

December 2007

LONDON ENVIRONMENT NEWS

Welcome to the end-of-year edition of Environment News for 2007 from City Hall. It includes a round-up of my own activities along with the work of the London Assembly environment committee and some news from the boroughs too.

I'm sending you this newsletter because my records show you have asked to be kept informed. However if you wish to be removed from the distribution list, please let me know: Mike.Tuffrey@gmail.com. Equally a PDF version of this newsletter is available to download from <http://www.tuffrey.com/> for forwarding on to others who can join the mailing list there too.

Since my last newsletter in the summer, Rachel Zaltzman has joined us at City Hall as my researcher. She returns to London having previously worked at the European Parliament. Welcome, Rachel. It's been a busy time at the GLA, with environmental issues very much to the fore. Next year promises to be no different. So please do stay in touch.

In the meantime, let me wish you a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.



Mike Tuffrey AM

*Spokesperson on the Environment
Leader, London Assembly Liberal Democrat Group*

Lib Dem Action...

- ***Tackling 'freesheets' litter***

Since the introduction of the londonpaper and London Lite, the increased waste from free sheets especially on London Underground trains and stations has simply become unacceptable. These two papers alone are responsible for four tonnes of waste on the Capital's streets everyday, incurring a clean up cost of £110,000 a year to London Boroughs alone. Similarly Transport for London has to cope with an increase of 1.5 tonnes of extra waste everyday on the tube network. Associated Newspapers and News International, the publishers of these free sheets, are not doing nearly enough to address this problem. In a deal hammered out with Westminster City Council, they have agreed to fund 32 recycling bins in the West End: a pathetic contribution given that London needs 4,000 extra bins to cope with just half of the free sheets given away. I have asked the Mayor a series of questions to ensure that when it comes to clearing up free sheet waste, the polluter must pay. London Councils must use their powers to prevent the distribution of these papers, unless the publishers are prepared to step up and cover London's recycling costs.

To read the mayor's response to my questions, go to: <http://www.london.gov.uk/mqt/fulltext-search-form.do>

- ***Opposing Heathrow expansion***

As the government launches a "consultation" into massive further expansion at Heathrow, the Liberal Democrat Group at the London Assembly is totally opposed to any more development at London's largest airport. The government seems so hell-bent on expansion that they are not stopping to count the environmental costs. They will not even take into account their own noise study, which they had promised would underpin their policy on Heathrow. Residents across London living under Heathrow's flight paths have already endured excessive noise, congestion and pollution. It is unacceptable and unreasonable to further diminish their quality of life. Transport Secretary, Ruth Kelly, before waiting for the responses to a consultation not due to close until the end of February, has said that unless a third runway is built by 2020, jobs would be lost and the economy would suffer. At a meeting on December 12th, I pressured the Mayor into agreeing to put his money where his mouth - City Hall economists will now work to examine the negative economic impacts to Londoners if expansion were to go ahead and, at the same time, to make the

economic case for alternatives such as video-conferencing for business and high-speed rail for short haul travel.

To watch a web cast of my exchange with the Mayor, go to: <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/webcasts.jsp>

- **Christmas lights go sustainable**

After launching the campaign for more sustainable lighting last year, I've succeeded in persuading the New West End Company, which manages the West End decorations, to use the most energy efficient LED lights available for their 2007 display and to offset their carbon emissions for the past three years. The West End lights are a world famous attraction and an important feature of London's Christmas festivities, helping to bring over 40 million visitors to Bond Street, Oxford Street and Regent Street over the holiday period. As such, the West End must continue to lead by example and ensure that the celebrations are among the cleanest and least damaging in the world. Next year, I hope to persuade them to move to powering the lights entirely by renewable energy; the technology is already on the market so that this is both possible and practical, even in our 24 hour city.

Environment Committee News...

- **Tackling plastic bags and packaging waste**

The Committee has been reviewing the use of throwaway shopping bags in London and recent proposals to reduce their use in the capital. Londoners currently use more than 1.6 billion carrier bags every year, receiving a staggering 200 bags each. Despite improved recycling rates across the capital, only one in every 200 plastic bags is recycled, leaving the rest to decompose over up to 400 years. Committee members questioned leading supermarkets about London Councils' proposal to impose a ban on shops giving away throwaway bags for free. There was a broad consensus on the need to act, and the Committee's preferred route is a levy. A short report on the issue was published on December 18th.

I feel the government ought to be addressing this issue as it is essentially a national, not regional, problem. However their policies have failed to have an impact and it chose not to support the Packaging Reduction Bill introduced into parliament by Liberal Democrat MP, Jo Swinson, which would have reduced plastic bag usage and packaging waste more generally. In the absence of effective action from Gordon Brown, I welcome the initiative taken by the boroughs. But I believe that it should be accompanied by measures to reduce dramatically the amount of non-essential packaging. Londoners are currently being ripped off. We pay three times over for excess packaging at the checkout, we pay increased council tax and landfill tax and we will all be paying the environmental cost for years to come.

