

Above is the NFB UK logo

FED NEWS 53

**March 2023**

Welcome to our March edition of Fed News. A huge thanks to everyone who has sent us contributions and suggestions for future topics. If you would like to submit an article for our next edition please email: [fednews@nfbuk.org](mailto:fednews@nfbuk.org)

Please note, the deadline for the next Fed News is April 20th 2023. This will allow us time to edit and publish in the first week of May rather than at the end.

**Editorial by Karl Farrell**

**In this issue, you will read of more people saying things and more of us doing things too. Maybe the gradual warm in temperature is warming us to the campaigning challenge. We face lots of problems in using buses and trains so NFBUK campaigning is trying to highlight the consequences if rail staff are cut and buses aren’t accessible.**

**We've also got more contributions this month, like the article on blind bingo and another on how one member uses his computer. And if we think we're the only ones who complain about bikes and scooters, perhaps we can take comfort in knowing that other people are put out about them too.**

**Plans are being drawn up to hold our AGM in September against the background of rising prices. Shortly, we will begin the run up to our annual event and hopes of more activity both nationally and in Branches.**

**We've just heard of a report in the London Evening Standard that the safety of 'island bus stops' in the capital, the ones with cyclists riding around them, is to be re-examined. Lots of people are uncomfortable with these bus stops but it is NFBUK that speaks publicly against them. Our mission is, surely, to champion the decluttering and greater use of footways, the pavement if you like, because everyone is better off when they can safely use them. We should be safely able to get off and on buses too!**

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# **NFB UK Success - Sadiq Khan to review safety of ‘floating bus stops’ beside cycle lanes. London Evening Standard online, 23rd March 2023, Reporter Ross Lydall**

Blind campaigners warn new layouts put them at risk of colliding with cyclists

Sadiq Khan has promised to conduct a review of “floating” bus stops after a delegation of blind people raised safety concerns.

“Floating” bus stops have been introduced alongside many new cycle lanes in London, primarily to prevent cyclists being put in danger if they get stuck behind a stationary bus and have to pull out into moving traffic.

But campaigners say the alternative design – which places a cycle lane between the bus stop and the pavement – puts pedestrians at risk when boarding or getting off a bus, despite a “zebra crossing” normally being included in the design to indicate that pedestrians have right of way.

St Thomas’s Hospital unsuccessfully fought a long campaign to prevent a floating bus stop being installed on Westminster bridge, fearing patients would come into conflict with cyclists heading northbound over the river.

Mr Khan, speaking at Mayor’s Question Time on Thursday, promised either he or his Deputy Mayor for Transport Seb Dance would meet campaigners “as soon as possible”, and said Transport for London was already reviewing the safety of floating bus stops.

He said: “What we can’t have is a situation where somebody is seriously hurt, or worse, as a consequence of a cyclist not following the Highway Code and running over somebody. It’s really important we do this before, God forbid, that happens, rather than afterwards.

“I’m more than happy to throw at this what we can to make sure these bus stop bypasses are safer than they appear to be.”

Members of the National Federation of the Blind of the UK attended the City Hall hearing, accompanied by Nelly the guide dog.

In a letter to the mayor and members of the London Assembly, they submitted a petition supported by 164 campaign groups calling for “urgent action” to improve safety for bus passengers queuing or alighting at floating bus stops.

They are also concerned about being hit by riders of e-scooters or e-bikes.

The letter, from Andrew Hodgson, president of NFBUK, said: “Expecting people who cannot see, who cannot move very fast or who are using mobility aids to step on and into a cycle lane with speeding cyclists and people using e-devices is simply not safe.”

Speaking to the Standard before the meeting, they admitted they were unaware of specific incidents of blind people coming to harm - but said the concern about colliding with cyclists was such that many blind people were reluctant to use buses in the first place.

Emma Best, a Tory member of the London Assembly, referred to media reports describing floating bus stops as “death trap bike lanes” because the majority of cyclists refused to stop for pedestrians.

She asked the mayor if he would support an “awareness campaign” advising cyclists how to behave around floating bus stops. She said wider concerns were shared by pensioners and people with young children.

Mr Khan said TfL’s approach to installing floating bus stops was “completely consistent” with Department for Transport guidance. He declined a request to stop TfL more floating bus stops.

