

Should London still think of itself as part of the UK?

Nick Johnson provides a view from the north



Nick Johnson is director of Urban Splash in Manchester

At the *Architects' Journal* roundtable on retrofit at MIPIM, the property conference held in Cannes last month, chairman Paul Finch fired an 'opener' at each of the guests: 'So how is it for you?' It was an attempt to take the pulse of the world of architecture and property in the midst of 'austerity Britain'. The guests laid out a barely recognisable picture, to non-Londoners, of life at the pulsing heart of a thriving international metropolis.

Now don't get me wrong – I'm a Londonophile. I recognise its international status, its appeal to those on the fickle and flighty international wealth circuit, the value of its stability to the recently displaced and, potentially, dispossessed international über-rich, and its cultural richness, diversity and quality of life – assuming that a life of quality is

something you can afford.

Fuelled partly by frustration and partly to provoke, I spoke of the 'arrogance' of our capital city. An arrogance that stems from the fact that while the rest of the country bears a disproportionate burden of the tide of austerity, the built environment businesses that operate in the capital are doing rather well – thanks to a tight geography that defines an unpopable polyp of prosperity, and business horizons that look south, east and west but in the current climate, rarely look north.

If you did look north, you could actually make a case that London should no longer be part of the UK, but devolved to the G8 or G20 international premier league of cities where, thanks to technology and transcontinental travel, we render geography irrelevant. And I suppose that's my problem, the point when geography becomes irrelevant – and it's not.

Geography used to define regional identity; it used to give the reason for the existence of 'place'. Market towns served the growers and producers that made and grew things for sale; manufacturing towns made use of climate, minerals and waterways to do the same thing. That we have lost or

are rapidly losing our regional identities is the greatest crime of globalisation. That we believe the costly and breathless pursuit of an increasingly uniform, and largely undistinguished, global identity suggests we are simply powerless puppets that 'follow the money'.

So where does it take us? It's all about balance. At the moment the country's scales are tipped in London's favour, and for how long we don't know. That reliance on foreign funny money is no different to the funny money banks traded that got us into this mess the first time around. It's just a curious reversal that global money happens to have a seemingly tight geography, for now.

The restoration of balance needs two things: it's about being grown up, and recognising that England has an 'other' city (I'll keep quiet on whether that's Birmingham or Manchester, but it's in the title of two teams at the top of the premier-ship), and that regionalism and the celebration of regional identity is the antidote to all that is bland, corporate and controlling in that self-serving idea(l) of global capital(s). ■

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Why not a power station?

David Rycroft argues that the future for Battersea Power Station is staring us in the face.



David Rycroft is a director at Morgan Sindall Professional Services

Battersea Power Station is firmly back in the news. And it's not surprising really. This iconic structure, in the heart of the vibrant and massive Nine Elms regeneration area, has always attracted strong opinions and even more so now it is up for sale.

A global marketing push is has been launched to find a long-term owner with offers being

rumoured around £500 million. An announcement on the successful bidder is expected in the autumn. Exciting stuff and about time. But amid the debate about the number of homes, offices, shops – and football stadia – on this most famous of sites, aren't we missing the obvious?

Why not turn Battersea Power Station... into a power station? It could work. There aren't many sites in London that are suitable for power generation, well-served by existing infrastructure for road, rail and water and, more importantly, are available. Battersea fits the bill on all counts.

Future energy supply is one of the UK's and London's most pressing challenges and we all know that there is a very real need to replace our

ageing energy infrastructure and build anew. As things stand, there are plans for 16,000 new homes across the Nine Elms redevelopment area, as well as hotels, shops, the redevelopment of New Covent Garden Market and the new American Embassy. All told, they'll require a lot of energy.

A reborn power station would help show if we're still a city of NIMBYs or, increasingly, PIMBYs (Please In My Back Yard). It could be extremely popular, creating jobs and helping to secure our energy supply. It's already in our back yard and many of us profess to love it.

Some creative thinking around a new power station could work wonders and solve a decades-old problem of what to do with the site, >>>

Turning the tide for river services

Thames passenger services are held back by the lack of a strategic plan, says Caroline Pidgeon



Caroline Pidgeon AM is chair of the London Assembly Transport Committee

The expansion of passenger services on the Thames is being held back by the lack of a strategic plan to guide improvements – and Transport for London's half-hearted approach.

