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*Have a good Christmas and a more prosperous New Year. When there is doom and gloom all around on the economic front, for those of us of a certain age who have seen it all before, we can be more optimistic. At least that's your editor's view of life.*

*After all, after many years of peculiar left wing policies that made no economic sense promoted by Ken Livingstone, we finally managed to get him ejected. That's enough to cheer anyone up. Mr Johnson hasn't done much wrong so far either, and the future definitely looks more rosy as a result.*

*But these are solely your editor's views of course. Don't forget to send us contributed articles and letters – I live in hope of receiving so many some day so that I'll be able to stop writing this newsletter.*

Roger Lawson  
Editor

## Editorial

*Apologies for skipping our normal bi-monthly schedule. Unlike other publications who have been reducing frequencies as a result of the recession and the consequent fall in advertising, in this case it is simply due to the inability of your editor to find time to put it to bed (advertising revenue is not a problem as we don't have at any present, but we are open to offers!).*

*Anyway, here's the usual mixture of good and bad news for motorists and other transport users including news on several public consultations. You can of course respond to these yourself, you don't need to reply on us to do it on your behalf.*

*It should provide a good read over Xmas and the New Year when you may have some spare time.*

*There's lots of material to digest, with even more available from the web links we provide.*

## Congestion Charge to be Abolished



On the 27<sup>th</sup> November, London Mayor Boris Johnson announced that the "Western Extension" to the London congestion charge zone, covering Kensington and Chelsea, will be abolished by 2010.

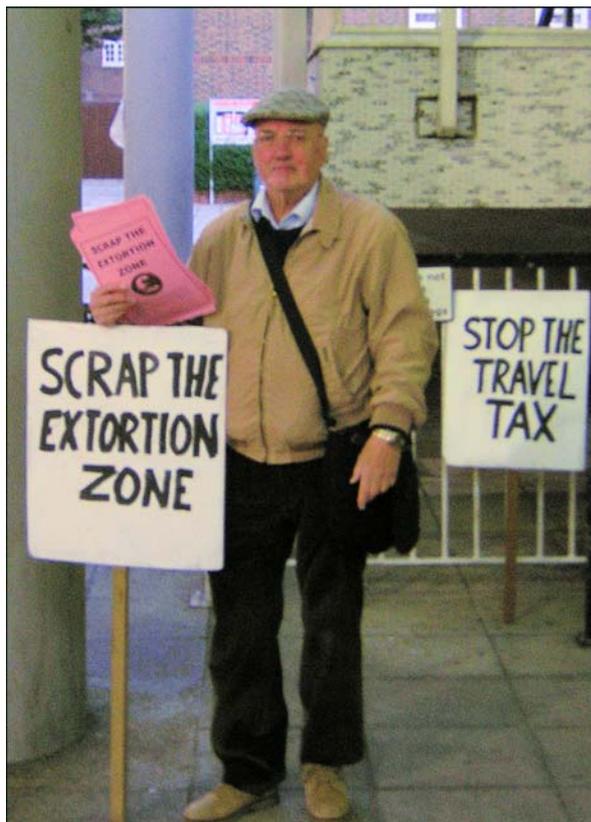
covering Kensington and Chelsea, will be abolished by 2010.

*"We are delighted that Boris Johnson has scrapped an unpopular scheme that the Association of British Drivers (ABD) has campaigned consistently against," said ABD London spokesman, Roger Lawson. "This is a great day for London and a good day for Britain - we look forward to Total Abolition of the Congestion Charge".*

Boris Johnson accepted that the congestion charge extension in London has not worked to cut congestion, but has harmed local businesses.

The writing is on the wall - a congestion charge does not work even in the very centre of a capital city that is already well served by public transport. It is undesirable and uneconomic. And particularly when it is extended to areas where people live and where normal businesses are located, it is ruinous.

The Association of British Drivers together with the West London Residents Association ran a very effective campaign to stimulate responses to the public consultation, with the result that some 28,000 people and organisations responded to the Mayor's consultation. Sixty-nine per cent voted to scrap it, with only nineteen per cent supporting retention, and twelve per cent supporting changes to the scheme. Note that 86% of businesses wanted it scrapped. A more formal consultation process now has to be gone through before the scheme is finally scrapped.



A photograph of your editor taken at a public meeting in Hammersmith by fellow campaigner Brian Mooney is shown above.

### **Congestion Charge to be Totally Scrapped?**



At a recent “Mayor’s Question Time” in the London Assembly, Boris Johnson even suggested that he was considering the future of the main Congestion Charge zone. In

response to a question from Victoria Borwick, he said he would “brood” on the matter.

