

October Newsletter

Dear West Londoner,

Welcome to my October Newsletter, and many thanks to all of you who responded to last month's. I have been very encouraged by the positive comments I have received back and also the increasing traffic visiting the Association website. I hope to increase the network of residents and businesses who receive this communication each month - and I would invite any of you who feel the letters contain useful information, either to forward it to others who may be interested or to encourage them to e-mail me or visit the website.

In September, transport was the predominant local theme. We learned more about Crossrail's plans for our stations along their route (generally good news if you are still living here in 8 years time), but also heard how First Great Western plan to withdraw early morning and evening commuter services. To hear at Acton Area Committee that Ealing Council had been invited by FGW last year to submit their views on the proposals, and that they had done NOTHING about it until now was infuriating for everyone concerned.

At the same meeting, I listened to the Council Leader declare his continued commitment to make provision for the West London Tram. Many of you would have been at one of the two debates earlier this month - in Ealing Town Hall and in Bush Hall - where an overwhelming majority of both audiences made clear their opposition to the Tram's creation. Opposition is so strong that I have given serious thought to turning the General Election campaign into a referendum on the subject. (Am I the only one to find it quite extraordinary that both Councils could be so determined to force the Tram upon us, when their rate-payers - both business and residential - are so opposed?)

And during the month, we heard from the Mayor's office that he plans to go ahead with the extension of the Congestion Charge into Shepherds Bush. This, in spite of independent evidence showing it would cost the community £150 million or more with no prospect of ever recouping the funds. The criminal absurdity of the combination of these proposals would be laughable, if the consequences were not so serious. The White City Shopping Centre might bring new life to our neighbourhood in due course, but these transport proposals will ensure potential shoppers think seriously about ever making the journey. The West Cross Route, one of the proposed access points to the new shopping centre, will be so gridlocked by vehicles trying to avoid the Zone and unable to use Shepherds Bush Green, that no-one will be able to get into the area.

What would I do, I hear you ask? Abolish the Tram and scrap the Congestion Charge extension. With the money saved, I would widen the West Cross Route so shoppers and business vehicles can get into the Chelsfield development and onto the A40 as easily as possible. Maintain and develop the 207 bus route down Uxbridge Road ("the best bus route in London") and provide a new fleet of smaller buses that make the short hop journeys - Park Royal to Chiswick, for instance, and Acton to Shepherds Bush via the White City estate. Sensible and flexible bus-lane hours would help - bus-lane timings should always be set for the shortest period needed to ensure buses have as good a run as possible.

Some of you know that my preferred means of transport is a scooter. Scooter and motorbike riders can sometimes be a pain in the neck for car drivers, but as a solution to getting around in London, they really cannot be beaten. No congestion charge (bad luck Livingstone), a fraction of the cost, easy parking and predictable journey times. Accidents are a constant worry, of course, but for the right person, two wheel travel is absolutely to be recommended. I encourage you to try it soon!

On to other subjects.

The October survey is up on the website (address below) - this month, I am asking you about QPR and the development of the Loftus Road stadium. While you are there, you could complete the standing, local residents' survey if you have time. Or simply e-mail me with any thoughts or suggestions you have.

For those of you with business interests, you may wish to know more about a business forum that has been established by a number of West London Conservative Associations. Known as "Business and Politics" it allows businessmen and politicians to share ideas and thoughts on topical issues. E-mail me if you are interested.

We have some political supper evenings coming up in October and November.

On Friday 8th October we have Boris Johnson MP attending a dinner.

On Monday 11th October the outstanding MEP and newspaper columnist Dan Hannan will be in the constituency for the evening.

And on Tuesday 23rd November Michael Gove the Times newspaper journalist and Conservative candidate for Surrey Heath will be in Shepherds Bush for dinner.

As you can guess, excitement is high among Tories right now. We are ahead (just) in a couple of opinion polls and next week we will be in Bournemouth for our Conference. I will report back later this month with a post-

Conference update ... the highlight for me is likely to be Ken Livingstone's attendance at a lecture entitled "Listening to London". He must be the least qualified person in the capital to speak on that subject, surely?!

Once again, I look forward to meeting you over the next few weeks. As ever, I am always interested in hearing your views - even if we may not agree all the time.

Best wishes,
Jonathan