

# LONDON ASSEMBLY LABOUR

## Boris Johnson – One Year On

### Boris Johnson's 1<sup>st</sup> year

Boris Johnson's first year as Mayor has been marked by incoherence, a lack of vision and criminal transport cuts in the poorest parts of London.

### **Cleaner & Greener?**

Johnson was elected with the biggest personal mandate of any British politician and yet, one year on, he has failed to tell us what kind of London he wants to leave behind. Vague aspirations about a 'cleaner, greener' city have not been backed up by thoughtful policies. In fact, far from making London cleaner or greener, the new Mayor is dismantling measures to improve London's air quality, has scrapped the Climate Change Agency and is cutting City Hall's environment team.

### **The reality**

Eye-catching, superficially attractive policies like planting street trees and designing a new Routemaster bus have masked the reality of Boris Johnson's year in charge: above inflation fare rises, abandonment of major transport projects, broken promises and lack of action to help London through the economic downturn.

*Labour's leader on the London Assembly, Len Duvall, said: "We've have had a year of cherries and icing but not much cake underneath. Warm words, endless press releases and a long list of aspirations have not been backed up by effective, thoughtful policies. Sooner or later Boris will need to show some leadership and come up with a coherent vision of how he wants London to look come 2012."*

*"Londoners need a Mayor who will fight their corner at every opportunity, who isn't afraid of taking tough decisions and who won't take no for an answer. Boris comes across as a nice guy and makes us all laugh but, if he wants to make a real impact on the city he was elected to serve, he will have to start treading on some toes. He needs to learn that a Mayor of London can't be loved by all of the people all of the time."*

### **Conduct**

In just one year, Johnson has been criticised for [storming out](#) of a Select Committee after swearing at one member, launched into an [F-word tirade](#) against the chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee after changing his version of events four times, and had his actions following the arrest of Conservative colleague Damian Green [described](#) as "extraordinary and unwise" by an independent solicitor.

## **Checklist**

### **What's he done?**

- Hiked up public transport fares by 6 - 11%
- Halved the congestion charge zone
- Abandoned major transport projects in the poorest parts of London
- Scrapped the rule that 50% of all new housing be affordable
- Jumped to the defence of bankers
- Axed £5.5m funding to skills programmes
- Slashed the GLA's environment and domestic violence teams
- Suspended the Low Emission Zone
- Cancelled Rise - Europe's biggest anti-racism festival
- Broken his promise to fund four rape crisis centres
- Dropped his pledge to build 50,000 new affordable homes

### **What's he not done? Johnson pledges not yet delivered**

1. Keep the Tube open for an extra hour on Friday and Saturday nights
2. Negotiate a no-strike deal with Tube unions
3. Scrap the bendy bus (he has admitted they are suitable for some routes)
4. Regulate rickshaws (pedicabs)
5. Convene an "emergency" public summit of train operating companies
6. Introduce an interactive, real-time bus map
7. Reinstate tidal flow in the Blackwall Tunnel
8. Introduce account-based congestion charging
9. Improve commuter coach services
10. Synchronise bus lanes rules
11. Re-introduce conductors on buses
12. Introduce Routemaster buses
13. Introduce a one-off council tax rebate to encourage home insulation
14. Work to help cut carbon emissions by 60%
15. Fund four rape crisis centres (the promised funding required is 50% short)
16. Build 50,000 new affordable homes (this pledge has been dropped)
17. Introduce an online fair rents guide
18. Support the Low Emission Zone (has exempted polluting vans and minibuses)
19. Publish a league table of councils that fail to tackle binge drinking
20. Make more stations step-free (has cut back on plans for step-free access)
21. Create a Cabinet for London
22. Give revenue inspectors more powers to tackle fare evasion
23. Publish contact details of mayoral advisers online
24. Introduce academic scholarships for university students
25. Incentivise councils to release dormant housing to those stuck in bed and breakfast accommodation, by returning the Mayor's precept to them
26. Ringfence spending on public health and reform London Health Commission
27. Instruct the London Skills & Employment Board to run a campaign promoting age equality in the work place

## Transport

Johnson has raised fares, wasted money, scrapped essential infrastructure projects, and at every turn acted in the interests of the motorist over public transport, walking and cycling.