*(Editors comments: It would certainly be a good idea to have another public consultation on this question, or on improving the way the system operates – although any changes may undermine its economics even more. After 5 years of operation, it seems a timely moment to review whether it is worth retaining this expensive, bureaucratic and ineffective system).*

### **Manchester Rejects Labour Bung**

Not long after news on the scrapping of the western extension, a decisive vote against a proposed congestion charge for a wide area of Manchester was announced. On a turnout of over 50%, a majority of 4 to 1 voted against the proposals including all ten local councils.

Effectively they rejected a massive bribe from central Government for money to be spent on public transport, conditional on implementation for such a scheme. This is the basis for the Government’s “Transport Innovation Fund” by which they hope to sneak in road pricing schemes. This is on the expectation that local schemes will prove so successful, and the public will get to like them, and thereafter a national scheme can be introduced. Thankfully the Government plans are coming unstuck all over the country and any politicians who support them are losing their seats. But the Government seems undeterred so far.

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## 20 Mph Speed Limits



Our last newsletter contained a long article on the subject of wide area 20 mph speed limits. The Transport Committee of the Greater London Assembly has announced an investigation into 20 mph zones, to be lead by Green Party member Jenny Jones.

*(Editors comments: this is probably the last person you would expect to chair such a committee because Ms Jones is known to be a supporter of almost every anti-car policy ever invented. The result is hardly likely to be an independent and unbiased analysis of the subject. But it seems we now have an Assembly dominated by Labour and Liberal Democrats, with support from the 2 Green members, who are lining up to make trouble for the new Mayor).*

For those who wish to submit their comments to this inquiry, go to this web page: [www.london.gov.uk/assembly/scrutiny/transport\\_20mph.jsp](http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/scrutiny/transport_20mph.jsp) . The ABD will be submitting a note to Ms Jones which will be available on this page of their web site: [www.freedomfordrivers.org/Consultations.htm](http://www.freedomfordrivers.org/Consultations.htm)

Note that Mayor Boris Johnson has recently rejected an application by Lewisham council for an all-encompassing 20 mph speed limit in the borough. He said he would support 20 mph zones in local residential areas where there were a high number of accidents but financial constraints dictated a limited approach.

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## Speed Humps – London News

Boris Johnson has come out against speed humps, but seems to prefer chicanes as a way to reduce traffic speeds.

In Croydon the council has permanently removed speed humps from two locations, but no such luck in Bromley. Councillor Colin Smith recently announced his decision in response to the petition on behalf of local residents submitted by your editor to remove humps from Watts Lane and Manor Park Road.

His conclusion was that the humps would be reviewed, and a public consultation undertaken, the next time the road was resurfaced. Unfortunately that may not be any time soon.



*(Editor's Comments: It is unfortunate that after much lengthy pondering, Mr Smith – picture left - seems to have failed to accept the wishes of the vast majority of the electorate and has taken the contrary advice of council staff who have persistently supported speed humps. Courageous decisions sometimes need to be taken on simple matters such as this but Mr Smith does not seem one likely to take them).*

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## SIDs Do Work



Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) actually do work to slow drivers according to a recent study at 11 sites around south-east London by TRL.

On average they slowed by 1.4 mph and accidents could be reduced by as much as 5 per cent according to the report. The London Borough of Bromley as 75 of these electronically activated signs which warn drivers of hazards or display vehicle speeds. They are much cheaper than speed cameras.

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## Environmental Debate

Your editor presented a paper at the National Transport Conference in London recently – this is an annual conference primarily aimed at transport planners. Bearing in mind the demands by the Government, at the behest of the environmental lobby, to reduce CO2 emissions substantially over the next few years, he was asked to tackle some of the related issues in respect of how they affect road transport. The paper presented can be found on this page of the ABD London web site:

[www.freedomfordrivers.org/Environment.htm](http://www.freedomfordrivers.org/Environment.htm)

It turned out to be a stimulating discussion as one of the other speakers was Dr Mayer Hillman who in essence presented an argument that we all had to stop travelling and introduce individual carbon rations that would kill off air travel, and limit mobility very severely.

Indeed if they ever film more episodes of Dad's Army he would be ideal to take the John Laurie role – saying in effect that “we are all doomed”. With the current financial crisis that may fit the mood of many people, but your editor does not agree. Such predictions and calls for dictatorial action by the state are unwarranted by the facts.