But he said: “You are right: all cyclists are required to stop for pedestrians at zebra crossings, in accordance with the Highway Code.

“Clearly, if it is the case that that is not happening, we need to not just raise awareness, we need to try and ensure there is enforcement as well.

“We need to make sure we keep cyclists safe from the risk of pulling out into traffic when a bus is [at] a bus stop, but also that pedestrians, particularly visually impaired ones, aren’t in danger because of cyclists not following the code. It’s really important they feel safe as well.

“What I am will in to do, and what I think we must do, is look into safety concerns raised by not just those who are visually impaired but others to make sure, in the quest to make cyclists safe, we don’t inadvertently, because a minority of cyclists aren’t following the rules, endanger others.”

This would potentially include working with the Government to improve safety and raise awareness, he said, adding that TfL had already begun work. “Clearly more needs to be done,” Mr Khan said.

# **NFBUK Campaigns Report by Sarah Gayton, Street Access Campaigns Coordinator & Research and Campaigns Officer**

NFBUK have been working hard on gaining support for two key petitions and

showing films to MPs and key stakeholders on the safety and accessibility at

bus stops in the UK. The first petition was on ensuring safe access to and from the bus in active travel cycle schemes. The second was in relation to

protecting safe access on trains and at train stations across the UK.

In particular, we have undertaken the following:

1: We organised a film show and discussion for MPs in Parliament in London,

on the safety and accessibility of bus stops in active travel schemes in the

UK on 11 January 2023. Our film called 'What is happening to the Safety and Accessibility at bus stops in Britain?' Was shown twice to an audience of

MPs and interested stakeholders. This was to highlight the serious concerns

we have where cycle lanes have been sandwiched in between the pavement and the bus stop. This article, from Craig Tracey MP who sponsored the event, explains more: <https://www.craigtracey.co.uk/news/national-federation-blind-campaign-safety-and-accessibility-bus-stops>

Sarah Leadbetter, Sandy Taylor, our representative in Scotland, our President Andrew Hodgson, Yemi Dada, former Executive Council member, Peter Monk, Pro Bono Access / Planning Advisor and Hyacinth Malcom NFBUK member attended the event; as well as Sarah Gayton, the Street Access

Campaign Coordinator.

2: The same delegation met with the Chair of the UK Parliament’s Transport Select Committee and explained our concerns over the bus stop bypasses on 11 January 2023.

3: Also, on that day we handed in 2 petitions to the UK Prime Minister at Number 10 Downing Street.

- The first one, which had already been submitted in October 2022, was handed in again and was supported by over 160 organisations from across the UK. It was to bring a halt to the use of bus stop bypasses and to ensure we get direct access to and from the bus direct from the pavement, with no cycle lane sandwiched in between the pavement and the bus stop. This petition had also been handed into the Scottish Government on 1 December 2022. Filming of a new active travel / tram scheme in Edinburgh was undertaken by Sarah Gayton, with Sandy Taylor, which resulted in the serious concerns raised over the safety and accessibility of the scheme making it onto the TV, radio and newspapers.

- The second petition handed in, was to stop train ticket offices

being shut down across the UK, to stop guards being taken off trains and to

ensure all stations are manned. This petition now has 146 supporting

organisations from across the UK.

4: The train petition, mentioned in 3 above was also handed into the

Secretary of State for Transport at his constituency office on 29 December 2022. Sarah Leadbetter travelled to Gloucestershire with Sarah Gayton, the Street Access Campaign Coordinator to meet with Bill Waddell, former Vice

President of NFBUK, to hand the petition into the office. Sarah Leadbetter

also appeared on TV and took part in National Radio 4 and local radio

interviews.

5: NFBUK member Kevin Greenan, a long cane user, was filmed on 26 December 2022 at his local train station. Footage of this was used on social media to raise awareness of the problems being created by the proposed plans for modernisation of the management of the railways, which in reality will introduce widespread discrimination. Kevin and Sarah Leadbetter have both appeared in many press articles about our petition including the BBC.

6: The same delegation who played the film at Parliament on 11 January,

showed the film to the Deputy Mayor for Transport for the Greater London Assembly and representatives of Transport for London on 25 January 2023. They explained the serious problems of the continuing use of bus stop by passes in London.

