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Editorial

Don't forget the meeting for London ABD members on Saturday the 28th April, commencing at 10.30 am – the same venue as last time.

Some of the issues covered within this edition will be covered at the meeting, and we will have a speaker from the Stop the Congestion Charge party.

If you have any local issues that you think are newsworthy, or about which you are irate, please send me letters or articles for publication. It's hard work writing all of this newsletter!

I would be particularly interested in some more coverage of news from the West of London.

Roger Lawson, Editor

Toronto Rejects Congestion Charging



Like most major world cities, the City of Toronto in Canada has some traffic congestion problems. So they recently sent Councillor Brian Ashton (picture left), to take a look at the Congestion Tax system in London. Here are his comments:

"There will be headlights shining out of my butt before we ever see congestion charges in Toronto".

It seems he did not think the system would work in Toronto as he did not see that it encouraged the use of public transit and does not help with environmental pollution. Or perhaps he was just horrified by the cost of the system.

Greenwich Road Tolls



Transport for London (TfL) and Greenwich Council are conducting a joint study of "road traffic demand management" in the Greenwich area. This includes consideration of a congestion charge tax (ie. a road toll) on the area bounded by the A102 and A2 – which includes Greenwich park and Greenwich town centre.

As you can see on the map above, it might also cover the Blackwall Tunnel and one option, even if a wide area charge like the central London congestion tax is not implemented, is to impose a toll on the Blackwall Tunnel. The Blackwall Tunnel and the A2 are of course the main routes used by traffic from South-East London and Kent to reach central London.

The joint study of the options is being supported by surveys of residents – more recently by Accent Group but there was also a poll by Mori a few months ago. The latest survey asks respondents to consider two possible zones – marked A and B on the map, the time of operation and the charges - £2, £4 or £6 are mentioned but it could be higher for larger vehicles.

Note that the charging zone would include the A2209 (Deptford Church Street) to the west which would be the normal way for traffic from the Surrey Quays, Rotherhithe and Southwark areas to avoid Greenwich town centre, and it may also cover the A2 over Blackheath so most of the diversionary routes would also be covered. In fact to avoid paying the charge, traffic would have to go through the centre of Lewisham which is already severely congested, or take some minor back roads. Clearly this congestion tax would not be readily avoidable by most traffic.

In addition a lot of traffic would likely divert to the new Thames Gateway Bridge and residents in Bexley are already exceedingly concerned about the additional traffic that will generate on their local roads.

It is worth pointing out that the use of “surveys” to lead public opinion in the preferred direction is now a common element of TfL practices. By using a biased survey they can pretend that people support a scheme without doing open and full consultation. And of course so far there has been no indication that most of the road users such as people who use the Blackwall Tunnel will be consulted at all.



Bob Neill, MP for Bromley and Chislehurst and Greater London Assembly Member spoke in the House of Commons on this issue in questions to Minister Stephen Ladyman. When talking about the proposed Greenwich scheme he said “*That would have ramifications*

well beyond Greenwich and the immediate area and would have an enormous impact on the national traffic network, including the A2 and A20, which are key feeder roads into London”. He requested the greatest possible public consultation be undertaken and that such a scheme not be imposed without against the will of the public.

The Association of British Drivers (ABD) totally agrees with this stance and is asking that a full referendum be conducted of all residents of the boroughs of Greenwich and the adjoining boroughs (Lewisham, Southwark, Bexley, etc). In addition all those people who live further away but use routes such as the Blackwall Tunnel should be given a voice.

Transport Innovation Fund

The funding for the initial studies is coming from central Government’s Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) for congestion schemes. The TIF funds are basically being used to bribe local authorities to set up congestion charging and road pricing schemes because the Government realises how politically sensitive such schemes are and does not want to be seen as promoting them directly.

Of course if you get a local scheme in somewhere like Greenwich, which encourages traffic to avoid the area, then you generate major congestion problems in adjoining areas which in due course can then justify their own scheme.