Since our last review in 2006 things are a little better, but river services are still far from reaching their full potential, and certainly well short of the Mayor's aspiration to double the current number of annual passenger journeys to 12 million. London's river services lag behind those found in other cities, like Paris, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Chicago and Brisbane.

Given the pressure on modes like the Tube and buses, why isn't the capital making the most of the Thames to get people around? Partly, it's an attitude problem. While Thames Clippers believes river services could provide 11 million passenger trips a year (the equivalent of the Hammersmith & City line), TfL has – disappointingly – likened the river to a medium-sized suburban bus route.

This attitude is reflected in TfL's approach to river services, which pales in comparison to the commitment it gives to other modes. Take the cycle hire scheme for example. Despite relatively few users to date, TfL spent £79 million on setting up the scheme, alongside comprehensive marketing. By contrast, TfL's direct financial support for



river services largely comprises a subsidy of around £400,000 per year to Thames Clippers for some of its services – most of which is swallowed up by TfL fees for pier usage.

This lack of support is compounded by the fact TfL does not have its own long-term strategic plan for river services so there is nothing to drive improvements. Poorly maintained or underdeveloped piers are a major barrier to expansion. There are opportunities to address this given the proliferation of riverside developments in London – but these opportunities need to be seized by boroughs during negotiations with developers. This can pay off: the £1.7 million cost of the new floating pier at St George's Wharf in Vauxhall was covered by the private developer.

Having a range of private owners of piers can, however, complicate securing improvements. Thames Clippers, for example, have to negotiate with ten different owners for the 15 piers they currently use – not an easy task. While there have

been some improvements to piers in recent years – including Tower, London Eye, Embankment and Greenwich – maintenance at many of the smaller piers can be a real challenge for their operators because revenues are small. Pooling funding and coordinating improvements to piers to help expand passenger services could form part of the strategic plan we want TfL to produce, which should also cover how all the different uses of the river – passenger services, tourist boats, freight and houseboats – are managed.

We also want to see a specific representative of river services on the TfL Board to champion the service and oversee the delivery of the strategic plan. This level of commitment, alongside improved integration with other transport modes and better publicity, signage and ticketing, could really help turn the tide for London's 'forgotten highway'. ■

www.london.gov.uk/publication/improving-river-services-london



Westminster's parking madness

The Localism Act should help keep councillors in touch with local opinion, hopes Tony Lorenz



Anthony Lorenz is senior partner, the Lorenz Consultancy

In my capacity as Chairman of the Resident's Society of Mayfair & St James's, we have enjoyed, an excellent relationship with Westminster, meeting quarterly at our offices in Hanover Square to discuss how to manage traffic in the area. We address resident's parking, meter parking and single and double yellow lines.

Notable successes have been achieved, not the least arranging a right turn at the southern end of Berkeley Street, allowing cars to travel directly to Hyde Park corner and getting TFL to abandon plans to bring traffic at the junction of Orchard Street and Oxford Street into Mayfair via North Row, which would have caused similar disruption, for cars heading to Marble Arch. They continue to be able to turn right. We also liaise with Westminster on Crossrail traffic issues and illegal resident res-park and disabled badges.

So what a shock, when in July 2011, Westminster stated they were pressing ahead with plans to bring in a crazy parking plan, which would have forced current day time arrangements to continue until midnight Monday to Saturday and even 1pm – 6pm on Sundays.

Hidden within voluminous documents, they stated that this had been on the agenda, on their website, for almost two years and thoroughly researched. Finding the few paragraphs would have been more difficult than locating a needle in a haystack. Sure enough, Messrs Barrow, Rowley and Co were gung-ho to press ahead.

When we studied the ramifications we realised it would be disaster, not only for businesses, but even more so residents and their visitors. Casting aside that Westminster assessed income of £7.2 million a year and car park revenue as well, both of which they denied was their main driver, their statement that this would alleviate traffic in a congested area was clearly a fiction.

People who live and work in Mayfair and St James's know what happens after 6.30pm – regrettably Westminster Councillors do not. Other than in isolated areas, such as Berkeley Street, there was and is no traffic congestion. We were worried by traffic congestion the plan would have caused.

