

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) - 19 November 2014

Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Questions to the Mayor

2014/4151 - Cycle Superhighways

Caroline Pidgeon

Please provide an update on your North-South and East-West Cycle Superhighway plans.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you so much, Caroline. With the Cycle Superhighways, basically, we have the North-South and the East-West that you want to know about. They are both still works in progress in the sense that we have had the consultation for the big East-West concluded on 9 November. We had 20,000 responses, including a huge amount of support and a lot of criticism, as you know. TfL is looking at it very carefully.

What I can tell you - and I must reassure Londoners about this - is that I do understand the concerns that many people feel about aspects of these Cycle Superhighways on both sides of the ledger. I know the cyclists have a passionate desire for thoroughgoing segregation. Motorists' groups are alarmed about some of the congestion issues that will arise. I have to take a balanced view and do what is best for the city.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you very much for your update. We know these plans are hugely popular with Londoners. There was 80% support in the response you have had. Two-to-one in a recent poll support them, even if they result in longer journey times for motorists. However, we know there are powerful vested interests that have been publicly and privately opposing these plans.

Peter Anderson, one of your board members at TfL, is the Finance Director of Canary Wharf Group. Given Canary Wharf Group is still very heavily lobbying against these plans, can you give us an update on his position and whether he will be sitting on the committee that decides this on 25 November?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Peter Anderson always registers his interests and declares his interests at the start of board meetings of TfL. We will take the decision, as far as I know, in the normal way. I do not think there is any particular reason why he should recuse himself from that decision any more, say, than the taxi drivers or the minicab drivers should recuse themselves.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: If necessary, Mr Mayor, given that the role of the TfL board is to enable your vision and your strategy and that this is something you are really committed to and that the Assembly - certainly the Transport Committee - is very supportive of your plans, if necessary will you use your power of direction on the TfL board to make sure these segregated Cycle Superhighways go ahead?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will make sure that we get a solution that is in the interests in London and of the London economy. I must make it clear, though, Caroline, that I will not support measures that in my view result in excessive paralysis of the traffic. I must be absolutely clear with you about that.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: We do not want to see these plans scaled back or watered down so much that they are just blue paint on the road as you previously had.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That will be the dilemma.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: One of the main objections - and you have talked about this - is the claim that it will increase congestion and I assume this is more the Citi and Canary Wharf Group's concerns about their chairs and chief execs being chauffeured around rather than ordinary staff.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is unfair.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: In line with your Cycle Superhighways, which actually show really great vision for this city, is it not the obvious thing to do to tackle congestion by increasing the congestion charge and maybe to use smart pricing that varies the charge depending on the time of day, as supported by London First? Is that not the obvious thing to do to tackle this issue of congestion?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am interested that you want to increase the congestion charge. I wonder how much you would like to put it up and I wonder how consistent that is with wanting to bear down on the costs of living for people who work very hard in this city and who maybe - I am thinking of teachers and of nurses and of people with white vans - have to drive through the centre of London and who have absolutely no choice. I am not convinced that that is a universally progressive move. Yes, you caricature the opponents of the Cycle Superhighways as being bosses in limos and so on.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: You need to tackle congestion alongside your plans.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you just study some speeded-up images of the traffic flowing along the Embankment and see what that vehicle flow consists of, you will see many, many people driving vans who are by no means fat-cat plutocrats. You will see buses. You will see people who absolutely depend on the traffic flowing smoothly.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): All right. The Liberal Democrats are out of time. Assembly Member Malthouse?

Kit Malthouse AM: Yes. Mr Mayor, I wanted to first of all thank you for the delicate process that is taking place around the East-West. Many of my residents are going through the consultation process at the moment. There are obviously various wrinkles that are alarming them, but we seem to be working our way through them.

I wanted to ask you about the North-South at King's Cross and what consideration you were giving to extending the Cycle Superhighway north of King's Cross up towards Kentish Town and Belsize Park --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Kentish Town, where you live?

Kit Malthouse AM: -- or indeed up towards Holloway, where I would declare an interest.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Is that so that you can be propelled on a sort of magic carpet? We will look at it --

Kit Malthouse AM: No, but the truth is there are a lot of people who cycle from that part of town who would not be able to access the Cycle Superhighway until they get to King's Cross.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All right, Kit. We will look at the 'Malthouse Stretch' and we will see if it is --

Kit Malthouse AM: It is not just me. It is Tom [Copley AM] as well and one or two other people

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Not just you, OK. We will see if it makes sense.

Kit Malthouse AM: OK. The other thing I wanted to raise with you which is connected, I guess, is whether you would support an amendment to the next road traffic bill that is going through Parliament to make it illegal to cycle while wearing headphones.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Generally speaking, I dislike excessive regulation and legislation like this. As you know, I have not insisted on helmets for Londoners, least of all on the hire bikes. We have not insisted on mandatory helmets because we think it discourages cycling. It is crazy. My own personal view is that it is absolutely crazy to cycle along with earphones in.

Kit Malthouse AM: If you will forgive me--

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I said this once and I was viciously denounced in the *Evening Standard* by some guy who liked to do it and thought it was the ultimate in nannying to tell him not to. I have gone quiet on it. What I would like to do is to try to find a bit more data about some of the cycling accidents and fatalities we have had and whether they are connected with wearing earphones. We are looking into that. Unfortunately, I have to tell you that sometimes the injuries are so dreadful that it is not possible to tell.

Kit Malthouse AM: The difference of course is that not wearing a helmet makes me a danger to myself, whereas wearing earphones makes me an extreme danger to other cyclists, pedestrians and motorists when I cannot hear shouts and cries of, "Get out of the way". I can tell you from bitter experience having had some very close shaves with - I have to say - young men on fixed-gear bikes wearing earphones and going at high speed.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What you say is absolutely true. One of the things we have, as you know, is Operation Safeway whereby the police stand on street corners and it is one of the best ways we have found of actually improving cycling safety. After the spate of accidents in November last year, we had a big Operation Safeway and we have continued to have it now and then without warning the public, as it were, when it is going to happen. They have rounded up loads of both motorists and cyclists who have been breaking the law by jumping the lights or whatever. I see no reason if a cyclist is cycling without due care and attention with his earphones in that the police should not haul him over as well and no doubt they do.

Kit Malthouse AM: Thank you.

2014/4307 - Mayor's Schedule

Len Duvall

Will the Mayor list his out-of-London engagements over the last month?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much. You want my engagements out of London. I cannot give you many engagements out of London. I can tell you what I did in London, if you like. Shall I read the list? It is fantastic.

Len Duvall AM: It is not the question, Mr Mayor.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): The question is actually about out-of-London engagements.

Len Duvall AM: Let me help you. I have a list of them.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of what?

Len Duvall AM: I have a list of engagements outside London and obviously your diary does not cover that: Bath, Swindon, Northampton, Corby, St Albans and Bedford. I think Blenheim Palace was a book-signing and I might cut you some slack on that and your trip to the United States while others might not. All those other issues are where you have done campaigning for the Conservative Party, Mr Mayor.

The question, Mr Mayor is: should Londoners be subsidising the Conservative Party and will you be submitting a bill for the days that you were out campaigning for them outside the London boundaries? I would cut you some slack if you were campaigning for them inside London. I do not think we should be paying for you to toddle off up and down the country to rescue your party, which is in dire straits.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Give me a break. This is bollocks.

Len Duvall AM: Will you be asking them to reimburse for those little sorties you have done in supporting various Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) and all the rest of it or are you going to try to justify that this is London business?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is something I do for the Conservative Party. I do it in my own time and I do it because I think it is the right thing to do and because I do not want a Labour Government. If you want what I did within London in the last 31 days, I have had seven weekend days--

Len Duvall AM: No, Mr Mayor, I am not interested in London. I am quite aware of your work in London. This is about outside London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You asked about my mayoral engagements. These are not mayoral engagements.

Len Duvall AM: They are not, but how do you justify what is your time and what is our time in London? Does it have to be that you are physically here and that everything else is not - if you know what I mean - London mayoral duties or what? How do you do that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Unless I specifically tell you otherwise, Len --

Len Duvall AM: But you --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Listen. The only way we can settle this is if we read out the list of all the things that I have done in the last 31 days in London.

Len Duvall AM: Are you going to do a lot more in the run-up to the general election outside London? Are you going to do a lot more? Londoners will feel short-changed, never mind your own constituency.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, they will not.

Len Duvall AM: The question is, Mr Mayor, you are the London Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is rubbish. This is a transparent attempt and a pathetic attempt to try to stop me campaigning.

Len Duvall AM: You are not the Leader of the Conservative Party and you are unlikely to be. The question, Mr Mayor, is: London is being short-changed while you work here. We knew that you were going to be an MP. Fair do's. It is a London constituency. We think you can manage both jobs. We think that has happened in the past. However, you are trooping up and down from London at our expense to campaign for a political party.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is not at your expense.

Len Duvall AM: Do you have no morals in seeking repayment--

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, it is not at your expense.

Len Duvall AM: Do you have no morals in seeking repayment back to us here in London for your duties?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is not at your expense. Listen. I really will not take any lessons from you guys. As anybody who is on the eighth floor, I work unbelievably hard the whole time. I would be amazed if there is anybody who has done as much in the last month as I have.

Len Duvall AM: Outside London? Yes, I would be amazed.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let me read it to you.

Len Duvall AM: You are the London Mayor, Mr Mayor.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Are we through?

Len Duvall AM: We are through.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. Among my additional engagements in the last --

Len Duvall AM: You are the London Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I chaired the Mayor's Advisory Group on 9 October to discuss the London Ambulance strike and the Ebola crisis. I met with Sir Roy McNulty [Chairman, Gatwick Airport Ltd]--

Len Duvall AM: Shall we talk about your book-signings, Mr Mayor, or was that in your own time?

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Could I stop--

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let me give you the whole list of what I have done in London. Come on. I met with Michael McGee, Non-Executive Director and Transport Partner with Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP), and Stewart Wingate, Chief Executive of Gatwick Airport, on 9 October to discuss Gatwick.--

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Mr Mayor.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Stop the clock.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is interesting. You might learn something.