**Labour's transport spokesperson, Val Shawcross, said:** "The Mayor's utter lack of commitment to public transport, to encouraging people out of their cars and to investing in London's future have been vividly exposed. It seems that poorer areas of London and the outer boroughs in most need of public transport links just do not feature in the Mayor's vision"

- So far, Johnson has:
  - allowed motorcycles to share bus lanes with cyclists
  - announced plans to halve the size of the congestion charging zone
  - announced he will waste millions on replacing some bendy buses with double and single-deckers
  - rephased traffic lights to give less time to pedestrians
- On Heathrow, Johnson accepts that London needs increased runway capacity, but is opposed to the third runway on nimbyish politically opportunist grounds. He's happy for Gatwick to expand, supports more flights at City Airport and proposes to build a new "fantasy island" airport in the Thames Estuary at an estimated cost of £40bn, yet opposes expansion in west London where many of his supporters reside

### Scrapping transport projects

Johnson has dropped plans for a Thames Gateway Bridge, DLR extension to Barking and Dagenham, Greenwich Waterfront Transit, and a Brixton to Camden Cross River Tram – all projects in poorer parts of London

- The Thames Gateway Bridge would have: slashed cross-river journey times, kick-started regeneration in the area, created the potential for 42,000 new jobs, and would have been only the fourth road crossing east of Tower Bridge, compared to the sixteen between Vauxhall and the M25 in the west.
- The £350m of PFI credits for the Thames Gateway Bridge cannot simply be 're-allocated' to another project, as Johnson argues. They have been thrown away because the Mayor bowed to minority opposition to the scheme in Tory Bexley.
- The planning permission to build 10,000 affordable homes in Barking and Dagenham – one of London's poorest boroughs, with a housing waiting list of 10,000 – relied on the DLR extension going ahead.

### Bendy buses

Converting the first three bendy bus routes to double and single-deckers will cost over £3m extra per year. The number of extra buses required to maintain current capacity on

the three routes will increase from 47 to 76 during peak hours, meaning longer journey times, more congestion and more pollution.

During the campaign Johnson said of bendy buses: “they wipe out cyclists, there are many cyclists killed by them every year”. But he now admits that there have in fact been **no fatal incidents** involving cyclists and bendy buses and only four serious incidents (where the cyclist may have required medical treatment).

## **Mayor’s Budget**

### **Council tax freeze**

- Johnson has announced that the GLA element of London council tax will not be increased this year. This will save the average London household just 15p a week, or £8 a year. At the same time, thanks to his fare increases, the average London family will be between £100 and £300 a year worse off
- Johnson is holding down tax with one hand and snatching increased fares with the other. It is a total fraud to suggest he is saving Londoners money to help them during the recession

### **How did he achieve the precept freeze? Some examples**

- The GLA budget for tackling domestic violence was [slashed by £90,000](#) and the staff team axed by 5 posts. The GLA's domestic violence programme has previously achieved impressive results including a 57% reduction in domestic violence murders for the last two years. That's 24 lives saved.
- [Slashed half a million](#) from the GLA's environment budget and [cut the team in half](#).

In the run up to the election, Boris Johnson promised to fund four rape crisis centres. He [said](#):

*“a reduction of the Mayor’s personal publicity team of 20% would yield the £744,000 a year with which to fund my commitment to dramatically increase access to support services for rape victims. Quite simply, I believe that it is more important to fund Rape Crisis Centres than press officers.”*

This promise has now been [abandoned](#), with only £233,000 being pledged – not even enough to keep London’s one existing centre open

***Labour’s deputy leader on the London Assembly, John Biggs, said: “This should have been the time for the Mayor to come up with radical solutions to see the capital through the recession. Instead, Boris Johnson’s budget consists of little more than minor efficiency savings, the deletion of vacant posts, and cuts to areas deemed less than important to his administration.”***

## Housing

Johnson has [abolished strategic targets](#), [shifted resources away from those most in need](#) and [scrapped infrastructure projects](#) that would have brought housing and regeneration to areas most in need.

