

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society incorporating FOIL folio

Unique link with Camden Proposed

The decision of Chief Executive John Foster not to seek an extension of his contract has given rise to first in local government - the idea of a Chief Executive shared by two neighbouring but freestanding local authorities

Councillors explore the options

With a spending review imminent and likely to reduce spending to a minimum, councillors of both authorities have taken the opportunity to consider whether one chief executive could serve two authorities, saving a salary of the order of £200, 000. Moira Gibb has been Chief Executive at Camden for more than six years, a long time in politics these days. Appointed by a Labour administration, she has survived two changes of political control. This ground breaking new post, if it is created, would offer a unique opportunity for career development within London.

Camden and Islington have historically been linked, sharing a long boundary. In the 1974 Health service the two boroughs combined to form an Area Health authority and some health links have been maintained. There are obvious links at King's Cross and Finsbury Park. On the other hand, there have been times of political strain, and accountability to two groups of councillors would not be easy as there would always be a temptation to see decisions favouring the other side over their own. This is far from a done deal. Camden's education service under the ILEA was linked to that in Westminster, and this has been perpetuated by the GLA boundaries which bizarrely separated Camden from Islington despite an initial recommendation to the contrary.

Where will it end?

If the two Boroughs were to share a chief executive, it would be logical to look at shared chief officers as well. The break-up of the ILEA created some of the smallest education authorities in the country and the cost of a Chief Education Officer for each of them is out of proportion to the amount of schooling for which they are responsible. The City of London has two schools, Birmingham has hundreds. The chief officer for education has a brief that spreads into social services now, but even

so there must be advantages in combining the administrative support. Having merged vast departments it is a small step to merge across the Borough boundary. Ultimately, there could be a single borough of Camden & Islington, but this would require legislation and has implications for all of inner London. At least the names might survive under this scenario: Hammersmith-Kensington-Chelsea-Fulham is surely too much of a mouthful.

Camden planning policy

In view of possible closer links with Camden, a recent editorial in the London Forum newsletter, *A dangerous threat to the democratic process* may be salutary. "Regular high-level reports over the last year have been critical of the creation of too much badly drafted legislation in the last 10 years. Few people are aware of a series of statutory instruments, legislation and new bodies created in an attempt to ensure that local councillors do not engage in corrupt practices, that led to a Cardiff councillor being upbraided for a disparaging remark on Twitter about Scientology, calling it 'stupid'.

"This case revealed the repressive way in which the Code of Conduct is now being interpreted by some Councils and misused to muzzle councillors. I had personal experience of this [continued on page 2]

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a few years ago when I called my local Camden councillor to discuss a contentious planning application in my street. I was astonished and mystified when she told me she could not discuss it with me. I thought she was just being difficult. As a result of the publicity given to this case I now know that the real reason why that happened was much more sinister. Under an arcane heading of "fettered discretion", council lawyers are telling councillors that prior discussion with a constituent on a planning issue could be judged as "apparent predetermination" on their part and could result in them losing their ability to speak on behalf of their constituents or to vote at any subsequent planning meeting. It has wider implications than just planning. If you were elected to the council, having campaigned and spoken out about any matter of local concern, you may find that it is a breach of the

code for you to speak or vote on that matter in any subsequent committee meetings. You have "a prejudicial interest" in it and are therefore barred.

"It is shocking that a code of conduct designed to stop councillors fiddling their expenses or accepting money for support in planning applications is actually being used to restrict the freedom of councillors properly to represent their electorate.

"The "prejudicial interest" policy is a direct assault on freedom of expression. That a public official could rule against an elected councillor for expressing his or her opinion on a matter of public interest is a dangerous threat to democracy.

"The coalition partners have apparently committed to legislate to prevent use of the 'prejudicial interest' bar. It is urgently required."

Cycling added to the public transport offer

Towards the end of June, the Mayor introduced a cycle hire scheme to the streets of central London. The London Forum has reviewed its impact.

Boris Johnson's cycle scheme seems to have got off to a good start and already has a dedicated Boris Bike website, calling itself 'An independent community forum for London's Cycle Hire scheme'. It is aimed to have 6,000 bicycles eventually and new cycle routes. There are 400 docking stations, the design and placing of which has caused problems in some conservation areas. Over 12,000 keys at a cost of £3 each were despatched to those who signed up for the scheme across the city, allowing them to unlock the grey and blue bikes.

