

# THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Winter, December 2016

No.224, Quarterly issue,

Distributed free to members

Registered with the London Forum of Amenity  
Societies, Registered Charity No.1058103,

Website: [www.brixtonsociety.org.uk](http://www.brixtonsociety.org.uk)

Our next event:

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> January:

## Winter Social

7 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre,  
2b Saltoun Road, SW2

Admission free to members, but to help our  
planning, please confirm if you are coming  
(and if you wish to bring a guest). Notify Bill  
Linskey (Chair) at [wjdccl@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:wjdccl@globalnet.co.uk) or on  
(020) 7274 3835.

## Christmas Market & Carols

A last-minute reminder about events around  
the bandstand in Myatt's Fields Park on  
**Sunday 11 December**. The Christmas Market  
runs from 2 - 5 pm, with Christingle making for  
children in the cafe from 4 pm, concluding with  
a carol concert from 5 – 5-30 pm. You can also  
order Christmas trees via the Little Cat Cafe  
on 07 735 056 138 or [catcafe@chef.net](mailto:catcafe@chef.net)  
*Myatt's Fields Park Project*

## More dates inside...

We aim to deliver this issue before Christmas,  
to give you ample notice of the Winter Social,  
and there are more dates on page 2, but do  
also check our website in the New Year as  
news trickles in of further events. In the  
meantime, seasonal greetings to you all...



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## Providing for your Christmas Post

Although a pre-paid postal service was  
introduced in 1840, and the first Christmas  
cards appeared in 1843, it was not until 1853  
that the first post boxes appeared on Britain's  
streets. At first they were a discreet dark  
green but red was soon adopted to make them  
easier to find. Early designs varied at local  
discretion, but in 1866 the hexagonal Penfold  
design was introduced nationally. Between 80  
and 90 still survive, including the above  
example at the junction of Mervan and Rattray  
Roads, provided when the surrounding houses  
were built in the 1870s.

This was the decade when Christmas Cards  
became popular, boosted by a half-price  
postage rate for printed circulars, cards and  
unsealed letters, introduced in 1870 and only  
eventually replaced by 2<sup>nd</sup> class post.

*Continued on page 3...*

# Diary of Events, New Year 2017

## Society Meetings

The Executive Committee usually meets on the second Thursday of the month to plan activities and agree our responses to current issues. Meetings are at 7 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2 (at the Effra Road end, facing Windrush Square).

- 9 February
- 9 March
- 13 April
- 11 May
- 8 June (AGM)

## Market Walks

Our guided walks round the market area continue on the second **Saturday** of every month, at £3 including the illustrated booklet of the route. Tickets are best booked in advance via [marketwalks@brixtonsociety.org.uk](mailto:marketwalks@brixtonsociety.org.uk). Walks start from Brixton Station Road at **2-30 pm** and take about 80 minutes.

## Sunday Walks

We join with other amenity societies to offer more guided walks on most Sunday afternoons from May onwards. We must send in our proposals by the end of January, so do tell us quickly if you want a special corner of Lambeth to be included.

## Brixton Windmill

Guided tours and other events will resume in April – see the Friends' website for dates and details: [www.brixtonwindmill.org/visit](http://www.brixtonwindmill.org/visit)



## Editorial Notice:

Space permitting, we try to feature local events and publish reminiscences or enquiries in our newsletter. We welcome news and comments from all who are interested in the Brixton area, so opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the Brixton Society. All material should be sent to the Secretary, Alan Piper, 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, or by e-mail to [APiperBrix@aol.com](mailto:APiperBrix@aol.com) Phone (020) 7207 0347

## Links with Other Groups

*Please check directly with the organisers if any queries over times or admission.*

## Until Tuesday 21 December – Rights of Passage

**A century of people power** is the theme of the current exhibition at the BCA, open 10 am to 5-30 pm, Tuesday to Saturday, Windrush Square, SW2. A new display, **Black is the new Black**, will open in January, and the reading room will reopen on 25 January. *Black Cultural Archives*

## Thursday 22 & Friday 23 December – Pop-up Panto at Brixton East

A fab and funky production of **Snow White** at Brixton East, Barrington Road,

SW9, presented by Sixteen Feet Productions – enquiries to (020) 7856 0380 or see the website: [www.sixteenfeet.co.uk](http://www.sixteenfeet.co.uk)

## Tuesday 10 & Thursday 19 January:

### The River Effra

Two more repeats of Jon Newman's talk in case you missed it at Brixton Tate Library a couple of months earlier!