Tom Copley AM: This is disrespecting the Chair.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is interesting. I launched the New Tube for London on 9 October. I met with Mark Rowley [Assistant Commissioner, MPS].

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Mr Mayor, we have stopped the clock.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am still on 9 October.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): We have stopped the clock so that you are not taking up anyone's time with this. I appreciate what you are saying is actually quite interesting. It is in the report that you have submitted to us already.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): If you wish to submit it as an appendix to the minutes of this meeting then that is probably the best way to have it in the record.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am happy to do that. Very good.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Cleverly?

James Cleverly AM: Mr Mayor, on your campaigning, did you manage to get to Doncaster at all? Have you been campaigning in Doncaster?

Andrew Dismore AM: He does not know where it is!

Tony Arbour AM: Does Ed Miliband [Leader of the Labour Party] know where it is?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Quite possibly, yes.

James Cleverly AM: I was just wondering in the various constituencies that you have visited to campaign whether you bumped into Ed Miliband at all. Actually, it is ridiculous even asking the question --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I hope Ed Miliband does as much campaigning as possible.

James Cleverly AM: -- because he would only ever be in either Westminster or Doncaster, surely. According to the new proposal put forward by our colleague, the only place that he would be allowed to be is either Westminster or Doncaster. I wait with eager anticipation for Assembly Member Duvall's rebuke of Ed Miliband--

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know.

James Cleverly AM: -- .for being anywhere other than Westminster or Doncaster.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): He should stay in Doncaster.

James Cleverly AM: He should stay in Doncaster.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): For the Labour Party to have any hope of winning the election, he should stay in Doncaster. I want Miliband out and around the country, meeting Myleene Klass [British musician and television presenter].

James Cleverly AM: Hands up which one of you think he will be a decent Prime Minister.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I thought he did very well against Myleene Klass. Did you not think he had a particularly good answer to why the 'mansion tax' was--

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): We have drifted a little bit beyond the original parameters of the question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I thought he was brilliant. Bring back Miliband.

James Cleverly AM: Who wants him as Prime Minister?

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): The next question is about the Living Wage.

James Cleverly AM: Put your hand up if you want him as Prime Minister, one of you.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Mr Cleverly--

James Cleverly AM: Everyone is looking down, "Do not ask me".

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Can you save the Labour Party's blushes and poll them in private?

James Cleverly AM: I apologise, Mr Chairman.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Amongst the things I did in the last week, by the way --

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): We have moved on to the next question, Mr Mayor. Time has moved on.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): People's Question Time in Walthamstow. Was anybody there? Who came to People's Question Time in Walthamstow?

Tony Arbour AM: We were there.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Did anybody notice Len Duvall at People's Question Time in Walthamstow? Where was Duvall? Some of us went to Walthamstow for People's Question Time. Not Len Duvall. He was washing his hair.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): The next question is about the Living Wage.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): He was flogging his book, *My Life and Times* by Len Duvall!

Len Duvall AM: Be careful on book-signings, Mr Mayor.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Let us deal with something that is of importance to Londoners, Mr Mayor.

Len Duvall AM: Be careful on book-signings. You do not want to go there, Mr Mayor, do you?

Andrew Dismore AM: Are they remaindered yet?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They have been on the *Sunday Times* bestseller list for four weeks, mate. Put that in your pipe and smoke it.

Tony Arbour AM: Can we have it as a raffle prize?

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): If this continues, I am going to take it out of the Labour Group's time.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Yes.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): It is the London Living Wage, Mr Mayor. We will return to the agenda.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is the number one bestseller in hardback nonfiction books about Winston Churchill [former Prime Minister] written by Conservative politicians.

Tony Arbour AM: Published in 2014.

2014/4954 - Living Wage

Tony Arbour

Research by my office has found that making the London Living Wage compulsory, as some have suggested, would cost the London economy £612 million per annum and thousands of jobs. Some councils are assessing business rate relief as a means of incentivising take-up. Does the Mayor support this and would he consider introducing a similar scheme for the GLA?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Tony, thank you very much. This is actually an extremely good question and a thoughtful idea. I have asked Kit [Kit Malthouse AM, Deputy Mayor for Business and Enterprise] to take it away and see if this is something that we could develop. Obviously, there is an anxiety I have about using taxpayers' money, as it were, to

subsidise the Living Wage because you would be cutting business rates in order to encourage businesses to pay it, but it might be a price worth paying because one of the advantages of the Living Wage is that it helps us to reduce the number of people who are receiving in-work benefits at the same time. It is definitely worth looking at.

Tony Arbour AM: I am pleased to hear that and I look forward to the results of Kit's investigation. As you know, there are no greater supporters for the London Living Wage than those of us who are sitting here. We very much applaud your efforts in seeing that London businesses sign up to the Living Wage. You have been infinitely more successful than your predecessor was, and you have been doing something substantial for it.

I wonder, Mr Mayor, if you are familiar with the situation of workers and owners of small businesses in parts of London. I wonder if I can give you a couple of quotations here. This is a man who owns an off-licence in Tower Hamlets. When we were doing our research he said, "I have one person working here and he is on £6.79 an hour. It is tough owning an off-licence. I spend over £2,000 a quarter just on value-added tax (VAT), £420 a month on business rates alone, plus rent and rates on top. I would pay the London Living Wage tomorrow if I had some relief on my massive tax burdens, but if it becomes compulsory I know about 20 people in my position who will go under in a flash".

Similarly, someone in a business which is a little larger said, "I employ eight people and pay them between £6.50 and £8.00 an hour. I value them immensely and want to hold on to them, but in order to do that I need to pay them the best I can. I feel terrible that I cannot yet pay them the London Living Wage, but frankly if it is made compulsory it will put me out of business. I would have to cut staff in order to meet the increased wage bill, which is unthinkable as the customer demands great service and we need people in order to fulfil this. I have to increase sales anyway to make a fair living wage for myself. We have been going for three years and we are still constantly on the line. I pay myself £10,000 a year even though I do six days a week. What would help people like me is a VAT cut for the hospitality sector. I pay £7,000 a quarter just in VAT. It is a killer".

Under these circumstances, do you not think it incredibly mistaken of the people sitting on the opposite side who believe that the London Living Wage should be compulsory and that the way to deal with the matter is to encourage people to pay the Living Wage by giving them carrots rather than using the stick?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I agree. It is a very interesting proposal, the business rate relief. Maybe there is something you could do on VAT. I have to say that I agree with your basic point, which is that it should not be compulsory. There is a minimum wage which is compulsory, but the point about the London Living Wage is that it is specifically to reflect the extra cost of living in London. It is spreading. The number of firms paying it has multiplied 15 times or more since I have been Mayor and 429, maybe more, companies now are paying it. It was only about 27 when I started. Huge progress is being made.

The difficulty with making it compulsory is that you lose the moral aspect of it. This is something that is about companies making a commitment to their staff that is supererogatory,

that genuinely shows that they value those people and that shows that they are committed to their employees and they want to help them meet the costs of living. Companies should do it. They should do it. They will find that it engenders loyalty; it produces higher productivity and all the rest of it. However, if you make it compulsory you nullify that aspect of the thing, and you also probably have some of the bad impacts you describe in terms of making it very difficult for some smaller businesses.

Tony Arbour AM: The spin-offs are obvious because every employer wants workers who are going to be loyal to them, and the employer wants to be loyal to his workers. In the two examples I have given you that is exactly what happens.

Did you know that there are some quite wealthy people who work in London who are not paying the London Living Wage, and indeed use zero-hour contracts, and indeed I refer to 62 Labour Members of Parliament who --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are joking.

Tony Arbour AM: I am not joking, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are these the people that Ed Miliband [Leader of the Labour Party] was attacking?

Tony Arbour AM: Indeed.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The predators. Predatory Labour MPs.

Tony Arbour AM: Absolutely right, and yet they come here and they posture and they say how terrible the administration is here in London..

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Velociraptor Labour MPs.

Tony Arbour AM: -- when no one has done more to ensure that the London Living Wage is paid than you. In relation to the point about business rates, of course, as you know, Mr Mayor, there has always been a provision whereby local authorities can give a rebate on business rates in relation to charity shops and indeed other premises which local authorities consider to be adding to the quality of life in London. Since manifestly the London Living Wage will add to the quality of life in London, do you not think that because you are a preceptor, you may be able to have some particular influence in ensuring that the kind of discretion that I am asking for is given? No doubt you could give Kit [Kit Malthouse AM, Deputy Mayor for Business and Enterprise] a steer on that one.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I think Murad [Murad Qureshi AM] said, Brent is looking at this. They have not actually done it as far as I understand it. They are looking at a business rate discount of £5,000 for 2015/16 if they become accredited London Living Wage employers. There is going to be a discussion at cabinet level in Brent in January 2015. It is an interesting idea. A one-off payment to 200 firms they will be making.

The question for the state is, “Will you ultimately save money by taking people off in work benefits, by helping their firms to pay them more?” That is the interesting--

Tony Arbour AM: Classical economist Adam Smith would certainly say that by giving people more disposable income, which they can choose to spend themselves, that in itself will generate far more than we are laying out. It is a sprat to catch a mackerel.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Tony Arbour AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Boff?

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, are you aware that to make the London Living Wage compulsory would cost London businesses over £600 million a year and put under threat over 32,000 jobs?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There are ways of calculating these things. Obviously those were the types of argument that were made against the minimum wage before it was introduced. I nonetheless agree that a compulsory Living Wage is not the way forward. You would be voiding the point of it. The Living Wage is there as a bond or as a compact between employers and employees. It is something that is special and that has been championed by London citizens. They are the people who really deserve credit for getting this whole thing going and for continuing their campaign. They do not want it to be compulsory. You should talk to them. I respect what they have to say. They do not want it made mandatory. You lose the mission and the campaign and it becomes a matter of state coercion and that is not how it should be done.

Andrew Boff AM: Of course, Mr Mayor, when the minimum wage was put in, the Labour Government at the time accepted that too high a minimum wage could actually affect jobs; hence that is one of the parameters that the Low Pay Commission must consider when it reaches that minimum wage figure.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course.

