

No to Silvertown Tunnel Campaign
Annual General Meeting
8pm, 29 January 2015, Mycenae House

Committee Attendees: Nicole Coates (chair), Clare Griffiths (secretary), Chris Taylor (treasurer), Darryl Chamberlain (Media and communications), Jill Austen, Stewart Christie, Anne Robbins, Adam Bienkov

Other attendees: 22 members

1. Introductions

NC opened the meeting and introduced CG/CT as secretary and treasurer.

2. Christian Wolmar talk/questions

CW's talk was entitled "when will they ever learn?" and aimed to put the Silvertown Tunnel into the context and wider picture around road building in London. He pointed out upfront that it is worthwhile us being here, that this is winnable. We should therefore continue to battle.

The following is a summary of the main points of CW's talk. He has spent the last 20 years writing about transport, mainly books on the history of transportation. We have had approximately 100 years of cars - at the start of WWII there were around 3m cars, now 26m. People believed the car was the solution to transport - urban motorways, huge car parks, Motorway boxes/ringways. Some of these were built - the M25 being the most obvious. Also the N/S circular road was "upgraded" in the north. The innermost of these proposals was for an urban motorway known as the "Motorway box" - this would destroy 30-40,000 homes. Parts of this were built, e.g. in Shepherds Bush (M41). Centrepont would have been at the centre of a huge roundabout. In the 1973 GLC election Labour campaigned against the plans, won and scrapped them. There were big campaigns against it. It is worth remembering that this happened even though the idea was considered to be rational.

We are fighting this again. Alex Grant's blog post gives a good detailed description of this (<http://alexgrant.me/2014/12/04/the-supporters-of-new-roads-across-the-thames-are-stuck-in-the-past-without-rail-links-theyd-be-a-disaster-for-east-london/>). We have the same rhetoric from TfL now. Andrew Adonis's pamphlet uses same arguments as were used in the 1970s and the figures used in the pamphlet have no real basis in science. The economic arguments are also nonsensical, for example the Silvertown Tunnel is needed to create 60,000 jobs, 2/3 of these in London, 1/3 in Kent and Essex and this could contribute £1bn of GDP! The current assumption is that everyone currently going through tunnel is delayed by 22 minutes.

At end of 1990s, traffic growth became decoupled from GDP growth. Therefore a plan to spend money on roads now beggars belief at a time of austerity. Congestion hasn't got worse. Young people are less interested in cars. They like public transport so they can use mobiles etc – car is not symbolic. Therefore we should not accept the predict and provide trends put forward by Lord Adonis and company. Growth in SE London has been facilitated by public transport growth. There's a good opportunity for a clever planner to point out that extra population has been absorbed by public transport, therefore we should build more of this. There are no proposals to build major roads in Putney, Hampstead for example. More deprived areas can have roads. - we need to argue against this. Boris should have been promoting the Bakerloo line from the beginning and also possible improvements to the DLR.

It's an odd point to make that "East London is cut across the middle by the Thames". This has always been the case! So the argument that West London has a lot of road crossings and therefore East London should have them. It's obvious why this is - the Thames is twice as wide here as it is in the West. SE London is separate from East London. They are different places and have different cultures. They have grown up with separate identities, accepting that they are separated by the river. The idea that Greenwich needs to be within a 10 minute drive of Tower Hamlets/Newham is nonsense – it doesn't add value to the area. It's just geography, we are never going to be near to Kingston, Hampstead etc, and we accept this.

It is inevitable that if the crossings are built this will lead to knock on widening of roads, whatever planners are saying now. The way this is done is to widen one bit, then the next, then the next. A tunnel will never just be a scheme on its own.

Modern cities cannot cope with increases in traffic. A successful modern city will be the one that limits car use. Examples of this include Times Square in New York, major cities in the Netherlands, the new Paris Left Bank scheme, Seville (see recent article in the Guardian about turning Seville into a cycling city. Cycling there increased 11 fold in less than a decade by giving over road space to bikes.

<http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/jan/28/seville-cycling-capital-southern-europe-bike-lanes>) This is the way modern cities are going. Our strategy should therefore be to reduce car traffic. In 50 years time it will be universally recognised that accommodating cars in centres of cities is unsustainable. There is both a good right wing and a good left wing rationale for taming the car. Economic argument of externalities – impact of a car driving into London is convenient but costs. Congestion charge was transformational. Silvertown Tunnel is working in the opposite direction.

Questions and Answers:

Q: If Mayor's office opposes the tunnel will it be shelved?

A: It is now a National Infrastructure Scheme, but realistically if a mayor was opposed to it they could block it. We are in a situation of political turmoil. No guess as to what can happen after the election. If mayor opposed and government is of same hue it would be unlikely to go ahead.

Q: London Assembly today – Labour members voted for Silvertown Tunnel/crossings in general. Therefore how can members of the public influence?

A: It's about making noise, campaigning. Zeitgeist/impact. It's a touch and go thing. Can battle against it. Employ cost argument – the country hasn't got the money. Can help a government save face by letting them employ an economic argument. Strong body of Greenwich councillors are against it. Government can railroad. Lobby at every level.

Q: Developers – can pressures be put on them?

A: Mayor is building an underground line to satisfy developers in Battersea when there are other places that could do with an extension more! Hope that whoever becomes Mayor there needs to be a different attitude towards developers.

Q: Vision for transport in S London over next 20 years.

A: Extension DLR, improvement of national rail services. Bus improvements. Bridges just for bikes?