**10 January** is at 106 The Cut, SE1, roughly opposite the Old Vic, open 7 pm for 7-30 pm.

*Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Soc.,*

**19 January** is at 7-30 pm at Upper Norwood Library, Westow Hill SE19.

*Norwood Society*

## Monday 20 February – the Dinosaurs at Crystal Palace

Their history and recent conservation described by Professor Joe Cain, 8 pm at Woodlawn Centre, 16 Leigham Court Road SW16. *Streatham Society*

## Monday 27 February – Community Food

**Growing in Clapham Bandstand Beds** started in 2013 to promote food-growing and wellbeing around Clapham Common. Diana Linskey and David Dandridge will describe the story so far and future plans. Starts at 8 pm (doors open 7 pm) at Omnibus, the former Clapham Library, 1 North Side, SW4. *Clapham Society*

## Local History Miscellany

### Questions of Heritage

Local history and heritage matters tend to get squeezed out of these pages whenever some new development or failing service is commanding our attention but this time I have tried to give the topic a bit more prominence.

There are always a few history enquiries on the go, and we try to share the answers in this newsletter for wider benefit.

### Southwark's lost champion

We regret to report that Stephen Humphrey, former Southwark Archivist and eminent expert in the history of that borough, died on 30 November, having collapsed at his Kennington home.

He was a leading light in local history circles, including the Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Society, and the Rotherhithe and Bermondsey Local History Society. He often attended Lambeth Archives Open Day. Only the day before his death, he could be seen in a repeat episode of the BBC TV series, the Secret History of our Streets, dealing with Reverdy Road, Bermondsey.

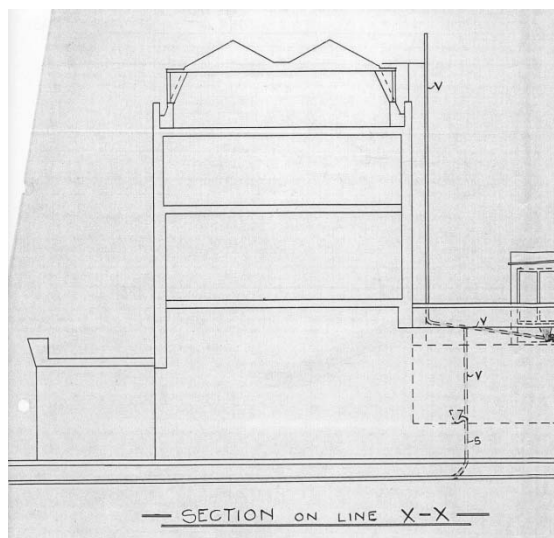
### Postboxes

*Continued from front page*

The classic cylindrical "pillar box" shape was finally adopted in 1879 and persisted with minor variations, such as the Royal monogram. Nationally, there are still 161 boxes left from the short reign of Edward VIII, including one on **Brixton Hill** between Blenheim Gardens and St.Saviour's Road (originally outside the SW2 sorting office). Although 60% of boxes around the country are from the present Queen's reign, the only memorable example on our patch is the rectangular box at the corner of **Electric Avenue** and Brixton Road, outside Iceland.

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of this country's first Christmas stamps in 1966, but increasing reliance on e-mails, tweets and bike couriers suggests that all this paraphernalia may eventually fade away. Just in time perhaps that a new Postal

Museum is due to open at Mount Pleasant in February – see [www.postalmuseum.org](http://www.postalmuseum.org)



*Brixton Place was built c.1800 along the east side of Brixton Road, between Coldharbour Lane and Beehive Place. Only the upper part of one house survives, above Reliance Arcade – here is a cross-section of c.1931 from the drainage files at Lambeth Archives.*

### Finding Plans - secret, lost or just forgotten?

Most of the time, people prefer to see a picture of the ancestral home or grandad's old shop, but occasionally we are asked where to find plans of local buildings, so let's share our limited knowledge with you all...

