

**London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 18 December 2013**  
**Transcript of Agenda Item 4 – Mayor's Report**

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** The Mayor will now provide an oral update of up to five minutes in length on matters occurring since the publication of his report. Then I will bring in Members for supplementary questions on that.

There have been requests from groups for the Mayor to cover a number of issues including zero hours contracts, Travelcard price rises in connection with the Autumn Statement and the Barclays Cycle Hire Scheme. Also, I am sure the Mayor would want to say something about the Airports Commission's interim report yesterday, so I would ask you to refer to that in your update as well.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Darren. Obviously, I am sure the whole Assembly shares your impressive tribute to the memory of Nelson Mandela.

Clearly, since the last report, there has been a lot going on. I would single out what we are doing in Southall where Ealing Council and the Greater London Authority (GLA) have launched a massive scheme for a revitalised Southall with the enormous potential that Crossrail brings to that area. We are wheeling out a programme for superfast broadband for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

As you will have seen yesterday, we are making some glacial progress on aviation. That may seem paradoxical, given that the Commission shortlisted three options from two existing airports, but Sir Howard [Davies, Chair, Airports Commission] did firmly leave the door open to an alternative and we intend to use that opportunity to make the case for what I think is a much better alternative for our city. I know that this Assembly, with very few exceptions, supports the position that there should be no third runway at Heathrow since it is a diabolical environment disaster and the wrong way for our city to develop.

You have additionally asked for information about zero hours contracts in City Hall. What I have said on this previously to a question from Fiona [Twycross AM] is that I am in favour of contracts that gets people into work. If there are currently 21 people who work in City Hall or Trafalgar Square who receive the London Living Wage, holiday pay and other benefits and then there are 51 peer outreach workers who are on such contracts, a scheme that was devised by them in 2007, I would much rather that they had a scheme that works for them and that enables them to come and be very useful and contribute to the life of London, as they do. I would just point out that there are plenty of Labour authorities that seem to offer zero hours contracts to their employees.

You have asked also about the cycle hire sponsorship and I will repeat what I have said over the last few weeks. I am very grateful to Barclays for stumping up the thick end so far of

£25 million. They will end by paying virtually £25 million to Londoners to support cycling in our city. That is a great thing and obviously the door is now open to other potential sponsors.

I can confirm that, absolutely, the fare increases in London will be held at the retail price index (RPI) across the board, as you would expect.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** Thank you very much. A number of Members have indicated previously that they did want to come in on the issue of airports, so we will deal with that first and then I will work through the other points that have been covered.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Mr Mayor, you must have been as surprised as I was by some of the things that Sir Howard Davies said in conjunction with launching his interim report. He said that he thought the options that he was suggesting would not provide any problems with noise. I was woken up at 4.30am this morning by the first aircraft going into Heathrow. How he can possibly reach that conclusion I do not know and I would like to hear what you think.

The second thing: he said that there really will be no problems with congestion because the infrastructure could cope with extra runway capacity at Heathrow. Given that that area has often been suggested for possibly a new form of congestion charge in the Heathrow area, again, where is he coming from?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are absolutely right, Dick, on both the points you make and, indeed, one of the most worrying aspects of what Sir Howard is now saying is that he wants to scope out greater flexibility around the night flights so that you could have potentially more flights coming in before 6.00am in the morning. It is absolutely not what Londoners want or deserve. We are going to oppose that in addition to many of his other recommendations.

The point that you make about congestion is well taken. It defies belief that you could have another 260,000 flights coming into Heathrow without substantial extra vehicular congestion in west London. That is absolutely inconceivable, again. Do not forget, for those who campaign about air quality - and there are many in this room - Heathrow is one of our worst hotspots. You would unquestionably be ramping up and increasing dramatically the vehicular air pollution around Heathrow in addition to the noise pollution from the planes and, indeed, the aviation fuel pollution. On all those counts, what Sir Howard had to say was - shall I put it delicately - grossly over-optimistic about Heathrow.

We are at a very interesting stage in the argument. This will now run and run, as you can imagine. It may well be that the commission will try to recommend Heathrow. I do not believe it is deliverable. I do not believe it is legally deliverable. I do not believe it is politically deliverable. The scheme will flounder and we will be forced ineluctably to look at better options.