More information on the reasons for the TIF bid are present in the following internet document which was published in 2005 where the Greenwich bid is described in detail:

www.dft.gov.uk/foi/responses/2005/nov/bidspff/

As it points out: "...any attempt to impose significant peak hour traffic reduction on Greenwich Town Centre would give rise to objections similar to those associated with the earlier lorry ban. Measures that serve only to reduce traffic in one locality by transferring it to other equally sensitive locations, clearly, offer no net community benefits, while proposals that benefit one interest group by inconveniencing others will always present difficult choices. The Council would not wish to be a party to measures that are liable to inflict detriment on other communities or local authorities."

This revealing document even manages to suggest that because of the problems of traffic diversion if a congestion charge was introduced at peak periods, it might be best to introduce an "off-peak only" charge – this would definitely be a world first – a congestion charge when there was no congestion!

But Greenwich estimated the cost of a scheme at over £100 million, an enormous amount of money with no clear benefits.

The Problems of Greenwich

Greenwich town centre has been a notorious traffic bottleneck for many years. The nature of the geography also causes any generated air pollution over a wide area to collect in the river valley. Two alternative solutions have been suggested in the past to remove traffic from the town centre and enhance this World Heritage site – the first was to improve the A2 route over Blackheath, possibly by using a tunnel to avoid damage to the park – the second was by constructing a new road along the river frontage – both projects were effectively blocked by environmental objectors.

Air Pollution Issues

In 2002, an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) was adopted by Greenwich because of the known air pollution problems on some of the major roads. You can read this on the internet at:

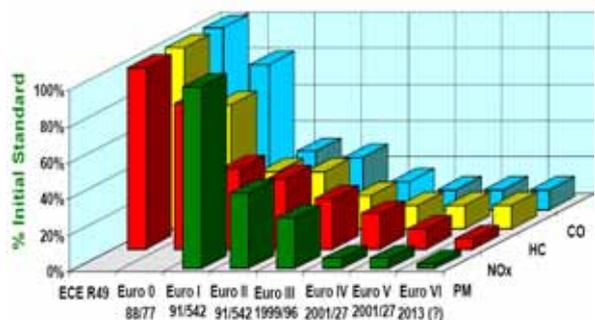
www.greenwich.gov.uk/Greenwich/YourEnvironment/Pollution/AirQuality/AirQualityActionPlan.htm

But although clearly many of the major routes in Greenwich generate much air pollution from traffic (for example the Blackwall Tunnel handles over 100,000 vehicles per day with heavy congestion during rush hours), it is not at all clear what the overall impact of traffic is on air pollution levels in Greenwich. Indeed the report fudges many of the key issues.

For example it says "local road transport constitutes approximately 28 to 80% of NOx emissions in the borough..." and "approximately 50% of the remaining background sources arise from road transport sources outside the borough". For PM10 (particulates) it says "between 5% and 40% of concentrations result from primary road transport emissions in the borough, depending on location, with approximately 60 to 95% arising from background sources".

In reality nobody knows how much general air pollution in Greenwich comes from local traffic, from industrial or other sources, or how much from outside the borough.

The proposed plans also don't seem to have taken any account of the proposed Low Emission Zone (LEZ) which will cover the whole of the greater London area and will reduce emissions from HGVs and buses quite substantially in the next few years. In addition the general improvement in the technology of vehicles is reducing emissions by large amounts – the chart below shows the impact on various emissions of European directives on vehicle pollutants from heavy duty diesel vehicles (source Prof. F.H. Palmer).



Note that private cars seem to produce less than 20% of total emissions of pollutants such as PM10s as HGVs, LGVs, buses and taxis are the main sources (see p.23 of AQAP).

It is also worth pointing out that the central London Congestion Charge has not resulted in improved air quality within the congestion charge zone – in fact it has got slightly worse since the charge was introduced – ask for more information on this if you need it.