Firstly, if the building is relatively new, or has been altered only recently, the best source is the on-line database of planning applications. Access this via Lambeth Council's main website, [www.lambeth.gov.uk](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk) and follow the links for planning and building control. Plans can normally be printed out, but not all have been scanned in colour. Applications should include plans of the building both before and after any alterations. The level of detail varies depending on the scope of recent or proposed works. For applications more than 10 years old there may be less detail, and applications made between 1948 and 2000 may only be represented by scanned copies of letters from the Council approving the plans (or not).

**Lambeth Archives** hold a variety of material:

## Local History Miscellany

The Drainage Files form the most extensive coverage of all building types across Lambeth, regardless of ownership. These cover the period 1854 to c.1980, when responsibility for approving drainage works passed to Thames Water. Although the files were only intended to record drainage, in some cases more extensive plans have been provided by applicants, including sections, elevations and upper floor plans. In later years it was often more convenient for architects to supply an extra copy of their main plan, but 19<sup>th</sup> century terraces may be represented only by rough sketches or not at all. Files are organised by street address, but for longer roads, files are spread over several boxes, not necessarily in numerical address order. Larger estates may include several subsidiary streets. Bear in mind that changes could take place between the initial proposals and final completion, such as the final house plan being a mirror image of the first draft, and a much later alteration may be in a separate file.

Lambeth Archives also hold copies of some of the illustrated brochures produced when some of Lambeth's major developments were being approved in 1965-75, such as the Brixton Rec. The Survey of London volumes for Lambeth include thumbnail plans of some landmark buildings. For other old property, there may be building plans included with various property leases in their collection. They also hold some construction plans for various Council estates, including some transferred from the old GLC in the early 1980s.

When County Hall was finally vacated in 1990 with the closure of the Inner London Education Authority, all plans of **schools** and other education sites were distributed among the successor London Boroughs. However, I am not certain whether Lambeth's portion went to Lambeth Archives or to another department.

In general, for premises in which the old London County Council, GLC or ILEA had an interest, the best place to look is in the collections of the **London Metropolitan Archives**. There is some material relating to their housing estates, and potentially for highways projects like the 1935 widening of Brixton Road, which included rebuilding of

most stores between Atlantic Road and Coldharbour Lane (long before Town Planning control was introduced).

Finally, miscellaneous items have been picked up by the Brixton Society over the years, or are filed away at home from projects that I worked on long ago. These are not organised in any way at present, but that's one of my retirement projects, so if you have exhausted all the previous sources, it may be worth asking us.

*Alan Piper*

### The Afro-Caribbean War Memorial Project

After a long period of consultations with interested parties, planning permission was finally granted on 28 September for the proposed war memorial in Windrush Square. This will now be sited against the side wall of Norfolk House, the first block in Rushcroft Road, generally known as the Bovril wall from its last remaining painted advertisement. It is hoped to unveil the completed memorial on **28 June** next year, and in the meantime a community reminiscence history project is getting underway.

More details at [www.acmemorial.com](http://www.acmemorial.com)

### The Future of Lambeth Archives

One side-effect of Lambeth's mismanaged library closures earlier this year was to leave the Archives isolated at the Minet Library, but without use of the lending library space, still mothballed for a proposed gym.