CW asked if people would ultimately support a bridge further out? eg Gallions. Would that get a more favourable response? The answer from the room was that wouldn't suit people living there.

FOGWOFT would like a separate tunnel for bikes.

CW commented that incremental improvements to add up to a change in the way transport operates are probably the way to go. Wherever you go people have ideas for incremental improvements. Lots of these could be made. Particularly buses. Ken Livingstone made big improvements. Boris Johnson has not built on this.

Bakerloo extension. Trams – orbital trams. Link town centres and link in with existing transport hubs, eg, Paris is building 3 new metro lines serving the outer areas.

Most of use of Blackwall Tunnel isn't by local people. Petrol costs going down, train and tube fares are going up. People arguing can't afford using public transport and therefore using cars. Rejig fares so there isn't such a big gap between each zone. Flatter structure. Integrate national rail system properly so you don't pay extra. Mayor has no power over fuel prices. A sensible government would exploit fall to up fuel taxes because no one would have noticed! Modal share may now shift a bit towards cars this year because of this. Inevitable that non-locals will use Blackwall. Misplaced argument that Silvertown Tunnel would be used by locals. There will be a choice of tunnel, dishonest arguments!

Statement from the floor about Gallions Reach bridge – horrified at the idea. Would have put roads through a lot of green space. CW – admits knows less about this and is therefore happy to take that view on board.

3. Apologies

Apologies received and accepted from Hayley Fletcher.

4. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of inaugural meeting. No amendments, minutes agreed.

The committee suggests amendment of constitution to remove position of Membership Secretary, and include the position of 'Media and Communications Secretary.'

Section 5 will be amended so that "Membership secretary, who shall be responsible for keeping records of members" is replaced with:

"Media and Communications Secretary, who shall be responsible for liaison with media organisations and communications with members."

Passed.

Will circulate new constitution with minutes of this meeting

5. Election of officers

Chair – Nicole Coates. Proposed by Stewart Christie, Seconded by Anne Robbins.
Agreed

Secretary – Clare Griffiths. Proposed by Darryl Chamberlain, Seconded by Chris Taylor.
Agreed

Treasurer – Chris Taylor. Proposed by Jill Austen, Seconded by Anne Robbins.
Agreed

Media and Communications Sec – Darryl Chamberlain. Proposed by Anne Robbins.
Seconded by Stewart Christie.
Agreed

6. Election of non-officer committee positions

Jill Austen, Anne Robbins, Adam Bienkov, Stewart Christie, Hayley Fletcher.

Elected unopposed

7. Chair's Report

We worked throughout 2015 on increasing our reach and improving the effectiveness of our message, since the consultation is not at formal stage yet:

- Response and suggested response to the Silvertown tunnel 'informal consultation.'
- Responses to Woolwich Ferry replacement, Bakerloo line extension, Barking DLR extension, and ULEZ consultations.
- Submission to the Environmental Audit Committee on Air Quality. Felt this was well received.
- AQ citizen science experiment in Jan last year; supported by Network for Clean Air.
- Grant obtained from Network for Social Change.
- Meetings with local politicians, both sides of river.
- Stalls at local fetes.
- Leafleting in SE and E London.
- Public meetings both sides of river.
- John Stewart and Kevin Bonavia attended committee meetings to share experience of campaigning. Useful and productive meetings.
- Continued use of our website and social media to put our message across.
- Anne Robbins and Hayley Fletcher joined our committee. Clay Harris and Francis Sedgemore left the committee.

Results to date:

- Difficult to quantify influence but we can see a change in some local council positions .
- We've been in newspapers and on television.
- We have 507 mail subscribers; 773 Twitter followers.

Next steps:

- E London AQ survey, with the support of Mapping for Change.
- Preparation for another round of canvassing/leafleting.
- Step up fundraising.

How can you help? 4 things:

- Still looking for E London AQ volunteers.
- Sign up for leafleting/canvassing.
- Fundraising ideas.
- Donations.

8. Treasurer's Report

Circulated at the meeting.

As of 28 Jan, £334.25 in our bank account. Some of that will be spent on tubes, so about £200. Received £3,735. Spent £3,401.

Majority outgoings is on promotional material. Committee meetings – use of Mycenae House, other meeting rooms.

Budget for the year. Submissions to various funds. Funded by donations and contributions of work in kind. Anticipate that we can remain solvent. Next consultation – formal consultation. Spend on promotional materials etc.

9. Any other business

Any questions or suggestions from the floor: East Greenwich Pleasaunce. EGRA, Slade Green, CCRA, Westcombe Society. Helping 4 groups to do studies in a supporting role. This is coordinated.

Sign up sheet

DC question – we often get asked what would you do instead? Chance we might be involved in a piece of work around this... Does anyone have suggestions of what they would like to see built. FOGWOFT's suggestion of a parallel cycle tunnel to the Greenwich Foot Tunnel. Use the old tunnel for pedestrians.

How viable is it to replace the Woolwich Ferry?? Consultation that TfL ran July – October, that covered this. They gave 4 proposed solutions. 1. New ferry Woolwich, 2. New ferry Gallions, 3. Bridge Gallions, 4. Bridge Belvedere, 5. Do nothing. TfL spun this to say 98% of people were in favour of "crossings". There is a lot of paperwork from TfL on this. Our view is that TfL want roads for roads sake. TfL own lorry park. Prime development land...

Swing bridge between Naval College and Island Gardens for pedestrians.

We will discuss how we are going to collate the ideas list and what we are going to do with this.

10. Date of Next Meeting

AGM will be in early 2016. There will be a public meeting during the year.