The ABD suggests that it is unnecessary to introduce congestion charges in Greenwich to tackle air pollution issues and more steps should be taken to reduce congestion which itself is the major cause of such pollution.

How to Oppose the Proposal

The Association of British Drivers (ABD – see www.abd.org.uk) is mounting a major public campaign to have road tolls in Greenwich thrown out. The public do not like road tolls of any form, and these proposals are in essence just an attempt by anti-car fanatics to raise the cost of motoring and restrict your freedom of movement. Make sure it does not happen by raising this issue with local councillors, your GLA members and your M.P.

Tidal Flow in Blackwall Tunnel Ended



Transport for London (TfL) have announced that the tidal flow system that operates during the morning rush hour at the Blackwall Tunnel is to end – in fact by the time you read this it will have already ceased as there was little notice given and no consultation on it took place. It was announced on the 18th April and took effect on the 20th April.

TfL claim this was because the Metropolitan Police who monitor the tunnel had noticed an increasing number of dangerous incidents. TfL have released a video showing some of the incidents which can be seen on the following web site:

<http://www.newsshopper.co.uk/video/videonews/index.var.4182.0.0.php> . A still from one of them is shown above and you can see how the car marked by the arrow has moved out from the left hand lane when entering the tunnel from the south bound slip road and will soon be running head on into a vehicle coming out of the tunnel north bound. The video in fact shows two near misses rather than accidents as in both cases the offending vehicles soon realised their mistake.

The tidal flow system has been in operation for almost 30 years and TfL have not reported on the actual accidents. In addition the contraflow system might well continue to be used when essential maintenance is required to be done within one of the tunnels.

The last time the tidal flow was suspended, which was during a fireman's strike, it resulted in substantial lengthening in the queues of north bound traffic. These queues often stretch for more than a mile almost every day, and the slightest incident such as an "overheight" vehicle or minor traffic accident results in several miles of stationary traffic.

Of course, many people have jumped to a simple conclusion. Namely that this is another example of the Mayor and TfL deliberately making congestion worse so they can argue that a "congestion tax" is really needed. Congestion charging or tolls are already being considered for Greenwich and the Blackwall Tunnel approach road. Then after it is introduced, they can revert to the previous scenario to show how beneficial the tax is. This was alleged by many people to have taken place before the central London congestion charge was introduced. With more road works and deliberate manipulation of traffic light timings before the charge was introduced. *(Editor's Comments: If you examine the video clips, it is clear that the error of moving into the right hand lane is probably accidental and clearly involves the crossing of a double white line because vehicles coming in from the slip road are prohibited from moving over until further along the road. Therefore the police could easily pursue such offenders if they thought it was deliberate. However, simply putting up a warning sign (even better – one that lights up when the contraflow is in operation), would probably stop these incidents. But no way do they justify cessation of the tidal flow system and I very much doubt that the situation has changed of late.)*

To register your objections to withdrawal of the tidal flow, please write to David Brown, Managing Director of Surface Transport, Transport for London, Windsor House, 42 - 50 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0TL (Email: david.brown@tfl.gov.uk) and we suggest you also send a copy to Ken Livingstone at Mayor of London, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA (email: mayor@london.gov.uk).

Bromley Council Opposes Road Pricing

The following motion was passed at the meeting of the Environment and Leisure Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee of the London Borough of Bromley on the 19th March 2007:

Congestion charge extension and road pricing

This Council would oppose any proposal to extend congestion charging across London and particularly in Bromley, the Council also opposes the concept of road pricing as motorists already make a major contribution to general taxation.

***Proposed by Cllr Nicholas Bennett JP
Seconded by Cllr Neil Reddin***



The speech given in support of the resolution by Councillor Bennett (photo left) was as follows - the report mentioned in the speech is present on the council's web site at:

<http://sharepoint.bromley.gov.uk/Public%20Docs/05%20EL%20PDS%202202.doc>

"This motion has been prompted by a report which went to the Environment and Leisure PDS on Traffic Congestion in Bromley on Feb 22nd 2007.

