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Editorial

There is a lot of coverage of Parking issues in this edition, and there is likely to be more in our next one also when the information from some other London boroughs on parking revenue and expenditure is available. It really is now quite disgraceful the way that parking fees and penalty notice charges (plus those for "moving traffic offences" such as bus lane infringements) are being used to subsidise concessionary public transport fares.

There is also some information on the Mayor's Business Plan, and how Ken Livingstone would do it differently if he manages to get elected in 2012.

Don't forget to send in your letters or news items that you think might be of general interest.

Roger Lawson,
Editor

Parking Fines



The charges imposed for infringing parking regulations have been growing rapidly in London over the last few years. These "decriminalised" charges (i.e. where you do not get a proper trial), also apply to minor moving traffic offences such as bus lane and "yellow box junction" infringements.

The following are some figures recently published by the Taxpayers Alliance for London boroughs after they looked at penalty charges nationally. Figures given are the total revenues in parking penalties for 2008/2009 and the increase over the prior year:

Borough	Revenue	% Change
Barking & Dagenham	£3.4m	+30.2%
Barnet	£5.7m	+30.4%
Brent	£4.1m	-13.4%
Bromley	£3.3m	+14.6%
City of London	£3.2m	-6.0%
Croydon	£5.7m	-11.4%
Ealing	£4.9m	-23.6%
Enfield	£4.0m	+3.9%
Greenwich	£0.7m	-21.2%
Hammersmith & Fulham	£6.9m	+10.7%
Hounslow	£5.5m	+5.7%
Islington	£10.7m	-14.1%
Kensington & Chelsea	£12.8m	-14.5%
Kingston upon Thames	£2.2m	+10.1%
Lambeth	£8.8m	-32.7%
Lewisham	£2.4m	-16.4%
Richmond Upon Thames	£3.4m	-8.0%
Southwark	£6.2m	+2.5%
Sutton	£1.2m	-16.7%
Tower Hamlets	£4.4m	-1.8%
Wandsworth	£8.1m	-20.6%

For some boroughs the latest figures are not available but Camden for example managed to record a massive £26m in 2007/2008. Some of the figures are also difficult to explain – for example why is Greenwich bottom in terms of revenue raised when it is not known to be a motorist friendly borough?

The neighbouring borough of Southwark managed to collect 9 times as much! And why are the revenues of some boroughs falling when others are rising? If anyone knows the answers to those questions then please let us know.

One of the most iniquitous aspects of the system is that local boroughs rely on the surplus revenue from penalty charges to subsidise other transport schemes, and particularly in London to pay for the “Freedom Passes” which grant free use of public transport to the elderly or disabled. They therefore have a strong incentive to obtain more revenue from these charges even though the law says that technically they should not be using them to raise general revenue.

There is a consultation currently being undertaken by London Councils in conjunction with TfL – see www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/Transport/Transportpolicy/APCConsultation.htm for details (use the site search facility to search for “parking charges” to find it). It is quite likely the charges will be increased as a result. And who will decide on the matter? That will be the London Councils Transport and Environment Committee (TEC) in reality. And who controls “London Councils” – the London Boroughs for who they are the representative body. Both the Mayor of London, and the Secretary of State for Transport can overrule the TEC but that has never happened.

So we have a pernicious system where the motive is to set the charges to raise lots of revenue and is not related to the level of compliance with the regulations, or whether the penalties are fair. Indeed there is no information on compliance available because councils do not collect it but typically set “targets” for revenues to be obtained from their sub-contracted operators.

The response from the ABD to this consultation can be obtained from this web page: www.freedomfordrivers.org/Consultations.htm . We strongly urge you to make your own submission though – the deadline is the 30th September.

Bromley’s Parking Revenue



To get some understanding of the profits that council’s make from parking fines, let’s look at the income and costs in one London borough – the Borough of Bromley (*Editor: and*

thanks to Bromley for coming up with these figures so promptly; I will try and obtain some data for other boroughs but I expect it to take some time).

Here are the figures for 2009-2010 for all parking income, associated “enforcement” revenue from penalty charges, income from bus lane penalty charges, the associated costs and where the surplus of income over expenditure is spent.

