

BVRG FEBRUARY 2008 UPDATE

A&E DEPARTMENT, CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AND MATERNITY SERVICES AT LEWISHAM HOSPITAL UNDER THREAT OF CLOSURE – HAVE YOUR SAY.

There is currently quite a radical proposal pending to change our local health services in the borough. A public health consultation is under way at the moment to look at healthcare within Lewisham, Greenwich, Bexley and Bromley. This consultation is called A Picture of Health and throughout January, consultation documents should have been delivered to all households in these four boroughs. Many of us have not received this document so we think it is important to let you know about it since the changes proposed could have a huge impact on our local community. **PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE YOUR SAY.**

There are three options being considered for the four main hospitals included in this project. Options 1 and 3 will result in Lewisham Hospital losing its Accident and Emergency department, its very successful Children's Hospital and its Maternity services. **Option 2 is the only one which will keep these busy departments open for local people in Lewisham.** We are concerned that the consultation document and the questionnaire seem to be written in a way to steer people away from Option 2. The statements in the document about separation of planned and emergency surgery preventing infection in hospitals could be misleading for two reasons: Cross contamination could occur in these two groups separately and Lewisham Hospital already has one of the lowest rates of infection, including MRSA, in the country. **Voting for Option 2 is the only way for local people here to keep our existing services at Lewisham Hospital.** This option does not worsen the outcome for the other hospitals. Lewisham has a very good record nationally in these departments so it does seem very odd to downgrade a successful and very busy hospital in a key urban area.

This public consultation and questionnaire could be perceived to be "spun" to make it seem that Lewisham Hospital losing these core services for patients will actually improve service. The issue is this: Do we want to lose our local A&E, Children's wards and maternity services? If these proposals go ahead, local people will need to travel much further for potentially urgent treatment. The solution in the document is to make ambulances travelling longer distances "mobile A&E services". Some local people may feel that there are some valid points within this proposal whereas others may see it as a thinly veiled attempt to justify yet more budget cuts from core NHS services. **THE DEADLINE FOR COMMENTS IS 7TH APRIL 2008.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- 1. Read the consultation document and return the questionnaire with your comments** - These can be viewed online at www.apictureofhealth.nhs.uk. Alternatively, you can call the consultation office on 0800 321 3579, email them on APOH@lewishampct.nhs.uk or write to A Picture of Health, 3rd Floor, 1, Lower Marsh, London SE1 7NT. Completed questionnaires can be sent through the website or by post to A Picture of Health, FREEPOST RRSL-BSTX-AKYS, Centre for Health Management, Tanaka Business School, Imperial College, London SW7 2AZ.
- 2. Attend one of the public consultation events:**
Lewisham - 28 February 2008, 2-8pm at Lewisham Methodist Church, Albion Way, SE13
Greenwich - 23 February 2008, 10am-4pm at Woolwich Town Hall, Wellington St, SE18
Bromley - 26 February 2008, 3-8pm at Bromley Library, High St., Bromley BR1 1EX
Bexley - 27 February 2008, 2-8pm at United Reformed Church of Bexleyheath, Geddes Place, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6
- 3. Get in touch with your local MPs and Councillors.**
4. If you have a complaint about this consultation process, please write to Michael Chuter, JCPCT Chair, Greenwich Teaching PCT, 31-37 Greenwich Park Street, London SE10 9LR.

THREAT OF INCREASED AIRCRAFT NOISE

Many of us have already noticed a large increase in air traffic over our local area in the last ten years. Now the Government is consulting on plans for Heathrow which will mean significantly more aircraft noise over Blackheath. The consequences of some of the changes could be serious for Blackheath and Greenwich and will result in much lower flying aircraft, **one every 80 seconds or so, constantly from about 6am to 11pm.** This could be introduced as early as 2010 with serious noise implications for all of us living under the flight paths.

The Blackheath Society is responding in detail to these proposals and is working closely with the Greenwich Society to co-ordinate responses for maximum effect. 12 local authorities in the Greater London area have combined to form the 2M Group to oppose the expansion of Heathrow. Currently, Greenwich and Lewisham Councils are not members of the 2M Group but both Societies are urging them to join.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Residents of Blackheath and Greenwich are strongly encouraged to submit their own views, by letter or e-mail. Letters should be sent to Freepost RRRR-TARL-ABJS, Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport (DfT Consultation), Research Services House, Elmgrove Road, Harrow HA1 2QG. Emails can be sent to heathrowconsultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk.