For more details about the Environment Committee, go to: <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/envmtgs/>
The Committee's report is available at <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/environment.jsp#bags>

- **Implementing the food strategy**

As the Environment Committee rapporteur on the Mayor's Food Strategy in 2005, I am currently scrutinising the London Development Agency's implementation plan. My main concern is that it does not put consumers at the heart of the process. With food accounting for 10-20% of household's environmental impact, we need to concentrate on influencing the individual choices that Londoners make about food every day. The LDA's budget is £3.87million over three years to support the work of the London Food Strategy. With £2.1million of that being spent on just two projects, this is money that I feel could have a greater impact on Londoners' food habits. The first, The Local Food Infrastructure Project, aims to improve information and availability of local produce, which is a barrier to Londoners buying locally grown food. It will target one of London's wholesale markets and work to increase the sustainable supply of local produce by 15% and establish a south-east food brand. The second project, Good Food Training for London, is a training and skills programme targeting public sector catering staff. It aims to train catering staff to produce healthy, seasonal and sustainable food. This will build upon the crucial role that schools have in providing our children with healthy meals – for some the only hot meal they will receive that day – and equipping them with the knowledge to make informed choices about the food they eat as they grow up.

For the Plan, go to http://www.lda.gov.uk/upload/pdf/London_Food_Strategy_Implementation_Plan.pdf

- **Cutting carbon emissions in the public sector**

Conscious of the growing number of sustainable development strategies and action plans being published by central government and our own GLA, I have taken the lead on an environment committee review of the gap between rhetoric and reality, focusing on climate change and examining local councils, the GLA family and the NHS in London. There is no shortage of advice for those responsible for London's public estate but we found that progress is still falling short of what scientists now tell us is essential. We also found that the level of action taken varies considerably between different parts of the public sector, which suggests that,

overall, London could do better, if the laggards learn from the leaders. Worryingly, we have identified structural barriers, which central government needs to quickly address, as too many new PFI-funded schools and hospitals are environmentally out-of-date before they have even opened. I launched the committee's report 'Emission Creep' on December 11th.

For a copy of the report, go to <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/environment.jsp#ecreep>

Borough Good Practice....

• Islington LibDems ban plastic bottles

Bottles of mineral water and bottled water coolers will soon be a thing of the past in all Islington Council buildings thanks to an initiative of Islington Liberal Democrats. A LibDem motion to ban Council departments from purchasing bottled water, telling them to drink tap water instead, was backed by the council. The move will save the Council money as buying bottled water costs 500 times more than turning on a tap. It will also cut back carbon dioxide emissions caused by the production, transportation and disposal of plastic bottles, helping to meet climate change targets. The GLA family has already ditched plastic bottles in favour of tap water at all our meetings, but the Islington motion also called on the Mayor to throw his weight behind a ban on bottled water in public buildings across the capital. I would urge other boroughs, not to mention other businesses and restaurants, to follow the Islington Council's lead and consider dropping the bottle.

For more details on Islington Liberal Democrats, go to: <http://www.islington-libdems.org.uk/>
For details on Islington's climate change energy fund, go to: <http://www.islington.gov.uk/>

• Lib Dem Borough Award Winners On Transport

Since winning back control of the Council from the Tories in 2006, Richmond-upon-Thames Liberal Democrats have put the environment at the heart of decision-making. They have firmly established their green credentials and won a number of awards, most notably as the Local Government Association's "Green Group of the Year." To make real strides, Richmond have set themselves the target of reducing their carbon footprint by 30% by 2013. This is much more ambitious than the Mayor's own target of cutting carbon by 30% by 2025 and have already identified over 150 projects to help them achieve this through the Carbon Management Programme. As 27% of carbon emissions come powering London's houses, climate change really must start at home. To assist in planning green homes, Richmond has produced a "Sustainable Construction Checklist" and "Sustainable by design – domestic house extension and loft conversions." They have also introduced a home insulation scheme, giving residents a £100 discount on their council tax for installing loft or cavity wall insulation.

For details on Richmond Upon Thames' work, go to: <http://www.richmond.gov.uk/>

News in Brief....

• Save the park

I am supporting the campaign of the Friends of Brockwell Park to object to a plan that will take more than 1,000 square metres from the Park for a new road scheme. Unbelievable in this day and age. The current proposals from Lambeth Council and Transport for London are completely out of proportion to what is required to ease traffic congestion in the area. I have presented a petition, signed by 2,469 local supporters, to Peter Hendy, Commissioner of Transport for London, opposing all plans that affect the Park boundaries, unless local people are fully consulted.

To support the campaign by the Friends, go to: <http://www.brockwellpark.com/>

Contact Details....

For GLA business, please contact me or my researcher at City Hall:

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