

Teddington Society Roads & Transport Group 2002 AGM Report.

1. Better communications about transport issues.

In order to improve lines of communication between the Group and Society members, in addition to the usual reports in Tidings, copies of minutes, monthly reports, and various other documents are now Emailed to any member who wishes to receive them. Much useful comment and feedback is received, and members with access to Email are encouraged to add their names to the list (just Email:- BrianHolder@compuserve.com to advise your Email address).

2. Important developments over the last year.

There have been four important recent developments that have significantly improved the way in which the public is consulted about proposed Borough transport schemes. These were:-

- (i) The Borough's Transport Consultative Forum (made up of representatives of various local societies and transport engineers) produced a document on the changes needed to modernise the Borough's transport consultation procedures.
- (ii) Mrs X, a resident of St Margarets sought a Judicial Review of a traffic scheme where consultation with residents had been inadequate, many not knowing anything about the scheme. Judge Silber ruled against the Council, in a case, which he said, created a legal precedent. At the subsequent High Court appeal, the Council freely admitted that it had not carried out a proper consultation and that it did not have a detailed record of who had been consulted. Its novel line of defence on a point of law, was that Mrs X personally knew about the scheme, and because Mrs X had knocked on neighbours' doors to ask whether they knew about the scheme, her neighbours also knew about the scheme. Both sides claimed a victory in this costly appeal.

The real victors, however, are the residents of the Borough, who now have much improved (but not yet perfect) planning and consultation procedures for transport schemes.

- (iii) Although most of us had reservations about the introduction of Cabinet style decision-making to replace the previous Committee based procedures, we have been pleasantly surprised by the effectiveness of the new system. Under the old Committee system, decisions often appeared to have been agreed before the meeting took place, and irrespective new facts produced, or of the contrary views expressed by large numbers of residents, decisions were rubber-stamped. The quality of debate has improved markedly under the new arrangements, as has the presentation and quality of evidence. The addition of lay members on each Committee has added balance to a system that previously often divided along party lines. The fact that one Councillor, the Cabinet member, has to make a decision based on the facts presented, and arguments made, is making open government a long overdue reality.

- (iv) The final big improvement is the introduction of the Richmond upon Thames web site. It is still having one or two teething problems, but it is usually possible the look up meeting dates, agendas, minutes of previous meetings, and which Councillors sit on each Committee. Various reports are also available. It is well worth a look on <http://www.Richmond.gov.uk>

3. The Teddington Study

We have just heard that £300,000 has been allocated to carry out some of the measures already agreed. Update at the AGM.