Buried deep in the report on Page 10 is the statement 'there is a very significant body of opinion in favour of introducing some kind of road charging, both across the UK and specifically in London, some time in the next ten to twenty years'.

No proof for this statement or quantification as to who or what the 'significant body of opinion' constitutes has been adduced. We know that the most recent 'significant body of opinion' was the 1.8million who signed the petition against road pricing on the Number 10 website.

The report on page 15 at paragraph 3.72 asks members to 'consider the Council's approach to the use of charging policies in the longer term should congestion continue to worsen'. The report says that traffic in Bromley grew 10% in Bromley between 1994 and 2004 yet then notes that in Bromley Town Centre it dropped 5% between 2001-2005.

This motion makes it clear that adding more charges on to motorists who already pay large sums in the form of road fund tax, fuel duties and insurance tax is not something which this Council wishes to support.

No doubt we shall be told that CO2 emissions are creating global warming and that oil is a finite resource.

Of course, it is true that the internal combustion engine does produce pollution, however rapid improvements have been made in engine vehicle efficiency and reductions in pollution have been made. Oil is a finite resource, but again, forecasts of when it will run out have been constantly overtaken as new reserves are discovered, add to this the development of alternative forms of fuel the situation is not anywhere near as bad as some lobby groups would have us believe.

Behind many of these campaigns are the self satisfied faces of the New Left. Having lost the battle of ideas between Communism and the free society they now seek to shackle the individual by the introduction of puritan laws, which if some of them had their way, would result in none of us travelling further than we could walk.

The motor car has been a great boon to the individual citizen. Our lives have been immeasurably improved and friendship and lifestyle patterns have developed in ways which were not possible a 100 years ago.

The car cannot be uninvented and any policy which attempts to ignore this fact goes against the grain of human nature.

Of course, we should all consider carefully when and how we use our cars but with petrol over £4 a gallon most people are careful already. Where appropriate most of us use public transport. Thousands of Bromley residents - who own cars - commute by train and bus to work. However there are many journeys which would take 4-5 times as long if one was to use the bus and there are many which are simply impossible.

The motorist already pays considerable sums towards the general taxation.

Vehicle excise duty in 2004-5 for cars, light vans, taxis and motorbikes amounted to £4.4bn. Fuel duty raised £23.3 bn (more than the total raised by council taxes). In total the British road user contributed nearly £29Bn

Spending on roads in England was £6bn so even with the rest of the UK the road user contributes three times as much to the budget as is spent.

What should we be doing?

Firstly we should learn the lesson of other environmental improvements - for instance; the introduction of smokeless zones after 1956 and unleaded fuel after 1988. Reward good behaviour by tax reductions rather than tax increases.

Secondly improve public transport. The massive increases in public transport fares in London without any improvement in service drives people into their cars. Proposals to abolish the saver ticket on the national rail system and the recent 74% increase in off peak fares from many Bromley stations are hypocritical impositions by ministers who travel for nothing in their ministerial cars.

Thirdly encourage by tax incentives more home working. New technology makes this possible. I'd be more prepared to listen to the Mayor of London's exhortations if he wasn't busy increasing the number of staff commuting to City Hall.

A Green Council is one which starts by practising what it preaches. Let's set a target for reducing the need for our staff to travel to work by giving a lead in increasing distance working."

Is Traffic Congestion Getting Worse?

Comments from your Editor: One of the interesting questions posed by the council's report is whether traffic congestion is getting worse in Bromley and other outer London boroughs. Looking at the 2001 census figures, it is clear that with only 23% of households in Bromley not owning a car, vehicle ownership has reached saturation point. This level is one of the highest in the country and has not changed much since the previous census ten years before.

