 2001 with the support of Peter Bishop who became director of planning and culture at Camden.

Major improvements to Monmouth Street using traditional materials are mostly completed funded 50/50 (£760,000) by the Trust & Camden Council and will be followed by improvements to Earlham Street Market and the Dials in 2009-10. The Monmouth Street works using multi-coloured dressed setts has won a number of awards and the template has been copied by Westminster in Long Acre and TfL in Shaftesbury Avenue. These works take place under the Clear Zones banner and aim to combine our Study's objectives with improving pedestrian movement and spaces.

We have eschewed the fad for pedestrianisation which usually does not work in the West End and instead gone for traffic management and a reduction in through traffic. In high density mixed use areas in the city centre the dis-benefits were apparent in Neal Street which was overwhelmed by illegal street trading and more recently with the ill-fated Soho traffic management scheme where Old Compton Street became a mega outdoor bar until the early hours.

The lighting group

As well as our environment group we set up a lighting group in 2002 and have designed our own 'Windsor' style lantern. The group

includes Westminster, EH, the Corporation of London and the Mercers' Company and the tender was won by Lefebvre SA in France. This is a very complicated project on both a technical and

aesthetic level and after many meetings and three prototypes should come to fruition later this year. All the lamp columns throughout Seven Dials and down to Long Acre will be replaced by the magnificent façade lantern designed by our colleague Paul Draper, probably with sugar bowl refractors and not the standard glaring pot optic. The lighting engineers from the three authorities have played a key role on the technical and maintenance issues – their main concerns hinge around sustainability. We have the funding for our lighting project – around £96,000 - but completion of all the remaining street works will cost around £1.3m.

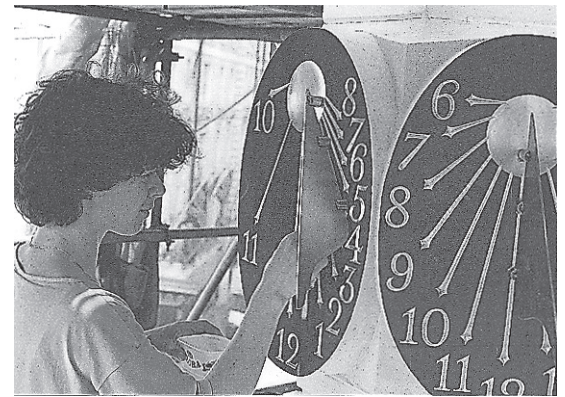
So we hope, somewhat later, as these things do take time, to prove that the RTPI were correct!

A tribute

Finally we should pay tribute to our partners who have not just helped finance this project, but who have done so with enthusiasm and long term commitment. Shaftesbury PLC: who made major donations and also employed their planning consultants and surveyors who played a key role on a wide range of technical work. Creating a cross border lighting partnership was made possible by Cllr. Robert Davis at Westminster and Cllr. Sue Vincent at Camden and much valuable support was given by officers at Camden, including David Reidy, Forward Planning and Martin Reading Head of Highways Engineering.

What are the lessons?

Have a clear and holistic vision based upon a detailed building and spaces analysis and ensure that you have an open and transparent partnership to implement it so it does not sit on a shelf as so many studies do. ■



Top: The repaving of Seven Dials, 1986. Camden Council, with Government support completely repaved the circus and created a new island for the Pillar's reconstruction

Middle: Caroline Webb gilding the sundial faces

Bottom: The unveiling of the re-erected monument in 1989, performed by HM Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands

Round the Societies

A round up of news from our member societies.

By **Haydn Mylchreest**

Readers are naturally curious about other Societies' activities and this column aims to highlight a few interesting topics. But my source material for the chosen topics is your newsletters and journals, so please let me have a copy of each edition as it is published. Another reason the newsletters are useful is because they give information on changes to committee membership and this enables me to up-date our database.

Evolving plans at Battersea Power Station

Battersea Society has had the opportunity of meeting the developers of the Battersea Power Station site to discuss the implications of their overall plans and how they are evolving. The latest information is that the eco-dome structure has been relocated nearer the river and the height of the "chimney" reduced from the originally proposed 300 metres, but there is concern that the eco-dome structure will be too dominant a feature and that the world-famous view of the Houses of Parliament might be threatened.

Alarming amounts of litter

Bexley Civic Society gives a prominent place in the Society's autumn newsletter to Bill Bryson, chairman of the Campaign to Protect Rural England. He is spearheading a campaign to clean up Britain which should receive our enthusiastic support. Some of the statistics in his article make shocking reading, and his statement on the lack of enforcement of existing litter laws is alarming. We should be shamed into action.

20-mph zones

Several Society mention these in their newsletters including the **Blackheath Society's** December edition. Such a zone has been in operation for about three years in Blackheath Village. Apparently, police records reveal a marked reduction in accidents but the Society is concerned that various speed bumps and tables are not effective in slowing down traffic. Bromley Road Safety Consultative Panel is asking Bromley residents if a 20-mph speed limit should be introduced on all "non-priority" roads in the borough.