Description	Income (£m)	Costs (£m)
On-street Parking (meters)	2.16	0.56
On-street Enforcement	2.22	1.73
Permit Parking	0.66	0.43
Off-street Parking	3.61	2.34
Off-street Enforcement	0.47	0.41
Bus Lane Enforcement	0.35	0.20
Totals	9.47	5.67

As you can see, they all show a substantial surplus with an overall profit of almost 4 million pounds.

Off-Street Profits. However £1.27m of the profit comes from off-street parking (i.e. from the councils own car parks) and these figures ignore any capital costs related to the provision of those facilities and the £308,000 that was spent on maintenance of them in that year. But it does suggest those charges are a lot higher than they need to be. Off-street enforcement basically covers its costs.

On-Street Profits. The profits from on-street parking are £1.6m with an additional surplus of £0.49m from enforcement. In addition they made a surplus of £0.14m from bus lane enforcement (not that there are many in Bromley). The total profits from those items were therefore £2.23m.

Where were these “profits” spent? Some £100,000 was spent on “Traffic Management Schemes”, £201,000 on “Improvement Schemes”, but the vast majority of it went on “Concessionary Fares” which took £1,773,000.

Concessionary Fares are mainly the Freedom Pass granted for free travel to those over 60 or who are disabled.

So in effect road users are supporting this concession whereas it should be a general charge on all taxpayers. The Freedom Pass system was introduced by Ken Livingstone as a hand-out to the electorate and it has been carefully concealed from you since as to how it is paid for. It is managed by TfL but the local boroughs are charged for the cost, and it has been rising rapidly in recent years. To avoid substantial increases in your Council Tax (which has consistently increased at a faster rate than general inflation anyway), borough politicians have been looking for other ways to cover the cost, and parking charge surpluses have been the answer.

Despite the fact that there was a legal ruling some years back that parking charges should not be used as a general revenue raising method, councils can do this because they can use the surplus to support other transport schemes following a change to the relevant legislation (a not unreasonable proposition apparently at first sight). But budgeting consistently for a large surplus is surely a breach of the law.

(Editor’s Comments: Parking and penalty charges are now being used to bail out the electorate from their own failing to recognise an electoral bribe for what it was. You should know that there are no free lunches in this world and that someone has to pay for these freebies given to a growing proportion of the population, most of whom could well afford to pay. Why should road users subsidise this system? The sooner this system is changed so that taxpayers become aware of what it costs, and all taxpayers contribute to it, so much the better).

More Charges Coming?

According to a report in the Daily Telegraph, several councils are looking at a Workplace Parking Levy so as to try and raise revenue.

Only Nottingham so far as committed to one, but this may well be the next source of more income.

Permit Parking Schemes



You will notice from the figures for Bromley given above that they make a significant profit from Permit Parking Schemes (councils often

pretend they don't make a profit from them but the facts tell us otherwise). Here's what your editor had to say about the proposal for a new scheme in Orpington recently (you could probably use this as a template to object to other such proposals):

“I refer to the consultation on the proposed permit parking scheme for the Walnuts area of Orpington (ref ADE(TP)/RP/T100/537):

I am always opposed to permit parking schemes unless there are very special circumstances associated with the area. Permit parking schemes generally do not solve the parking problems in an area because they do not improve capacity, and are simply a way for local residents who are willing to pay to gain priority over others. But roads are public highways and there is no justification for giving priority to people who happen to live next to them.

There was a widespread consultation on permit parking schemes for Orpington some years back, and most people were opposed. But subsequently we have now seen piecemeal proposals for particular small areas. This is an underhand way of getting such schemes in place, because we all know that once there is a scheme for a small area, then vehicles are displaced to an adjacent area, for which there are then calls for another scheme — and so it goes on. Let's stop it now before the whole of Orpington is covered by them!

Has parking in this area got worse of late? If it has it is probably the result of the misconceived Tesco store development which removed significant amounts of long-term public parking.

It is very noticeable that the justification given in your note of the scheme consultation is very brief.

The reasons given are:

1 - to deter long term non-residential parking. Why should that be objected to? There is simply no justification for making life more difficult for people who need to park in this area.

2 - to deter obstructive parking near junctions and driveways. Well you don't need a permit parking scheme to do that. Simple parking restrictions can be imposed to stop that.