The full 250 page Consultation Document is available at www.dft.gov.uk. From the *Home Page* select *Adding capacity at Heathrow Airport*, then *Consultation document*. Alternatively you should be able to get a copy by telephoning 0845 600 4170. Responses must be received by **27 February 2008**.

We believe it's in the interests of our local community that both BVRG and the Blackheath Society have as many members as possible in order to have greater influence, particularly on topics like this which are of importance to both organisations. If you're not already a member of BVRG, please email us on bvrgroup@tiscali.co.uk or call 020 8143 4623. You can join the Blackheath Society via their web site www.blackheath.org (which also has a suggested letter of objection regarding aircraft noise, if you are interested) or by calling their office on 020 8297 1937.

BLACKHEATH JOINT WORKING PARTY MEETING This will be held on Friday 22nd February 2008 at The Recital Room at Blackheath Halls from 7.30pm. It's an opportunity for local residents to meet Councillors, council staff and leaders of local organisations to share views about issues affecting Blackheath

CUMULATIVE IMPACT ZONE – ACHIEVED! We are really pleased to confirm that a **Cumulative Impact Zone (CIZ or Saturation Zone)** has finally been established in Blackheath village from November 2007. This reflects the fact that there are already a huge number of licensed premises in a relatively small residential area. This now means that, by default, Lewisham Council will now **refuse** licensing applications if the applicant cannot demonstrate that there will not be an adverse impact on the people living in the CIZ. (Without a CIZ, the default is to grant applications).

This CIZ was only achieved through more than four years of effort by BVRG members, two generations of local councillors, local police teams and the Blackheath Society and its members! BVRG is proud that its efforts have led to the successful declaration of the CIZ, and the committee would like to thank all members who have been supporting us over this long period of time. We are also very pleased that so many local groups have worked together so closely and supportively. The campaign has been without political divisions and has been supported by citizens, law makers, and law enforcers alike.

We can not rest on our laurels now though. The CIZ gives us the opportunity to maintain and improve our village living environment but we must all participate actively in this to benefit from it. The BVRG steering group decided at its January meeting that BVRG will start a programme of regular meetings with representatives of the licensed premises around Blackheath village. The committee will offer to meet, over the course of 2008, representatives from: The Railway, The Crown, O'Neill's, The Princess of Wales, Cave Austin, Zero Degrees, The Cactus Pit, and the Hare and Billet. It will also add further premises to this list if members ask us to.

We have a very important request of you: please let us have comments on issues with (or praise for) these premises, and any others which should be on the list. Only with your continuing support will the quality of life for all of us in Blackheath village continue to improve. **You will still need to individually object to any future licensing applications** – this CIZ will not result in applications being turned down automatically and licence applications in the future without objections may still be granted.

NEW WEB SITE FOR BVRG Our new web site www.bvrg.org.uk goes live in early March in time for our **4th birthday**. Many thanks to our new steering group member, Rob Widdicombe for getting us on the web. You'll find further information about BVRG on our new site, news updates and useful contacts and links amongst other things. We hope you like it and do email us any suggestions you may have for future content.

UPDATE ON MOMO FRANKS During last year, this business at 56 Tranquil Vale opened, operating as what is clearly a restaurant. The planning status of the premises is A1 (i.e. retail) and the location is in the "core retail area" as defined by Lewisham Council. Bizarrely, in September 2007, an alcohol licence was granted despite the fact that no planning consent had been given for restaurant use – indeed, in 2005, a planning application for change of use had been refused. As a good example of non-joined-up government, the local authority had therefore granted a licence to a business operating without proper planning permission! Lobbied by both BVRG and the Blackheath Society, the Planning Department then galvanised itself into action and the Planning Committee meeting in December decided to take enforcement action and required the business *within three months* to cease being used in contravention of planning rules. So far as we know, no appeal has been lodged against this decision and no new planning application has been made. For the time being, business continues as normal...

Blackheath Village Residents' Group Limited
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