In characteristic fashion Mayor Johnson was quoted as saying: "These are public property now. It's absolutely crucial that people recognise that they belong to all of us. I'm a Conservative mayor, but what we're doing is a gigantic communist experiment." He was also keen to emphasise that it was his idea and not his predecessor Ken Livingstone's.

Those who sign up for membership must pay a deposit of £300 and then it costs £1 for 24 hours, £5 for the week or £45 for an annual membership. The first 30 minutes of any journey will be free, and

the next 30 minutes will cost £1, with rising costs for journeys of more than one hour, up to a maximum 24 hours, which is £50. Casual users will be able to hire bikes in due course.

Barclays Bank is spending £25m sponsoring the scheme and the bikes are emblazoned with their blue logos.

It is estimated that about 9% of people coming in to work in central London come by bike, which makes it the seventh highest figure out of 20 European capitals. Those with the highest numbers of commuting cyclists are, not surprisingly, Copenhagen with nearly 60% and Amsterdam with 45.6%. Rome manages only 1%, Dublin 4.8% and Paris 5.3%. Although cycle use in London has doubled in the last decade, the number of fatalities has actually fallen.

There is some anecdotal evidence that users of the hired cycles are not part of the minority of cyclists who flout the law at junctions and pedestrian crossings. The existence of an identifying number on the bike may be the necessary deterrent.

Islington in Bloom

The Islington Society took part as one of the Sponsors of Islington in Bloom 2010 as reported in our last Newsletter. We sponsored category "Best Forgotten Corner" with three awards: Gold, Gilt and Silver.

The judging in June and July was based on appropriate choice of plants, together with their health and maintenance, wildlife friendliness and the use of water conservation techniques.

The 2010 winners of "Best Forgotten Corner" were:

Gold	Elia Street, N.1
Gilt	Hamilton Park West, N.5
Silver	Canonbury Court, N.1

Islington Council hosted a lively and well attended function at the Assembly Hall on 5 October for presentation of the Awards to winners in the various categories. As examples, the "Best Community Garden" award was won by Culpeper Community Garden; the "Best Blooming Pub" awards - which we had hoped to sponsor - went to:

Gold	Sekforde Arms, E.C.1
Gilt	Hemingford Arms, N.1
Silver	The Old Fountain, E.C.1

Islington in Bloom arouses increasing interest locally year by year. Its success has been marked by a Gold Award in London in Bloom 2010 and a Silver Gilt Award in Britain in Bloom 2010.

National News round-up

We are again indebted to the London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies for this report.

New Government legislation planned

Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, has announced two new Bills making radical changes to the planning system and the shape of local government.

The emphasis of the new coalition Government is on localism and decentralisation, transferring power from central to local government, and putting more power and opportunity into people's hands giving them the ability to determine the shape of the places in which they live.

Future planning structure

Regional governance mechanisms would be abolished and replaced by

- A National Framework for Development with economic, environmental and social priorities; infrastructure national policy statements under the Planning Act 2008 would be incorporated; this would need the approval of both Houses of Parliament; PPGs and PPSs would be reviewed - including PPS5.
- Development Control: flexible zoning would allow changes of use without planning permission as prescribed in the development plan; there would be a presumption in favour of sustainable development, housing building incentives and 'Neighbourhood Approval', which could include a third party appeal to test conformity with the local plan.
- The appeals process would include new third party rights of appeal - but on limited grounds only. After a knee-jerk outcry of "nimbyism run riot" and

"a charter for nimbyism" from housebuilders, a more measured response followed, acknowledging that the new regulations would force the industry to re-think the way it engaged local communities and work harder with them if they wanted to get a development through the system.

Mark Clare CEO of Barratt is quoted as saying "We will learn to operate on a more local basis to meet the shift in policy". Recent research by Yougov and the NHPAU shows that 75% of people would support more housebuilding in their area if it were better designed and in keeping with their area, and if they could be sure local services did not suffer.