Gatwick is there. The difficulty with Gatwick in my view is that it does not provide the hub capacity. One of the most interesting things Sir Howard said yesterday was that he thinks hubs are now an outdated concept. That is very much to be tested. I am not at all certain that that

is correct. All the evidence I see around the world is that other countries - our competitors - are going for hubs and we need to examine that. That is, if I may say so, a convenient argument for a commission to adopt when it wants to restrict the expansion of Heathrow to one runway or, indeed, to just another runway at Gatwick. That argument about hubs is, I am afraid, also not founded.

There is a lot way to go on this, but the onus is now on our side of the argument, to be frank, to make the positive case for what we see and for our vision of taking the city forward and for taking aviation forward. I am absolutely confident we can do that.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** It is undoubted, I think, by all of us that any expansion of Heathrow is completely off the agenda. He has not put any idea --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There is one recidivist Labour Member here who is always chuntering away his passionate support for Heathrow. Perhaps he should tell west London Labour Members of Parliament (MPs) about his views on Heathrow.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** If I could continue making the point, as it stands, your ideas for possible new London airports are not in any shortlist. How do you intend to go forward, not only to convince Howard Davies and his Commission but also, of course, there are clearly a number of Londoners who believe that expansion of Heathrow is all right?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Absolutely. This is the key thing. I saw a poll the other day which said that the Estuary option was narrowly the preferred option of Londoners and indeed of the rest of the country by a small margin. That is without really, in my view, much campaigning, much information. We have not yet really begun to make the argument.

One of the interesting things that Sir Howard said was very telling. The difference between the Estuary option and the three he has shortlisted is that those three, after all, involve the extension of the existing, visible, tangible infrastructure. You can see very readily what is to be done. It is up to us to make in his mind the plans for the Estuary just as clear, just as concrete, just as tangible. I think we can do that and obviously that is the work we have to embark on.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** If he were to attempt to go forward with a Heathrow expansion, would you join in with the 2M Group of local authorities in west London who talk about the possibilities of judicial review and challenges of that sort. Would you be prepared to get involved in that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not rule anything out. I want to be very clear. I do not rule anything out. I do not at this stage want to get involved in that kind of threat-making or however you want to interpret it. I certainly do not rule anything out and you can take it that I was elected, as indeed I think most of us were, on a very clear manifesto to oppose the third runway, not just to stop it for one term or whatever sophistry you come up with but to stop it forever. That is why we will campaign very hard for what is a much better alternative.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** You, no doubt, Mr Mayor, and certainly the people sitting around this table here think that what is being produced has been a betrayal. All of us campaigned, as you have clearly said, on the clear issue, "No ifs, no buts, no third runway", and on that basis we have all been very badly let down.

I want to ask you about the situation which my constituents in particular feel about this. They have not only been betrayed, but their properties are now going to be blighted. They are going to face the threats and the continuance of noise and pollution. Up until now, they have campaigned very politely against this. Indeed, you have been there. They attend rallies in their Barbours and their boots.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Let us not stereotype them.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** They have petitioned and they have written and they have marched. Most importantly, Mr Mayor, this is the thing that I want to put to you because you have talked to us just now about threat-making, these people vote. They have seen that this peaceful form of protest appears not to have been terribly successful. I can tell you this. My constituents think that this is an end to being Mr Nice Guy. Clearly, you have said and you have repeated that you will rule nothing out. We would be looking for something more positive than that. You already know that one of the Members of Parliament on my patch has made it crystal clear that if there is any renegeing on what I consider to be a very clear promise, he will run against Heathrow. Hopefully, he will run as a Conservative against Heathrow.