Figures from a national traffic survey quoted in the report indicated that traffic growth in Bromley was 10% from 1994 to 2004, but it also reports that Bromley town centre traffic levels fell by 5% in 2001 to 2005. Although traffic congestion is a major concern to Bromley residents as is clear from surveys of resident's opinions, it would be unwise to claim that congestion has been getting worse, or is likely to do so in future. With so many vehicles on Bromley's roads, it would appear more to be the case that many routes have reached saturation levels and hence traffic volumes are almost self regulating – people choose not to use cars for some journeys, or simply choose not to travel because they know their journey times would be excessive – or they reschedule their trips to avoid the most congested periods. All congestion is self-regulating to a large extent, which many national politicians seem to be ignoring, although that does not mean of course that steps should not be taken to alleviate it.

From personal experience, congestion as a whole in Bromley has been severe for many years, and has neither got worse nor better. Of course the Council's attempts to improve matters by encouraging the use of alternative transport modes have also not been at all effective, and in my view are not likely to be.

New London Parking Service



Few subjects get London's hard pressed motorists more angry than parking. It is surely the most frustrating aspect of driving in the capital. Now there is a solution at hand – www.Park-Up.com. They aim to clarify the myriad of parking rules and regulations, show you where you can safely park and avoid unnecessary tickets.

Ironically parking in London is not that difficult, it's just knowing where to park - and that's where the new service comes in. Park-Up.com is a radically new web-based parking guide for Central London that will officially launch in mid-March. Uniquely, their database has the location of all of Central London's on-street parking bays, together with their tariffs and hours of operation. Together with a comprehensive listing of car parks, disabled and motorcycle bays, the information is the best around. The service also allows you to feedback your experience of each location, thus creating a knowledge base for other drivers.

The information is available free on the website www.Park-Up.com or for a small fee you can have the information (Maps and/or SMS's) sent directly to your mobile phone.

The service area covers all of Camden, the City, Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster, and Islington at present. It also covers areas that border or are adjacent to the congestion charge zone in Southwark, Lambeth, Tower Hamlets and Hackney.

Intentionally or not many local councils have been profiting from confusion by failing to make their parking information fully available to the public. One could hazard a guess why. There's no need to be confused any more - try it out at www.Park-Up.com. Now there is no reason to be one of the 263 people who get a parking ticket ever hour.

Norman Olaniran, Park-up.com

Black Cabs In Mourning?



Yes it seems that according to a report in the Evening Standard, black cabs may be passing away. They claim that such vehicles will be banned from London's roads under tough new European pollution rules.

By 2010, all cabs will have to pass new "Euro5" limits for pollution which the existing engines used by the manufacturer of London cabs cannot meet. The cost of developing a new engine, particularly in the required time scale, is beyond the means of the manufacturer for such a limited production volume vehicle.

The manufacturer, LTI Vehicles (part of Manganese Bronze Holdings), has been developing a hybrid powered version but is asking for £5 million of government funding to enable it to complete the project.

(Editor's Comments: Diesel powered black cabs are some of the most polluting vehicles on London's roads and even the Mayor has recognised that they contribute substantially to air pollution problems in London. It would certainly be environmentally sounder to replace them by ordinary cars, as of course are used as taxis in almost all other cities in the world. Personally I have never been a fan of London cabs and would be glad to see them replaced by cheaper, quieter, more comfortable and less polluting cars).

Community Speed Watch



The Metropolitan Police have decided to try out some "Community Speed Watch" schemes in London – specifically in two areas of Lewisham and two in Croydon (Kenley and Sanderstead).

These schemes create local community groups that promote traffic speed reduction. It includes the provision of speed cameras to volunteers who must wear fluorescent jackets (so of course they look like the police) and who can record vehicle numbers and pass them to the police. The police then issue warning letters to those exceeding the speed limit.