Decentralisation and Localism Bill

Again, this is intended to "shift power from the central state back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils.....free local government from central and regional control so that they can ensure services are delivered according to local needs" and "...empower local people giving them more power over local government". Scheduled for the autumn some of the key policies will include:

- Abolition of the Government Office for London
- allowing councils to return to the committee system, should they wish
- abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies except for London
- new powers for communities to help save local facilities and services threatened with closure, and

the right to bid to take over local state-run services

- giving councils a general power of competence
- giving residents the power to instigate local referenda on any local issue and the power to veto excessive council tax increases

- greater financial autonomy to local government and community groups
- a simplified and consolidated national planning framework

- cutting local government inspection and abolition of the Comprehensive Area Assessment

The Bill also includes the abolition of the Infrastructure Planning Commission but Bob Neill, the CLG Minister has made it clear that until the Commission is replaced it will continue to accept applications for major energy projects. There is to be a new fast track planning process for major infrastructure projects but "the difference being [the decisions] will be made by democratically accountable ministers, not unelected commissioners".

An end to 'garden grabbing'

Following initial moves late in the day by the last administration, the new government has acted swiftly to rectify what many saw as the destructive practice of 'garden grabbing' due to changes to planning guidance which put gardens into the Brownfield category. The practice has been most prevalent in London and the South East. It is estimated that about 180,000 homes were built in gardens in the last five years. Planning Policy Statement 3, Housing, has now been selectively revised to remove gardens from the definition of brownfield land.

Minimum housing density target scrapped

The government has removed the requirement for new housing to be built at a density of more than 30

people per acre.

Housing Minister Grant Shapps said: "The current system with its push for high density ... is seen to have contributed to the lack of family sized homes and flats that local people need.local communities will no longer be victims of a system designed to maximise profits and minimise choice." London has its own housing density policy.

Community Right to Build

This will allow communities to take forward developments for new homes, shops and facilities in their area. It will also allow a community organisation to go ahead with development without the need for an application for planning permission, if there is overwhelming community support for the development and minimum criteria are met. But the Community Right to Build won't be used to expand the size of communities by more than 10 per cent over a 10 year period.

Audit Commission to be scrapped.

In a surprise move in August, it was announced that England's public spending watchdog the Audit Commission, which employs 2,000 people, is to be scrapped saving £50m a year. It was claimed that "The corporate centre of the Audit Commission has lost its way. Rather than being a watchdog that champions taxpayers' interests, it has become the creature of the Whitehall state". Councils would be able to ask private companies to carry out audits. It is said that over the past few years a consensus has emerged that the burden of inspection has started to outweigh the benefits. But without an independent Audit Commission, what will happen to a council that provides inexcusably poor-quality services? Surely it provided a constitutional safeguard to ensure local government resources are used effectively?

Society publications

Twentieth Century Buildings in Islington, by Alec Forshaw, £14.99, photographs by Richard Leeney, ISBN 0-9541490-0-9
The Story of Day Flats in and around Islington, by Andrew Bosi, photographs from C.F. Day Limited and Oliver Craxton, £5, ISBN 0-9541490-1-7

An architect in Islington, by Harley Sherlock, £14.99, ISBN 9-78-0-9541490-2-4

[all of the Society's publications are available from the Society at 35, Britannia Row, London, N.1 or from local bookshops]

Books from our President and Vice-Presidents

Suicide of the West, by Richard Koch & Chris Smith, £14.99 and available on Amazon, ISBN 0-8264 9023-9.

A History of Islington, by Mary Cosh, published by Historical Publications at £18.95, ISBN 0-948667-974

53 Cross Street - the biography of an historic house by Mary Cosh & Martin King, photographs by Pauline Lord, published by the Islington Archaeology & History Society

An architect in Islington, by Harley Sherlock, £14.99, ISBN 9-78-0-9541490-2-4

English Heritage publishes commemorative plaques guidance

Commemorative plaques, which can be found on buildings of all styles and dates, are a means of celebrating the history of people and places. Today there are at least 300 plaque schemes across the country, as well as countless individual plaques. English Heritage - which has run the London-wide plaque scheme since 1986 - has now published practical and detailed guidance on every aspect of plaque work, including design, historical research and the gaining of consents.

Celebrating People and Place aims to answer frequently asked questions for those interested in embarking on a plaque project of their own. The document was compiled by English Heritage with

advice and information provided by administrators of other plaque schemes, many of whom attended the Commemorative Plaques conference held in London in February this year. Local authorities, civic societies, history groups and other bodies and individuals involved in commemorative plaques have been consulted on the guidance.

In order to strengthen the links between the many groups and organisations that are involved with commemorative plaques, English Heritage is in the process of carrying out an audit of existing schemes. Keep an eye on the website, or contact the Blue Plaques Team on 020 7973 3757 or email plaques@english-heritage.org.uk for information.