I wonder if you would make it clear because it is above my pay grade to your colleagues in Government that it is not only going to be the Members of Parliament locally who feel angry about this but there will be very many citizens - bearing in mind that we have local elections next year - who will be running as candidates specifically against Heathrow. I wonder, Mr Mayor, what your line would be on such people.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would be very supportive of those who oppose Heathrow. Zac [Goldsmith, Conservative MP for Richmond Park], who I think you are referring to, obviously is very passionate and correct in his arguments. The policy was right first time. I do not believe there is any case for varying it. The sooner we have clarity from the Government the better and I rather share your view that it will be deeply detrimental to go into the next election with what looks like cover for a gigantic U-turn on Heathrow. I do not think that is the right way forward.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Can I take it that you are hardening up your line of not threat-making, but you yourself will no longer be Mr Nice Guy on the matter?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I cannot promise I will not be Mr Nice Guy. When have I ever deviated from my policy of a saccharine and glutinous tidal wave of general niceness? That is my approach to life. We are going to win this argument and we will do whatever it takes to vindicate the position on which we were elected and which is, incidentally, 100% right for London and right for the rest of the country. That is what we will show over the next few weeks and months.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** My constituents and I are directly in the firing line as far as this is concerned. As I have indicated, we have behaved very politely. Our sword has been in our scabbard and you can be certain and London can be certain that we are not going to be silent and polite on the matter any longer. We very much hope that eventually you will be our tribune on it.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Our Assembly Conservative colleagues are quite right to raise these issues because, of course this decision actually does ignore public opinion and, quite honestly, the noise misery that is experienced at the moment by more than three quarters of a million Londoners has to be taken into account.

Mr Mayor, you said just now that the third runway would be a diabolical environmental disaster, but actually it would be a disaster environmentally to put any airport expansion anywhere. The case just is not made for more expansion at the moment. There are lots of options at Heathrow for using the slots better and they have not been explored.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Does that mean more flights?

**Jenny Jones (AM):** No, the same number of flights but used by different planes. If I could support you for a moment - a rare moment - on this, I am absolutely committed to no expansion at Heathrow. In fact, your calculations show that Heathrow, as it is now without expansion, will still be illegal on air quality by 2020 and in breach of European rules. Quite honestly, I do not think the European Commission will allow Heathrow expansion to go forward simply on air quality. We will be facing huge fines on air quality from Europe, so this is yet another sword or dirk in your scabbard.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are right, Jenny. Thank you very much. Can I thank you for your support and the clarity of your logic? I do not, obviously, agree necessarily with you about the capacity argument as a whole. I agree, actually, with Sir Howard and the Commission about that, although they understate the demand. Where I certainly agree with you is on the environmental impacts in west London. Do not forget that one arrow that we have in our quiver is the Low Emission Zone and it is always possible to imagine a low emission zone around Heathrow.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** You cannot see that if you expand airport capacity, you move the misery somewhere and you increase misery somewhere?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, and --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Someone somewhere is living under or near a flight path and is going to experience noise pollution, air pollution and disruption to their lives. Yes?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, that is absolutely true. It is very interesting. I had the chance to look in more detail at what Sir Howard actually says about the Estuary proposal last night and he says, of all the proposals, it is the one that offers the most --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I am not going to discuss your fantasy airport, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is the one that offers the most benefits and --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Let us stick to facts, shall we? Let us stick to the real world.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- what it would do is reduce the victims from noise pollution to a tiny fraction --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Millions of birds instead.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- of those who suffer in London. That is one of the reasons that actually it is very interesting. He pays tribute to it. He says of all the proposals the Estuary solution offers by far the largest potential --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** No, please, Mr Mayor. Do not talk to me about your weird ideas for environmental disaster beyond Heathrow. You just want to kill birds.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- for growth and economic regeneration, so I was very encouraged by that.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** Mr Mayor, will you consider leading a coalition of London and indeed west London politicians who would identify themselves as opponents of the third runway in time for the General Election?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Of course. Kit, obviously, you have played a leading role in this whole argument for a long time. What I find, actually, is that there are many voices in politics in London and, indeed, in west London that have a great opportunity to make themselves heard a little bit louder.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** Strangely so.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We are only at the beginning of this argument and I know that they will want to join people such as yourself and Tony Arbour who have campaigned on this for a long time.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** I wondered also if you would now consider some of the more imaginative proposals in terms of campaigning against the third runway, for instance renting a plane, which we have talked about, and flying it down the approaches to this new northwest runway or, indeed, renting a house under the flight path and allowing members of the Commission to spend maybe a week living in this house to see what it actually feels like to live under the flight path.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There are famously a couple of trees on the site of the Sipson village third runway that were planted in the name of David Cameron [Prime Minister] and Nick Clegg [Deputy Prime Minister], I think.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** And Ed Milliband [Leader of the Opposition].

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** And Ed Milliband. We must have a forest of trees standing, protesting silently in arboreal defiance against the U-turn. Let us hope that their planters remember these trees before they even think of sending in the bulldozers.