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## Not Guilty, But You'll Still Pay



The Government has commenced a consultation on changes to the payment of Court Defence Costs. One of their proposals is that defendants who are

acquitted, but were paying for their own legal counsel, will no longer be able to recoup those costs from the Crown. Edmund King of the AA said, “*This is against the common law and against the common man. If you prove your innocence you should not have to pay for it.*”

Your editor agrees. As outlined in an article in previous newsletter this year, I was recently prosecuted for two minor motoring offences, one of which was an obvious nonsense and was dropped at the start of the hearing, and the other on which the prosecution ultimately failed to provide sufficient evidence.

After two court hearings and much expense, for a prosecution that was clearly wrong and handled totally incompetently, I did get some of my expenses back. But I would not have done if these new proposals were introduced.

These proposals are apparently being introduced to save money, rather than in the interests of justice and I hope you agree they should be opposed. Please go to the consultation on this web page and submit your own views:

[www.justice.gov.uk/publications/award-costs-central-funds.htm](http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/award-costs-central-funds.htm)

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## Boris's Way to Go



A smiling Boris Johnson (above), introduces his ideas for the future of transport in London in a document entitled “Way to Go”. It's well worth reading and from his apt turn of phrase looks like he might have even written it himself.

For example, he says on the problem of roadworks that “*it is time for a holy war against holey streets*” and when referring to the major tunnelling works required for Crossrail and underground extensions he says “*the best thing is to reverse the normal laws of politics when we find ourselves in a hole, and keep digging.*”

The full report is available on the internet at:  
[www.london.gov.uk/mayor/publications/2008/docs/way-to-go.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/publications/2008/docs/way-to-go.pdf)

As he asks for comments, your editor sent in a response on behalf of the ABD which can be read at:

[www.freedomfordrivers.org/ABD\\_WayToGo\\_Response.pdf](http://www.freedomfordrivers.org/ABD_WayToGo_Response.pdf)

I won't include the full response here, but here is what I said in respect of the claimed "achievements" of Mr Johnson's predecessor:

"You give the sheer number of buses (8,300 apparently) as one success of past transport policy. But this has been achieved only by massive subsidies of the bus network, and as you point out, a very large proportion of the passengers on buses do not pay because they have free use of them (and that's ignoring the large amount of fraudulent use where those who should pay do not).

In effect, London residents, via taxes, are massively subsidising bus travel, particularly for central London residents, when many such residents never get on a bus. Why should this be seen as a success? Providing free transport to those who could often afford to pay is a nonsense, and a general subsidy for bus travel from those who use other forms of transport does not make sense either.

In addition bus travel has risen because the alternatives have become less attractive. With increased over-crowding on underground and surface rail, and policies that deter car use by congestion charges and road obstruction, people have had to use buses because the alternatives are worse – even so their average loading is very poor. This is not a policy success, it is sheer lunacy.

You also claim the congestion charge, and "other measures to deter the motorist" as an achievement, when we would absolutely disagree. The congestion charge has not reduced congestion which is pretty much back to where it was before the charge was introduced. Meanwhile it costs a massive amount to operate (a totally unproductive and wasteful charge on Londoners), while generating very little in surplus to spend on public transport projects.

Neither would we see the "additional bus lanes" which discriminate against other road users in favour of bus users – effectively allowing them to jump the queues – or the "pedestrian friendly phasing of traffic lights" as achievements. The latter has simply obstructed road transport without any significant benefit to pedestrians and we are glad that the Mayor is reversing that policy.

As you say, under the previous administration there was a "coherent attempt to get people out of their cars and on to public transport", i.e. an unstated policy to discriminate against private motor cars in favour of buses and other public transport. This was not supported by any rational debate or objective and was primarily an attack on one sector of the population for political reasons and using false arguments such as "environmental benefits". You say the "question is not how to demolish that policy, but how to develop and improve it", but we suggest that scrapping that policy should be your main objective."

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## Mayor's Recent Decisions

Boris Johnson has communicated a number of decisions including some on Livingstone's pet projects. These are:



1. The Thames Gateway Bridge has been scrapped (artists impression above), much to delight of some of the boroughs in South East London, and the chagrin of others. (*Editor's Comments: this was a useful project but bedevilled by inadequate access routes and environmental issues, but there are rumours that an alternative river crossing will be looked at which I would certainly welcome*).
2. Cross Rover Tram scrapped, which had already been forecast, plus the Croydon Tramlink extension, and proposed Oxford Street tram.
3. Bus lanes will be opened up to motorbike use, much to the opposition of pedal cyclists although there is thought to be no road safety problem associated with this.
4. Completion of the London Cycle Network is being abandoned, despite the fact that Boris is a keen fan of cycling. But the sums being spent on this hardly seemed to justify the benefits obtained.