Permit parking schemes simply generate more administrative costs all of which are passed on to residents. This is an "unproductive cost" in that it does not improve facilities at all and simply results in people being employed in non-productive jobs to administer the scheme. What a waste of resources!

I suspect the prime motivation for the introduction of such schemes is to generate surplus funds for the council which it will waste on pointless transport related projects (or subsidies of the Freedom Pass). We need to stop creating more needless bureaucracy in Bromley and scrapping this proposal would be a good place to start".

Olympic Route Network



The Olympic Route Network and charges to be imposed for infringing it are also the subject of a current consultation – see

www.london2012.com/orn and www.london2012.com/publications/penalty-charge-level-consultation.php for details.

Your editor had this to say in a press release from the ABD: "We opposed the whole idea of reserved lanes for Olympic use. We see no reason why games administrators, media staff, employees of games sponsors and their guests should be able to occupy valuable road space to the exclusion of Londoners going about their normal business. The proposed penalty of £200 for infringing these lanes is simply outrageous, when there is no justification for it at all".

Boris Johnson has said that "It will mean inconvenience for London drivers for 17 days of the games", but this is simply wrong. Taking into account the main Games and the Paralympic Games the restrictions are likely to run from the 27th July when the Games start to the 9th September when the Paralympic Games finish and it is indicated that any Traffic Management Orders will not be lifted until 5 days later, so in total it means **at least 49 days, not 17!**

It also seems likely that many people will be confused by the temporary restrictions, and it is unlikely that the Olympic Reserved Lanes will be marked to the same standards as current bus lanes. In reality, many people are going to **accidentally collect a £200 fine** which is simply unreasonable.

The ABD opposed the whole concept of reserved Olympic Lanes but our comments were ignored. Reserved lanes will be installed on many roads including Park Lane, Southampton Row, Victoria Embankment (most of it), Tower Hill, The Highway, Limehouse Link, A106 Blackwall Tunnel Northern Approach, A11, A102 Blackwall Tunnel Southern Approach, A2 Shooters Hill Road. These comprise many of the key routes for traffic across central London.

You can see the response we made to the consultation on the proposed penalty charges here: www.freedomfordrivers.org/Consultations.htm - but please make your own submission also – the deadline for this is the 31st October.

Cycle Hire Scheme



The “Barclays” London Cycle Hire scheme was launched at the end of July – see www.tfl.gov.uk/BarclaysCycleHire for how to use it.

Above is photograph of one of the stands with a quizzical onlooker – not an unusual reaction in the first few days. The scheme covers approximately the Fare Zone 1 area of inner London, roughly from Tower Hill in the east to Kensington in the west and from Elephant and Castle in the south to King’s Cross in the north. So it’s not a lot of use to those who live in the suburbs unless they have first taken other transport into the centre. There are 5,000 bikes and 300 “docking stations” like the one in the photograph. Users of the bikes have commented unfavourably on their weight and speed in comparison with their own personal cycles.

The budget for the scheme was about £90 million in the 2 years 2009-2011 according to the Mayor’s Transport Business Plan. That might sound a lot but it’s fairly trivial in relation to the annual subsidy for London buses.

Cycle Superhighways

Regarding the article in our last edition, apparently the Cycle Superhighways are “Barclays” blue because they sponsored both the cycle hire scheme and the superhighways (although they only have their name on the bikes).

(Editor: this gives me an idea for how the Mayor can relieve his budget problems. All he needs to do is to get other companies to sponsor other sections of road for a fee – for example red bus lanes could be sponsored by Vodafone and green cycle lanes by BP. If California can consider using electronic number plates that change into adverts when the vehicle is stationary, why not? But I am not sure I am in favour of allowing garish road surface treatments just to please the advertisers – it smacks of “visual pollution”).

International Comparisons

London has a long way to go before it reaches the level of cycling in other major cities, although we are ahead of cities such as Brussels, Rome or Paris according to Eurobarometer. With 9.1% of people cycling to work, we are easily beaten by Copenhagen (59.5%) Amsterdam (45.6%), Stockholm (18.7% and Berlin (17.2%).

Road Works & Road Sense

London First (a body that represents businesses in London) recently launched a report on the problems caused by road works under the title “Road Sense”. The full report is obtainable from www.londonfirst.co.uk but here is a brief summary.