On the idea of commandeering a plane or hiring a plane and showing Londoners what the noise impacts would be, I have actually looked into this. Unfortunately, owing to a change in the air space regulations that took place last year to protect against Olympic attack - I think probably at the insistence of the Americans - we cannot. This is no longer possible. As you know, I remain ever optimistic and we are going to see what we can do to give Londoners some sense of what the noise impacts will be like. I really think we do need to make this clear. It is very difficult because there are lots of people living in areas and communities who have not yet experienced noise and who are going to experience noise. It is important to make it clear what they will suffer.

If you look at the map, people looking at the images of what is being proposed at Heathrow this morning in the papers will have been truly taken aback. These are gigantic schemes. Do not forget that they are just the beginning. If there is a third runway, all you do is compound the hub at Heathrow. You intensify the need at Heathrow. You feed the great monster and there will be an inevitable desire for a fourth runway, which would be absolutely cataclysmic for Londoners all over the city. I do think that this is an argument that we are going to win, but this is not the end. It is not the beginning of the end. It is, perhaps, the end of the middle of the beginning or something like that. That is roughly where we are.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** You are exactly right. A third runway means a fourth runway. That of course has great resonance for those of us who were councillors and sat in meetings with Sir John Egan, who was then Chairman of BAA and who promised us that Terminal 5 was it and they would not want any more after that. I remember distinctly sitting in meeting after meeting where they said, "No more. Terminal 5 will be the end for Heathrow".

A final question for you, Mr Mayor. My reading of the Davies Commission - and I have to confess I have not been through all of it yet - is that it is very light on safety. It does not mention safety very much. Certainly in relation to Heathrow, it does not refer to the fact that a third runway at Heathrow would statistically increase the likelihood of there being a major incident in the western suburbs. I wondered what you were able to put out into the public realm or specifically to reinforce to the Davies Commission that there are significant safety concerns around a third runway.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There are, of course, safety concerns. Aviation is actually, as everybody knows, a very safe form of transport, statistically speaking, but it must be axiomatic. If you increase the number of flights over the vulnerable area, you are at greater risk

of a disaster. That is one of the reasons why other cities have gone down the routes that they have and have taken their hub airport and put it somewhere, generally close to water, where the approaches do not risk large numbers of human habitations. That is one of the advantages of the proposal we are setting out.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** My assumption is that the emergency services both in London and in Berkshire have emergency plans for an airliner coming down in the western suburbs somewhere and that presumably part of the work around considering another runway at Heathrow would be revisions to those plans, taking into account - small though it may be - the greater likelihood of there being a catastrophic crash somewhere like the Staines air disaster 40-odd years ago. I wondered whether as part of the process you would be commissioning from the Metropolitan Police Service, the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) and the London Resilience Forum that work so that the Davies Commission could be aware of what extra resources and planning would be required to deal with that extra likelihood.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is a very interesting thought and I will take it up with the London Resilience Forum and with LFEPA. I would have to look at to what extent the risk is intensified.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** Thank you. No other Members have signalled they wish to come in on airports, so we will move on to zero hours contracts.

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** I wanted to go back to your points that you made earlier and I just wanted to stress, Mr Mayor, this is not about your peer outreach programme. This is about people who work in this building on a daily basis whose terms and conditions are being eroded and undermined by being on zero hours contracts. This includes security staff and catering staff. These are not casual members of staff. They are effectively people who work here week in, week out, on a daily basis. On your watch, we have 40 people who work in this building and who do not know how many hours they will have from one week to the next. I just want you to tell us what you think the point is in paying somebody the living wage if they do not actually have a guaranteed income.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I gave you the answer earlier on. I think the number is actually 21, not 40. These are not direct employees of City Hall, as I am sure you can imagine. They are GLA contractors. My strong view is that I would rather have people getting jobs and having the advantage of work than not having it. I am resistant, as I have said before, to measures that introduce greater rigidities into the labour market. I would prefer to see people paid well and that is why I greatly support the London Living Wage, which has massively expanded. Just in the last year, the number of firms paying it has increased by about 156% or something like that. I support that and I campaigned for it.