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## LIP Funding & Distorted Policies

Transport for London (TfL) recently announced the Funding Settlement for 2009/10 – this spells out the cash awards from TfL funds for local transport schemes on which the local boroughs rely almost totally for funding. Boroughs have to make competitive “bids” for funds each year.

As an example of what this means for one London borough, here are some details of the settlement for Bromley. In the last (current) year, Bromley was awarded £4.9m. Next year they will get £3.9m when they bid for £10m of funding.

The biggest items approved were £660,000 on road maintenance (bid was £2.3m), £615,000 on bus priority schemes (bid was £1.5m), £604,000 on local safety schemes (as bid for), £400,000 on 20 mph zones (bid was £641,000), £334,000 on the London cycle network (bid was £1.4m) and £205,000 on other cycle schemes (bid was £425,000).

Note that for the first time the borough is getting £100,000 to spend as it sees fit which is a small step towards giving local boroughs more control on their own affairs and budgets.

*(Editors comments: Although it is good to see some reduction in the waste of money on cycle lanes and bus priority measures, where spending is often totally out of proportion with the benefits, it is still obvious how spending on the road network is totally distorted by TfL and the former Mayor's priorities. Millions of pounds spent on improving the lot of cyclists and bus users, but nothing at all on improving the road network and reducing traffic congestion for everyone else).*

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## New “Routemaster” Winners



Boris Johnson has announced the winners of the replacement Routemaster competition. Joint winners of the Design competition were the above from Aston Martin & Foster Partners, and the one below from Capoco Designs.



It is hoped to have some on the roads by 2012, while some of the widely criticised “bendy buses” which they are planned to replace have already been withdrawn. They will include the open rear platform “hop on and hop off” design but will only have a capacity of 80 instead of 130 on bendy buses so more will be needed. However they are likely to obstruct traffic less.

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## The Olympic Route Network



The proposals for the Olympic Route Network (ORN) have been published – this is a network of roads identified as likely to be used by Olympic Games competitors, officials and supporting media. It includes many of the main “arterial” roads in London such as the A102 Blackwall Tunnel approach (above), Victoria Embankment and Upper/Lower Thames St (the main east/west route through London, the A40 Western Avenue, A41 Finchley Road, Park Lane, parts of the A406 North Circular, A10, A11, A12, A13, A2, parts of the A205 South Circular, etc.

The exact measures to be implemented on this network are not specified, but it includes possible use of “reserved lanes” for accredited Olympic vehicles, and other measures such as banning road works, rephrasing traffic lights, introducing parking restrictions and other measures.

Media response to the publication was widely critical referring to “Zil” lanes which were reserved for Communist bureaucrats in Russia. AA President Edmund King said *“The network will cause congestion for buses, taxis and other road users. Enforcement must be fair. The last thing we want is motorists straying into Olympic lines by mistake and being hit with fines up to £5,000”*. (yes that’s not a misprint – five thousand is the possible figure authorised by an Act of Parliament).

The full consultation report can be read at [www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/olympicroutenetwork/](http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/olympicroutenetwork/) - responses are required by the 19th March.

The following is an extract from what your editor said on behalf of the ABD (full version at: [www.freedomfordrivers.org/ABD\\_ORN\\_Response.pdf](http://www.freedomfordrivers.org/ABD_ORN_Response.pdf)

“We have no comments on the individual roads selected simply because the extent of the network is so large, that as a result many main arterial routes have been included. It is perhaps unfortunate that the former Mayor has saddled London with the Olympic Games, and we therefore see the need to establish some transport plan that minimizes the impact of the Games on the transport network of London and on the ordinary residents and businesses of London. We see it as a key objective of any such network that it should minimize those impacts rather than provide a facility whereby the Games competitors, officials and support media can have priority over the general population.

We do not think it is sensible to prioritise the transport of Olympic “family” members, who wish to take part in one way or another in a voluntary activity for the entertainment of themselves and others, over the interests of ordinary members of the public who need to go about their normal business or social activities.

However, it may be wise to establish a network to minimize the impact of the Games on the residents and businesses of London, during its duration.

As regards any proposed measures to be installed on ORN, we would specifically object to the introduction of any “Olympic Lanes” on existing roads that are reserved for the use by Olympic Games participants, officials or media (i.e. restricted to “accredited vehicles”). London is already very short of road capacity and many of the suggested routes are at best two lane roads so it would cause severe difficulties for general traffic if the capacity of those roads was reduced.

For example, the Victoria Embankment and Lower/Upper Thames St is clearly one of the key routes and is designated as part of the ORN, but this is the main east/west route through London and is congested for a lot of the day despite the fact that it runs through the London Congestion Zone.