New CABE commissioners and re-appointments announced

Rab Bennetts OBE and Professor Sarah Wigglesworth MBE were appointed as new Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) commissioners earlier last month.

Rab Bennetts is co-founder of Bennetts Associates Architects, with recent projects include the redevelopment of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon and Edinburgh University's Informatics and Humanities building. Mr. Bennetts is also a founder and on the board of the UK Green Building Council. Sarah Wigglesworth MBE is a

Professor at Sheffield University and the founder of Sarah Wigglesworth Architects.

They succeed Robin Nicholson and Irena Bauman, whose commissioner terms expired this year. Joyce Bridges, M.J. Long and Lorna Walker were reappointed as CABE commissioners for a second term. The re-appointment of Joyce Bridges, who is also an English Heritage commissioner, will ensure CABE maintains its strong links with English Heritage. The four year appointments will run from September 2010.

CAMRA's Heritage Pubs website updated

The Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) has re-launched its Heritage Pubs website - a portal focusing on the country's most important pub interiors. The website now has more content, many more photographs and improved navigation.

CAMRA's National and Regional Inventories of Historic Pub Interiors form a central part of the site, including details of 293 pubs whose interiors CAMRA considers to be of exceptional historic or architectural importance. Entries are selected by CAMRA's Pub Heritage Group, following close inspection and evidence-based research.

The site also lists those National Inventory pubs that are currently regarded as being "in peril" and provides advice on getting pubs listed. A new section of the site also offers advice for Planners and other professionals on how they can help in

conserving pub heritage.

Thames Tunnel Consultation

The proposed Thames Tunnel, designed to capture sewage from the 34 combined sewer overflows (CSOs) that discharge directly to the River Thames that the Environment Agency has identified as the most polluting, needs to be up to 20 miles long, broadly following the River Thames from west to east. Thames Water has identified its preferred route and this consultation is your chance to comment on it. Deadline 20th December.

Transport News Round-up

Bicycle hire scheme launched

The long awaited scheme whereby Londoners can hire a TfL bike for use in central London commenced in June. On page two we carry London Forum's report of its introduction. The GLA transport committee is conducting an early review of the scheme, and welcomes comments from users. Can you always pick up a bike on Clerkenwell Green, and are there always places in the destination point bike bank at which to return your cycle? Has the scheme given rise to more helmet-free cycling and are you concerned about road safety?

Waiting for the comprehensive spending review

There is a sense of calm before the storm in view of grave forebodings about the effect of the comprehensive spending review. With talk of 25% cuts in public spending, and special pleading from so many other spending departments, Mayor Boris has been concentrating on the importance of CrossRail and of the tube line upgrades that are currently in progress. Consequently, there are more fears for the things he does not mention, bus services and electrification of the last bit of diesel passenger line in London, from South Tottenham to Gospel Oak.

There has been an announcement that CrossRail will proceed, but there are continuing reports that savings are being sought. As CrossRail was subjected to fourteen reviews before it was finally authorised (it was safeguarded under Margaret Thatcher and John Major was said to be supportive of the project), it would be a sad commentary on the effectiveness of those reviews if it were now found that savings could be made without compromising the value for money which the project offers. The tube upgrades grind on now that Boris has extricated us from the disastrous PPP scheme by buying out Tubelines (reported in Summer 2010). Work on the Jubilee line was badly behind schedule under Tubelines stewardship and is now expected to be completed in February 2011. It is therefore running approximately fourteen (one four) months late. There is now no start date for the Bakerloo line as a result. Work on the Northern line is further delayed, and will not now be complete in time for the Olympics; work on the Piccadilly line will miss not only this deadline but the planned

opening date of CrossRail. The Victoria line work is still expected to be completed in time for the Olympics, but problems have arisen with new train sets breaking down, causing disruption to services during the week in addition to the continuing inconvenience at some weekends.

Enabling EMUs to operate between Gospel Oak and Barking would achieve operating savings as well as improving the service to passengers. It remains a Network Rail responsibility although the savings would accrue to LOROL and to the freight operators.

The bus subsidy has escalated since the creation of the GLA/Mayorality. Despite telling us that outer London had been neglected by his predecessor, the mayor continues to disregard the bus (the only form of public transport in many parts of outer London), raising fares by more than those on the tube, and confining investment to the Borismaster bus which if developed would operate in central and inner London.