Andrew Boff AM: I think it is accepted by Londoners as well. In the research we have been doing, we have talked to a young full-time waitress called Augustina in Greenwich, 18 years old, and she said, “I earn £7.00 an hour and can double this with tips on a good day. Of course I would like more money to help out with my rent, bills, petrol and other expenses, but at the same time I understand why the London Living Wage is not compulsory for good employers like mine. I want to see the kind of job opportunity I have for other people, and by making the London Living Wage compulsory that opportunity would be removed”. Do you see that, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I completely agree. I completely agree.

Andrew Boff AM: Curiously enough, a restaurant owner, again in Greenwich, also - one of your voters no doubt, Mr Duvall - who said, "In France, where I come from, there is too much tax and regulation which stifled business owners like myself".

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Look at their unemployment rate.

Andrew Boff AM: Exactly. "That is why I [this business owner] came and invested in the United Kingdom. My restaurant has been running for six months and I employ five people on £7.00 per hour. On busy days they can easily double their tips. A blanket mandatory London Living Wage would be counterproductive. It just would not work in this industry". This is somebody who has come to this country to provide job opportunities and sees that those opportunities will go if the London Living Wage is made compulsory.

Mr Mayor, I urge you to carry on in the good work that you have done in promoting the London Living Wage and ensuring more responsible large companies sign up to it. Only in that way can we have responsible employers paying the kind of wages that Londoners want to see paid.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely. What is so exciting about what is happening at the moment is that we are finally starting to see some of the more difficult companies joining the ranks. Big cleaning companies and retail companies are joining as well. I congratulate Deputy Mayor Malthouse on the work that he and his team continue to do to help London citizens. It is a great campaign.

Andrew Boff AM: Just one last point, Mr Mayor. You may want to make yourself familiar; we have talked a lot about zero hours contracts, of course. The Labour Party has made it a big thing. Ed Miliband [Leader of the Labour Party] had made it a big thing. I wonder if you could acquaint yourself with which local authority uses more zero-hours contracts than any other in the United Kingdom. Are you guessing? It is Doncaster, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No kidding.

Andrew Boff AM: It uses more zero-hours contracts than any other local authority in the country.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely extraordinary. Absolutely extraordinary.

Andrew Boff AM: It is do as they say not do as they do, by the sounds of it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is amazing. Is that not amazing? I agree with you. I agree with you passionately. I hope very much that the Living Wage will continue to be something that basically we all support and drive forward together.

2014/4203 - "One Man Can Make All the Difference"

Jenny Jones

During your recent book launch you said, "The point of the 'Churchill Factor' is that one man can make all the difference". To avert the biggest threat of our generation, catastrophic and irreversible climate change, what difference will you make in the lead-up to and actual Paris Climate Change Summit next year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, thanks, Jenny. I am going to ignore your very kind plug for my book.

Jenny Jones AM: I have heard there are mistakes in it, but we will not talk about those now.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There are no mistakes in it. You are welcome to read it and you will find much to your advantage in it, as many thousands are at the moment.

Jenny Jones AM: You do make a point of leadership, though, and you are in a --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I just answer your question?

Jenny Jones AM: -- particularly favourable position, are you not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. On what we are doing with the Climate Change Summit.

Jenny Jones AM: In the lead-up.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Under this mayoralty, London's carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions have been reduced, as you know, by 12%, a stunning achievement. London's per capita emissions continue to be the lowest of any region in the United Kingdom at 4.9 tons. London is close to achieving the interim target of 20% reduction with three years to go. We have done a huge amount. I will tell you how we have done it. We have done it through RE:FIT, RE:NEW and decentralised energy in public sector buildings and schools. We have saved 30,000 ton of CO₂ through retrofitting 100,000 homes. That is saving 22,000 ton of CO₂ annually. We will continue with all those measures. You know what we are doing with decentralised energy, the London Plan policy to reduce CO₂ automatically in buildings that we approve and in low CO₂ energy generation. We have a meeting just this afternoon on that subject which I shall be addressing.

Jenny Jones AM: I am really glad about that. Are you going to go to the Paris Summit? It is in December next year.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am told that you want me to stay in London. You cannot have it both ways.

Jenny Jones AM: Please do not confuse Labour and the Greens. We are substantially different.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Can I say how much more effective a left-wing opposition the Greens are turning out to be than Labour?

Jenny Jones AM: I am going to use that on a Green Party leaflet. You are very kind.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I wonder whether left-wing people agree with me that the Greens are increasingly the natural alternative.

Jenny Jones AM: Perhaps you would come down to Brighton for us and help. Can I get back to the point? Are you going to go to the Paris Summit next year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are looking at it. I am not ruling it out, but it is not in the diary at the moment.

Jenny Jones AM: Perhaps I could urge you to put it in the diary. Quite honestly, the new agreement that has just happened between the United States of America and China actually changes the whole global view of how well we can battle against climate change. Having you in Paris would send out some really big signals about what is happening here in London and what could happen in the United Kingdom.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My friend Mr Biggs [John Biggs AM] is inviting me to go to Paris permanently.

Jenny Jones AM: I do not care about what he says. Could you please just answer my question?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Jenny, quite seriously, I am looking at the Paris Summit. I take your point about wanting London to show leadership. London would in any event be admirably represented by Mr Matthew Pencharz [Senior Advisor - Environment & Energy, GLA], luxuriantly moustachioed at the moment as he is. He has been receiving all sorts of prizes around the world recently for some of the things that he has been doing.

Jenny Jones AM: I am more interested in you because it does send out a signal if we send our top person to these events.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Matthew is a pretty top person.

Jenny Jones AM: No, I am sorry, Mr Mayor, you must understand the difference between you going and an advisor going to a summit of that sort.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you going, Jenny?

Jenny Jones AM: Yes, I can, if you like.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not paying for you to go.

Darren Johnson AM: She will go if you will.

Jenny Jones AM: Yes. No, Darren said it. I will go if you will. The thing is I am concerned that you do not appear really to be 100% convinced that climate change is happening in spite of all the reports that we have had from masses of governments. Nearly 200 governments signed up to the Climate Change Report that came out this month. I feel you are still a bit dubious about it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. I have always said that I cannot possibly dissent from the best scientific advice. I am not sufficiently versed in meteorology and climatology to dissent. What I have also said is that even if the sceptics are right, it is a good thing for the city to reduce pollution, to reduce consumption and to reduce CO₂ emissions because you save people loads of money, particularly people who are in fuel poverty, who cannot insulate their homes and so on. There are great reasons for doing this, for all the RE:NEW and RE:FIT stuff that I have talked about, irrespective of the big arguments about climate change. I have two reasons for wanting to see the programme succeed. As I say, the reductions in CO₂ outputs are pretty impressive for a city that has been growing economically at such a fantastic rate.

Jenny Jones AM: I am sure you do understand how much of a signal it would be if you went to those climate talks. You did not go to the last one in New York.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I was at Copenhagen.

Jenny Jones AM: Going to Paris next year will send out all sorts of signals. Like it or not.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What is the most eco-friendly way I could go --

Darren Johnson AM: It is not very far. It is not very far on Eurostar, is it? Come on.

Jenny Jones AM: Like it or not, you are a personality. You would be a heavyweight person there and --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot believe I am being bullied by the Assembly to go on a foreign junket.

Darren Johnson AM: You just said they are effective and we are trying to be even more effective in making you go.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Look, Jenny, quite seriously, I will be honest with you. I have not focused on the Paris Summit yet and whether it is crucial to be there. If I decide that it is, I will make sure I let you know. I hope that you will go anyway. Whatever happens, London will be very powerfully represented and we will make sure that we make a strong and positive contribution to the discussions.

Jenny Jones AM: Do you understand that climate change is very dangerous and that if we do not do something to actually slow it down we are going to be facing some much higher temperatures in the next few years? London is a global city. It will hit us very hard. Our Economy Committee is hearing from big business at the moment that they think the biggest risk to their business that they have to assess is climate change. It will hit London very hard.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. The Eurozone is a more immediate problem than climate change for business. I do not in any way minimise the importance of tackling it. As I say, I have to accept the overwhelming majority of scientists have this view. As I say, even if the sceptics are right there will still be a good case for putting in lots of insulation and helping people save money and that is what we are doing.

Jenny Jones AM: I agree with you completely and it is fantastic. Thank you.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): The Greens are out of time.

2014/4308 - Labour Market Inequality

Fiona Twycross

Why are there now more people in London being paid less than the equivalent of the London Living Wage than when you took office?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Fiona. You are asking why there are now more people in London being paid less than the equivalent of the London Living Wage than when I took office. More people are now being paid more than the London Living Wage than when I took office, basically, because there are more people in employment. London actually has the lowest proportion of workers on less than the Living Wage of any region in the country. We have more people as a proportion of the population in London on Living Wage incomes even allowing for the London Living Wage, which is set at higher level, as you know, than the rest of the country.

Fiona Twycross AM: There is an issue about how the statistics are used in relation to your record on the Living Wage. If you look at what GLA Economics reports, it says that over 20% of jobs in London pay less than the Living Wage now. In 2012 this was 17% of jobs, and in 2007, just before you came into office, this was 13% of all jobs. Do bear with me. It is actually going the other way to what you suggest. The truth is that the London Living Wage rate is not really worth the paper of your press release announcing the new rate unless there are more people being paid it. It is about the money in people's pockets.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): More people are now being paid it, as I said.

Fiona Twycross AM: Yes, but more people are not.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, more people are being paid it.

Fiona Twycross AM: If we go to the proportion of people who are not, the proportion of people who are paid below the Living Wage has gone up and the actual number of people who are paid below the Living Wage has also gone up. You can argue that more people are paid it, but actually more people are not paid it as well.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The more-people figure.