- Johnson has scrapped the target for 50% of all new housing to be affordable. There is now no means by which to ensure Tory boroughs, who have traditionally failed to provide affordable housing for their residents, deliver.
- As well as scrapping the 50% target, Johnson has also changed the requirement that 70 per cent of new housing is social rented/30 per cent intermediate to 60/40. At a time when there are hundreds of thousands of children in London living in over-crowded conditions, almost a million people already on the social rented waiting list, and waiting lists [predicted](#) to reach an all time high during the recession, this is a dangerous shift in resources away from the most in need at a time when they need it most
- Johnson has also [indicated](#) he will not insist that councils deliver social housing to meet their affordable housing target. This means Tory councils, traditionally averse to providing social housing for their residents, could conceivably meet their target solely with shared ownership schemes
- In place of the 50% rule, Johnson has set numerical targets for each individual borough which, when added together, total 50,000. Almost a year after he was elected, the Mayor has yet to even agree these targets with all the boroughs, let alone make progress towards the 50,000. Some boroughs, like Conservative Barnet, are attempting to halve the indicative target Johnson set them
- Johnson is [asking nine Labour-run boroughs](#), containing some of the most deprived areas, to provide almost half of London's affordable homes, and the more affluent, geographically larger Conservative boroughs (who make up half of London) just a third.
- Johnson may argue that the poorest boroughs with the most need should provide the most housing. But, rather than promoting mixed communities, by asking boroughs with the longest waiting lists and the worst problems of over-crowding to provide the most, and by refusing to insist that Conservative boroughs contribute, this approach merely perpetuates social segregation.

Boris Johnson clearly promised **“I will work with the boroughs to build 50,000 more affordable homes by 2011”** (page 2, Housing Manifesto)

He has since [admitted](#) that they will not all be “new” and is [casting doubt](#) over whether 50,000 will be delivered at all

*“Although he has new and unprecedented housing powers, a £5bn budget from the government and the expertise of the new Homes and Communities Agency, we have heard little from the Mayor or his housing adviser that shows he appreciates or understands London's housing needs.”* **Labour housing spokesperson, Nicky Gavron**

## The Economy

At every turn Johnson has been wrong on the economy. He remains perhaps the only politician in the country still happy to defend the bankers. His “Economic Recovery Action Plan” is little more than re-announcements of old initiatives (mostly those of his predecessor), and pledges of support for the work of other bodies.

He has been [criticised](#) by major retailers, including Marks & Spencer, Selfridges and John Lewis, for not acting quickly enough to help business through the downturn. And he has cut funding to projects working to give vulnerable Londoners the necessary skills to find employment in the economic upturn.

### Cuts to projects

- Johnson has cut almost £6m of funding from projects giving Londoners the necessary skills to find work in the economic upturn. Some projects no longer receiving funding include:
  - **City Fringe Partnership**, which provided a range of services to SMEs in the creative, construction and financial service industries, aimed at increasing the employability of Londoners in some of the most deprived parts of the city.
  - **Kings Cross Construction Training Centre**, a flagship scheme providing skills training to local residents in the surrounding wards of a key regeneration area.
  - **Real Life Parenting Ltd**, a unique, small-scale scheme helping the parents of disabled children into work

### Defending bankers

- With Londoners worrying about their jobs, the economy and house prices, Boris Johnson's reaction to the credit crunch was to [defend](#) the actions of his friends in the City, some of whom [bankrolled his election campaign](#).

Johnson, who earns a reported £250,000 a year from the Daily Telegraph on top of his £138,000 as Mayor, said it was "time to enter a note of defence of the bankers who have been punished" and that people should "stop whingeing...about house prices boosted by City bonuses". He dismissed criticism of bankers and suggestions the City might need some reform as “neo-socialist clap-trap”. Johnson’s analysis was [dismissed](#) as “economically illiterate” by Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman.