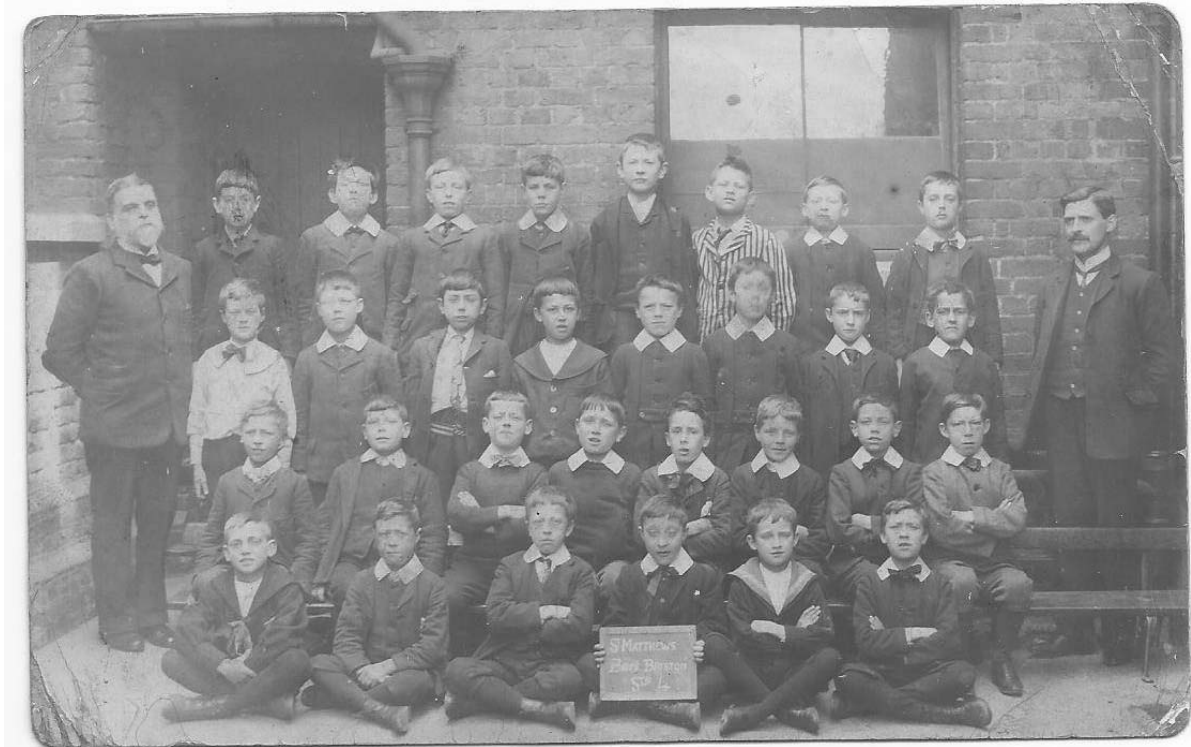
Archivists have dreamed of bigger and better premises for many years, both to fit in the accumulating records generated by the Council, and the growing number of people visiting the archives for business or academic research or for family history projects.

Lambeth appointed consultants to examine future options and sites, but has had to extend the timescale because of its failure to supply them with enough details of alternative premises, such as running costs.

Consequently, the Consultants' report will not be presented to Lambeth's Cabinet until the New Year.

## Local History in Focus

### Edwardian Schooldays



*On this page we are featuring some of the photos sent to us in the past year. The tough-looking bunch in this first example are Boys' Class 4 at St. Matthew's School, taken c.1900. The school stood in St. Matthew's Road, SW2, until it was bombed during the Second World War, and its site is now part of the St. Matthew's Estate.*

### At home in North Brixton 50 years ago



*Steve Farthing contacted us from Tunbridge Wells to help find Hilda Road, where he spent his first years in 1963-68 before the family moved to Ashford. He also sent some photos from the family album which helped us locate the road off the south side of Mostyn Road, later replaced by the Myatt's Fields South Estate. Photos show the north (left) and south ends of the street, and in between, the tiny kitchen in the family's flat (Photos H14, H44, H40.jpg)*

### Undermining the Carnegie Library

Following the contested closure of the library in April, GLL finally applied for planning permission last month for altering this Listed building to allow their use of part of it as a gym, with a new entrance hall approached from Ferndene Road.

Both groups competing to run the building – the Carnegie Library Association (formed by the Friends) and the self-appointed Carnegie Community Trust – have objected that the scale and layout of the proposed alterations will undermine their ability to manage the rest of the building successfully.

The proposals only consist of the alterations required by GLL to suit their use of part of the building as a gym. This includes excavating below the main floor level to provide a pillared hall with 3m headroom. No dedicated area has yet been identified for reinstating any form of public library service. Combined with the closure of the Minet Library, and the ad hoc arrangements at West Norwood, a large swathe along the eastern side of the borough still lacks proper library provision, and Brixton Tate Library is under greater pressure, particularly for study space.