Fiona Twycross AM: It is about which figure you want to concentrate on. The number of people who are not being paid it or the number of people who are not.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There are now more people, yes. I understand the point you make, Fiona. It is also true that the proportion of people in London, as I said, who earn less than the Living Wage is lower than the rest of the country, even allowing for the fact that the Living Wage in this city is higher than in the rest of the country. It is 17% in London who are paid less than the Living Wage and 22% of the rest of the country are paid less than --

Fiona Twycross AM: No, it is over 20% of jobs in London that pay less than the Living Wage.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is 17%.

Fiona Twycross AM: No, it was 17% in 2012. The latest figure for London is 20% of jobs in London pay less than the Living Wage.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The figure I have here is 17%.

Fiona Twycross AM: -What percentage of jobs in London paid below the Living Wage are there going to be next year? Is it going to be higher or lower? What percentage is it going to be next year, higher or lower?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The figure I have is 17%.

Fiona Twycross AM: I have a figure of 20%.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): You are out of date, Boris.

Fiona Twycross AM: Your figures are out of date because the 17% is from 2012. Over half of all working-age adults and children in poverty in London actually live in a household where somebody is working. Poverty pay is a massive issue in London. Unless people are paid and get a rate that pays for their work, it is difficult to see how people can get on in a high-cost city such as this. Data from the Office of National Statistics shows the average pay in London in real terms has fallen by £87 a week - that is in real terms - for the average Londoner since 2009. Another failure on your watch is that in real terms the average pay has gone down. The scandal of poverty pay is getting worse and not better.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Hang on. Do you know by how much the number of jobs in London has increased since I have been Mayor? It has gone up from 4.94 million to 5.6 million. That is more than 500,000 people more in work. That is an extraordinary expansion.

Fiona Twycross AM: How many of those are on poverty pay?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is why there are more people being paid the Living Wage

Fiona Twycross AM: Work should pay. If people are in work it should pay.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Above all, what you are seeing is that the number of employers signed up to the Living Wage has doubled just in the last 12 months. As you know very well, we are taking all sorts of other measures to help people on low pay. Cutting council tax, making sure that people continue to have access to cut-price travel for those --

Fiona Twycross AM: The overall costs for Londoners are increasing out of all proportion. In real terms, average pay has fallen by £87 a week. At the same time, FTSE 100 directors' pay increased by 21% over the past year alone to an average of a staggering £2.4 million annually, which is about 120 times the average worker's. What is your message to Londoners on low pay about the message this sends?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My message to Londoners is that this is an administration that cares deeply about trying to ensure that they have the Living Wage. We have expanded it, as I say, massively, by about 1,500 times or whatever it is, since I was elected.

Fiona Twycross AM: Still the number of people paid less than the Living Wage is going up and as a proportion.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, the number of people who are being paid more than the Living Wage is also going up.

Fiona Twycross AM: But the proportion is going up. The proportion is going up and that matters. Do you agree?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is because there has been a massive increase in jobs. That is a good thing. What you are really comparing, if I may so, Fiona --

Fiona Twycross AM: But the proportion is a massive increase in low-paid jobs and people cannot afford to eat.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What you are comparing is people who have no job and people who are in work. --

Fiona Twycross AM: However, they cannot afford to eat, cannot afford to pay their bills, cannot afford the rent and cannot afford to live in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- and whom we are helping through cutting council tax, as we have done every year.

Fiona Twycross AM: Do you agree?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Your policy and what you would rather have is everybody on the dole.

Fiona Twycross AM: That is absolutely patently not true. I welcome the fact that the Conservatives recognise the value of incentives, which has actually been Labour policy for some time.

However, I want to talk briefly about how you have said before that you think that where people can afford to pay, they should. Do you agree with Arsenal's position on the Living Wage or do you think they should listen to campaigners such as Fair Play Fair Pay and recognise that as Arsenal and other Premier League clubs clearly can afford to pay the Living Wage, they should do so?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do.

Fiona Twycross AM: You do?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I agree that companies who can pay it should pay and many of them are now. The movement is building. It is a great thing to watch. We have had an interesting discussion with Tony [Tony Arbour AM] already about his proposal to try to encourage companies to pay it, particularly small businesses. It is not always easy for everybody to pay it, but big companies who have big cost bases can certainly do it. They can do it without detriment to their shareholders. In fact, it would be positive for their shareholders because they get their higher productivity, lower human resources (HR) costs and more loyalty in their staff and they should do it.

Fiona Twycross AM: Yet many of the jobs at the football ground, as you will be aware, will be part-time. Almost half the jobs paid below the Living Wage in London are part-time jobs, compared to less than 13% of full-time jobs. Do you believe that part-time work is effectively second-class work?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. We believe in supporting everybody on low incomes in London and making sure that the maximum possible receive the Living Wage and ensuring that we do what we can to help people on low incomes through cut-price travel for those in search of work and for a 24-hour Freedom Pass. We have now concessions for apprentices in addition to all of the other concessions that you know of on the transport network.

Fiona Twycross AM: Will you have a specific focus on take-up on part-time jobs?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The tax that absolutely everybody, every homeowner and every householder has to pay in London is the council tax, of which we have cut our share by 24%.

Fiona Twycross AM: Yes, but will you have a particular drive on increase of Living Wage among part-time workers?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know whether you were listening to my opening statement, but we have just helped part-time workers with an effective cut in their annual travel cost of about £200, £300 and £600 depending on what their route is.

Fiona Twycross AM: That is of minimal comparison to getting a decent pay. It would be much better if you just made sure everybody had a decent level of pay. It is very well for him but--

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That will be of substantial benefit.

Fiona Twycross AM: Thank you.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Bacon?

Gareth Bacon AM: Can you clarify whether or not it is within your gift to compel all organisations in London to pay the London Living Wage or not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course not. We have been very successful by moral-suasion and evangelism and bright-eyed optimism. That is how we win.

Gareth Bacon AM: Yes, because I am quite confused.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We do not believe in gloom, misery and coercion.

Gareth Bacon AM: I am quite confused by the line of questioning taken by the Member opposite. It seemed to imply that it was your fault that everybody in London was not being paid the London Living Wage. Do you think that is a fair criticism?

Fiona Twycross AM: He was claiming success for a policy that is failing.

Gareth Bacon AM: Is it failing? Is it failing, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It did very well under Labour, did it not? Do you know how many companies they had under Labour? Twenty-seven companies paid under Labour.

Gareth Bacon AM: Could you confirm how many now?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): How many are there now?

Gareth Bacon AM: How many are there now, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. They do absolutely nothing. The reason they are basically not interested in it - shall I tell you why - is because the Living Wage is a policy that supports working people. It supports people who actually make an effort. The policies they really like are policies that support people who live in homes that are entirely funded by the taxpayer. They love that. They love that stuff. There is not an earthly chance that those people will ever vote Conservative. They think, "We will build more of that". That is what they really like. That is why I basically do not support the Labour Party. I do not think they are fundamentally interested in labour. They are interested in inertia.

Gareth Bacon AM: Mr Mayor, employment in London has increased exponentially in the last few years, which is why it is simultaneously true to say there are more people on the London Living Wage and more people not on the London Living Wage than a few years ago. The Labour Party, as we have heard ad nauseam, wants to make the London Living Wage compulsory. We have heard evidence earlier this morning that that would actually force certain small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to go into bankruptcy and an alternative to that would be laying off people in large numbers. Perversely, this would mean that the percentage of people in work who are paid the London Living Wage would be higher than it is now. Do you think that that would be a win for London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Completely right, Gareth. You have put your finger on the fallacy in their argument. What we have had is a massive expansion of employment. That has led to more people being paid the Living Wage and, yes, of course there will be also more people not being paid the Living Wage. The name of the game now is to get more companies to pay the Living Wage and that is what we are doing.

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

2014/4309 - Child Poverty in London

Joanne McCartney

The number of children living in poverty in London is shocking. What action are you taking to address the appalling number of London's children living in poverty?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Joanne. What we are doing on child poverty is what we can within the powers we have. We are investing £500 million of European Social Fund (ESF) money over seven years to support workless, low-skilled and low-paid Londoners into jobs. The best way of helping children in poverty is to help their families to have a decent income. There are specific things you can do for kids whose lives may be chaotic for one reason or another and whose parents are not in a position to deliver the help that they need. There is the Food Programme, breakfast clubs and Magic Breakfast. We support the voucher scheme we are piloting through Alexandra Rose Charities to help kids' families buy fresh fruit and vegetables. We have leadership clubs in schools to help kids develop their potential between the ages of 10 and 14. Also, there are many other initiatives, as you know, through Team

London and other programmes to support literacy, numeracy and all the things that kids need to be more confident and successful in their lives. It is not just our campaign but long-running campaigns to help children in poverty in London that are starting to pay off if you look at some of the results in London schools where they are much, much better than they were 10 or 20 years ago.

Joanne McCartney AM: Mr Mayor, that is all very good. I want to focus particularly on poverty and what you can do in your role as Mayor. You have said previously that tackling poverty is key to ensuring that children get the best start in life. We would all agree with that. Recent research has shown that 14 of the top 20 boroughs in the country for child poverty are in London. If I look at my figures from my own boroughs of Enfield and Haringey, child poverty is actually increasing rather than decreasing. London has a particular problem if you take it after housing costs are included. Therefore I am going to ask you today if you would consider bringing a greater focus on tackling this and actually developing a specific child poverty strategy which would put all necessary interventions in one document and actually would bring more focus to the area. It would be a real leadership commitment from you into tackling this --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am interested in the idea. I will look at it. It is a matter of concern. The biggest driver is the housing costs. There is no question that that is the thing which is now sucking so much of a family's income. The answer, as everybody knows, is to build more homes and more affordable homes. Whether there is advantage in a specific child poverty action group here in the GLA I will consider.

Joanne McCartney AM: If you would do because the Government has a strategy. It seems to me that being the capital city we should have one too. There are so many cross-cutting themes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I understand that.

Joanne McCartney AM: ...and quite often people operate in silos in their own departments and do not see the cross.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Joanne, I am not dismissing this at all.

Joanne McCartney AM: I am very grateful.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not dismissing this.

Joanne McCartney AM: Perhaps if you could do that as soon as possible, I would be grateful.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We have some great people engaged on that here in the GLA.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Whether there is something that they could produce that would be genuinely worthwhile and that would add value, I will consider. I do not want to produce a document that is just a hodgepodge of all the things that we are already doing and does not really take it further.