Residents returning from work after 6.30pm who have been unable to find a resident's parking space because people would have hogged them – they would have driven round in circles looking for a res-park, trying to avoid having to pay for a meter and then having to top it up half way through the evening.

In come the restaurant visitors, driving round in circles, looking for a meter, and whilst they are seated at 10.00pm the club/bar and casino visitors would also be driving round the narrow Mayfair streets waiting for people to vacate meters. So all in all, traffic chaos would have ensued.

Then, in the face of complete surrender, Westminster get the yellow paint out and paint double yellow lines within 10 metres of almost every corner. Many of these are unnecessary and battle now resumes to get them to paint out some of the double yellows to single.

Perhaps the moral of the story lies in the localism bill, allowing people who understand their area to get even more involved in traffic as well as planning, licensing and the like.

The fight goes on. ■



Better intelligence

Giles Barrie introduces Property Week's new information service

Planning Intelligence is a new weekly email-based subscription service from Property Week offering details of new applications and consents across England, Scotland and Wales.

The information provided includes key information such as the location and type of development, client and other interested parties involved, along with data concerning the site and scale of the development.

We knew that many of our customers have a need to be aware of new schemes and developments but do not necessarily want to commit time and resources to searching and sorting through council planning websites for relevant applications.

Owing to the diverse ways in which applications details are published ours are initially identified through a combination of human and automated pick up but crucially each application then also undergoes further assessment by a UK-based researcher prior to release to ensure details of involved parties are correct and additional data is added where it is available. Customers can pay according to the geographic regions they wish to view and they can choose which development sectors they are alerted to once they subscribe.

The key difference between a service like this, and a construction leads service such as Barbour ABI is that while the source planning and approval data is tracked in the same way, they will then also spend a large amount of resource on adding layers of valuable construction-specific data, far more relevant to product manufacturers, contractors and specialists. Barbour ABI will also track planning applications and construction across the whole market whereas Planning Intelligence focuses on Office, Retail, Residential, Leisure and Industrial schemes.

Planning Intelligence is offered regionally. Since introducing the service, demand has been greatest for coverage of the London region particularly but as predicted requests for other regional subscriptions are also strong. As the level that Planning Intelligence aims to provide details for London itself saw around 2000 individual new and consented applications for key schemes over the past 12 months. ■

Giles Barrie edits Property Week

Diamonds are a girl's best friend – especially in jubilee year

Life is one long jubilee – Ira Gershwin

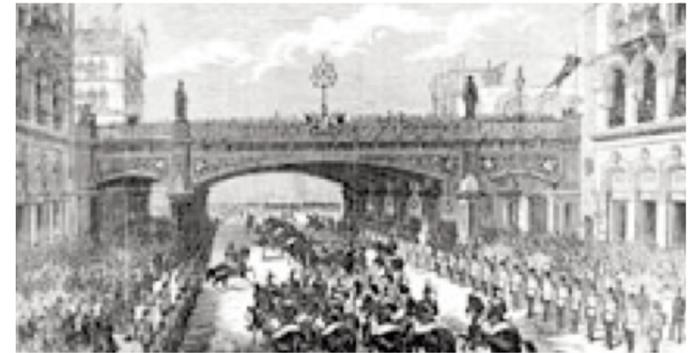
It's 115 years since the last diamond jubilee for a monarch and that, in many ways, was a first.

According to my dictionary, a jubilee is "the celebration of a 50th or 25th anniversary – a year (every 25th year ordinarily) of indulgence for pilgrims and others..." But further research suggests that it's not that simple. Traditionally it seems, the diamond jubilee was on the 75th anniversary: this changed with the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria. There was considerable national unrest when Queen Victoria largely withdrew from public life after Albert's death in 1861 and by the 1890s she was in poor health, so it was decided to bring the diamond jubilee forward to the 60th anniversary of her accession in 1897.

The Roman Catholic Church's institutional observation of a Jubilee at 25-year intervals meant that this change from 75 to 60 years overturned a tradition that had existed formally since Pope Paul II's bull of 1470. Diamond jubilees have been held on the 60th anniversary ever since, but it is not clear how Queen Elizabeth's 75th year on the throne will be designated.

