

Please give bus users a roof over our rain-soaked heads

Charity definitely begins at home and I have to put my cards on the table and confess that the theme of my column this week is one in which I have a vested interest.

Ever since I collected my Freedom Pass four years ago, I have been singing the praises of the way that Transport for London under Ken Livingstone has revolutionised London's bus services.

My recurring theme in this spot is that we need to extend the bus line scheme because improved public transport is enhancing the quality of life, either directly or indirectly for all Londoners.

I can now get from Mortlake to Marble Arch in well under an hour - certainly quicker than I can drive at busy times - with the aid of two buses and escape the scrabble and discomfort of a tube ride.

There is plenty to see and enjoy from the comfort of my 419 and the top of a 10. When I change at Hammersmith bus station I am sheltered from the wind and rain and if so inclined can get some cash from an ATM, my bread and milk from a supermarket, have a hair cut or buy a packet of sporn.

Thousands of pensioners who would otherwise be clogging up the streets with their 4x4s or ancient Rovers are now happily travelling around the capital without creating pollution or holding up commuters traffic.

But... I have one complaint. I have raised the issue with several councillors, written a letter to this newspaper and tried to trace which authority is responsible - without avail.

My house in Shalstone Road is served by three routes, all within a five minute

walk - the 190, the 419 and R68.

When I journey west I face no problem at all. A shiny chrome and glass bus shelter accommodates me on the Lower Richmond Road and come hail or gale I can wait in comparative comfort.

However, if I want to go east, hazards lie ahead. The bus shelter which originally served this route was embedded in the wall of Kensington Cemetery, a quaint timber structure with a wooden bench which although a period piece served its purpose well.

Traffic planners, however, quite rightly decided the buses would be safer and more efficient if they stopped about 100 yards further west - and so the sign, timetables and paraphernalia were all moved 100 yards towards Richmond.

The bus stop tucked into the brick

wall was not transportable though and so it remains a curious relic of times past - sad, unloved and unused while I and my neighbours - mostly the elderly and the young are left to face the full force of the elements on one of London's busiest arteries, a feeder serving the M3.

And on a rainy day, lorries, coaches, vans and cars whizz hazardous close, spraying us with surface water - while we stand unprotected and uncared for.

Could someone, somewhere please bring back our bus shelter? It cannot cost much and practically every other stop in the whole of Greater London has protection - many of course with those amazing illuminated signs which tell you how long you must wait for the next service.

It is not much to ask. And as one who is a loyal and faithful customer and

proclaims the glories of a good public transport system to all and sundry and leaves his nasty polluting Toyota on the driveway, I think I am due a roof over my head.

There are many of us Mortlake residents who hop aboard, doing our bit to combat climate change, who might well become a burden to the national health service if we are forced to practise unprotected queuing!

All my neighbours in Mortlake - scores of them - who share my concern will also be grateful. And I promise I will write a thank you letter to all concerned, vote for whichever councilor takes it up and continue to remind the world through my weekly distribut of how London has one of the world's most desirable networks of bus tube, coach and rail services.