

Trial of Floating Bus Stops

In this, the first of a two-part article, DBU Planning Team member Karl Farrell describes his experience of a trial for Floating Bus Stops in London.

I would like to warn you of a new type of bus stop that could give you a nasty surprise. Bus stop bypasses have been created in Denmark and the Netherlands to avoid cyclists having to overtake buses where they pick up passengers. These detours keep cyclists away from an accident-prone situation, but as the detour effectively creates an island, the stops are often referred to as "floating bus stops". Transport for London (TfL) has begun to try them out here because so many journeys in London are now made on bikes.

On four occasions in 2013, between August and October, I took part in an exercise to test this new concept for Britain. The Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) in Wokingham was commissioned by TfL to conduct trials of the floating bus stop.

TRL's off-road trial site consisted of pavement and road made of tarmac. By the side of the road kerb, a standard bus stop had been erected with a passenger shelter. A one-way cycle lane was cut into the pavement to take cycle traffic around the bus stop. Cyclists were expected to turn off the road a dozen metres before the stop into the lane which took them behind the shelter and down maybe as far as the next intersection.

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Home care, parks and leisure

The next Forum Meeting offers a varied menu. Head of Commissioning for Hackney Council, **Cynthia Davies** will be attending to consult us on changes in the home care service. So if you have experience of the service, please come along and say what you think.

Clare Ruocco from Greenwich Leisure will also be attending to talk about what our swimming pools and sports centres offer to disabled people.

Ladi Ajayi, Leisure and Physical Activity Development Manager for Hackney will also be coming to talk about the Council's side of the story - a chance to give your views on whether our parks and green spaces meet the needs of disabled people.

The Forum will take place on Monday March 31st from 11.00am-1.00pm in the Education Room (2nd Floor glass walled room) at CLR James Library, Dalston Square, E8 3BQ

Dalston Junction station is next door, Dalston Kingsland station is 5 minutes walk away and buses 30,38, 277 and 56 stop over the road.

Help with transport is available on request for people who cannot manage public transport. Call David at Age UK East London on 020 7241 5906.

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The TRL trials were said to be investigating new ways of improving safety for cyclists. However, they were also investigating the impact of changes to the urban environment for other road users and pedestrians. Pedestrian trialists were asked to walk to the bus stop, crossing the cycle lane that cyclists were using, and temporarily board and alight from a stationary bus parked at the stop. The cyclists were trained TRL staff but the pedestrian trialists were urged to treat the trial site as they would a normal road and pavement and be aware of cycle movements.

Even in this unrealistically quiet setup, I could not hear the bicycles until they were ticking or whirring past my ear. Yet there was no sound of traffic moving or other street noises. So I took the approach that I would indicate my intention to cross the cycle lane and start crossing a second later.

I have not read the final report on the TRL trial, which included we eight visually impaired pedestrians but also other pedestrians and several tens of cyclists, but I was amazed to hear that cyclists were expected to have the preferred right of way.

In the second half of this article Karl will look at the recent introduction of Floating Bus Stops in Newham and their impact on disabled pedestrians and bus users in east London.

Leisure Access

Anthony Larvin, from the DBU Planning Team, writes below on access to venues in and around Hackney.

If you intend to go to an event or gig, most venues should now be accessible or at the least aware of access needs, but you will need to know in advance if it is suitable for your needs.

Venues should offer an additional companion ticket at no extra charge and be able to allocate an area specific to your needs. Most inquiries and bookings are now by email or 0844 numbers usually. Some also have accessible information on their websites, sometimes tricky to find but they are there! These details do change regularly so be prepared to check before buying.

Some venues are more suitable than others and there are still plenty of opportunities to improve. **Attitude is Everything**, is working to raise awareness www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk 0207 383 7979 for enquiries.

Local venues to keep in mind are: The Union Chapel, Islington. www.unionchapel.org.uk/pages/disabled_access.html For Accessible enquiries, call 0207 226 1686. Further up Upper Street under the old town hall is the Islington Assembly Hall. They do not operate a box office or deal with bookings as they only offer links to sales pages on their

website. www.islington.gov.uk/assemblyhall/events/Pages/default.aspx. They can assist in accommodating most needs if you get in touch before making a booking at assemblyhall@islington.gov.uk Tel 020 7527 8900 (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm).