Victoria's Diamond Jubilee of 1897 was both a more restrained and a far grander celebration of her reign than the Golden Jubilee of the previous decade. The Queen's own involvement was greatly diminished on account of her increasing frailty. As an example of alterations in ceremony, the thanksgiving service took place not in Westminster Cathedral, but in the open outside St Paul's, so that the Queen could remain seated. The scope of the celebrations nevertheless expanded considerably for the Diamond Jubilee, with a celebration of empire becoming the central theme.

Before leaving Buckingham Palace on 22 June, the Queen issued a telegraph throughout the empire, saying 'From my heart I thank my beloved people. May God bless them!' Invitations had been issued to all the Indian princes, but many were forced to remain at home to deal with the aftermath of a devastating famine. Many Indian troops, however, participated in the procession through London, including Bengal lancers, officers of the Indian Imperial Service Troops in kirtas with gold sashes, and Sikhs marching alongside Canadians. The Daily Mail wrote: 'Up they came, more and more, new types, new realms at every couple of yards, an anthropological museum – a

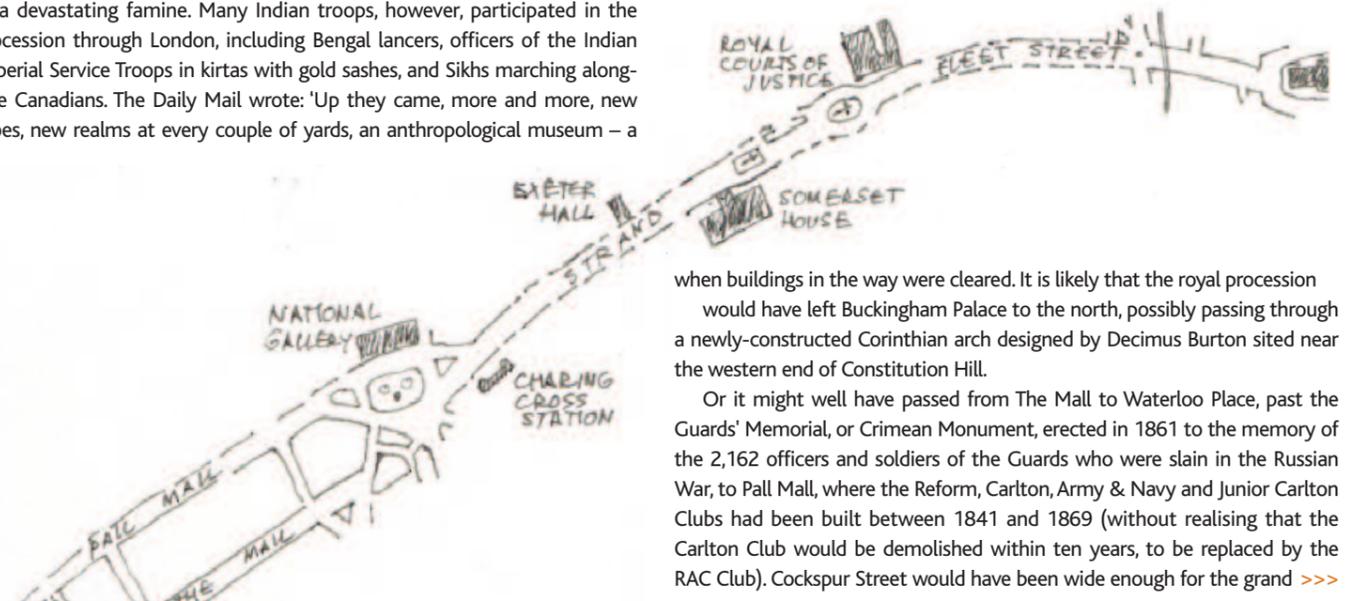


The royal procession passing under Holborn Viaduct

living gazetteer of the British Empire' (23 June 1897).

While in 2012 Queen Elizabeth will make visits to far-flung places such as Waltham Forest and Bromley, with a procession by boat along Thames, in 1897 the prime ministers of all the self-governing dominions were invited to London and Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee procession from Buckingham Palace included troops from all over the empire. The parade paused for an open-air service of thanksgiving held outside St Paul's Cathedral, throughout which Victoria sat in her open carriage. The buildings she would have passed on this journey differ considerably from those that Elizabeth will pass on her trip along the river, although many were also constructed during her long reign.