Joanne McCartney AM: There could be something significant if you could do it. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All right, we will have a look. We will have a look.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Any supplementaries on this question? No. The next question on debt in London has been set aside for a written response.

2014/4929 - Tower Hamlets

Andrew Boff

Given Tower Hamlets receives funding from the GLA and TfL, is the Mayor concerned by the recent PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) report on the allocation of monies by the council and can he assure us that steps have been taken to ensure that the GLA's money has been allocated appropriately?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, thanks very much, Andrew. I share your concerns and indeed the Government's concerns. Democracy must be done and it must be seen to be done. It is important that the commissioners whom the Secretary of State has directed to go into Tower Hamlets should be given every possible support. They should not be vilified and abused. It is very important that we should get to the bottom of what has or has not gone on. That is the reason for supporting what Eric Pickles [Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government] has directed.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. However, you have a particular concern with regard to the funding that comes from this building, which amounts, as I can see, to about £6 million. Will you ensure that there is a review or taskforce allocated to ensure that this £6 million has been properly spent according to the specifications on that grant money?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We will be taking steps to ensure that all GLA resources that go to Tower Hamlets are properly spent. Obviously there are matters of serious concern. It will be no secret to anybody here. This must be done in a calm and rational way. It was most unfortunate the other day that my predecessor seemed to invite people to find the homes of these commissioners and said, "Make their lives intolerable". Here is what he said, "When these commissioners turn up, find out where they live and then have a peaceful demonstration outside their homes so their neighbours know that these are the sort of people who turn out and overturn a democratically elected Mayor. Make their lives intolerable. Fight them. Expose them. Make certain everybody knows that they are doing".

I do not think that was the kind of language that the Labour Party would want to associate itself with. I wonder whether the Labour Assembly Members might now like to dissociate themselves from their former Leader.

Tony Arbour AM: I assume the meeting was after lunch.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know whether the meeting was after lunch or not.

Len Duvall AM: If you suspend the time I am more than willing to confirm what the Mayor said.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): No, we will not suspend your time for it.

Len Duvall AM: Then our nods will have to be--

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Len.

Len Duvall AM: We concur --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sure that will be appreciated by those commissioners and the people who are tasked with getting to the bottom of what has gone on in Tower Hamlets.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Any more supplementaries?

Andrew Boff AM: Just very quickly, Mr Mayor, I am still not getting quite what I want, which is an instruction from you to ensure that there is a review of GLA funds allocated to Tower Hamlets and how that has been spent. That is what I am looking for from you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, we are looking at all the spending, particularly the Decent Homes money. We are asking for an independent auditor's report, along with the annual statement of grant use.

Andrew Boff AM: That is what I am looking for. Thank you very much, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No problem.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Malthouse.

Kit Malthouse AM: Mr Mayor, do you think it is appropriate for the former Mayor, who has encouraged the intimidation of public officials, to remain on the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Labour Party?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, of course not. He should resign immediately.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): That question falls outside the Mayor's responsibilities.

Kit Malthouse AM: The very heart of Labour.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): The next question about the Metropolitan Police officer arrest targets has been withdrawn.

2014/4315 - London NHS in Crisis

Dr Onkar Sahota

Recent figures show that the number of ambulances in London meeting their target response time has decreased significantly in the last six months. Further to this, reduced access to general practitioner (GP) services in London is creating increased pressure on our accident and emergencies (A&Es). What representations are you making on these issues?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Onkar. This is a very relevant question and one that Victoria [Victoria Borwick AM, Deputy Mayor of London] and I have been thinking about a great deal in the last few months. Everybody is aware that the London Ambulance Service (LAS) does a fantastic job but it is under colossal pressure. It basically does not have enough paramedics. It has a rising volume of calls. It has very, very serious problems. I, as Mayor, cannot ignore that, even though of course I do not directly run the ambulance service. We have had lots of conversations with Ann Radmore [Chief Executive, LAS] and have also written to Jeremy Hunt [Secretary of State for Health] with Ann's encouragement to try - you will have to forgive me, I am not very well - to set out our concerns. We are in contact with NHS England's London Director to try to tackle the waiting times in A&E departments, including by improving GP and community services.

There are many factors that are causing the difficulties in the ambulance service and many solutions are now being adopted, including trying to recruit urgently the paramedics that they need. Forgive me, I think I am going to have to go and take a break.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Do you want to take a moment just to compose yourself?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Will you forgive me if I go and have a drink? I will be back. Take it out of my time.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Can we just adjourn the meeting for a moment while the Mayor recovers? This is turning into quite a long session.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, Roger. I have a bad cold.

[Adjournment.]

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Are you feeling better?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am. I just did not want to keep spluttering while I am trying to answer Onkar [Sahota] about health.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): We quite understand.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Forgive me, Onkar.

Victoria Borwick AM: Mr Mayor, we are just welcoming Charlton Manor, which was the first school in London to receive the Gold Healthy School Award.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well done.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): I am just going to resume the meeting because this is being recorded. Carry on.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Anyway, I have more or less finished my answer. Onkar?

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Mr Mayor, I know that you have just come back from New York and you may not have caught up with all the headlines in this country. The headline of the *Mail on Sunday* was the A&E closures are in meltdown. This is something I have been warning about for the last two years and so has the *Mail on Sunday*. We have a situation where you cannot get an ambulance in time, people are waiting.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Where what?

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: We have a situation that the ambulances cannot reach their own target. Their target is they should reach the caller within eight minutes 75% of the time and they are only hitting the target 62% of the time. Moreover, if you look at Northwick Park and the A&E at the Ealing Hospital, they do not see the patients 30% of the time within the target and it should be below 5%. Further, another hospital randomly I am looking at is Hillingdon Hospital and it does not see the patients 21% of the time within the target, although they are meant to see 5%. They are meant to see 5% outside the four hours but they only manage to see 21%.

What I am saying is we have an A&E meltdown crisis. We have a crisis in the ambulance staff. You cannot get an appointment with GP services. What are you doing about it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): On the A&E crisis and the difficulties A&Es are having, we have written to and sought assurances from NHS England that they are trying to get back up to the 95% waiting times standard. We are on that.

The difficulty, as you know very well, Onkar, as a GP, is that London has a shortage of GPs and indeed of effective GP cover in my view. You will be familiar with some of the arguments that have raged in London over the last few years about how to deal with that. We should be encouraging more GPs but we should also in my view have gone down the route of having more, whether you want to call them cottage hospitals or polyclinics or however you want to

describe them, walk-in centres. That was the right thing for our city to do. It was a great shame that that was all dropped, as I remember, by Labour when [Lord] Ara Darzi [Chair, London Health Commission] produced ages ago what I thought was a very credible solution. It is very sad that we have not gone forward with that.

The problem with primary care and GPs is feeding through into the A&E problem. It has been compounded by the shortage of paramedics. It is not just the shortage, of course. The big change that happened was that the paramedics - I am looking at Victoria [Borwick AM, Deputy Mayor] to prompt me here - was that the paramedics' qualification became applicable not just for the ambulance service but for all sorts of other jobs. Suddenly they were being sucked away to do all sorts of employment other than working in the ambulance service. The result is that there is a huge shortage of paramedics, to the point now where we had to recruit in Australia for 180 London Ambulance Service paramedics. You will appreciate--

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Mr Mayor, the question was that the population of London is going up. We cannot recruit the paramedics. The answer is not to close A&E departments. You set up the London Health Commission and you mentioned Lord Darzi and he called upon you to call together the decision-makers in London. He called upon you to make a case for a £1 billion investment in the community service over the next five years. What are you doing about it? How are you taking the findings of the London Health Commission?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Unfortunately, as you know, I do not run the ambulance service.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Part of the problem, Mr Mayor, is that we do not know who is running it. The whole thing is all fragmented. Who is running the LAS? That is part of the problem. We do not know who is running it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would love to do it.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: You are not running it. The Secretary of State is not running it. Who is running it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, the Secretary of State is running it.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: No, they are not. The GPs have no choice in the matter at all.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As you know, we do not have control of the budgets, but clearly there is a problem.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: I know you have been dealt with a bad hand, Mr Mayor. You have been dealt a bad hand of cards by the Secretary of State, but you need to stand upright and show leadership.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am very happy to.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: -The leadership you referred to in the Churchill book. The same leadership is required here on the NHS.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you for another plug. I cannot fault the Assembly this morning for the generosity you have shown in mentioning this book.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Walk the talk.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We have intervened on all the issues that you mention. Onkar, you should be in possession of the correspondence. It is very frustrating because it would be a huge advantage to London if primary care was basically devolved to London, be it at borough level or with a strategic role for the GLA. That is basically what should happen. There is a natural fit between social services and primary care. It would give the boroughs much more control and you would have genuine local democratic responsibility. You might get some good decisions. You might get some braver decisions because at the moment you have national politicians who are absolutely terror-stricken about taking difficult decisions, if we are honest about some of these issues. Yes, they are terror-stricken because they are wrong. Only [John] Biggs has a totally wrong line on the airports.

If you look at healthcare and hospital provision, many of the arguments are very similar, in my view, to some of the arguments that you hear about ticket offices or fire stations or police stations. People have too much of an attachment to bricks and mortar and not enough attachment to excellent services. You could have reforms that benefited healthcare and increased longevity right through the city. I am a passionate believer in devolution, not just fiscally but in healthcare as well.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

2014/4956 - Legal Highs

Victoria Borwick

The Prime Minister has spoken up in the last week about the need to combat the rise of so-called 'legal highs'. Would the Mayor campaign for a change in regulations about the sale of these perceived 'legal highs'?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Victoria, you know more about this than I do, I have to admit. We had this conversation the other day. You drew it to my attention. You pointed out what the Prime Minister had said. I am prepared to take it from you that these are nasty and dangerous things. Whether it is timely to ban them I do not know. You could consider me more educated on the subject than I was before. I can now see that there is an argument. I had thought it was not something that we needed to worry about, but you are persuading me that it is.