Some local event listings are at: www.clissoldpark.com/news
This year Clissold Park is celebrating its 125th Anniversary!

The free swim scheme currently operates in all Hackney swimming pools, Kings Hall, Clissold Leisure Centre, Britannia and the London Fields Lido. For those eligible, not only can your personal assistant accompany you for no extra charge, your PA can swim at anytime without you needing to be present. Proof may be required. You will need coins for the Locker though! That's it on leisure and culture!

Benefits entitlement,

If you are travelling abroad be aware benefits entitlement has now changed. It is no longer up to 26 weeks, unless it is for medical treatment only It is now up to 13 weeks for travel and leisure.

It is your responsibility to know about these changes, even if the information is hard to find!

See:

www.gov.uk/claiming-benefits-move-travel-abroad/illness-injury-and-disability-benefits

It is time to worry about energy bills as always! For any enquiries on anything energy related contact the Energy Savings Trust 0800 512 012 www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

Most importantly, if you have a low income below £16,190 pa you may be entitled to the warm home discount scheme (not to be confused with warm front, which is being phased out) funded by the government, if you are in receipt of benefits such as DLA and qualify. It's a one off payment of appx £130, usually sent to your electric supplier! Do check with your energy provider as you never know and every little bit helps. For this winter the scheme is now closed. For the fourth year of this scheme you need to apply in October 2014, so make a note in your Diary now! You have to reapply every year, it will end in 2015.

Dual fuel customers however may be eligible for a new addition to this scheme with the same title, the warm home discount scheme, which is a £60 credit to your bills. It has the same criteria to qualify but not all energy companies are taking part - check with your energy provider

Carol Davis, who has been supporting DBU since July 2011, has now left Age UK East London. We wish her all the best in the future.

DBU is now likely to be funded by Hackney Council for another year, so we hope to have a replacement for Carol in the near future.

For British Gas customers call 0800 048 0202

It may also be prudent to check your Council tax band is right for you There is a disability rate for adapted homes and this can be assessed with a visit, LBH Revenues and Benefits 0208 356 3902.

Final top tip is to check with your water supplier concerning the tricky nature of getting charged with the appropriate band for water rates. Default value is called the RV - rateable value- which depending on circumstances can end up being the highest amount which needs to be checked. This could be as much as £400 a year for a single person with minimum use whereas the AHC - ASSESSED HOUSEHOLD CHARGE- would be appx £218 per annum, which is nearly half for the same service!

So in this case, if it exceeds £220+ its worth looking into. A couple should be around £280 and so on. It is your responsibility to check and see what the right policy is for your needs and not for the water board to inform you.

This scheme applies only if you can't have a meter installed or refuse one. If a meter cannot be installed, once assessed by an inspector then the rate should be checked to make sure it's the correct price for the circumstances and it's at the AHC not RV if it's reduced.

Disability BackUp

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Hackney's Mobile Repair Service

by Gill Jackson

Mobile Repair Service repairs things like household appliances, heating systems, and do plumbing and electrical jobs too. MRS also does some very simple things like change light bulbs, put up and take down curtains. This is the Quick Fix and Handyperson service. MRS works for any disabled person any age as well as older people over 55 years.

MRS second main aim is to help prevent accidents in the home. Flooring that needs fixing, trailing leads that need sorting, things in high cupboards (we bring them down), faulty wiring, changing light bulbs and other things.

Charges: Labour per half hour:- QuickFix: currently FREE (this is for small jobs of less than 30mins); Carpentry/ handyperson: £4.00 Appliance repairs, gas, plumbing/ electrical work. £7.00. Parts are of course extra, but MRS will pick them up for you. As well as the MRS handyperson service, it can help with emergency loss of heating. Contact MRS by phone on 0845 4500 410 or 020 7272 3102 or e-mail:

emergencyheating@mobilerepairservice.org.uk. MRS home safety checks are about checking your security measures. It can fit door bolts and door spy holes, check for trip hazards and prevent falls so you don't end up injured or in hospital.

The MRS Stop Falls Services is a support service that helps by looking at falls prevention and also offers an exercise programme to strengthen your muscles, correct posture and give you confidence after a fall.

Finally MRS is trying to develop work with people who are hoarding but it lacks funding. If you know someone who might need or want help, let MRS know. Finding out the true size of this medical problem in Hackney may well assist our funding bids.