

Demand safety on the buses

Tom Kearney, founder, London Bus Watch, spoke at our September Forum meeting

In the early evening, on the last Friday before Christmas 2009, Tom was hit by a bendy bus at a signalled pedestrian crossing in Oxford Street and didn't "wake up" until 2010. In a near-death coma with two collapsed lungs and a pierced liver, Tom was reported by the police as a "probable fatal".

Upon recovering from these critical injuries after waking up in January 2010, Tom began to wonder how many people had been hit by buses in London. When he searched for this figure from his hospital bed on his laptop he discovered that Transport for London (TfL) did not publish any such information. As the former director of a mining operation in Africa and a UK listed company, Tom was surprised that public authorities and their private contractors were under no obligation to publish casualty figures associated with their operations.

While still in hospital in February 2010, he came across

the London Assembly's "Streets Ahead" report which showed nearly 2,000 people involved in Oxford Street bus collisions between 2000 and 2008. He later discovered a TfL presentation to the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) which stated: "Buses are four times more likely to be involved in a KSI collision with a pedestrian than would be expected for their share of traffic."

From Freedom of Information requests he discovered that over a six-year period from April 2007 to April 2013, London buses "hit two pedestrians or cyclists a day", and there was not a single safety-related key performance indicator to be found in TfL bus company contracts (last year bus operators were paid over £1.9 billion for these). In 2013 Tom went to a public session of the London As-

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**The London Bus Driver
Bill of Rights**

We the TfL Bus Drivers proclaim this Bill of Rights to which all London bus drivers shall be entitled and TfL shall compel all its contracted bus operators to adopt without delay.

1. *The Right to a safe work schedule without forced overtime or loss of pay.*
2. *The Right to a decent and proper rest break in the working day.*
3. *The Right to drive a safe and well-maintained vehicle.*
4. *The Right to clean, serviced toilet and rest facilities on all bus routes.*
5. *The Right to report safety concerns without fear of retribution from TfL or employers.*
6. *The Right, when seriously ill and covered by a doctor's note to not be harassed into coming into work until fit to do so.*
7. *The Right to relevant and timely safety training.*
8. *The Right to drive without being forced to answer radio messages and texts from Controllers whilst in motion.*
9. *The Right to have all company rules in writing and clearly displayed.*
10. *The Right to be treated with dignity and respect by our employers, TfL and the public.*

*Signed on behalf of
London's Unite Bus Drivers*

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

I suppose, like me, some of our members watched the TV coverage of the Labour Party conference in the last week of September. What struck me was that, despite the huge outpouring of affection for Jeremy Corbyn, he was intent on ensuring that conference recognised his whole team.

The shadow ministers presented their own reports, and spoke well about the problems we face.

John McDonnell, shadow Chancellor, presented the case for re-nationalisation of our basic services and despite howls of opposition in the right-wing press, the BBC's money-man, Martin Lewis revealed that it was not only Labour voters who supported this move, but a majority of Conservative voters!

Keir Starmer made some matters about Brexit much clearer about what it may mean to this country.

Emily Thomberry (our South Islington MP) drew attention to other aspects of Brexit that required urgent action

Angela Rayner gave us a taste of the current problems and failures in the field of education with proposals to overcome these.

I was particularly impressed with the contribution from Rebecca Long-Bailey, the business shadow minister who emphasised how

important is new technology and its rapid growth over the last 20 years of her own life (and she is only 38 years old now!).

She said the next 20 years would see even greater changes – the machine/computer- replacement of the workforce, and what this means for jobs.

Some of us in the trade unions were calling for a negotiated reduction in the working week as a balancing lever with new technology long before we reached retirement age.

Today, the trade unions must take up this challenge, and so Rebecca's contribution was welcome.

Finally Jeremy Corbyn, in a 90-minute speech, gave an overview of Labour's policies, thanked his team, particularly spoke about the disgraceful way the press had treated Diane Abbott, and said that the change in direction with Labour would mean the involvement of all our people and not just the 10 per at the financial top of the unfair system we have at present.

As I write, the Conservative Party is due to have its conference in the first week of October. don't hold your breath.

I will be back with my Chairman's Notes next month.

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sembly and asked questions which finally spurred an embarrassed TfL to action and, as of 1 January 2014, you can find TfL's Bus Casualty data available on its website.