### Brockwell Park community greenhouses

Much good work takes place around Brixton but is often unseen. We had rather lost touch with activities in Brockwell Park's greenhouses so it was good to see their Annual Report recently. Opening hours and activities have been increasing and there are several strands underway. Training sessions have been run in basic gardening skills for local residents and for schools. There is ongoing collaboration with several other community projects, including Incredible Edible Lambeth, and the re-use of spent hops from Canopy Beer and horse dung from Ebony Horse Club.

Enquiries to:  
[director@brockwellgreenhouses.org.uk](mailto:director@brockwellgreenhouses.org.uk)

### London Parks and Greenspaces Forum

Set up as a charity in 2013, the Forum recently rebranded itself as **Parks for London**. It is an independent charity dedicated to promoting and enhancing London's parks and green spaces, working with the people that own, manage, maintain and use them. Its aim is to keep them thriving, accessible, safe and beautiful.

Its Chief Executive is Tony Leach, and the Chair of the Trustees is Sue Ireland, who is also Director of Green Spaces at the City of London. For further information, visit: [www.parksforlondon.org.uk](http://www.parksforlondon.org.uk)

### More Greenspace support

For many years we have kept in touch with the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, and our Secretary attended their AGM on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. Guest speaker was Lloyd Grossman, who has recently taken on chairing the new Royal Parks charity.

The MPGA was founded in 1882 and has relatively modest resources but is well connected. It currently supports Trees for Cities and London in Bloom, and has given small grants for planting projects such as the community garden behind Carnegie Library. Further details at [www.mpga.org.uk](http://www.mpga.org.uk)

### Central London Bus changes

At least two local bus routes may be affected by proposed changes to reduce the number of buses crawling along Oxford Street. Several routes would start or finish at Trafalgar Square, Park Lane or Tottenham Court Road instead.

**Bus route 3** would be re-routed to Russell Square, linking Millbank, Tottenham Court Road station and the British Museum.

**Bus 137** would be re-routed to run between Streatham Hill (Brixton bus garage) and Park Lane/Marble Arch, rather than continue to Oxford Circus.

Proposals are out for comments until 29 January – see [www.tfl.gov.uk/west-end-bus-changes](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/west-end-bus-changes)

## Current Issues

### Reprieve for Music Venue

On 29<sup>th</sup> November, Lambeth's Planning Committee considered an application to allow the upper part of the closed Grosvenor pub to be converted to residential use.

This application was opposed by representatives of the Brixton Society and the SW London branch of the Campaign for Real Ale, basically because such a conversion would render the ground floor unviable for use as a public house. For once, the Committee agreed and by 5 votes to one rejected the planning application. It is open to the developer to appeal the decision, but for now at least, the Grosvenor lives to fight another day.

**Why this matters:** Residential property values are so far ahead of values for any other uses that it is becoming difficult to safeguard sites for recreation, employment, education and all the other functions that a town needs. It can be even more difficult to sustain evening entertainment uses once a lot of new neighbours move in above or next door. The Grosvenor was one of a shrinking number of pubs that offered live music and a foothold for new young bands to build a reputation. If the pub can be let as a whole, it allows staff to live on the premises and offers potential for developing a food offer also.

CAMRA had already got the building registered as an Asset of Community Value, which gives some protection, but Lambeth has resisted adding it to the adjacent Stockwell Park Conservation Area.

### Brixton Central Master Plan

Previews of the latest proposals have been presented to the Brixton Neighbourhood Forum, and to the Brixton BID, but the full version may not appear until January.

The mix of uses remains much the same as earlier drafts, with rebuilt retail on Popes Road between the railway viaducts, shading away to other business space around Valentia Place. It's proposed that the main entrance to the railway station would return to Popes Road, where it was when first built – but maybe not

so convenient if you were trying to dash between the railway and the Tube station?

The Master Plan will also determine what eventually happens on the Pop Brixton site. This is still intended to be retail and parking at the base with a residential block above. Plans now seek to modify the position of the block of flats previously approved for the recent Pop Fields site (ex Canterbury Arms) to set it back from the Popes Road frontage.

International House would be replaced by a residential block once the "New Town Hall" complex is completed, but the Recreation Centre itself should remain now that English Heritage has given it Listed status.