7: Further filming of Jane Sellers, London Branch member from Surrey, who is a long cane user has also taken place and a short film was produced on

the impact of the proposed changes to the management of the railways in

Britain. This has been put onto Twitter and social media.

8: On 20 February, multiple copies of the petition on railway reform were

once again handed into Number 10 Downing Street. This was to put further

pressure on the Government alongside the industrial action on the railways. We were represented by Andrew Hodgson, Sarah Leadbetter, Yemi Dada, Kevin Greenan and Dr Linda Miller and were joined by other sight loss organisations, representatives from Inclusion London and commuting organisations. I spoke with a representative of a commuting organisation who verified to me that they have plenty of evidence to say that a great many people, as well as those with a visual impairment, are experiencing great disadvantage through the inaccessibility of the railway reforms over the past few years and this would continue still further with the proposed forthcoming plans.

Click here to read a recent press article: <https://metro.co.uk/>.

Short films of our work can be seen on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDZjjaPx4TQhREU16IEoLmg/videos>

Please see below in NFBUK contact details for all our social media links.

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# **Executive Council Summary by Liz Silver**

The most recent Executive Council (EC) meeting at the end of March, was too late for a summary for this edition of Fed News. The previous one was on 21st February. Steve Springthorpe is not able to attend meetings at the moment due to ill health.

The February meeting covered a wide range of issues, including good practice re the meeting not lasting more than two hours and practicalities such as setting up an EC e-group. There is some admin type work to do at the moment, such as preparing for the CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) and checking policies and procedures to make sure they are up to date, or whether they need drawing up. At the time of writing, the election for President cannot go ahead as there are still issues which need to be sorted out.

The Treasurer's report covered a range of topics. There are a couple of branches that still had not submitted their accounts for 2022, so this has delayed the examination of our accounts by the auditor. An organisation called the Fairness Foundation contacted us and There is the possibility of a £5,000 grant. This could be used for training on the use of technology, including IT/computers and phones. We need to be able to say more specifically how the grant would be used, before signing the agreement. Ideas include branches being able to run training sessions for members, national training sessions face to face or online, or individual one to one sessions. Overall, we need to try and raise more money this year than was raised in 2022

WE still need to decide where this year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held. Burleigh Court in Loughborough is the most likely possibility, but prices are quite high. At the time of writing, Blackpool is also an option. Dates still need to be agreed, but this will depend on venue availability.

On the campaigns front, work is ongoing regarding cycle pathways and bus stop bypasses. We need to look at the management of campaigns and activate the campaigns forum. There will be an input on the Support for Sight Loss campaign by Martin Borrill, who was at the national AGM and jointly ran a session with Andrew Hodgson. Martin is away at the moment. he has expressed an interest in taking on the role of NFB Treasurer.

Karina Gregory has taken on the update of the NFB website and has begun work on this. She is starting on the Campaigns section. Local campaigns can be on the website under branches and there will be links to branches from the general campaigns section. If campaign information is updated in one place (e.g. branch campaigns), it will be automatically updated in general Campaigns. Branches will need to coordinate with Karina to update their sections. She would like to add 'useful links' to the website. If you have any ideas, queries or feedback about the NFB website, you can contact Karina on [kgregory@nfbuk.org](mailto:kgregory@nfbuk.org)

# **news from our branches**

## Leeds Branch

Leeds City Council alterations to the A660

A few weeks ago, Hilary received an email from a Project Officer @ Leeds City Council, wishing the National Federation of the Blind UK to be involved with the alterations to the A660 road that runs from Leeds to Ilkley.

On Monday 6th February, Hilary and Sheila met members of the Project Team and Connecting Leeds, @ Merrion House. The A660 (Otley Road), runs past the University of Leeds. This project would begin adjacent to the University @ the clarendon Road traffic lights. As they walked further away from Leeds, they stopped at Woodhouse Moor. Looking to the right, the project team described the layout of cycle tracks, shrubbery and concrete shelters. Hilary clarified that these were Bus Stop By passes and that NFB UK had recently presented a petition to Downing Street against such changes as they were deemed dangerous for blind and partially sighted people.