Concerns about flights from City Airport

Both **Blackheath** and **Charlton Societies** draw attention to concerns that have been expressed about the application made by City Airport to increase the number of flights from 73,000 to 120,000. Blackheath has opposed the application and wonders what other expansions are planned at the airport. Charlton which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, notes that plans include flights from City Airport to New York; presumably larger aircraft would be used than those currently using the airport, and that would imply increases in noise and pollution.

Kingston upon Thames Society awards.

Every two years the Society gives awards for development schemes judged to make a contribution to the environment of the Borough. The December 2008 edition of the *Kingstonews* carried photographs of the six schemes that were selected as being worthy of an award for the period 2007-08.

An anniversary at Mill Hill

The **Mill Hill Preservation Society** celebrates its 60th birthday this year. Much more rigorous enforcement of planning approval conditions is called for by the Society. Several schemes are commented on in the winter 2008 edition of *MPHS* and a common feature is the lengths that developers will go to take advantage of what appears to be lax supervision by Council staff.

Preserving green spaces and gardens

Dulwich Society reports that a Planning Inspector has ruled in favour of objections to a scheme to build a house on part of the rear garden in Dulwich Village and said this development "would compromise the openness of this area and deprive it of its semi-rural character." This decision is consistent with other recent refusals and is seen as presenting a serious impediment to development proposals for other 'backland' within the Village.

Evidence is being gathered by the **Isleworth Society** on the use made by the public over the last 20 years of Isleworth Green with the aim of having the Green formally registered as a village green using the provisions in the Open Spaces Act. The attraction of registration is that development of any kind would not be allowed on the land in future. Readers of this column will follow progress with interest.

Along with other Amenity Societies, the **Knightsbridge Association** has expressed its concern at the increasing use made of the front lawns of the Waterhouse Building of the Natural History Museum for commercial purposes. An example is the use of both the East and West lawns by London Fashion Week for two periods of six weeks each year which detracts from the setting of the Grade 1 listed building and denies normal use by visitors to the museum.

London Parks & Gardens Trust. Lovers of gardens and related history will be pleased to know that the Garden Museum in the old church next to Lambeth Palace re-opened last November after a three-month closure for internal changes including the installation of new galleries.

Did you know that London has a new park called Northala Fields? It is located on land alongside the A40 which used to be Kensington & Chelsea playing fields. There are four man-made hills in the park constructed with the spoil excavated during the Wembley Stadium and Westfield Shopping Centre projects.

Open Spaces has backed campaigners against the installation of 12 floodlit, five-a-side football pitches on Tooting Bec Common on the grounds that the pitches would be fenced and therefore not accessible to the public. Although the Wandsworth Council has proposed to swap part of the Common for the Woodfield Recreation Ground, this is not seen as a fair exchange since the recreation ground is already a public space.

A light railway for North London?

At a recent meeting of the **Finchley Society's** Environmental and Transport Committee, an idea was put forward by the Campaign for Better Transport for a light railway, similar to the Docklands Light Railway, to run from Finchley Central to Mill Hill East, along a new track to Finchley Road via Colindale, Hendon and Brent Cross shopping centre. At Brent Cross there would be connection with a similar line to Wembley Stadium, Park Royal and Ealing Broadway. ■

newsbriefs

Key issues of interest and concern to note.

The Killian Pretty review - the new Barker?

Published in November 2008, its purpose appears to be to speed up the development control process, and concerns about this raised at draft stage have had no effect.

For major developments there will be

- formal pre-application discussions involving, where appropriate, all relevant parties, including elected members, statutory consultees and representatives of the local community.
- greater use of Planning Performance Agreements for major applications.

Of particular concern are:

- Considerably expanding the scope of permitted development for non-householder development.
 - making obtaining planning permission simpler by revising and expanding the existing simpler consenting system (known as prior approval);
 - reducing burdens on applicants from having to provide "unnecessary" information or validation requirements, particularly for householder and minor developments;
 - substantial changes to the way local lists are drawn up.
- London Forum members should lobby their MP to seek adequate community participation in the planning decisions process.
[w http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/kpr/kpr_exec-summary.pdf](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/kpr/kpr_exec-summary.pdf)

New permitted development class Basements

The number of very large subterranean extensions to properties concerns many amenity societies in London. One major concern is the possible damage caused to neighbouring buildings; another is the length of time the construction can take – in some cases more than two years – with the attendant noise, vibration, and blocking of parking spaces.

The Government's new Permitted Development rules allow for limited development of this kind. Now the Communities and Local Government department has issued a report which recommends the creation of a new basement extensions permitted development class for inclusion within a Householder Permitted Development Order, Class G.

It includes limitations based on length, breadth and depth but for the first time basement lightwells will be "permitted development" except in conservation areas where all lightwells on principal elevations or on elevations facing a highway should require planning permission.

