



## **Baroness Jo Valentine's speech at the House of Lords Debate on the Queen's Speech**

**13<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

My Lords, most of the Government's proposed legislation in the areas that we are considering today, I welcome. It draws successfully from studies by Lyons, Stern, Eddington and Barker. However, I care about implementation. Work does not stop with the press conference or when legislation clears Parliament. That is when the real work starts.

East of here, delivery of the Olympic spectacle is in good hands: it will be fabulous. But what about the much vaunted legacy—in particular, physical regeneration of the area around the Games in east London, which is essential if the Olympics are not to be an isolated white elephant? That deprived neighbourhood sits in the Thames Gateway, Europe's biggest regeneration site.

East London is a test bed for whether this year's legislative proposals deliver for real. With the Olympics as a catalyst, how do we deliver higher community aspirations, a thriving economy connected to the City and to Europe, and a world-class leisure destination? We do so with vision, leadership, resource and appropriate governance. I would have trouble ticking any of those boxes, let alone all of them.

The public sector has many plans for the area, but does it have vision? What is vision without funding commitment for infrastructure? Billions needed to prepare the 2012 park means billions needed to unlock wider regeneration in the area.

The planning process regulates delivery. The Government promise democratic consultation before making strategic commitments to large-scale projects. That, with fast and effective planning procedures, will please most, though perhaps not planning lawyers. East London housing provision might benefit, too. Developers are ready to invest where they are confident that roads, bridges, schools and health centres will be built. The Government's new planning gain tariff clarifies developers' contribution towards infrastructure costs. The organisation which I lead, London First, worked with the property industry to develop this solution.

What blocks housing schemes also handicaps commercial development. Resources are as important as principles. Many local planning departments have neither capacity nor expertise to deal with large, complex developments. East London needs Sir Michael Lyons's "place shaping" big time.

Nationally pooled business rates provide little incentive for authorities to encourage new commercial development. If authorities are to shape rather than frustrate development,

they should keep more of their new business rates and use them to strengthen their planning departments.

East London will be linked to the rest of London by Crossrail. Thanks are again due to the Government for finally committing in October to a funding package. However, a project that takes two decades to agree is not exemplary, and agreement still has to translate into trains and tracks. After the jubilation, I learnt that both the Treasury and the Department for Transport will scale down their Crossrail teams. The biggest construction project in northern Europe is still being legislated for, let alone begun—and where was Crossrail funding legislation in Her Majesty's Speech? Business, as a major funding partner, should have a seat at the Crossrail top table alongside the Transport Secretary and Mayor of London, to ensure that the appropriate governance and risk management are put in place.

The Climate Change Bill has the laudable goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions. We need a legislative and tax environment which captures the full cost of environmental impact. The more that any tax raised can be hypothecated to tackling climate change, the better. The Government rub their hands at the prospect of more air passenger duty, but where is the conversation about investing it in environmental solutions?

Shrill media and pressure groups make aircraft the only villains. Greenhouse gases from all sources need to be equally addressed. We need carbon reduction targets and emissions trading schemes operating within these, but Stern did not advocate using the planning system or any other to restrict flights. The answer for the environment and for UK competitiveness is not artificial handicaps on either Heathrow or, for that matter, City Airport in east London.

The UK's cars and lorries produce three times more CO<sub>2</sub> than aviation, and congestion makes London Europe's slowest city. Road charging must be at least part of the solution. For instance, London's congestion charge reduces traffic and emissions, and increases investment in public transport. To gain trust, schemes must make visible contributions—economic, environmental and social—to their local areas. Also, an independent body should regulate charges to avoid multiple and confusing charges and to ensure value for the charge payer.

In central London, despite 70,000 fewer cars a day entering the zone, congestion has recently increased, mainly due to road works. We need a step change by the Greater London Authority and London boroughs in their strategic management of roads. The Traffic Management Act 2004 placed a duty on highway authorities actively to manage congestion. Frankly, I do not see it—and the legislation is only partly implemented. This is a fitting final example: the legislation is three years old, and the Transport Secretary should implement it. Go on, Ms Kelly, spoil us. Make it do what it says on the tin!

**For more information, please contact Graham Capper on 020 7665 1505 or [gcapper@london-first.co.uk](mailto:gcapper@london-first.co.uk)**