They report that road works in London account for 38% of the most serious and severe traffic disruptions at a total cost of £752 million.

They argue that traffic capacity has been reduced in recent years as road space has been reallocated to pedestrians or dedicated to bus and cycle lanes. Meanwhile road works have grown to an all time high due to gas main, water main and electric cable replacement programmes. Their estimate is of 500,000 road works in London in 2009, lasting on average 3 to 4 days each, which means about 5,000 road works at any one time.

London First hired consultants Colin Buchanan to give them an assessment of the economic cost of these works and they came up with a figure of £4bn per year, which works out at £2,000 per road work per hour. But TfL think the figure is only £2bn per year. Either way, it's a pretty enormous number.

Their report concludes that a new system of financial incentives is needed so as to encourage more co-ordination of works and reduce their duration. To this end they are proposing a system of "lane rental".

There is already a "permit" scheme being piloted by some London boroughs so that highway authorities are aware of proposed works and can try and co-ordinate them. But there will be high administration costs in running such schemes. Effectively the cost will be passed on to the utility companies, who are likely to pass it on themselves to their customers. But it may not change behaviour much. A "lane rental" scheme might encourage faster working, more night time and weekend working and other improvements such as "keyhole surgery".

However, they only propose this be imposed on the very busiest parts of the road network, with the existing permit scheme on secondary routes and no impositions at all on minor roads.

This is what ABD member Brian Mooney had to say on these proposals to the media:

"London First's Road Sense report offers some useful ideas towards containing the impact of roadworks. However, I would be wary of clutching at lane rental charges as a first resort. It could end up creating bureaucracy with costs passed on to consumers and council tax payers, while seeing no end to disruptive roadworks.

We should not penalise diligent councils who maintain roads properly, or utilities dealing with bona fide emergencies, like a burst water main. Rather should we be encouraging efficient maintenance, with sharp penalties for unnecessary over-runs or shoddy resurfacing?

Perhaps the greatest value might come from better co-ordination of works and prevention of delays; maybe we can learn from other countries?"

(Editor's Comments: Providing a financial incentive to do something more quickly is a sound idea in theory but will it really change the behaviour of the utilities when they can pass on their costs so easily? My feeling is that it's a bit like permit parking schemes – a big generator of bureaucracy and associated costs but with no increase in capacity it's simply a rationing scheme. Surely what we need is more research into technological solutions or education on "best practice". It's simply ridiculous to keep on digging up and relaying the same stretch of road as happens currently. How many times for example have road works disrupted Lower Thames Street (the major east-west route past the City) in recent years? In reality it's been almost continuous road works for one reason or another, with the result that it is rated one of the most pollution prone roads in London.)

Mayor's Business Plan



The Transport for London Business Plan for the years to 2017/18 seemed to sneak out without much fanfare. But as it actually tells us more about where the Mayor plans to

spend our money, it's worth reading (go to www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/investorrelations/1462.aspx to obtain a copy). Here are some brief comments on the contents:

CO2 Emissions and Electric Vehicles

On page 21 there are some interesting figures on CO2 emissions in London. In total 42 million tonnes are emitted each year and the Mayor aims to reduce those by 60% by 2025. However, only 22% of the emissions actually come from transport, and less than half of those come from cars and motorcycles. So in reality about 10% of total CO2 emissions come from cars, and are tending to fall unlike other sources, despite them being the target of many attacks when other larger sources get away unscathed.

Anyway the Mayor plans to improve matters by increasing the number of electric vehicles in London from the current estimate of 2,000 to 100,000 “as soon as possible”, plus of course by encouraging cycling.

Income and Expenditure

On page 72 is a breakdown of income and expenditure for “surface transport” which shows the net bus subsidy as running at £574m in 2009/2010 and gradually dropping to £452m in 2017/2018. That’s ignoring the £70 odd million of “other bus support” costs shown separately. Clearly it’s proving difficult to wean Londoner’s off their massive handouts because they didn’t realise who was paying their bus fares – it’s them via taxes.

Needless to say, the London Congestion Charge provides minimal surplus to assist supporting these costs.

Page 90 gives the overall income and expenditure for TfL covering bus, tube and other operations (yes the Underground is clearly subsidised massively also from these figures). Apart from losing £4.4bn in “net expenditure” this year, which only falls to £3.7bn 2017/2018, there is an additional £12bn to be spent on Crossrail over the next 9 years. Most of the cash to cover these deficits comes of course from central Government via a grant from the DfT.