• **For the period from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2016, 25 people were killed and over 12,000 injured in bus safety incidents.**

• **In the first six months of 2017, six people have been killed**

Working secretly with TfL bus drivers, in 2015 Tom was also able to compel TfL to extend the Confidential Safety Reporting System (CIRAS) to its contracted bus fleet making London's bus drivers the only surface transport workers in the UK with this confidential reporting right.

In 2016 and 2017 Tom's Bus Safety Amendment to the Bus Services Bill would have extended London's casualty data reporting and confidential safety reporting to all UK bus operations, but the government had it withdrawn four times. It remains to be seen if the government will keep its promise to include these policies in the Guidance for the Act.

In July 2016, the Mayor announced that Oxford Street would be pedestrianized by 2020, making this decision – after Casualty Data Reporting (2014) and CIRAS (2015) – Tom's third major victory.

After five years of campaigning, Tom succeeded in convincing the London Assembly to conduct a detailed investigation of the safety of the London Bus Operation and its report – entitled "Driven to Distraction" – was published in 2017. The report presents a damning evaluation of the

time-focussed commercial incentives that have underpinned the performance of TfL's bus operation for decades.

Although TfL has until October 2017 to respond to the London Assembly investigation, TfL bus drivers, backed by Unite (their union) have issued a "Bus Drivers Bill of Rights" which spells out ten demands which must be fulfilled in order to make safety a priority of TfL's bus operation.

Among these rights: access to toilets and a working schedule that does not promote fatigue.

In a demonstration at City Hall on 14 September 2017 TfL bus drivers presented the Mayor of London with a copy of their Bill of Rights.

Given Tom's success in changing TfL Bus Safety policy since his own near death in December 2009, he questions why all the reform of London's lethal bus operation needs to be catalysed by a volunteer campaigner who happened to be fortunate enough to survive – thanks to the NHS

Since his own bus crash on 18 December 2009, 95 people have died in TfL bus safety incidents (mostly from collisions, but at least 10 from on board falls) and tens of thousands have been injured.

Tom wonders if these casualties might have been a lot fewer if the Mayor and Transport for London had made bus safety a priority. Tom is working hard with bus drivers to ensure they will do just that.

Forum members were amazed and shocked by Tom's presentation. We will now support his campaign and Unite bus drivers' Bill of Rights.



**Islington Council
are setting up a
community choir!**

—
**No singing
experience
required!**
—

**Bring your friends,
family, carers,
and enthusiasm !**

—
**A fun way to
improve health,
happiness and
make new friends.**

**THE SINGING WELL PROJECT
NEEDS YOU!**

NO SINGING EXPERIENCE REQUIRED!

**GET INVOLVED AT OUR TASTER
SESSIONS**

Saturday 30th September 11am - 1pm
Or
Monday 2nd October 11am - 1pm
Arsenal Hub, 56 Benwell Road N7 7BA

Then every
Monday from 16th October 2pm - 4pm
Lorraine Estate Community Centre
356 Holloway Road N7 6PA

Interested?

Contact
Liza Durrant
On 020 7527 7471

Or email
liza.durrant
@islington.gov.uk

LOST GLORY

by Eula Harrison

Abundant and wild bloom the flowers
In this overgrown garden lost in time
With broken fences leaning trellises
Up turned plant-pots trailing vine

Crumbling arches barely standing
Lean at a precarious dangerous angle
Sweet peas and wild flowers blooming
Haggle for space among the brambles

Bluebells and yellow buttercups peeping
Daffodils and tulips bloom in a broken tub
Ornamental arches swathe in ivy clinging
It must have belonged to a person or club

Now left abandoned and overgrown
With a wild rustic charm still remaining
In the garden now lost in time



We're going into Autumn and Winter - so we thought this picture of our garden party would cheer us up as we prepare for the "End the Winter Blues" party at the beginning of 2018.

Smart meters can be dumb

We all need energy meters, but demand the latest model, says Paul Lewis (Radio Times 15-21 July 2017)

Four million homes now have “smart” energy meters. These devices, provided and installed by energy suppliers, will tell you in real time how much electricity and gas you are using and what it is costing. That is supposed to encourage all of us to use less. Official estimates say that savings by customers and the energy industry will be much bigger than the £11m cost of the whole smart meter programme. But suppliers have recently blamed some of the rise in electricity prices on the cost of the programme itself. It will be some years before we feel the benefits in lower prices.

Smart meters should also mean the end of estimated bills. Your supplier should know how much energy you are using so it can in theory send an accurate bill.