The above picture is taken from the cover of the "brochure" for the Avon & Somerset scheme and you can read more details on how it operates at:

www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/units_and_departments/operations/rpu/community_speed_watch.aspx

(Editor's Comments: It's not at all obvious what happens if people just ignore the warning letters – in fact they are hollow threats as there is no basis for a prosecution. In reality of course these local vigilantes have no power and may simply end up getting abused by their neighbours for their over zealous and officious activities. It seems to be yet another attempt by the Government to control your personal behaviour and an encouragement of busybodies who have little knowledge of the road traffic law and the issues involved. I certainly am not in favour of this kind of scheme and if I see any of my neighbours participating in them then I will tell them what I think).

Speeding Fines – A Lottery for Honest Drivers in London



According to the BBC, about half a million speeding offences per year are detected by Safety Camera Partnerships in London. Of those some are emergency vehicles which are not prosecuted and some are foreign vehicles that cannot be traced to send a notice of intended prosecution. Even of the remaining 350,000, only 48% who are sent such a notice actually subsequently receive a fine or points on their licence.

The discrepancy is due to the large proportion of foreign drivers who do not respond and cannot be traced, plus the numbers driving on false number plates. In addition, many drivers simply register their vehicles at an address at which they do not reside and are never there when anyone visits. In addition, a simple failure to respond to any communication often causes the police to give up it seems.

Jeremy Broughton of TRL said that honest drivers were being penalised. With far fewer traffic police on the roads than ten years ago, it was now extremely unlikely that anyone would be caught driving with false number plates and such people were typically uninsured also.

(Editor's Comments: Yes, speed cameras encourage worse criminal offences while not preventing road accidents. And the only people who pay the fines are those law abiding citizens who actually voluntarily pay up and are unlucky enough not to notice a camera site. The whole system is totally lunatic and just shows that you cannot enforce reasonable driver behaviour by automated means).

Parking Permits Vote in Islington



Following the massive public controversy generated in the London Borough of Richmond by their proposed CO2 based permit parking system, Islington Council are proposing a similar scheme.

There are two big differences though which are likely to make the issue less divisive:

1. The system is not quite as severe as that proposed in Richmond, and is designed to be "revenue neutral" from day one.
2. There is to be a full referendum of all Islington residents on the issue which will cost £90,000. In addition, this will be supervised by the Electoral Reform Society and the council will ensure "that the expression of supporting and opposing points of view is neutral and balanced."

More information is available in the council's report at the following web page:
<http://www.islington.gov.uk/Democracy/reports/reportdetail.asp?ReportID=5133&intSectionID=6&intSubSectionID=2>

(Editor's Comments: It would seem that following the intervention of the ABD in Richmond, that Islington councillors have learned to be somewhat more democratic. We will wait and see how unbiased the consultation really is and offer our advice if necessary).

A New Threat to Your Freedom

Plans have been announced to allow private bailiffs to force entry into people's homes to seize goods to cover any fines or penalties, and their own costs. This is what ABD Member Peter Morgan had to say about it:

"It is bad enough when armed police break into homes, but they can only do this with a court search warrant, or if they have arrested someone who lives there, or if they are in hot pursuit of a suspect.

It may be terrible for wholly innocent members of the family, even when the suspect has actually done something seriously wrong, but these cases are relatively rare. Even gas, electricity and water companies can only force entry with a specific court order, and there should be no doubt as to the property and liability for the service at that address.

Bailiffs frequently go to people's homes and cause real unjustified alarm and distress, amounting to harassment. I know of a case where a disputed £60 parking ticket for a vehicle which had been sold months before led to bailiffs waking up the street at 6am with loud banging and shouting, demanding payment of £700.

Under these new proposals, someone could be woken in the night by noises, and find themselves confronted by private bailiffs. This plan would be a wholly outrageous assault on our fundamental rights and freedoms. It could obviously lead to cases of serious violence.

It would lead to many gross abuses. Someone could return home to find their house emptied. It is fundamental that a bailiff has to identify in your presence any goods he may seize, and you can challenge ownership beforehand.