Reserving one lane on that route for any time would cause major congestion. Similarly the Blackwall Tunnel where there are only two lanes would not cope with having one lane removed and dedicated to a minority of vehicles – it would simply be a totally inefficient use of the available road space, of which there is not enough in London at present without reducing it further by misallocating it to “leisure activities”.

Other parts of the ORN are single carriageway roads so introducing such lanes on them seems rather impractical.

One suggestion we do have is that where there are bus lanes, which typically are underutilized, that these could be shared by Olympic traffic to good purpose.

Note that we would also suggest that many of these routes could be examined to ensure that such matters as traffic light phasing, parking restrictions (e.g. red route enforcement), limitation of road works, are optimized to ensure that they can cope with the additional traffic likely to be generated by the Games.”

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## Letters

The following letter was received from Peter Morgan in response to the articles on London congestion charging and 20Mph zones in the last edition:

*“The purpose of Livingstone's Tax on Travel was never clear. The key point to remember is that there is nothing wrong with traffic, indeed in general more traffic is good. Congestion is a potential undesirable consequence of more traffic than the network can adequately cope with. Thus the objective is to maximise traffic capacity while minimising congestion.*

*A straightforward tax on travel like the congestion charge is bound to reduce traffic, but there is nothing good about that. It could only be a good idea if it reduced congestion by more than it reduced traffic, but congestion is as bad as ever, despite less traffic. Thus this tax is just yet another incompetent and bad traffic management measure, which has done nothing to improve road conditions, while stopping many people travelling and businesses prospering.*

*On widespread 20mph limits, it is important to work on a road-by-road basis, and look to see the existing safety record. On most residential side streets, the accident rate is negligible, and a speed limit reduction most unlikely to reduce casualties.*

*It is also necessary to look at the whole picture. Reducing accidents is a benefit, but against that must be set the cost of increased journey times for general traffic and for emergency services. Often the reduced accidents and casualties are outweighed by these additional costs, which councils habitually ignore.*

### **Road capacity and traffic evaporation.**

*It is self-evident that cutting road capacity can cut traffic - for example if a road is closed, through traffic is no longer possible.*

*Equally, if a junction is constrained so that its capacity is less than what previously passed, there must be less traffic now.*

*The key is to remember there is nothing good about less traffic (unless it is achieved by allowing people to do what they need to do with less unwanted travel). In general more traffic is good and less is bad. Reducing road capacity can and often does reduce traffic but make congestion worse, a total disaster.*

*Introducing isolated road pinch-points, such as Livingstone's misguided scheme for Parliament Square, generates severe congestion, as traffic is forced to queue and squeeze through a narrow bottleneck.*

*We have already seen this so clearly with Trafalgar Square, where a nonsense carriageway reduction has led to serious and much worse congestion and queues for most of the day, even if there is less traffic passing through.*

*I am not claiming more traffic is necessarily good, let alone advocating seeking to increase traffic, but there is nothing necessarily bad in more traffic, and less traffic is probably a negative.”*

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## News Snapshots

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

+ Jim Douglas of the Motorists Legal Challenge (see [www.motoristslegalchallenge.co.uk](http://www.motoristslegalchallenge.co.uk)) is considering asking police to investigate Ealing Council for fraud on the basis that they have issued tickets for illegally marked box junctions. He wants the council to refund all wrongly paid fines since 2004 which they are refusing to do.

+ Transport for London (TfL) plans to make significant job cuts according to recent press reports. Peter Hendy, transport commissioner, has acknowledged there will be a reduction of jobs within TfL but actual redundancies may be avoided.

## 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](http://www.abd.org.uk)

## Contact Information

This Newsletter is published by the London Region of the Association of British Drivers (A.B.D.), PO Box 62, Chislehurst, Kent, BR7 5YB. All material contained herein is Copyright of the A.B.D. or of the authors and may only be reproduced with permission. Any opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author of the article or that of the Editor which do not necessarily represent the official policies of the A.B.D.

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Our internet web address is: [www.freedomfordrivers.org](http://www.freedomfordrivers.org) (or [www.abd.org.uk](http://www.abd.org.uk) for the national ABD web site). This newsletter is supplied in electronic form which can be displayed and printed via the free Adobe Acrobat reader. The Adobe Acrobat reader can be downloaded from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat>

Note that the ABD maintains a list of members who are familiar with individual London boroughs and may be able to help with information on local issues in those boroughs. The current list is below. If any members would like to take responsibility for any boroughs and report back on local transport issues so we can monitor them then please let me know. Roger Lawson

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