(Editor’s Comments: Why should central Government, and taxpayers in general, continue to prop up a hopelessly uneconomic transport infrastructure in London to the detriment of the rest of the country? Maybe the new Government should take a very close look at these subsidies. If people had to pay an economic fare for using London’s tube trains or buses, then they might find they would prefer to live elsewhere and relieve the chronic overcrowding we have in London. Subsidies always distort behaviour and with the current economic difficulties now might be a good time to reconsider this “pork barrel” political structure, to use an American phrase.)

(Stop Press: after writing the above, it seems that Boris Johnson accused the Treasury of trying to divert money from the capital to fund “more motorways in Scotland” and claimed that spending more money in London was essential to drive economic recovery. Reportedly bus fares are lower in London than anywhere else in the country and nobody else has

24-hour “Freedom passes”. The Treasury and LibDems find this too difficult to bear. It looks like a strong dose of the financial realities is creeping in).

Livingstone’s Transport Policies



Of course the Mayor’s Business Plan covered above rather depends on him staying in power for long enough. Ken Livingstone is likely to stand for Mayor again and has launched his Transport Policy at a meeting in East

Croydon. He castigates Boris Johnson for wasting millions of pounds on “pet vanity projects” such as the new London Bus and the “fantasy” Thames Airport. He criticised Mr Johnson for scrapping the £25 Congestion Charge and the Western Extension, and for delaying phase 3 of the LEZ. Mr Johnson also ditched lots of expensive projects such as the Cross River Tram, Greenwich Waterfront Transit, Croydon Tramlink Extension to Crystal Palace (lots of information about that on the ABD London web site), and the Thames Gateway Bridge which Livingstone supported.

Livingstone would “put ordinary Londoners first, holding down fares and fighting tirelessly to protect investment in London’s transport system”. In other words, it would be back to the old regime of ever growing subsidies from your taxes for public transport users, and higher expenditure on capital projects (which is one reason why tube and bus fares have been going up much faster than inflation).

He also suggests he would bring in a 20 mph speed limit in all residential areas (which of course comprise most of London). He supports promotion of cycling and walking (who doesn’t?) but criticises Johnson for spending money on the cycle-hire scheme when he promised it would be set up and run by private enterprise at no cost. But he wants to expand the cycle hire scheme to suburban town centres and obtain an “explosion in smart phone apps for cyclists”.

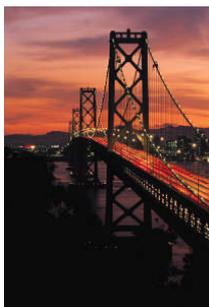
Climate Change?

Under the heading of “climate change”, Livingstone states that he would “vigourously promote policies to reduce the demand for the most polluting forms of transport – private road vehicles.”

(Editor’s Comments: As usual Mr Livingstone shows his hatred of cars and ignorance of the facts. Private cars are not the most polluting road vehicles and can actually be less polluting than other transport modes. They contribute a small percentage of emissions of all kinds in London.

As regards his financial policies, he seems to live in some socialist fantasy world where buses should ideally be provided in ever growing numbers and at ever reducing cost to the user – with most riders paying nothing, as he almost managed to achieve under his regime. The financial impossibility of supporting this by ever growing taxes and hand-outs from central Government became clear to everyone which is probably why he lost the last Mayoral election. Even if the Mayor wanted to carry on in this way, the new national Government will not go along with it. So you can vote for “more bread and circuses” by choosing Mr Livingstone for Mayor or you can go for the more financially sound strategy of Johnson, who is gradually reducing these subsidies – even if at a much lower rate than I would personally like).

San Francisco Parking Scheme



Livingstone did mention one scheme for car drivers he would like to see brought in which has proved successful in San Francisco apparently. To avoid drivers driving around looking for a parking space, a Wi-Fi service has been created which tells drivers via their mobile

phones when they are near an available parking space. It is also suggested that there are a lot of other phone “apps” that could be developed from transport data held by TfL.

Boris Standing

Boris Johnson has confirmed that he will be standing for Mayor again in 2012, and the bookies already have him as odds-on favourite to win.