However, the meters currently being fitted are not as smart as they should be. They use the mobile phone network to send data. Each supplier has its own way of doing that and if you switch supplier to get a better deal, the chances are the meter will not be smart enough to communicate with the new supplier and will become just as dumb as the one it replaced. Customers tell me that dumbed-down smart meters are much harder to read than traditional ones.

In future, smart meters will use a new £3 billion data communications network so that the same meters can be



used by every supplier. But the new meters – technically called SMETS 2 – are still being tested and none have been fitted into homes. The old SMETS 1 meters currently being fitted will not work with the new data network until late in 2019 at the earliest.

Despite the fact that the current batch of smart meters can turn dumb if you switch suppliers, energy companies are fitting more than a million every three months in an attempt to meet the Government target of one in every home in Britain by the end of 2020. If you are offered one by your supplier, you can say no and wait until everything is working properly in a few years. Northern Ireland is not taking part.

National Pensioners Convention LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 18 October 2017

- 10 am coach from Islington Town Hall
- 11.30 am assemble Old Palace Yard (opp House of Lords)
- 1-3 pm rally/lobby Committee Room 14 (House of Commons)

During the general election, the NPC raised a number of issues as part of a Pensioners' Manifesto. This NPC Lobby now gives campaigners the opportunity to raise these issues with their MPs.

- A state pension set above the official poverty level, around £200 a week and linked to the triple

lock of the higher of earnings, prices sor 2.5%.

- Greater funding for the NHS, an end to privatisation in the health service and a national social care system funded from general taxation, free at the point of delivery and without means-testing.
- Maintenance of universal pensioner benefits such as free bus travel, a £500 winter fuel allowance, free prescriptions and a free TV licence for the over 75s.
- More homes that are both affordable and suitable for everyone, whilst recognising the specific barriers to downsizing that older people face.
- New legal protection for older people from all forms of elder abuse, to ensure dignity and raise standards of care.
- A Brexit deal that safeguards the payment of pensions, protects EU care workers and the rights of UK pensioners living abroad.

BOOK YOUR PLACE FOR THE 2018 PENSIONERS' PARLIAMENT!



Since the last Newsletter 14 members have booked their place for the 2018 Pensioners' Parliament.

This takes place in the Winter Gardens in Blackpool from 12-14 June 2018 and we will go by coach leaving on Monday 11 June and returning on Friday 15 June. The cost is £250 (but there will be a subsidy from the proceeds of our Christmas Fair stall to reduce this). This cost includes the re-

turn journey and bed, breakfast and evening meal at the Gresham Hotel (which is very near to the Winter Gardens, has a lift and a comfortable sitting room to socialise with old and new friends) plus the Parliament itself with interesting and knowledgeable speakers at the opening rally and the discussion sessions on important issues (e.g. pensions, health and social care, transport) and the lively social evening on the Wednesday evening.

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU WANT TO BOOK

Name..... Telephone.....

Address.....

Enclosed: £10 to book a place for Pensioners' Parliament 2018

To: Islington Pensioners Forum, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN

INFORMATION

BINGO every Monday	1pm at 1A Providence Court, Providence Place N1 0RN
Lunch and a chat	1pm Wednesday in the IPF Hall (address above)
IT and Smart Phones	3.30pm Wednesday in the IPF Hall. How to use smart phones, tablets, laptops. Sessions by "Healthy Generations" & IPF
Thursday 18 October	Lobby of parliament - details page 4
Thursday 19 October , 10.30am	Forum meeting: John Muir , Islington Voluntary & Community Services Develt Manager & Pamela Aristokle VCS Develt Officer
Thursday 14 November	Forum meeting: Liz Davies, lawyer - on housing

We want to hear from you

Write to Islington Pensioners Forum, 1A Providence Court, Providence Place N1 0RN

Call us on 020 7226 7687

Email us at ipf@islingtonpensionersforum.org

Office open from 10.30am - 2.30pm Monday and Wednesday, **but please call first.**

Sign up for our online newsletter on our website: www.islingtonpensionersforum.org

Presidents: Jeremy Corbyn MP & Lord Smith of Finsbury

Joint chairs: George Durack, Bob Collins

Secretary: Dot Gibsion **Asst Secretary:** Annette Thomas.

Charity No: 1043081. Supported by Cripplegate Foundation, the Big Lottery, and Islington Council



Islington Pensioners Forum £5 annual subscription

STANDING ORDER FORM : please send the completed form to:

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Signed..... Date.....

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