The tour ended at Headingley and St. Michael’s Church, where they propose to close the Otley Road end of St. Michaels Lane and widen the pavement, as well as move the bus stop further along. Sheila raised the importance of having tactile paving to differentiate pathways and crossings.

As this is a large project, it was agreed that another meeting should be arranged and the project team be invited to a branch meeting on 4th April.

Guide Dog taxi refusal

Hilary experienced problems with a particular Taxi company on 7th December 2022, after booking to attend the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind AGM.

Initially the taxi arrived late and after loading her walking frame into the car, it was subsequently unloaded when Hilary said they were next to pick up Mary and her Guide Dog. The taxi company confirmed there was no notice in their office of the driver being allergic to dogs and another car was dispatched.

Having explained to this second driver that his step was too high and she needed to call Mary to explain this change, as she put her key to the door, he too drove off. After calling the operator once more, Hilary then reported them to the Taxi Licensing Authority. Hilary has now given a written statement and a prosecution is on its way to this taxi company. Other members, attending their recent branch meeting, also revealed they had experienced problems with this firm.

Obituary

It is with deep regret that Leeds & District Branch announce the passing of Joan Milligan on 7th March 2023. Joan had been in hospital for two months and was fast-tracked to a nursing home where she died. She was a lovely lady with a great sense of humour, well known and in fact some members had known her for over thirty years.

Widow of Martin Milligan, Professor of Law@ the University of Leeds, he was keen to acquire Resource Centres for Blind people; helping to Secure Shire View for Blind & Partially-sighted people in Leeds. He was helped by Barry Naylor, Trevor McDonald and Jim Hughes.

The funeral was held on 2nd March, attended by 31 people & 6 guide dogs. Karl Farrell, Vice-President, also attended representing the Executive Council of the NFBUK.

RIP Joan, you will be sadly missed.

## London Branch

Vision Foundation engages members on a sensitive topic at our recent branch meeting

Kerry, Grants Officer from the Vision Foundation, gave an informative presentation on their recent Unseen Campaign in creating awareness of domestic violence and abuse within our community. Evidence shows that 1 in 12 people had been affected at some point. In the most recent London Life, Vision Foundation provided lists of organisations available to support members affected by this.

Success of our first Campaigns Forum

Seven people attended our first Campaigns Forum on Zoom, Monday 20th February, where we discussed a range of potential campaigns affecting our members. From this list, three areas will eventually be focused upon.

One member commented “More and more businesses are asking people to book online only. The numbers do not give people access to human beings. What happens to the people who either cannot use the website due to its inaccessibility or even people who do not have computers or iPhones. Are they going to miss out more and more as more restaurants and pubs go over to online booking with no human access?”

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# Tech Forum

London also delivered its first Tech Forum in February. TAVIP (Technical Association of Visually Impaired People) have agreed to attend in both April and May to support this project. Dates of both future meetings will appear in London Life.

Presentation of the 2022 Teddy Trophy to our Superman Pardy

Jessica Beal happily presented Pardy with this recognition of his contribution to our London Branch for many years. Described as Superman, a true gent and great friend to us all, Pardy has supported numerous events for the branch including Blackpool trips, Buckingham Palace visits, Eastbourne weekends and various socials.

Below is a photo of Jess presenting the silver Teddy Trophy to Pardy



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# My visit from Sarah Gayton, NFB UK’s Campaigns Co-ordinator, regarding the railway campaign by Jane Sellers, Branch Secretary

On Monday 30th January at around 10.30, I met up with Sarah Gayton. We went for a coffee first of all and then we planned what we were going to film on her iPhone. Sarah first asked me what would happen if the ticket office was no longer open at all? My reply was that it would be difficult for me because I would have to try and obtain a ticket from a machine which doesn’t talk.

Then Sarah asked me what would happen if I needed assistance and nobody was on the gate-line at Horley station. I replied, it would mean that I would be even more anxious than normal. When travelling without sight it can be very stressful, which sighted people wouldn’t necessarily realise unless they have a disability.

Sarah asked me to hold up some campaign boards, which she had brought along as prompts for her filming. A video of Jane can be seen on NFB UK Twitter account and has already been retweeted and liked many times.