**Labour's leader on the London Assembly, Len Duvall, said:** "When Londoners voted for Boris they thought they were electing someone who would speak up for everyone, not just those at the top. The current economic difficulties may not have affected the Mayor, but ordinary Londoners are paying higher prices and worrying about their mortgages. They will be looking to the Mayor to show that he understands the difficulties they are facing, not defending those whose greed and excess has done nothing but exacerbate their problems."

Johnson has since begun [campaigning](#) to abolish the 50p tax rate on people, like him, earning over £150,000

## Environment

Despite Johnson claiming he wants to make London “cleaner and greener”, his actions during his first year in office point to someone who cares more about the rights of private vehicle drivers than the air Londoners have to breathe. He has [rolled back](#) congestion and emission charging, [rephrased traffic lights](#) at the expense of pedestrians and [slashed](#) funding for cycle lanes. All the while, Johnson uses his own cycling as a fig leaf to mask his harmful, regressive agenda.

### Low Emission Zone

Phase three of the scheme was scheduled to start in October next year and would have affected 90,000 vehicles, including the most polluting vans and minibuses. A daily £100 charge was due to be imposed on those that did not meet the emissions standards. Failure to pay would have incurred a £500 fine for each day that the vans entered the zone, which covers the Greater London area.

- Johnson has [suspended phase three](#), claiming, without any research or evidential base, that it would harm small business. He ignored the following facts:
  - 1,000 Londoners a year die prematurely because of poor air quality
  - 1 in 5 children in east London suffer with asthma
  - London’s poor air risks 12,000 children being hospitalised for respiratory failure
  - Britain is about to be taken to the court for its poor equality, facing a £300m fine

*“Boris’ decision to halt the further rollout of the Low Emission Zone tells us all we need to know about his concern for air quality and its implications for Londoners’ health.”* **Murad Qureshi**

### Scrapping the Western extension

According to TfL, Johnson’s decision to scrap the Western extension of the Congestion Charge will result in an [estimated 30,000 extra vehicles](#) a day entering the zone. TfL say the decision will result in an [annual loss of £70m revenue](#)

The government is so concerned about Boris Johnson’s record on the environment it is reportedly [investigating](#) what powers it has to countermand the Mayor.

### Environment budget

The GLA’s spending on the environment has [been slashed by half a million pounds](#) and the Mayor’s proposals to cut 114 posts will fall disproportionately on the environment team – potentially harming his ability to carry out his statutory duties on the environment.

**Labour’s environment spokesman Murad Qureshi said:** *“Boris’s anti-climate change views are well known; it wasn’t so long ago he was siding with George W Bush on Kyoto and likening belief in climate change to a stone-age religion. His actions in office suggest he hasn’t changed his mind.”*

## **Policing**

Johnson's record on crime is one of broken promises and lack of delivery

### Police numbers

He has frozen increases to the GLA element of council tax which, during the last eight years, has paid for extra police officers. Before Boris, police numbers increased from 25,400 when the GLA was established to 31,000 in 2008— an increase of 22 per cent. Kit Malthouse, Johnson's deputy mayor for policing, and Simon Milton, his chief of staff, have both said the debate about police numbers is "sterile".

Would Boris Johnson and his deputies be happy to see the "sterile" debate about police numbers played out on the streets of Westminster, Kit Malthouse's constituency and the borough Simon Milton used to lead?

### Knife crime

Operation Blunt 2 has had some success in taking knives off the streets but was established by Ken Livingstone. Johnson is now attempting to re-brand the fight against knife crime as his own, when in fact he has done nothing new to tackle the problem

Johnson's youth crime strategy, 'Time for Action' is full of proposals for services over which he has no jurisdiction.

- He does not control young offender institutions so cannot directly change the support given to offenders.
- He does not run individual boroughs so cannot make them fine truants
- His TFL Transport Academy is nowhere to be seen
- The Scouts [came out against](#) his proposal to force young people to go to their meetings

### Violence Against Women Strategy

The promised £750k funding for four rape crisis centres has not been delivered.