Shoreditch station

It is understood that LOROL is reviewing the decision to put Shoreditch High Street into zone 1. Reports from the last stakeholders meeting suggest some uncertainty about what is under consideration, but it appears that they are looking for a way of limiting the damage to passengers who board or alight at the station. The gates would remain in zone 1 but the line be in zone 2 as pledged in 1994. This would meet the stated objective of the East London Line (to encourage passengers out of overcrowded zone 1) and would end the anomaly of Dalston Junction to West Ham costing more than Dalston Kingsland to West Ham. It would not address the feeling of deceit felt by the users of the old Shoreditch station who were persuaded to withdraw their objection to its closure on what now transpires to have been a false premise.

Highbury Corner

The Post Office has reneged on its agreement to move to new premises; it now wants to close yet another outlet! It is however possible that the transport and environmental improvements may go ahead, even if they cannot be persuaded to rethink. We hope to have more news for the next issue.

AB

From the Society**CURRENT OFFICERS**

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What we do

- we support conservation planning work to preserve the borough's historic fabric and individual buildings of distinction
- we campaign for a high standard of design in new buildings
- we encourage best practice through awards for good architecture in new or refurbished buildings
- we organise a varied programme of events including talks, walks and site visits
- we campaign for better public transport and for priority for people travelling on foot or by bike
- we produce publications that celebrate Islington's history and its social and cultural diversity
- we publish neighbourhood walking trails to foster exploration awareness and pride of place
- we build links between residents officials and councillors
- we publish a regular newsletter
- we send advisers to Council groups dealing with development, the environment and transport
- we are represented on the London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies, which takes up cross-borough issues and is a member of Civic Voice

Future Society events**Annual Dinner 2010**

Annual Dinner proposed for 11th November 2010

50th Anniversary Annual General Meeting: **3rd November, 2010 at Islington Town Hall.** Further

details to follow. E-mail is our most efficient means of communication and members are asked if they have not already done so to provide an e-mail address to islingtonsociety@aol.com.

20th October Joint meeting with the Islington Archaeology & History Society on the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, held at Islington Town Hall, 8 p.m..

Speaker: Paul Heath, Chairman SPAD.

Our monthly Meet the Officers meetings continue at the Canonbury Tavern, Canonbury Place on the first Tuesday each month at 9.0 p.m., on Tuesdays 5th October, 9th November and 7th December. We have had to move from the Marquess because our meetings clash with their weekly quiz.

Other Events in or around Islington:

Islington in Bloom 2010 with one category sponsored by the Islington Society. Awards ceremony on 5th October 2010.

Islington Museum 245 St. John Street, EC1V 0207 527 3837

Until 27th November Exhibition Walter Sickel's works, 150th Anniversary.

Islington Art Design Fair Candid Galleries, 3 Torrens Street, E.C.1

(near Angel Tube) 1-24 October Weekends Fri-Sat-Sun

Archaeology & History Society (8.0 p.m. Islington Town Hall)

20th October Joint meeting with the Islington Society, details above.

12th November "Maps and Mapping".

15th December "40 Years of the Camden History Society", Speaker: John Richardson

Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, 39a Canonbury Square

Until 19th December "Art and the Fall of a Dictator: Against Mussolini".

Almeida Theatre, Almeida Street, N.1 0207 7359 4404

Monday-Saturday 7.30 p.m., Saturday matinée 3 p.m.

Until 6 November "House of Games", story by David Manet.

World Premiere: 12th November-8th January 2011 "The Master Builder", Henrik Ibsen.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
For the YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2009

	2009		2008	
	£	£	£	£
Subscriptions Donations & Events of which Annual Dinner was £1289 (2008: £1001)	2785		3628	
Interest receivable	54		418	
		2839		4046
Printing & distribution costs	1318		1016	
Meeting expenses of which Annual Dinner was £1200 (2008: £937)	1200		1193	
Misc expenses incl. VAT	8		3	
Donations to other groups	15		20	
Entertainment	-		-	
Website	325		-	
Refunds	-		76	
		2866		2308
		(27)		1738
Deficit / Surplus				
BALANCE AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2009				
Cash at Bank incl. Lloyds/ TSB and CAF Bank	11,062		11,196	
Add: received in arrears	-		-	
Accumulated funds				
Balance brought forward	11,196			
Adjustment to prior year accounts				
Deficit/Surplus for the year	(27)			
Total	11,169			