

WAS THIS THE GREATEST THING BRITAIN NEVER BUILT?

Rulers generally want respect. Adulation. Even immortality.

Emperors, Kings and Queens, Presidents and Dictators display their own portraits as often and wherever they can: banknotes, statues, paintings, and postage stamps.

But so can the Mayors of a great city yearn for immortality. While some want better air, transport, education, housing and health, others dream of leaving an iconic object behind them. They yearn for something that will make posterity stop dead in its tracks. Gaze up in awe. Gasp. And say, *Now that's what I call the work of a Mayor!*

Psychiatrists call this the Ozymandias Complex, after the poem by Shelley. He describes a Traveller finding the statue of a King whose plinth boasts: *Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!*

Yet all that remains of the royal figure is a huge pair of feet and a broken sneering face in an empty desert. Such is fame. Still, rulers will keep trying.

But how can a mere human Mayor of London hope to acquire enduring fame? Apart from the relics of big time rulers, there are also many great women and men who were born in, or moved to the capital who command respect long after their ascent to Elysium.

This was the problem faced by a recent incumbent. Who shall remain nameless, but was like many others ambitious, with an eye on the greatest position in Britain. (No, not manager of Charlton Athletic. Not *that* ambitious.) Staff were selected. Orders were given. Hell was raised, (where appropriate) and so one by one the Newcomer's Assaults on immortality began to appear:

The **8-lane Freedom Free-Way Tunnel** from Manhattan to Hyde Park Corner Car Park. *'With stunning views of Buckingham Palace on arrival!'*

The **Floating Airport Island with Replica of Mt Fuji** in the Thames Estuary.

The **Chinese Great Wall & Ice Palace and Hotel** designed to replace Crystal Palace Park.

Pippa Pug World West named after the lovable cartoon character *Bulldog* who thinks she's a Poodle. which would combine a 10 storey shopping Mall with the biggest Wetherspoons in the World. "A worthy replacement for boring old Stone Henge!"

And there were others... Each Project recruits consultants to manage Legal, Accounting, Image Management, Merchandising, Media Control, and Diffusion issues.

Sadly, all of these Projects failed for reasons no one could have predicted.

In his despair the Mayor tore his hair and threatened to resign. Then one brave soul stood up and declared, "These schemes failed because none of them speaks to the true spirit of our City and our Great Leader. Both are Dynamic, Iconic, Heroic, Historic and, er, Fantastic. But I can fix that."

Impressed by the Man's vision the Mayor gave him one week and an unlimited budget to produce a better idea. And, inspired by the rancid hatred in the Room, he did.

A week later to the day the new Project was unveiled. "SIMPLY GENIUS!" said a loyal newspaper. The South Bank of the Thames was dominated by a Project that *had* worked: London Eye, a 135 metre high Ferris Wheel. Why not portray the Mayor *keeping an Eye* over London, and celebrate his well-publicised love of cycling by...

ADDING A SECOND WHEEL AND CONNECTING IT TO THE EYE TO MAKE A GIANT BICYCLE!

THE WHOLE CONSTRUCTION TO BE CROWNED BY A GARGANTUAN FIBRE GLASS MODEL OF THE MAYOR HIMSELF ON THE SADDLE? WHAT BETTER WAY TO SEND THE MESSAGE THAT HE WOULD *DRIVE* LONDON? NOW AND FOREVER!

"It IS genius!" agreed the Mayor. "People will come from every corner of the world, come from every nook and cranny, come from the deepest cave to the highest peak to see ME! Eat your Froggy Heart out Eiffel Tour! Take a hike Statue of Liberty! Get stuffed Nelson. I am the One. I am the Future!"

And his staff roared approval until the windows rattled in their frames.

"You'll all get a medal for this!|" said the Mayor.

But many disagreed... Wretched petty-fogging bureaucrats and pathetic so-called 'experts' cavilled and carped and scoffed. Engineers said it would be unstable. Owners of the Eye withheld their approval. Market Researchers found a majority of customers and families disliked the idea of passing between the Mayor's legs...

And so the BIKE was scuppered before it even hit the road!

A revised model with a smaller rear wheel - in the style of a 'Penny-Farthing' ridden by a scaled-down version of the Mayor was road-tested and judged funny, quaint, and ridiculous by most of the Public. To mobilise public support the Model Mayor was displayed outside City Hall but disappeared one night by a fierce storm and was never seen again. (Unless we can believe the farmers of Normandy and Jersey who have blamed it for causing yield loss in their frightened livestock.)

So the Project was abandoned. The only trace of its passing is a single sketch from an unfinished publicity video which shows the Mayor flying over County Hall on his way to conquer Parliament.



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