Victoria Borwick AM: The important thing, Mr Mayor, is that town halls are waking up on Sunday mornings and finding their streets littered with the debris. All of us have had correspondence about this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is the little vials of stuff? Yes.

Victoria Borwick AM: Yes, that is right. The trouble is we are all now seeing the evidence which will make people wake up to what has been going on the night before. Let us not beat around the bush here and let us use this morning to remind people--

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What has been going on in the bush?

Victoria Borwick AM: -- that 60 people died last year taking what they thought were legal highs, 60 children who will not be with their families this Christmas because they took something that they thought was legal and then mistakenly, because it was legal, they thought it was safe. Therefore, I would like you to use this forum this morning, Boris, particularly as we are coming up to the party time of the year to remind people. Please, let us give a message from this Assembly today from all of us: do not take legal highs because actually this might not be a safe thing to do. Yes, go out and party but, please...

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is right.

Victoria Borwick AM: Let the message be more amicable around our horseshoe today to say, please, let us keep our children safe, particularly at this time before Christmas. May I have your endorsement for that message?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, you certainly can. The drugs that we are talking about are called new psychoactive substances or novel psychoactive substances. They include drugs such as King Cobra, Clockwork Orange and Bliss. There is one called Meow Meow, which apparently has already been banned. What they do is they mimic the effective of drugs that are already illegal but they can be bought in this city.

I hear what you say. We need to look further into the usage of and the harm done by these things. I will ask the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to see whether we think as London that any further action should be taken against them. When you talk about 60 kids dying, it is obviously not something that we can ignore.

Victoria Borwick AM: Thank you very much and thank you, Assembly Members.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): The next question on the London Living Wage is set aside for a written answer.

2014/4314 - International Sales of London Homes

Tom Copley

Do you agree that housing developments built in London should be marketed to Londoners before they are sold overseas?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I do think that homes should be marketed to Londoners first or first-equal. It is difficult to exclude foreigners. Someone will say they cannot see them under European law because we live in a single market. Many so-called foreign buyers are Irish, French or whatever.

Tom, it is still the case - and I really have insisted that my team go away and thrash these figures out again because I wanted to be absolutely sure - that overseas buyers account for about 3% of London's transactions and about 6% of the value. Yes, there are cases - and I have seen them - of big new developments where seemingly a dismayingly large proportion of homes are being bought by overseas investors. It is important to recognise two points. The first is that to get those developments going, you often need the upfront cash that those buyers have. The second point is that those homes will not necessarily be occupied solely by the international investors; they will be available for rent by Londoners.

Tom Copley AM: I want to talk about your concord which 59 developers have signed up to, which says that they are committed to marketing homes in their developments first or first-equal to Londoners. How are you ensuring that developers honour this commitment?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Those which do not - and there is one case in particular; I think it is Galliard which has not done so - we have named. We are seeking urgent consultations with them and we have struck them off the list.

Tom Copley AM: They have been struck off a list. You said in response to a question from Nicky Gavron that the concord is a voluntary agreement based on goodwill. What sort of monitoring is there? Is it simply based on when these things are reported to you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Obviously we do not have our own police service to go and vet every contract in London. You know, these things emerge pretty quickly and --

Tom Copley AM: Yes, are you aware?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- one case has emerged --

Tom Copley AM: You have mentioned one case. I believe there is another case here of the Battersea Power Station Development Corporation. Are you aware that it is violating the agreement?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not aware of that. If you have evidence of people violating the agreement, then you should bring it to us and we will --

Tom Copley AM: It says a number of homes in the third phase of the development were marketed in the United Kingdom first, but the *Evening Standard* reported that 539 of the 1,305 homes in the third phase of the development are being kept in reserve to take on international roadshow starting next month. Are you aware of this? This was in the *Evening Standard*, your favourite newspaper.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If there is a failure to market those homes to Londoners and if they are being restricted to international investors in some way that goes against the spirit or letter of the concord, then we will get them in. Battersea is one of the sites where you could look at the proportion buying those homes from overseas and say, "What is in this for Londoners?"

Tom Copley AM: Absolutely, can I --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I just give you the answer? The answer is that actually many Londoners do buy homes, even on these big prime projects, but also that the asset or the home is available on the London rental market. It adds to the supply and that is a good thing.

Tom Copley AM: Yes, but it is no good if you are a first-time buyer, is it? If you have international investors who are essentially outbidding first-home buyers and pushing up the price of property? It is no good if you are a first-time buyer.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What you must do for first-home buyers is build tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, more affordable homes and homes for part-buy/part-rent as we are doing. What would be a deep mistake would be turn all xenophobic and hostile to international investment and to garb ourselves in the raiment of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and say that we did not want nasty foreign money coming to our shores. That is not the way forward.

Tom Copley AM: Can I press you there? In terms of the Battersea Power Station Development Corporation, based on what I have said today, will you look into this and see if they are indeed in violation.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will. Of course, we will look and see if they are indeed in violation.

Tom Copley AM: Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not have any direct evidence that they are. We have obviously worked very closely on that site for many, many years to get it going. It is a triumph that Battersea is being rebuilt and it will deliver tens of thousands of homes for Londoners.

Tom Copley AM: That is a good example. He has answered my question.

2014/4313 - Homelessness

Jennette Arnold OBE

In 2008 you promised to eradicate rough sleeping by the 2012 Olympics. Instead it has risen year-on-year since you became Mayor. Why have you failed to deliver this pledge?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Jennette. What we agreed with the charities and the boroughs was that nobody should spend a second night on the street. There has been a huge problem with homelessness in London. You are right in what you say. It is a continuing problem. I would contrast it with what goes on in other cities. For instance, most rough sleepers just spend one night on the street. Only 3% of all rough sleepers - and that is just 169 people, in other words - were reported on the streets every quarter of the last year.

If you look at a place like New York, the New York's Deputy Mayor for Housing was interviewed in *The Guardian* last week and he pointed out that 53,000 people sleep in the city's homeless shelters every night. As you have been kind enough to point out, if you go to Washington or New York, as I have done lately, and you see what is going on there, it is of a different order of magnitude, the homeless problem.

That is in no way to minimise the problem we have. We have a problem. It is vital to understand the causes of this problem though also, Jennette. There has been a substantial increase in the proportion of homeless people who are from European Union (EU) accession countries and it is very difficult for local councils to budget for them and for homeless charities to work out how to deal with the problem when you have unrestricted access by large numbers of people to London in the way that we have. The No Second Night Out scheme is very effective.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): OK. That might well be working for some people. I am glad you are agreed that the situation has not got any better and that we now have an 85% increase of rough sleepers. That is looking from 2007/08 when there were just over 3,000 to now when there is 6,500.

I just want to spend the next few minutes drawing to your attention the plight of London's young people who are homeless. I want to know if you know that many young people who are homeless through no fault of their own use your bus network as a place to call home and a place of safety. If you do, would you agree with me that is something that has to be stopped because it is totally unacceptable and will you commit to revisiting the work of the Bus Outreach service that formed part of the Government's No One Left Out programme, which was stopped about two years ago? It cannot be acceptable that the bus service becomes the home and the place of safety for our homeless children of this city.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will certainly have a look at that. Obviously the impact of that on the bus service is not being felt because the crime continues to be very low. In fact, crime has fallen by 45% on buses, but I will certainly look at what is happening.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): I will follow up in writing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do not forget that Gordon Selfridge, the American founder of Selfridges, spent his declining years going around. He went completely bust and he lived on a bus. He went around with plastic bags. He went around and around.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): There is this romantic view that adults can take and adults can maybe be involved in. That does not apply to our young people. I will write to you and I will send you a case study of this (overspeaking)

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will be grateful. Are you talking about people actually sleeping on buses?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Absolutely and that is totally unacceptable.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I will look into it. It is not feeding through into our crime figures or passenger discomfort but I will find out about that.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you.

2014/4934 - Million Mask March

James Cleverly

How do we prevent anonymous masked demonstrations from happening in London, such as the 5 November 'Million Mask March'?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, absolutely. The police do a fantastic job. They have about 4,500 demonstrations a year, but when people are breaking the law and wearing a mask they must expect to have that mask removed and they cannot keep it on in defiance of the wishes of a police officer. That is the legal position and I am glad it is.

James Cleverly AM: Thank you. I would be very happy to put on record that the police, both in that circumstance and more widely, did a very balanced and very effective job. I happened to be in Parliament Square - not protesting, I have to confess - on that particular evening and I noted the police were very much conscious of keeping a convivial atmosphere as far as possible. Do you share my concern that the vast majority of people who went on to that protest were intent on peaceful protest but by wearing masks made it a lot easier for our *agents provocateurs* and people who would commit crime? It makes it a lot easier for them to get away with it by virtue of the fact they were masked up and we should encourage protesters not to hide their faces if they genuinely want to pursue peaceful protests.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. 'Encourage' is the right word. It would be a bit difficult for us to say to people that they cannot wear masks when they are protesting at any stage. The law is pretty clear. They are obliged to remove their mask if a police officer requires them to do so and quite rightly.

James Cleverley AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): The next question on street markets has been withdrawn.

2014/4316 - Air pollution

Murad Qureshi

Who should Londoners trust on the true extent of air pollution in London, your office or the King's College Environmental Research Group?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, thank you. Obviously great confidence has to be placed in the King's College London's Environmental Research Group. We have a very close working relationship with them. They work with the boroughs and with the London Air Quality Monitoring Network. We depend on their analysis, which shows amongst other things that omissions of nitrogen oxide (NO_x) has fallen by 20% and particles less than 10 microns in diameter (PM10s) by 15%. The latest analysis actually shows that concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) have fallen by 12% since 2008.

Where we are entitled to be cautious is in the spin that is put on their findings by - I am sure - perfectly well-meaning journalists who slightly soup it up and make statements that cannot really be justified, saying that London has the worst air quality in the world or that Oxford Street is the most polluted place on the planet. These things simply are not true and it is important to correct those.