From a London planning perspective, it is interesting to wonder how the procession reached St Paul's and what they would have seen on the way. The Admiralty Arch at the eastern end of The Mall was not constructed until 1911,



when buildings in the way were cleared. It is likely that the royal procession would have left Buckingham Palace to the north, possibly passing through a newly-constructed Corinthian arch designed by Decimus Burton sited near the western end of Constitution Hill.

Or it might well have passed from The Mall to Waterloo Place, past the Guards' Memorial, or Crimean Monument, erected in 1861 to the memory of the 2,162 officers and soldiers of the Guards who were slain in the Russian War, to Pall Mall, where the Reform, Carlton, Army & Navy and Junior Carlton Clubs had been built between 1841 and 1869 (without realising that the Carlton Club would be demolished within ten years, to be replaced by the RAC Club). Cockspur Street would have been wide enough for the grand >>>

procession to pass close to Nelson's Column - with the present National Gallery, built at the start of Victoria's reign, behind - before entering West Strand and passing the towers of the Charing Cross Hotel in front of the station that had been built on the site of Hungerford Market thirty years before.

Queen Victoria would have been sad to pass one of the most familiar features of the Strand - the Corinthian portico of Exeter Hall, on the north side of the street, the Wembley Arena of its day, much extended and capable of holding audiences of 3,000. On June 1, 1840, Prince Albert presided in the Great Hall at the first public meeting of the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade, this being the Prince's first appearance at any public meeting in England.

She would have been impressed by the hundred-year-old Somerset House, but perhaps ambivalent about the Royal Courts of Justice, which she had opened in 1882. In a typically British way, the building was subject to a competition among 11 selected architects, for a different site. Eventually in 1868 it was decided that George Edmund Street was to be appointed the sole architect and he designed the whole building from foundation to varied carvings and spires. Building was started in 1873 but after strikes, delays and other temporary stoppages, with foreign workmen being brought in, the building

was officially opened eight years later.

The churches of St Mary le Strand (consecrated 1723) and St Clement Danes (completed by Wren in 1682) and their graveyards were both situated in the middle of the Strand, so the procession may have split to pass them by. At the end of Fleet Street the Queen would have gone across Ludgate Circus and under what was then a raised Fleet Line at Ludgate Hill station (rebuilt in 1990 and renamed City Thameslink) before finally travelling along Ludgate Hill to St Paul's and returning up Farringdon Street beneath the Holborn Viaduct - as the first flyover built in central London, another marvel of Victorian engineering completed during her reign (in 1869).

On 23 September 1896, Victoria surpassed her grandfather George III as the longest-reigning monarch in English, Scottish, and British history. The Queen requested that any special celebrations be delayed until 1897, to coincide with her Diamond Jubilee, which was made a festival of the British Empire at the suggestion of Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain. And as we all know, that is how Queen Elizabeth will celebrate this June. Whether she will replace Victoria's unique telegraph message - apparently the first time that modern technology was used by a British monarch in this way - with an entry on Facebook or Twitter remains to be seen. ■

Business News

Planning in London has learned that TfL and London Underground are in negotiations for the sponsorship of station names in return for injections of cash.

This follows the pattern set by Madrid, where it was reported recently (*see right*) that stations are to be renamed Goya MacDonald's and Sol Galaxy Note.

Arsenal station is expected to become The Emirates, Baker Street will be named Hovis, and Knightsbridge will change to Harrods.

Planning in London understands that changing Pimlico to Citroën is a possibility since it comes before Vauxhall, but altering the name of any station to Next is excluded to avoid the confusion of announcements that say "the next station is Next".

Believed to be under discussion is changing the Circle Line to Virgin Tube,



ABOVE: *The Times* 19 March 2012

but a stumbling block is the clash of Virgin's corporate colour with Circle Line yellow. But the deal could allow the Central Line to change to Orange.

It got out that advanced negotiations for Chanel to sponsor London's Eurostar terminal which may be renamed Agincourt International led to street protests in Paris on April first. — AR