Bailiffs already impose ludicrous charges, multiplying debts many times over, and there seems no way to challenge the costs they say they have incurred. Under this offensive idea from our widely despised government, someone could find that their property has been seized and sold off to pay someone else's debt.

Already, councils seize and destroy vehicles without justification. At the very least, no bailiff should have any right to enter a private home without a specific court order for that purpose, and this should only be grantable after a court has been satisfied that due notice of the hearing has been served and an opportunity provided for the occupiers to dispute in court liability for the warrant and costs. "

Note that many of local authorities use the Northampton County Court - which is near one of the largest debt collection firms - to pursue unpaid fines.

During the current financial year the court has issued more than one million warrants - all by computer and without the motorist being in a position to contest the debt. Once the warrant is issued, the matter is handed over to bailiffs to collect the money on behalf of the council. The debt collector also is entitled to levy additional fees on top of the fine.

(Editor: this system is absolutely an abomination as anyone who has tried to deal with the Northampton Court well knows. They simply do not respond to any communications and seem to consider their operations to be above the law).

This is what ABD Member John Batchellor had to say:

"I believe that the time is ripe to campaign for repeal of the Road Traffic Act 1991. This is the pernicious piece of legislation (Tory as it happens, but ruthlessly used by Labour) which took parking control away from the police, who in the main were responsible and proportionate about how they enforced it, and handed it to councils, who have repeatedly shown themselves to be irresponsible and greedy.

The Act was deliberately framed in such a way as to provide only the narrowest of defences against claimed infringements (it is not a defence, for example, that the action was taken in the interests of road safety, or out of consideration for other road users, as when one parks partly on a grass verge; or that the action harmed nobody; or that it was reasonable in the circumstances. Reasonableness is a concept which in other circumstances of drafting legislation, lawyers absolutely love. Not for motorists though.)

In most walks of life importance is given to the concept of separation of duties. A clerk may receive monies but someone else has to maintain the receipts records and a third person independent of both has to reconcile the takings with the records of them. A person may raise an order for goods, but someone else has to take physical receipt of the deliveries and another person has to pay the invoice. The American constitution was founded on the principle of separation of powers between legislature, executive and judiciary, so that checks and balances apply to the arbitrary exercise of power.

But the 1991 Act placed parking enforcement in the hands of councils and said that councils were to collect the money from that enforcement. Never was there a bigger incentive enshrined into law for bodies to use their powers oppressively, irresponsibly and corruptly. There is a widespread realisation of this, yet few politicians of any party comment upon it in their election literature, the media do not treat it as an election issue and the wider mass of voters is not encouraged to either.

We must change this culture. I never tire of telling people when the context arises that I have no intention of voting for any politician of any party whose election campaigning avoids comment on the oppressive enforcement of parking controls. I am tired of hearing a hypnotic chant that the 'issues' are education, war and global warming and nobody is to disagree. It will continue to be so until a critical mass of people make it otherwise.

The bailiffs issue is an opportune hook on which to take forward arguments that councils have shown themselves to be irresponsible, and the time has come to take their much-abused powers away from them, returning parking enforcement to the police."

News Snapshots

Sundry news in the last few weeks that is worth a mention is as follows:

+ Businessman and local Councillor Simeon Ademolake has won a judicial review against a parking ticket which he was sent after he briefly stopped on a red route in the Commercial Road, east London. He won the review, after winning a previous PATAS adjudication, on the basis that the ticket was not valid because it was not attached to his car or handed to him – in fact he drove off before the attendant could do so. This was thought to be the law before and in fact many councils have rules for parking attendants that stop them issuing tickets if the driver returns to his vehicle, but clearly the local borough in this case thought otherwise. Transport for London also seem to be unhappy with the result.