E-Petitions

Peter Morgan, an active ABD member based in Croydon, has pointed out that all councils are required since April 2010 to set up E-Petitions, ie. enable people to create electronic petitions hosted on the councils web site. See this article on the BBC web site for more background: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/8380736.stm>

Your editor certainly was not aware of this, but when I checked my local council’s web site (Bromley), they are actually supporting this capability – but nobody seems to have submitted any petitions as yet, probably because few people are aware of this possibility. Other council web sites I checked did not even mention it.

Peter has also pointed out that it’s always useful to keep an eye on what your local council is doing. The better councils are very open about what plans are being considered, and local news, although sometimes the interesting stuff is buried deep in their web sites. Often they also provide news feeds or Twitter feeds you can receive.

Dartford Crossing & the M25



The Dartford Crossing (photo above) and the M25 either side of it is essential to many people who live on the eastern side of London. Queues at the toll booths have continued to grow since the introduction of the increased £1.50 charge which probably slowed people when paying. The smallest incident now creates long tail-backs and long queues can form at busy times (which is now most of the day), particularly during the summer when “tourists” heading to and from the channel ports and who are slow payers use the crossing.

“Slow-payers” means that they don’t throw their cash in quickly, and don’t move through the tolls rapidly.

As was reported in a previous newsletter, the former Government was looking at selling off the crossing. Nothing more has been heard of that. But a little reported deal might have a major impact on it.

In May 2009, the Highways Agency did a deal with a consortium of Balfour Beatty, Skanska, WS Atkins and others to take over operation of the crossing. In addition the contracts included widening of the M25 and the contract value was £6.2bn. This gives responsibility for operation of the crossing to Atkins and for “services in network management, asset inspection, traffic management, tunnel operations, incident management, routine and winter maintenance for the entire M25”. More information was given in this announcement: www.investegate.co.uk/Article.aspx?id=2009052016000159675

It indicates that revenue from the tolls will be handed over to Highways Agency, but this very long term contract presumably might make it difficult to dispose of the crossing (except possibly to the same consortium), or of course make it free of charge as it should be.

It seems that Atkins are studying how to improve the efficiency of the toll collection and other aspects of the crossing (staffing for example is very high in comparison with say the Blackwall Tunnel where of course there are no tolls). There is already a cash-less payment system called “Dart-Tag” which results in you paying only £1 instead of £1.50 but only regular users seem to register for it. The fact that there are no longer reserved “Dart-Tag” lanes as there used to be, tends to dissuade the casual user from bothering with it. I am not sure why that was changed a few years ago, but possibly because HGVs tend to queue up and block many of the toll booths leaving only a limited number available for cars.

(Editor’s Comments: It is really appalling that such a long term contract has been entered into, none of the details of which have been disclosed, or are likely to be disclosed. It creates a private monopoly and restricts the freedom of action of subsequent Governments, and no doubt imposes a very significant financial obligation on them.

This should surely have been a matter for parliamentary debate and approval rather than being sneaked through with minimal publicity).

Motor City, Hither Green



Forget Detroit, Wolfsburg, or Coventry, the London suburb of Hither Green may be the next major car manufacturing centre if the plans of Peel Engineering come to fruition. They have revived the P-50 micro car (picture above) and you can buy this single-seat vehicle in a “limited edition” run for £12,500. Originally produced in the 1960s in the Isle of Man, it is claimed to be the smallest production car ever built. For more information or to place your order, go to: www.peelengineering.co.uk

Local Government Ombudsman

As you may be aware, if you are unhappy with the way your local council has dealt with any matter that has affected you personally, and it refuses to respond to your complaint, you can appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). But it’s not quite as easy as it may appear, and almost all complaints are rejected. See the BBRAG newsletters on our web site for the issues (use the site Search facility of course to find the relevant ones).

A public consultation on the role of the LGO is being undertaken (see http://www.lawcom.gov.uk/docs/cpl96_summary.pdf for details) but it looks to be rather a damp squib and is hardly likely to deal with the nature of the complaints about how the LGO operates.