Murad Qureshi AM: OK, thank you very much, Mr Mayor. Can I just inform you that this morning the UK Supreme Court has made a requirement of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to produce a meaningful air quality plan to ensure that the exceedance period for nitrogen dioxide limited values beyond 2010 is as short as possible? Producing a plan is not enough in itself. Do you welcome that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do. You know - and, Murad, you have worked on this for years - that the issue for us in London is we feel that often we are in the lead. We care about it and we are doing all sorts of stuff and taking huge amounts of flak from drivers to make vehicles cleaner, putting in the Ultra-Low Emission Zone and all the sorts of things we are doing, but the Government we do not think is funding this enough. There is a £500 million Office of Low Emission Vehicles fund. We could spend it far better than any other place in Britain and the lion's share of that money should come to us.

Murad Qureshi AM: OK, with this ClientEarth of victory, I am sure Defra will be knocking on your door very soon. The case is that we have to move beyond the plan and before you move beyond a plan you have to accept scientific advice. I did hear you say earlier that you cannot dissent against best scientific advice on climate change and air quality. I hope you will re-emphasise that and also offer an apology to King's College because there is no doubt they felt threatened by the letter for whatever reason. We do need them on board still because - let us face it - there are not many scientists amongst the political classes. I just think this is an

opportunity for you, given that you said over the weekend that you accept the scientific advice and also this morning, to offer them an apology and draw a line under the whole episode.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. Perhaps it would be more appropriate if I could just offer my renewed support for the scientific work that King's College does. What I object to is ill-informed headlines in newspapers based fallaciously on those reports which say things like, "Welcome to London, the most toxic place on the planet". That I think is palpable nonsense. In London, if you look at overall air quality and if you look at NO₂ we are better than Stuttgart, Paris, Munich, Rome, Milan and Mexico City where levels are nearly double that of London. Hong Kong, Istanbul, Beijing and Shanghai all have higher readings. London comes at about, as far as I can remember, fifteenth on the city-wide index and seventeenth on the traffic-focused index. There are plenty of other cities that have far worse air quality than London. It is just not true. All I am objecting to is the way that this stuff is spun. Then perhaps what would be nice would be sometimes when the academics see that their words are being misrepresented, they then could themselves point out that actually things are not quite as the newspapers would have it.

Murad Qureshi AM: Yes. Mr Mayor, there is no need to get defensive on this because last week we did ask Frank Ellis [Branch Chief, United States Environmental Protection Agency] here and he confirmed your interpretation that it has been a misrepresentation by the media of what was said.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I was not being defensive, I was just stating the facts.

Murad Qureshi AM: Can I just move on to another issue that has come up, which is dealing with the diesel pollution which the Environment Committee is presently dealing with? The removal of the diesel particulate filters by lorry drivers, suburban utility vehicles (SUV) drivers and what-have-you is critical.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely.

Murad Qureshi AM: We can talk about the future and what-have-you. There are immediate things that can be done. I am going to be writing to the Police Commissioner about this, I just hope you will join me in emphasising the importance of making this a criminal offence.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I absolutely agree.

Murad Qureshi AM: This is happening with the present diesel car stop at the moment, whether they be lorries or whether they be SUVs or family cars. There seems to be a lot of garages offering this service.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you sure? They are doing this all to get more miles to the gallon?

Murad Qureshi AM: Whatever the reasons, but actually the Department of Transport is saying this weekend that modifying vehicles is actually acting illegally and they could face prosecution.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is not just illegal; it is immoral.

Murad Qureshi AM: It is immoral, indeed.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What they are doing actually is they are wilfully disabling the devices in their machines that can reduce the amount of pollution. It is completely wrong for them to do that. Murad, you are bringing something to me that I was not aware of. I will look at it.

Murad Qureshi AM: That is why I have brought it up here because I did not think you had. Du Pont also admits there is a loophole over its own regulations because companies can carry out such alterations without breaking the law.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We should close that loop.

Murad Qureshi AM: Exactly. The whole thing is that the Police Commissioner, given he is quite keen on car crime anyway, could get the message out that this is not morally right and this is actually a public health issue as much as a legality issue as well.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely. I am very interested by that.

Murad Qureshi AM: I will write the letter and you can sign it with me.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not promising to sign any letter with you but I will have a look at the letter. I certainly agree with the thrust of what you say.

Murad Qureshi AM: That is an immediate thing you can do and that is the kind of action we need on top of the legal action we have had this morning against Defra.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. OK.

Murad Qureshi AM: Thank you.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Bacon?

Gareth Bacon AM: Mr Mayor, again, I am slightly confused by the attack that was just made on you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think he really did attack me much, did he?

Gareth Bacon AM: In the preamble to his question, he said that there was no doubt that King's College London were threatened and invited you to apologise to them. Then later on in his questioning he confirmed - and I was at the meeting and I heard this myself - that King's College London had said that the journalist's report was a misrepresentation of the facts. Which is it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Murad was gracious enough to accept that the academics themselves were concerned about the way that their findings had been presented in the media. It is very important that neither politicians nor the media seek to distort academic phrases. There is legitimate anxiety about pollution in Oxford Street. As it happens, one of the reasons that pollution levels in Oxford Street are so high is because we are punctilious and we put our monitors very near the curb side where they are likely to inhale the maximum level of pollution. If you look at other cities around Europe, they are not quite so observant and some of their readings, we think, are a bit optimistic. That does not mean we should not tackle pollution in Oxford Street. Yes, we are. We have to bring in more low emission buses. We have to deal with the taxi fleet in particular, which is an issue in Oxford Street because there are many more taxis now using that street. After we pushed a lot of buses out, it was filled up with taxis. We have to deal with the whole vehicle fleet all together, but this can be done with technology, and we are.

Gareth Bacon AM: Just to confirm, there was no threat made to King's College by your office at all?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

Gareth Bacon AM: The journalist wrote that there was a threat to their funding and I was going to invite you to read out the line in the letter that was referred to.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Their funding? No.

Gareth Bacon AM: Yes, as the threat. Murad Qureshi in his opening remark said they were clearly threatened and there was no doubt about it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. I will tell you what it was. What we were hoping was that the academics would be so rigorous as to point out that some of the more hysterical media coverage - almost all of the media coverage - of their report was misleading and tendentious and that was what we were hoping.

Gareth Bacon AM: Just to confirm, then, it was --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): From what I heard from Murad [Qureshi AM], they have been kind enough to do that.

Gareth Bacon AM: There was not threat and no apology is required?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

2014/4312 - Sexual harassment on the Transport Network

Joanne McCartney

What progress have you made in your sexual harassment awareness campaign on London's Transport Network?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Joanne, we obviously take this extremely seriously because this is one crime type that, as you know, has been going up, but part of the reason we think it has been going up is because people's awareness is being raised. The activity on Project Guardian, which we launched in 2013 to reduce unwanted sexual harassment on public transport, includes 150,000 leaflets handed out to show people we take it seriously. There is a hashtag Twitter link for the whole project. I cannot tell you what it is, unfortunately. There are police engagement days every month where they focus on this issue and how to tackle it and 2,000 police officers have been trained to help them spot offender behaviour and provide better victim care. One hundred officers are now undertaking cover patrols and surveys of targeted individuals and that has resulted in 500 detections so far. A 'detection', as you know, is where the suspect is identified and there has been an outcome for sexual crime on the London Transport Network.

Joanne McCartney AM: Is that MPS officers who have been trained?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is MPS officers. There has been a big increase in activity. One of the results has been a big increase in reports of sexual offences. There have been 1,639 reports of sexual offences in the 14 months since the project was launched, compared to 1,182 in the 14 months prior to the project. The hope is that that is because people are reporting it.

Joanne McCartney AM: We had this discussion when I last raised this in September and we had looked at the figures and London's own survey showed that fewer women were now reporting than the previous year and so there looks to be an increase not only in reporting but in actual incidents. I asked you at that meeting to do a proactive campaign similar to New York City's and you and Peter Hendy [CBE, Commissioner, TfL] - because it was in the TfL period - both said that you were looking at this and that you have been launching a proactive campaign. I asked about posters going up in the Transport Network and you said, yes, you were going to do that. My question is actually asking you for an update on the awareness campaign.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): On the posters. I can tell you there are 150,000 leaflets that have been handed out. I cannot tell you about posters. I do not have any information on that.

Joanne McCartney AM: We thought that this was an actual proactive campaign. I can tell you that New York City has just launched the second phase of its programme called Sexual Harassment is a Crime in the Subway Too and it has messages played on its boards. It has station announcements saying that sexual harassment will not be tolerated. It has all its station staff trained and witnesses are urged to approach them. It has an online reporting tool, where both people that have been victims and also witnesses can post pictures and it is directly fed

into the police. Is that something that we are going to see in London under your mayoralty, a concerted effort like that? You talked about a lot of leaflets.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a fair bit of activity going on, on this front. Whether it exactly resembles the New York campaign --

Joanne McCartney AM: It does not look like it does and I am asking you to do that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- in terms of the number of posters and the visibility of the rhetoric against sexual harassment.

Joanne McCartney AM: Mr Mayor, it is not rhetoric against sexual harassment.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): When I say 'rhetoric', I mean announcements on the station and the message being very, very out there in the public realm. Let me look at what is currently going on and see whether it is adequate.

Joanne McCartney AM: In September I thought you had taken this on board and were saying you were going to launch something this autumn.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): A fair amount of people would say that 150,000 leaflets is a lot.

Joanne McCartney AM: That is not a proactive awareness campaign, Mr Mayor, which is what I am calling for. Will you go away and look at it again and let me know if you are able, under your mayoralty, to actually take a lead on this and do something that has been done in New York City to great effect?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, we think that there has been a considerable impact from this campaign because the reports of sexual offences have gone up 38%, we think as a result of the greater awareness by officers and the staff of this issue, the training that we now give them and all the various ways in which we are engaging with stakeholder groups who are campaigning against this to raise awareness.

Joanne McCartney AM: Mr Mayor, TfL's own survey shows that 96% of interviewees say they did not report the incident and so only 4% are reporting. An awareness campaign is needed. If we see those figures go up as a result of an awareness campaign, we are going to actually support you in that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, you are being a little unfair, Joanne, in saying that nothing is going on.