Listing - a salutary warning

Streatham Society newsletter carries a salutary story of the demolition of a fine Victorian gothic mansion – it is a lesson for all historians and conservationists who must be alert when plans are afoot for new developments. The building in question was the manager's house of the adjacent Conyer's Road Pumping Station, a Grade 11 listed building dating to 1888. The story concerns the failure of the Society to realise the mansion was not itself listed; the Society was under a false impression that the mansion was part of the listing that applied to the pumping station.

Sustainable Communities Act

The Sustainable Communities Act gives community groups, local residents and councils a new power to tell central government the action they should take to improve the sustainability of communities. More information about how people can lobby their local councillors to make use of this new act is at
[w http://www.localworks.org/](http://www.localworks.org/)

Parish councils

Recent legislation enables parish councils to be established in London for the first time. They can create some bye-laws and manage some local services such as parks, community halls and community transport. More information at:
[w http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/697732](http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/697732)

Regional Network Funding

The Government has announced £1.5million to support third sector regional networks. Despite claims that "Regional networks help ensure that the voice of local third sector organisations shapes regional policy and strategy", it seems that the 'Third Sector' is seen only as those regional and local voluntary organisations with large budgets that are delivering services for Government and local authorities for health, education, deprivation, rehabilitation and services for the elderly, etc., and that Civic community networks are not recognised or included.

London Forum is considering an enquiry to the Minister, Kevin Brennan, on why regional organisations like ours cannot get the financial support he described, for our work representing communities in dealing with the GLA and regional agencies, and building community participation and capability.
 [It's called putting money where mouth is!]

[w http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/news/news_stories/081126_regional.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/news/news_stories/081126_regional.aspx)

Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill

This seeks to create greater opportunities for community and individual involvement in the decision-making processes of local public authorities [*do you get the feeling that we've heard this somewhere before? Ed*] and to ensure that councils respond to petitions and can consider other matters raised by citizens in their area.

Key areas are provisions for greater involvement of local authorities in local and regional economic development; a new duty for local authorities to assess economic conditions; a joint duty on regional development agencies and local authorities to produce a single regional strategy; and powers for councils to co-operate in promoting economic development.

Additional provisions include: separation of the Boundary Committee for England from the Electoral Commission; a new body to represent the interests of housing tenants in England at national level; new powers for audit authorities to produce public interest reports on entities connected with local authorities; and improving the operation of construction contracts particularly as regards cash flow and adjudication.

newsbriefs

LDFs.

It will be essential for London Boroughs to draw up these documents to replace their UDPs over the next 2 years or so. Members need to use the oft repeated commitment to community involvement as best they can to ensure they are involved in the process. We give details on this page of two important meetings to help members deal with these issues. The Government has published several papers on the way a borough Sustainable Community Strategy, with its quality of life aims and themes, should be carried into the preparation of the Core Strategy of the LDF and related to Local Area Agreements and Planning Obligations. The Core Strategy is supposed to drive the preparation of spatial policy by Development Plan Documents, Area Action Plans, Town Centre Action Plans and other policy documents in the LDF. They must also be in conformance with the London Plan for development control purposes, on siting of tall buildings or protection of local views, etc. The Mayor of London has taken over responsibility for approval of the Local Development Scheme from the Government Office for London. More information on the Department of Communities website: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/planningandbuilding/pps12ldf> ■

The Civic Trust Griff Rhys Jones Appeal

The recent appointments of Griff Rhys Jones and Philip Kolvin, as President and Chair respectively of the Civic Trust, will give the civic society movement the higher profile it needs.

With many policies that affect the issues in which we have an interest, now being decided at national level, it is more important than ever that the civic society movement has a strong campaigning voice within government and the media. The Trust would also like to provide better services and training opportunities for Civic Society members to help them deal with the impact of these policies.

To help provide that the Trust needs to recruit dedicated staff who will make sure the concerns of civic societies are raised with government ministers and in the press. As you will, appreciate, there is a cost to this and the Civic Trust has therefore launched the Griff Rhys Jones appeal.

You can support the appeal by making a donation to the Civic Trust or taking out personal membership of the Civic Trust.

Find out more at www.civictrust.org.uk ■

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London Forum event

Open meeting on the preparation of

Local Development Frameworks

Monday 16th March 2009 6pm for 6:30pm

The Gallery

70/75 Cowcross Street EC1 (near Farringdon station)

An opportunity to hear how the LDF process should be operating, following the 2008 revisions to PPS12. The preparation of local Core Strategies, Area Action Plans and other Development Plan Documents LDFs has implications for London Plan revision, for community empowerment in local authority work and for the preparation of masterplans for opportunity and intensification areas, some of which involve more than one borough.

Entry is free to London Forum members

Non-members fee £3, payable at the door.

Planning Aid for London

Planning for Sustainable Communities

- getting the most out of the big 4!

Thursday March 26th, 2-5.30pm

The Guildhall Marketing Suite.

This event will explore and clarify the relationship between **Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS)**, **Local Development Frameworks (LDFs)** and **Local Area Agreements (LAA)**.

Bookings must be made by contacting

Lucy Barton at london@rtpi.org.uk or telephone 020 8613 8357

newsforum

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