# **Members’ Tech Talk**

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## TAVIP to make a presentation on Zoom for NFBUK members

## We are delighted to announce that Jeff from TAVIP will be making a presentation at London Branch’s Technical Forum on 25th April, 7pm. London Branch would like to open this forum up to all NFB members. If you would like to register, please email:

[london@nfbuk.org](mailto:london@nfbuk.org)

TAVIP (Technology Association of Visually impaired people) is a lively community of blind and partially sighted people who are keen to spread the use and benefits of technology among its members and to support those members in its use.

Membership is free. To this end, they have a website [www.tavip.org.uk](http://www.tavip.org.uk/), a monthly get together over Zoom, a members’ list for announcements and a discussion list where members can pose and get help with queries. Their website contains a training directory. In addition, they are running a pilot project on technology for work where accepted applicants receive an audit of their existing skills and training in the use of specific applications.

London is keen to share its opportunities with other NFB branches and will be hosting this in collaboration with our Nottingham branch. If you would like to receive an invitation please email:

[london@nfbuk.org](mailto:london@nfbuk.org)

## What tech I use at college and home and how this assists me by Philip Simpson

Tech I use at college

At college I use a laptop with a keyboard attached to it. I use NVDA speech software. I find this useful because this software is free to download and free to install on any device such as a laptop or computer. If you read a word and it is spelt wrongly, the software tells you by saying 'spelling mistake’. When you correct the word, this goes, so you know if you have now spelt a word correctly. Also, if you have got caps lock on or use a capital letter, if you are reading back, this comes in a higher pitch. This is useful I feel.

Tech I use at home

At home I use a computer PC with a Braille Focus 80 underneath the keyboard. These are extremely useful pieces of kit to me. The Braille displays at the same time as the speech, what Is on the screen, or as I am typing. This helps me to check my work or emails for accuracy. Where would I be without them, I’d be lost wouldn’t I?

Again, NVDA is free to download from the internet and free to install. That’s helpful, isn’t it? Also, if I type with caps lock on and I use the caps key, the speech makes a noise so I am aware of this. This is vital for me. Where would I be without this? I’d be totally lost, wouldn’t I?

This speech software allows me to do the same things as a sighted person is able to do. This I feel is so cool!

I can trawl the internet for information on any topic I like. This means I can look up anything I want to. That’s a win, win, win for me, isn’t it?

Also, I can send and receive emails. However, I haven’t yet mastered how I read attachments or PDF documents with NVDA, reading my emails on EM Client application. That’s the only drawback for me.

I would urge anyone thinking of going to speech software to go for NVDA any day. It’s so easy to use and it doesn’t need a lot to teach yourself how to use it.

# **Self-service checkouts are not accessible for blind and partially sighted customers by Fiona Musgrove and friends**

A number of members have expressed concern about the increase in self-service checkouts and the reduction in staff at their supermarkets.

A repeated response from Tesco to concerns from disability groups, is that staff will always be on-hand to assist customers using self-scan checkouts. With the growing implementation of these check-outs, how can we be assured of receiving adequate support whilst shopping?

When a 69 year old woman challenged Tesco’s automated system, over 100,000 people signed her petition - click here to find out more: <https://www.lancs.live/news/uk-world-news/tesco-shoppers-boycott-supermarket-nightmare-24000016>

It would be all so simple if we all did our shopping on-line, but with the growth of loneliness and isolation amongst so many disabled people, this could become detrimental and impact on our mental health. Leading disability rights advocate, Tanni Grey-Thompson (@Tanni\_GT) has recently tweeted about the growth of automation of self-service checkouts: Another shop put in self-serve tills. Not very accessible. That’s another shop I’m not going back to. (17/02/2023, 18:26).

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## **Bad service by Darren Vickers**

I have experienced two bad incidents during the last month, in two different supermarkets.

The first was in a local Iceland store where I visit frequently with my Guide Dog. She deliberately tried not to serve me when I approached the desk, saying “I can’t help you. It is company policy not to help disabled people”. When I told her she was breaking the law she replied they were short of staff

Reluctantly she did assist me in the end with my shopping, but it made me feel humiliated. When I returned home my Partner was furious with the discrimination I had faced and complained to Iceland head office who said they would look into the matter.