Joanne McCartney AM: I am not saying that. You should do more, a proactive --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That I am willing to accept. Before I commit myself to a gigantic poster campaign, I want to go and look and see just exactly what we have.

Joanne McCartney AM: Mr Mayor, in September you told me you would do that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let us see how we are getting on.

Joanne McCartney AM: I will put the question down again in two months' time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): All right, the Labour Group is out of time. The next question on the Infrastructure Delivery Board is set aside for written answer, as is the question on the Garden Bridge and the question on New Bus for London pollution. The next question is the *Green Light* report.

2014/4933 - *Green Light* report

James Cleverly

My colleague Richard Tracey recently published the Green Light report, which makes the case for turning off many of London's traffic lights at night. Have you had an opportunity to read the report?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, James. I want you to know that of course we have studied Dick's [Tracey AM] excellent suggestion. I am very open-minded. In boroughs, particularly in outer London where traffic may be lower late at night, boroughs have it within their existing powers to turn off traffic lights and it would be quite difficult to do in some places. The risk is particularly on big roads that you will get a free-for-all and Enfield in particular is worried about encouraging drag racing, which they have a certain amount of already. I know people would not want to see that.

Generally I have become a bit gloomy about the willingness of boroughs to do anything with traffic lights. They talk a good game but when it actually comes to removing traffic lights what happens is that a massive local campaign is started, mainly by Liberal Democrats.

James Cleverly AM: Not massive anymore.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is right. At any rate, there is a Liberal Democrat campaigns to keep whatever oppressive instrument of the state they can find and so it becomes very difficult to remove traffic lights. We have managed to remove about five, basically because everybody says that it would cause unacceptable risk of injury. If boroughs want to do it, they will have our full encouragement.

James Cleverly AM: I appreciate that. Obviously the report is calling for something subtly but significantly different, which is not the removal of the traffic lights in totality.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

James Cleverly AM: You will remember 2009 when my constituency suffered a very widespread and prolonged power outage shortly after I was elected.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Not because you were elected?

James Cleverly AM: Correlation does not prove causality. The traffic lights across the whole of North Bexley were out for a good three - and in some cases four - days. At some of our most difficult junctions, there was an obvious improvement in traffic flow. I am thinking particularly of a junction by Danson Park, which is a particularly difficult offset.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Danson?

James Cleverly AM: Danson, a part which you know very well.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know well. I remember Danson.

James Cleverly AM: The point we are making, Mr Mayor, is that in parts of London there are very modest traffic flows and you find the ridiculous situation of cars sitting at red lights when they have a completely open view of all the traffic that is not there and they have to sit there with their engines running, waiting for nothing to happen, until the light changes. What we are suggesting is that TfL should use its modelling software to model the impact, which we have estimated could save a huge amount of time, a whole load of unnecessary pollutants and save money for Londoners in the periods of time when there are very, very low traffic volumes, often but not exclusively in outer London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is more likely to be a relevant approach in outer London areas where there are very low traffic volumes in the small hours. The difficulty in the centre of town is that we are a 24-hour city now and people can be particularly vulnerable late at night for one reason or another. I would be reluctant to see such a measure on the Transport for London Route Network (TLRN) because there would be considerable risk.

I accept the point you make about traffic flow when there are no lights. The trouble is wherever we have tried to do this, making that fine libertarian argument, what happens is that there is an absolute backlash locally and people want that light because they are terrified that their grandmothers are going to get knocked down, or their children are going to get knocked down. I am afraid against that sentiment it is very hard to fight. It is easily whipped up.

James Cleverly AM: Mr Mayor, I do appreciate that. Obviously you are familiar that the report suggests that we are talking in the small hours of the morning, typically between 1.00am and 6.00am, and the number of grandparents and small children trying to cross roads at that stage, I would guess, would be fairly modest.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I mean London is changing. It is a 24-hour city. The other thing that is a great statistic, one of the great unsung achievements of TfL and the police in this city generally is the massive reduction that we are now seeing in killed or seriously

injured (KSIs) on our roads of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users and that is big, big falls now. That is incredible given the pace at which the city lives and the growth in population. That is a prize. I would not want to see that prize put at risk. I am willing to see this idea trialled by boroughs if they want it. We are unlikely to proceed with it systematically across London on the TLRN. I have to be honest with you.

James Cleverly AM: I am disappointed to hear that because we have seen this with shared space schemes, the evidence has shown that actually if you have the courage to trust road users and say, "You are expected to use your eyes. You are expected to be conscious and careful of other road users", with shared space schemes which have been promoted by your mayoralty, we have actually seen the evidence, whilst counterintuitive, is quite compelling that actually if you remove the need for drivers to be observant and be considerate, they are more likely to be less observant and less considerate. What we are saying is in the same philosophy of those shared space schemes we say to drivers, "You have the responsibility to be considerate of other road users". As I say, the evidence that I have seen in my own constituency in 2009 shows that actually drivers are considerate and they allow other road users to take their fair turn at junctions and crossing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I am not sure that that is true over a long period of time. What happens is that frustrations build up and you do need traffic lights to keep traffic flowing smoothly. What we are certainly doing is putting in more Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique (SCOOT) systems so the lights are sensitive to the volume of traffic coming down the road. That, it seems to me, is a much more sensible approach. If the traffic is very light then you might have much longer on green. That is what we are doing in the small hours of the night. That is probably the way we will go for the time being, giving motorists more time on green in the small hours is the approach we will follow.

James Cleverly AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): The final question is on stamp duty.

Gareth Bacon AM: It is a bit wider than that.

2014/4932 - Stamp duty

[Gareth Bacon](#)

In light of all the discussions regarding devolution to our northern cities, can the Mayor ensure that London will receive a fair deal and will at least be devolved of the five property taxes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Gareth, and, yes, you are absolutely right. I want your support for this.

When we make this case to Government about devolution, we should be talking not about the mayoralty or about councils or about politicians. This is about people. This is about London being able to build more homes for its people, being able to invest in transport and being able

to do great things for people who are having a tough time in our city. That is why we need stable and continuous financing. It is not some arcane argument about sovereignty or who controls the money. It is about actually being able to deliver and to be able to plan and to invest in the infrastructure the city needs and so I am very grateful for your report.

Gareth Bacon AM: In turn, I am grateful for that answer, Mr Mayor. The problem is that Greg Clark, the current Minister for Cities, has recently said that stamp duty was not on the table for London devolution talks. Is that something that you accept and will you be continuing to make the case for London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. As you know in every negotiation with Government I have a doctrine of unlimited negotiating capital and we go forward. I do not think the position will be tenable in the long term and that there is a snowballing desire to see devolution to the great cities. We are working, as you know, with all the other great cities of England to achieve this. The Government is listening. Greg [Clark] is very keen to help. What he said is strictly accurate. It is not on the agenda at the moment but that does not mean it will not be on the agenda and it is something that will inevitably have to be considered.

Gareth Bacon AM: Two boroughs in London - Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea - together raise more in stamp duty than Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland put together. If you are successful in getting this on to the table and the GLA does take a portion of stamp duty revenues, will you fight to ensure that those two London boroughs also receive a fair deal on that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. We have to be careful with this because the Treasury does regard stamp duty as being a fantastic cash cow and it is only human of them to want to keep it. We can show that there is no loss to the Treasury and that we can do a deal with them so that we shared some of the upside if stamp duty receipts go up. If there was a compromise and the boroughs and the GLA shared the proceeds of growth with the Treasury. There is no reason for them to be paranoid about this. This is something that can work well for Her Majesty's Treasury and the Exchequer. It will mean more money all round in tax yield because it will mean more growth and better housing and more employment.

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. Finally, in our final 18 months in this building and indeed when you move down the road to the more attractive building, can you fight to ensure that any nonsensical and economically illiterate proposals such as a mansion tax never see the light of day?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I thought it was a wonderful session the other night with Myleene Klass whipping the ass of the Labour Leader. I thought that was absolutely superb. It is interesting that of all the Labour would-be Mayors, they have all distanced themselves from that. Tessa [Tessa Jowell MP] has, Sadiq [Sadiq Khan MP] has, Lammy [David Lammy MP] [prospective Labour candidates for Mayor of London] has.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sadiq is behind it, is he? OK, so Tess and Lammy. Sadiq is pro this ageist tax on London, but we do not know what the position of the Labour Group on the Assembly is.

Len Duvall AM: We have run out of time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They have conveniently run out of time. Len says he has run out of time. Normally all too easy to interject, all too eager. They have run out of time. There they are luxuriating in their mansions. Look at them, unwilling.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): I see you have conceded the general election, Gareth [Gareth Bacon AM] and you, that Labour will go on to win. You just made the comment you were out of time. Assembly Member Boff.

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, in the absence of Home Rule that seems to be indicated by Westminster, do you think it is time for a referendum for independence for London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I do not. I have never believed that and I do not think you do either, Andrew. I know that it was the policy of the former Mayor to create a kind of city state. London is the capital of England, the capital of Britain, the capital of the United Kingdom and long may it remain so.

Andrew Boff AM: We are the ones who are propping up the rest of the United Kingdom and is it not about time that we had more of our money kept locally?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, absolutely right. When we talk about child poverty in London, it is unbelievably important to people in the rest of the country understand that this is not a city that is some sort of plutocrats paradise. It is a city which has huge inequality, huge social problems and it is a city which needs proper funding and that is what we are asking for. We are asking for the ability to plan long term and to pay for the needs of all our people. It is completely equitable and will be in the interest of the whole country.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor, but I still think while we are still paying the bills for the rest of the country we should be a little more assertive about our rights to keep the money that we actually create in this great city.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are. We are being very, very modest. All we want to do is go up from 5.6%, which is what London currently keeps of the tax it generates, to a mere 11.5%. The Government would keep the overwhelming bulk of London's tax yield. It would remain with the Treasury. This is a very, very modest and sensible step that we are asking for.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Everybody is now out of time and that is good note to end the session on. Thank you, Mr Mayor for your answers.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, sir.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): I am pleased to see your throat held out.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, thank you.