

Democratically Yours

Political Newsletter of Norman Cutting

Issue A

Summer 2006

You missed it!

I'm afraid that due to lack of time and money, residents between Woodlands Avenue and Cross Oak Rd missed out of my Winter issue - however if keen, it's available on my web site (www.normanCutting.com) along with most other bits amongst the archive section.

Regular readers know that I try to bring to your attention those national and local issues that frequently slip under your radar, so just to get you going:

In case you missed it!

Good idea or not?

A "24x7 national vehicle movement database" that logs everything on the UK's roads and retains the data for at least two years is now being built, according to an Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) strategy document leaked to the Sunday Times. The system, which will use Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR), and will be overseen from a control centre in Hendon, London, is a sort of 'Gatso 2' network, extending, enhancing and linking existing CCTV, ANPR and speedcam systems and databases.

Police use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras could 'break human rights law' according to some reports. Which, it would seem to us, is a novel way to categorise the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, the Act police procedures appear to break. This had not previously been thought to be a landmark of human rights legislation, but go on then, blame the Human Rights Act and move swiftly on to blaming Europe, why don't you?

ANPR's problem has been spotted by Chief Surveillance Commissioner Sir Andrew Leggatt, part guardian of liberty, part doormat, who notes in his annual report that RIPA requires authorisation for operations involving intrusive surveillance. This is usually granted for surveillance operations on named suspects, but clearly fixed ANPR cameras scanning for large numbers are suspects (e.g. those recorded as not having tax, insurance or MoT) don't readily fit

into such a system. Police are also busily building a national 24x7 vehicle movement database intended to record all passing number plates, everywhere, at the rate of 50 million a day, records to be retained for two years. Or actually, six years, or forever!

"24x7 vehicle movement database" is actually how the police describe it, and from the point of view of a Surveillance Commissioner you'd think that was a dead giveaway. The system doesn't just track named suspects, even hundreds of thousands or a few millions of named suspects, it tracks all vehicles, keeping the data so that it can be mined to discover the movements of people who at some point in the future become suspects. So effectively, everybody is a suspect.

The above has been 'culled' from 'The Register' Internet site and I think it deserves a wider readership. You are it!

Hospital - wot hospital?

First they build a new maternity wing, then they close it.

Then they build a new accident and emergency unit, then they think about reorganising it.

This reorganisation will not result in the closure of the A & E department (they say), just the operation. It seems the intention is to have a private company run the department ('we are not privatising the NHS') and all normal facilities will be available - unless unplanned or critical (Q&A session printed on front page of PCT newsletter summer 2005 issue).

Now they think about closing the elderly persons ward (? - ward - have you been there?).

It used to be the young and elderly who were considered the most vulnerable, now they are the easiest to get rid off!!

As I write this in mid August, it's obvious that no-one actually knows what is going on or should that be 'in control'?

The Berkhamsted Citizens Association has taken residents concerns on board and actively supporting the Dacorum Hospital Action Group. More information on 'www.berko.org.uk/bca'.

Meanwhile, in the rest of the world!

We have a government committed to devolving power to local people.

The first thing they do is appoint regional assemblies to organise our area - from Cambridge and unelected. This has gone on since 1997 and the current 'devolving of power' is allowing just three months from the 'theory' to 'practice' and do away with County Police forces and make them more 'efficient'. I expect several of you have experienced the efficiency provided by centralising the control room. Similar ideas are being proposed for the Fire and Ambulance services.

In order to continue to devolve services to local people, the current 'what can I do today?' proposal, is to lose the Parish Council, lose the Borough Council and lose the County Council and set up another organisation which will be required to 'consult at local level'. Not to take any notice, but consult!

If the Regional assemblies are anything to go by, it's members will be appointed, not elected, and if they don't do the government bidding, then appointees will be threatened with replacement! WOULD THEY?

In fact, our very own East of England Regional Assembly EIP report is winging it's way to be rubber stamped as I write. More houses for us, up from 6,000 to 12,000, I'm afraid. including the land between the M1 and Buncefield Lane (don't ask!).

For some reason, they didn't agree with the idea that you build houses and then the government will pay for all the infrastructure required like roads, schools, hospitals and the like.

Which reminds me, I heard recently that the new proposed 'centre of excellence' hospital 'planned' for Hatfield may not happen, as the Health Authority has run out of money and will not be able to afford it.

You'll never guess who actually funds the NHS and says they will fund the infrastructure for the imposed new housing. Is it any wonder that suspicions are raised?

I could go on about ID cards, council tax, parking, the state of the 'new' town centre pavements and all the other annoying items, but I will end this issue with two quick thoughts.

1 Why not spend the millions proposed to be spent on windmills to provide only 10-15% of our power requirements, on finding a way to dispose of the reactive waste from nuclear power?

2 Emissions from aircraft are not treated the same as everything else - why not?

That's it for this issue. Any queries, questions, criticisms, you know where I am.

www.normanCutting.com - www.berko.org.uk



Just in case you have absolutely no idea who I am, then at great expense and effort, I wandered out and got my wife to take a photo of me. Of course, in real life, I look much better, have more colour and the sun doesn't make my glasses quiet so dark, but hey, what do you expect for nothing!

This newsletter is sponsored by your local electrician - *me*, so for your electrical work, give me a call!

***N.Cutting* Electrical - 871851**

Carrying out electrical work for the local community since 1972

Do you find this newsletter interesting?

You have been receiving my newsletters fairly regularly since 1996 (yes, it's that long!), and there is an election next year, if you didn't know.

I could do with some funding, as well as help in delivering my 'missives'.

Each newsletter costs about £125 and between 2000 and 2500 copies circulated (depending on how I feel and time available). It takes about 1 hour to deliver 100, so any help would be appreciated.

Please get in touch if you support my efforts, the address is at the bottom, together with my telephone number. My e-mail is norm@berko.org.uk