### Atlantic Road Streetscape

Work is underway to redesign Atlantic Road to reduce hazards and improve the environment. If it was just a matter of road closure or one-way systems, it would have been sorted years ago, but Atlantic Road now forms a vital link in servicing the surrounding street markets and arcades, and has also become a popular commuter cycling route, so the new proposals need to be more sophisticated.

Plans are being prepared by Metropolitan Workshop assisted by BWB Consulting, so that Lambeth can bid for a share of TfL funds for work to happen in 2018/19.

Consultations with the remaining Atlantic Road traders (still quite a lot) are getting underway and there will be wider consultation to follow, including a couple of workshop events expected later in January.

Initial ideas are based on removing through traffic other than buses and cycles, and limiting other vehicles to delivery access only. Wider pavements, easier crossings and better-placed bus stops are all being explored.

### And those Railway Arches?

Network Rail's ambitious plan to revamp all the arches between the station and Brixton Road has run into problems of their own making. The cost of legal challenges from disgruntled tenants has eaten into the project budget so that now repairs to the arch parapets and the

## Current Issues

station's blue fibreglass cladding are being scaled back.

Meanwhile, Brixton BID and Lambeth Council are trying to organise extra support for the remaining traders in Brixton Station Road, who have reported a dramatic reduction in footfall since most of the arches were boarded up.

### New Town Hall complex

Quarterly meetings are being held between the developers and local residents to pick up any problems arising in the course of construction. Among key points from the meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> December, operations will shut down between 23 December and 3<sup>rd</sup> January. From January, most delivery vehicles will approach the Brixton Hill gate from St. Matthew's Road and then exit via Acre Lane.

Within the Town Hall itself, work is underway in the basement, to be followed by new services installations. The new Civic Office block is up to 1<sup>st</sup> floor level, with another 3 storeys to add. The Hambrook House site at the corner of Porden Road is now to be built by a separate contractor, Galliford Try, working with Notting Hill Housing as the residential landlord. Work will start in February on Iver House, the former Co-op department store on Acre Lane, where the upper floors will be limited to private housing.

### Loughborough Junction public realm plans

After the scandalous road closures 18 months ago, it's a relief to see some constructive plans coming forward for 2017. Lamp-post banners will go up around the junction in January, perhaps inspired by those around Herne Hill, to celebrate local history and creativity. Long-standing ambitions to smarten-up the railway bridges will start with re-painting the bridge over Loughborough Road in March. Around the same time, new artwork will appear on the Green Man, which dominates the road junction. New pedestrian crossings and re-surfacing are intended for the nearer sections of Loughborough Road and Coldharbour Lane outside the station. The nearby entrance to Wyck Gardens is also due to be improved.

For further details and background, see: <https://ljpublicrealm.com> and follow the links.

### Equality Commission

To follow-up the recent Borough Plan consultation, Lambeth has set up an Equality Commission. This will run for 6 months to investigate poverty and inequality, particularly as experienced by several distinct parts of the community. A series of events are underway to collect views, ideas and concerns.

**Participation, representation and leadership** are the themes on **Thursday 5 January**, 6 pm to 8 pm at Streatham Library, Streatham High Road SW16.

**Crime and Justice** issues will be considered on **Saturday 28 January**, 1 pm to 3 pm at the Waterloo Action Centre, 14 Baylis Road SE1.

These events are free but please book via Eventbrite – see [www.lambeth.gov.uk/events](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/events)

### Tackling Air Pollution

Brixton Road is a hot-spot for air pollution from road traffic, but one of many around London. Encouraging diesels over petrol-engined cars has reduced carbon dioxide emissions but left nitrous oxide and “particulates” (tiny soot grains) as ongoing health hazards from the exhaust fumes.

The Mayor is now seeking views on two measures to improve air quality:

#### Ultra-Low Emissions Zone:

This would introduce stricter emissions standards for vehicles, from 2019 in Central London, then extending out to the South Circular Road (top of Brixton Hill) and perhaps eventually the whole London area.

#### Emissions Surcharge:

This would be an extra charge within the existing Congestion Charge Zone for the more polluting vehicles, generally those now over 10 years old. An extra £10 a day has been suggested.

Closing date for comments on the air pollution proposals is **18 December**. More details at: [www.tfl.gov.uk/airquality-consultation](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/airquality-consultation)