The second incident occurred in Sainsburys where I also frequently visit with my Guide Dog. When I asked for help at the Customer Services, I was told to go to till number 12. After complaining to the Store Manager, someone eventually assisted me around the shop

Both experiences have left me feeling nervous about visiting supermarkets again, although I know I have to in order to buy groceries.

## **TESCO AUTOMATION by Phillip Simpson**

The problem with Automated check-outs is not that they are automated, so much as the wider, more human services they will replace. I was deeply concerned to read that where there are many automated checkouts and few staffed check-outs, people who need to be served by a person, rather than through ‘efficient self-services’, may have to wait in a queue for, say, half an hour. That’s not great for people who cannot stand for long periods of time due to mobility impairment. There are plenty of other examples of people to whom this move may be detrimental, many shown in the text uploaded by a petition’s creator. The problem is that automated checkouts may well be introduced before or without accessibility being sorted out.

In my local Tesco, I’m now being assisted by shelf-fillers, not check-out staff. On the last occasion, I needed the helper to read out the names of some items on the shelf, or to identify and load into the trolley the specific brand of an item. Sadly though, the only person available to help me to find the shopping had severe dyslexia. The experience wasn’t good for either of us. There were no alternatives. I’m sure I can now get all kinds of apps to solve the problem, but that won’t be the solution for everyone. Progress may often trip over its own feet if measures are introduced without adequate equality impact assessments. They might possibly identify what needs to be done to ensure that automated services are accessible to us. I can't use self-service check outs myself.

## **Sign a petition against automated checkouts by Clive Lever**

There is potential impact on blind and other disabled people of the replacement of checkout staff at supermarkets with automated self-service tills. Picked up from the New College Worcester Former Students list, see the link to a Change.org campaign on this subject concerning Tesco.

If you object to this, please sign by clicking the link below:

<https://www.change.org/p/tesco-stop-replacing-people-by-machines-bringbacktescostaff->

As well as the usual signing and sharing, the text uploaded to this page on the subject by the campaign initiator is well worth a read.

# **The Origins of Blind Bingo by Keith and Diane De Jersey**

There is little historical content on the origins of Blind Bingo. In America, there are many providers of Braille and large print cards for players, but not much evidence of it being played. Attempts have been made to use computer software but this limits players opportunities and even the on-line versions are not seen as accessible for screen readers.

Here in the UK, London members, Diane and Keith remembered their first experience of Blind Bingo with Aquabats Sports and Social Club for Visually Impaired People. “I was introduced to this game in about 1998. I am a member of Aquabats Sports Club, and at that time, 2 of our helpers, Doug and Hazel, were prison officers at Pentonville and Holloway prisons respectively. Through these 2 people, we used to meet regularly at the Pentonville Prison Officers Club social entertainment evenings. one of these evenings was bingo.”.

From this need for inclusion, a set of Braille boards was produced through the prison service to allow blind and partially sighted people to participate in Bingo.

In America, a few years ago, Joanna Richardson set a precedent for blind bingo players by successfully lobbying the New York State Racing and Wagering Board) similar to our Gaming Licensing Authorities) to allow her to use electronic Bingo Cards in public Bingo Halls. Opposition to this form of inclusion, had initially come from other Bingo players. They took offence at the audible sound of the alert generated on her electronic Bingo cards when she matched a called number. It took a further two years, until she was finally allowed to take her electronic Bingo cards to Bingo halls in America.

How can a blind person play bingo with adapted cards?

This photo shows Diane and Keith taking part in a recent game of Blind Bingo in The Lucas Arms, Kings Cross, London with their friends.



First there is a sheet of hardboard about 10 inches by 5 inches. Then there is a sheet of paper with 15 random numbers on 3 lines, just like a bingo card. These numbers are both Braille and raised tactile numbers.

This sheet of paper is then stuck to the sheet of hardboard.

Next, a second sheet of hardboard is stuck on top.

This piece of hardboard has 15 circular holes, revealing the 15 numbers on the card.

With each board, there are 15 markers in a small cloth bag. These are circular pieces of plastic designed to fit in to the circular holes of the board - just like a plug fits in to the kitchen sink. So, when a number is called, if you have it, you just put your marker in to the hole to cover your number.