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** There are more people who are not paid the living wage now than when you became Mayor. In your written response to me on the number of zero hours staff employed at City Hall, we have more in the response you gave me than the 21 you mentioned. We have OCS Catering 17, Van Vynck 1, AOS 11 and Servoca 11, so I am not quite sure how you get to 21 when your own figures last week in response to the question came out at

considerably more. You should go back and double-check with your team about exactly how many people are on zero hours contracts.

Will you make sure that you speak to the contractors and ensure that these people, who are the lowest-paid workers here -- it is not your 'tsars'. It is not your Deputy Mayors who are on these contracts. It is the lowest-paid workers.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are looking at the September figures. That is the answer. You are looking at the figures from 11 September. I am told that the figures for now are down and there are 21.

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** How do you explain that just last week you gave me these figures that were considerably higher than that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Those were the figures for September. What I am giving you today is currently relevant.

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** If you can clarify exactly who it is who is paid under those contracts because, as I say, these figures were given last week.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am more than happy to do that, Fiona.

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** To make matters worse, you are currently planning on outsourcing the night-time security guards at City Hall, which will further erode their terms and conditions. You have failed to provide Assembly Members with a business case to justify this move, even though Members have repeatedly asked for this.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** A business case?

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** Val [Shawcross CBE AM], for example, has been asking for a business case as to why --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, this was raised repeatedly by Val and by Jenny Jones at the Bureau of Leaders meetings.

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** You still have not responded. You still have not given a business case.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** In that case, I am sorry if we undertook to do that and did not do that. I will make sure that we give you --

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** You will commit --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** This is being handled, I imagine, by the Head of Paid Service, so I will make sure that we --

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** We note that commitment, but we are getting away from the issue of zero hours contracts now, so if you can get back on to the topic?

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** Not particularly, because the security staff are the people who are on the zero hours contracts, so it is about further eroding their terms and conditions. I think it is relevant and I would ask the Mayor that in light of our deep concerns he drop the plans for the outsourcing and make sure that people who work in this building who are our lowest-paid workers have decent terms and conditions and are treated fairly.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will certainly make sure that you get that. If there is some information about the business case you have been deprived of --

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** We have not seen the business case yet.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- then I will make sure that you get it. Just so people know, the use of zero hours contracts is by no means, obviously, confined to this place. The London Borough of Newham has 546 people on --

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** We should be the best. We should be the best example of how the lowest-paid workers work.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I say, I am not certain that that language is entirely appropriate because what I would like to see is people in employment and people having the confidence that comes with a job. One in twenty employees in Tower Hamlets is on a zero hours contract and Brent, Ealing, Merton, Lambeth and Hounslow all have many employees --

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** With respect, listing examples of where people are on zero hours contracts as the lowest-paid workers is not an excuse for practice that takes place here. I will leave it at that and I would ask for the further clarification.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I really repeat what I have to say. I am determined that we should expand the London Living Wage and that we should pay people reasonably and that they should have proper benefits. We should all get behind that campaign. I am delighted that it is really taking off. The increase from 2012 to 2013 has been truly extraordinary and I know Kit [Malthouse AM] has been playing a big role in trying to ramp that up. What we need now --

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** He is not talking about zero hours now.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- is a big retailer to come in. We have 250 businesses now paying the London Living Wage. We are yet to get one of the one of the big retailers.

**Fiona Twycross (AM):** He is not talking about zero hours contracts now.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** We will leave it there, thank you. Do any Members wish to come in on the issue of bike hire? No. We then move on to Travelcards and the Autumn Statement. Assembly Member Pidgeon?

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM):** Thank you. You said in your statement that you would be holding at the retail price index (RPI) fares across the board. I specifically asked you about Travelcards. Can you confirm if Travelcards will go up by inflation or inflation plus 1%, which is what you announced?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** They will go up by RPI, as the Chancellor indicated in the Autumn Statement.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM):** You are bringing your fares in line with the Government? You announced it was going to be RPI plus 1%.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** All rail fares across the country are going to be RPI following what the Chancellor said in the Autumn Statement and --

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM):** Are the Travelcards going to be RPI?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- that obviously has a knock-on effect for Travelcards, Caroline. As you have rightly spotted, that is very good news for London because it means that Travelcards also will be held at RPI.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM):** Thank you.

**Darren Johnson (Chair):** Thank you very much. Did anyone wish to come in on the issue of Southall? No. That concludes questions on the Mayor's oral update.