**Labour Assembly member Joanne McCartney said:** "This is a complete betrayal. Boris is promoting himself as a defender of women's rights; behind the scenes he is reneging on his promise to fund new rape crisis centres."

*Green party Assembly member Jenny Jones said: "If you promise something you jolly well get on and deliver it. There's a lot of back-tracking going on and a lot of women need these centres and need them immediately."*

*Yvonne Traynor, chief executive of the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre, said: "Promises shouldn't have been made so early as we are now very disappointed."*

## Alcohol ban

Johnson says the ban on drinking alcohol on buses tubes and trams has been his proudest achievement. But, since the ban was introduced, there have been:

- No arrests made and no record kept of how many drinks have been confiscated
- No record kept of how many confrontations there have been between staff and passengers attempting to drink, and no record kept of how many people have been refused entry to the transport system because of drink

*"This was a flagship Boris Johnson policy, yet he is doing nothing to enforce it and nothing to monitor whether or not it has been a success. How does he expect to tackle drinking and anti-social behaviour with a few posters? As usual with Boris, he talks a good game but when it comes to following through or backing up his words with actions, it's nothing but hot air." **Len Duvall***

## **Equalities**

Johnson has [scrapped](#) Europe's biggest anti-racism festival, cut back on providing step-free access at Underground stations and abandoned the annual Capital Women conference.

### Rise Festival

Having dropped the anti-racism message from the festival last year, the writing was on the wall for Rise. The trade unions withdrew their support after all meaning was stripped from the event. This year Johnson failed to attract sponsorship and refused to use GLA funds.

**Labour London assembly member Jennette Arnold said:** *"The festival embodied all that is good about London, bringing people of all ages and cultures together. It was a celebration of London for Londoners – something Boris just doesn't get."*

### Capital Women Conference

Johnson has scrapped the post of Women's Adviser and axed the conference, which provided a networking opportunity for thousands of women, who could question the Mayor and GLA staff about issues affecting them. The reports that came out of the conference played an essential role in shaping and influencing the GLA policies.

### Step-free Access

Although the Mayor promised that he would improve public transport accessibility, he has dropped his predecessor's pledge to provide step-free access at 33% of all Underground stations. Instead, he has set a reduced target and has shelved plans to improve access at a number of major stations, including Finsbury Park, Highbury & Islington, Liverpool Street and Vauxhall.

## Gimmicks

Johnson's impressive rhetoric and well-spun press releases have been supplemented by a number of eye-catching, seemingly attractive policies which, under scrutiny, deeply disappoint.

### Planting street trees

Under scrutiny, Boris Johnson's seemingly impressive pledge to plant 10,000 street trees turns out to be little more than a well-sold press release. Johnson has pledged to plant the trees over four years, across 40, as yet geographically undefined, 'deserving' areas. That's 2,500 trees a year, or 62 per area. The likelihood of most Londoners seeing one of Boris Johnson's trees on their street is miniscule.

- Ken Livingstone pledged 1 million trees and, since 2002, 425,000 trees have been planted – 21,500 in 2007/08 alone
- So while Johnson's 10,000 trees over four years are welcome, the reality doesn't come close to the rhetoric

### 'Priority' Parks

Johnson held an 'X-Factor' style competition to decide which London parks were most deserving of £6m investment. By definition this put the least able to mobilise groups in London at a disadvantage and was therefore a flawed way of allocating public funds. Predictably, while those areas rewarded with funds have celebrated, there have been many – including the Mayor's natural supporters – left disappointed.

- Placing responsibility for deciding where investment should be directed is not the leadership Londoners expect
- 10 parks with well-motivated and mobilised supporters were each awarded £400,000, while one received £2 million.

**Labour's deputy leader on the London Assembly, John Biggs, said:** *"Placing the onus on Londoners to lobby for cash, simply creates divisions between groups. All of the shortlisted parks were and are in desperate need of investment. This kind of policy simply creates a luck-related scenario of winners and 'losers'."*