These markers are transparent, so when someone calls house, the card can be checked without removing the markers.

At the end of the game, you remove your markers to clear your boards and start it all again.

This is a very well-designed product, providing a clear solution to inclusion. The combination of the prison officers and the inmates, enabled so many people to play Bingo again, with their friends at Aquabats Sports and Social Club for Visually Impaired People.

To join Aquabats at a future Bingo event please email their Secretary Arthur: [arthur.payne@trade.gov.uk](mailto:arthur.payne@trade.gov.uk)

# **Emergency alert planned for Sunday 23rd April on all mobile phones and tablets**

The government are to test a national alert system to all mobile phones and tablets on Sunday 23rd April. No time has been provided.

An audible alert will sound and the phone will also vibrate for those with hearing loss. It is advised you respond to this alert by following the given instructions.

This will still be received if Location services are switched off.

Please read more here: <https://www.gov.uk/alerts>

# **Grants and benefits quick links**

# Information on surviving the economic climate crisis.

There is a lot of information provided by the Government and supporting organisations to ensure you are in receipt of all the benefits and support you are entitled to. Things have certainly changed at the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) as they now allow email communication with accessibility needs.

Please click here for more information: <https://www.gov.uk/>

Grants to help you improve your central heating

The Government are running a number of schemes for people on particular benefits to improve their cavity wall insulation, loft insulation and central heating systems, including providing grants.

Please click here to see if you qualify:

<https://warmauk.com/central-heating-grants-for-households-on-personal-independence-payment-pip/>.

RNIB Benefits Calculator for blind and partially sighted people

As a response to the concerns of blind and partially sighted people facing economic hardship, the RNIB has created a Benefits Calculator to ensure you are in receipt of all the support you are entitled to receive.

Please click here for more information:

<https://rnib.entitledto.co.uk/home/start>.

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# **Joan Collins demands Sadiq Khan tackles unruly cyclists By Laurence Dollimore**

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Dame Joan Collins has called on Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan to tackle unruly cyclists after she was almost knocked down on her way to a glitzy dinner with friends. The 89-year-old was heading to Rules Restaurant in Covent Garden, with guests including Christopher Biggins, \*Mama Mia creator Judy Craymer and her husband Percy, when the incident is said to have taken place. The actress and original Dynasty star made it to the restaurant, but was clearly shaken up after a cyclist 'with no lights' allegedly crashed into her.

She wrote on her Instagram page: 'Getting out of a black cab on the way to Rules restaurant, we discovered Maiden Lane was closed to all traffic. However, that didn't stop a masked cyclist with no lights and weaving on the pavement from crashing into me, almost knocking me over.’

Dame Joan despaired as she asked: 'How much longer must we live with closed roads and cyclists who consider themselves above the law? Why don't you do something about it Mayor Sadiq before this beautiful city of London is ruined?’

Rule 64 of the Highway Code states that 'you must not cycle on a pavement', while Rule 60 says: 'At night your cycle MUST have white front and red rear lights lit... It must also be fitted with a red rear reflector (and amber pedal reflectors, if manufactured after 1/10/85)’.

This comes after dozens of reckless cyclists were caught brazenly ignoring pedestrians using a zebra crossing this month. Footage showed a string of selfish bikers and e-scooter riders speeding past people trying to walk across a crossing in Farringdon Street, with some cyclists even swerving around pedestrians.

Rule 81 of the Highway Code states: 'Do not ride across a pelican, puffin or zebra crossing. Dismount and wheel your cycle across.’

The National Federation of the Blind UK's Sarah Gayton told MailOnline the time had come for the government to take real action to stop blind road users being discriminated against.

The Street Access Campaign Coordinator said: 'We are absolutely sick to death of being ignored. Our voices are never heard. The cyclists have to learn to stop and wait. Something is fundamentally wrong. We are not saying don't cycle, we are just saying we need a system that is safe and accessible.’ She added: 'The cyclists just will not stop. We are not against cycling. Cyclists can be safe, but they have to learn.’

There is a video that highlights the dangers of floating bus stops, where bus passengers have to cross a cycle lane to a bus island to catch the bus. Floating bus stops were introduced across the country as part of travel schemes to accommodate bike lanes.