+ The London Development Agency (LDA), part of Ken Livingstone's empire, is funding a commercial satellite launching company to the tune of £12 million. This money is going to Inmarsat, a large stock market listed company, to help them to bid for a European Space Agency contract. The purpose of the proposed satellite is not totally clear but it apparently may be used to support phone systems and for logistics companies – critics claim this means it could be used for road price charging in London via GPS monitoring systems. *(Editor's Comments: More of your taxes being wasted on grandiose systems by the Mayor and it is not at all obvious how the LDA can justify funding this company when it is supposed to be supporting business developments in London).*

+ American Bob Kiley, former Transport Commissioner for London, has admitted he is an alcoholic. Mr Kiley is still "employed" as a part-time consultant by Transport for London for which he is paid £737,000 per year, plus a free Belgravia home. He is supposed to do 90 days of work per year in his new role, but when asked what he does for the money, he said "I'd have to tell you, in all honesty, not much". It seems that his alcohol consumption has got worse now that he has more spare time on his hands. *(Editor's Comments: Yet another example of Mayor Ken Livingstone's generosity with your money and lack of financial prudence).*

+ Following the extension of the London Congestion "Charge" to the west, a number of embassies have decided to stop paying it. The USA was already refusing on the basis that it was a tax from which foreign embassies are exempt, but they have now been joined by France, Germany, Belgium, Slovakia, Belarus and Russia.

+ Figures recently published by the Department for Transport show that motorists continue to exceed speed limits. In fact since 1994 the number exceeding the 70 mph limit on motorways has gone up from 47% to 53%. There has been some apparent reduction in those exceeding 40 and 30 limits (down to 50% on the latter), but even that could be explained by changes to data collection techniques.

(Editor's Comments: Clearly the enormous amounts of money spent by the Government to change peoples behaviour is having no effect because they continue to drive at speeds they consider safe for the

conditions – and most people no longer respect the motorway limit which was set when most vehicles could barely exceed it and were inherently less safe with much poorer brakes and roadholding).

+ Active ABD member Peter Morgan reports that the Croydon Road User Forum (CRUF) is being disbanded by the council. Peter is a long serving member of this group which advised the council on traffic and roads issues. Apparently a new forum may be introduced but it will probably simply talk about detailed road safety issues. According to Peter: "What it comes down to is that the new council does not want to hear about what the motorists and the community are concerned about. It wants to manipulate and massage public opinion for its own purposes."

+ A number of London boroughs seem to be experimenting with payment for parking spaces by mobile phone – for example Westminster. This is to replace parking meters and "pay and display" devices from which the cash is often stolen by organised gangs. However, there have been a number of press reports of difficulties in paying or of getting refunds if you pay incorrectly. Not only do you typically need to register in advance (not much use for casual parkers), but you also need to be really expert to "text" in your car registration number, bay number, credit card details, how long you want to stay, etc. In reality it takes a hell of a lot longer and is very prone to error. But Westminster seems to be persisting with installation. If any readers have experience of these systems, perhaps they could let us have a report.

+ The Director of the West London Tram project, Christopher Dean of TfL, failed to turn up at a meeting of residents to discuss plans for two Hanwell roads. More than 200 people were disappointed when he apparently decided at the last minute that the meeting might turn into an "anti-tram" demonstration. *(Editor's Comments: A typical example of Transport for London staff not being willing to face the people which is what democracy is all about of course. They would rather manage and massage public opinion by biased press releases, biased surveys of public opinion and other similar PR tactics).*

Contact Information

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About The Association of British Drivers (ABD)

The ABD is the leading independent organisation which represents the interests of private motorists in the United Kingdom. We campaign to protect the rights of individual road users and believe that road transport is a beneficial and essential element in the UK transport infrastructure. We oppose excessive taxation of motorists and are against tolls and road usage charging. We also campaign for more enlightened road safety policies. The Association is a "not for profit" voluntary organisation which is financially supported primarily by its individual members. More information on the ABD is available from our web site at www.abd.org.uk