In January, the NFB handed a petition to the Prime Minister, appealing for the government to stop using such bus stops as they are 'not safe or accessible for blind, partially sighted and many vulnerable bus passengers, as they create a barrier to accessing public transport independently'.

The petition set up by the NFB has been signed by 163 disability organisations.

The NFB added: 'Many people are also now using e-bikes, e- scooters and other e-devices which are too fast and add further danger at the bus stops.’

People took to cycling at a massive rate during the pandemic. The number of miles travelled by cyclists increased by 46.1 % in 2020 compared to 2019, and 15.7 %in 2021 in relation to the same year. Meanwhile, the number of cycle lanes in London alone rocketed during Covid as councils jumped on the bandwagon to cut down on car use.

Please click here to read the full article:

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11784831/Joan-Collins-demands-Sadiq-Khan-tackles-> unruly-cyclists-knocked-down.html

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# **Blindness and Mr Beast by Fiona Musgrove**

When a renowned YouTuber, Mr Beast claimed he had helped 1,000 people get their sight back, it caused a flurry of reactions on Twitter and lead to a comment from NFB UK’s President Andrew Hodgson, applauding his philanthropy on the BBC.

Mr Beast, real name Jimmy Donaldson, from the USA, aged 24, has already secured a fortune from his blogging and stunts on YouTube. One stunt involved thousands of people placing their finger on an app to claim a large financial reward; another saw Mr Beast watching paint dry. Whatever his antics, millions tune in to watch and generate a fortune for this young man. He is now one of the highest rated bloggers in the world.

He recently released a quote on his Twitter feed that he aimed to spend all his money before he died and subsequently donated the costs of operations for 1,000 people with a visual impairment.

Through his actions, he has also raised awareness of curable conditions such as cataracts, which can lead to blindness. This Affects so many people around the world who have no resources to afford an operation.

Click here to watch: <https://youtu.be/TJ2ifmkGGus>

When our President Andrew was contacted by BBC Newsbeat, he acknowledged Mr Beast’s kind gesture. Andrew, himself registered blind, is aware of the emotional stress sight-loss can cause people, both here and across the world. On our e-group, Karina, one of our Trustees, commented “this brought into perspective how in this country we are lucky to have access to a health service.”

Please click here to read the article in full:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-64490431>

# **Quick question**

Have you come across the phrase 'watching paint dry'? For example, as in 'Mr Blah was so boring it was like watching paint dry'. Well, here is the question... what is the VI equivalent for the phrase?

Please send any ideas to. [fednews@nfbuk.org](mailto:fednews@nfbuk.org)

# **NFB UK Circulars**

BSEC-23-01. Summary of Report from Independent Panel and Executive Council Decision

BSEC-23-02. Members Email Group

BSEC-23-03. Survey for all musicians, singers and music producers

with a visual impairment

If you require copies of these please email your branch Secretary

# **NFBUK contact details**

Address: Sir John Wilson House, 215 Kirkgate, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF1 1JG.

Tel: 01924 291313

Email: [admin@nfbuk.org](mailto:admin@nfbuk.org)

Website: [http://www.nfbuk.org](http://www.nfbuk.org/)

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDZjjaPx4TQhREU16IEoLmg/videos>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/NFBUK>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NFBUK>

Fed News: [fednews@nfbuk.org](mailto:fednews@nfbuk.org)

EC Contact details:

Andrew [ahodgson@nfbuk.org](mailto:ahodgson@nfbuk.org)

Karl [kfarrell@nfbuk.org](mailto:kfarrell@nfbuk.org)

Devaki [dsivasubramanian@nfbuk.org](mailto:dsivasubramanian@nfbuk.org)

Karina [kgregory@nfbuk.org](mailto:kgregory@nfbuk.org)

Fiona [fmusgrove@nfbuk.org](mailto:fmusgrove@nfbuk.org)

Liz [lsilver@nfbuk.org](mailto:lsilver@nfbuk.org)

Stephen [sspringthorpe@nfbuk.org](mailto:sspringthorpe@nfbuk.org)

Staff contact details:

Louisa [admin@nfbuk.org](mailto:admin@nfbuk.org)

Sarah [sarahgayton@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sarahgayton@yahoo.co.uk)

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