Speed Display Devices v. Cameras



There has been a vigorous exchange of letters on the merits of speed cameras, and the alternative of using speed display devices (one pictured above in Bromley) in the pages of Private Eye. The use of speed display devices has been covered in previous newsletters if you want more information. Your Editor joined in the debate to point out that speed display cameras were much more cost effective in terms of accidents or injuries prevented. I did not have the immediate information to hand to substantiate this claim, but here are the details.

The following is a brief summary of the information present on the Safespeed web site (see www.safespeed.org.uk/vas.html which was produced by Idris Francis and others), based on the original TRL report on the subject and scientific analysis of the relative costs and benefits:

1. The original TRL548 report said that speed display devices reduced accidents by one-third in their study and that they were very effective at reducing speeds. Indeed they are more effective than speed cameras are at reducing accidents and casualties.
2. Speed display devices initially cost about £5,000 (or less) with very low maintenance costs, whereas speed cameras cost about £50,000 per year to operate.
3. The relative cost-effectiveness of display devices versus cameras is therefore about 50 to one. This is an enormous difference and yet even

after this figure was well known, speed cameras were still being advocated by central Government and politicians.

The key point is that for the same amount of money (and budgets are always limited), you can save many more lives and injuries by spending the limited resources that are available on speed display devices and not cameras. In addition you avoid the criminalisation of large swathes of the population (over 200,000 people banned from driving now annually due to getting too many points on their licence, thus threatening their livelihoods). In addition, thousands of people are involved in the totally unproductive activity of issuing speeding tickets, and collecting the fines, including of course the police and courts staff who would be better occupied on real crime.

News Snapshots

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

+ The ABD London web site which contains all of our newsletters and lots of other information (www.freedomfordrivers.org) has been improved by the addition of a site search facility from Google. This means that all the pdf documents (including the newsletters) on the site are now indexed when they were not before. Simply use the "Search" facility to find the information you wish to look for. In addition the web site has been improved in other ways to bring it up to date and add more material. If you have any suggestions for other improvements, please advise the editor. Note that it is remarkably easy to set up and maintain a web site or blog nowadays and if you wish to do that about a local campaign or issue then please ask for advice.

+ TfL are involved in a new project called "FREEFLOW" which is aimed at providing an "intelligent decision support" system for traffic managers so they can more effectively manage traffic networks. Pilot schemes to be developed by a consortium of partners for York and the West End of London (around Marble Arch and Hyde Park Corner) are planned.

Managers at present can often see when traffic flow is abnormal as a result of an accident or other unforeseen event, but it is often not obvious what changes they can make to traffic signals or routing to improve matters.

+ The London Borough of Sutton has won a “Smarter Travel Award” from TfL for its achievements in sustainable transport. Bromley Council won “Team of the Year” award for encouraging walking, use of public transport and providing cycle training for local people (*Editor: I know they do as they often do the latter in my street – Bromley is good at providing education to young drivers and cyclists*).

+ The London Borough of Brent is planning to bribe residents to give up their parking permits. They will get a £200 voucher towards the cost of joining a car club, or buying a cycle, or purchasing an Oyster travelcard. The cost will be funded from parking revenues. They also plan to introduce an emission based permit charge scheme.

+ Transport Minister Norman Baker may block the use of CCTV cameras to enforce moving traffic offences in the rest of the country (only usable in London at present). He commented negatively on the high level of surveillance already experienced by the public. (*Editor: How about banning their use in London also?*)

+ TfL are apparently looking further at average speed cameras for 20 mph zones. But a poll in the London Evening Standard showed 70% of people opposed their use. Such cameras are already under test in two London Boroughs (Camden & Southwark) but TfL want to try them in another 4. Note that there are already 780 conventional speed cameras in London. (*Editor: Yet another excuse to issue £120 fines for minor and accidental infringements of traffic regulations, particularly by boroughs such as Camden. Note that the ABD is considering mounting a campaign on this issue. If you think this would be a good idea, or would like to actively support it, then please contact the editor*).

+ The proposals to change the system whereby innocent defendants can recover their legal costs was overturned by a Judicial Review. The judges view was that it required primary legislation via Parliament to introduce such a change rather

than a simple administrative order. The issue was covered in an article headed “Not Guilty But You’ll Still Pay” in our edition number 12, as this is a common issue with motoring offences. It is not clear what the Government will now do on this issue.

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

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Contact Information

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A.B.D. London Region Co-ordinator and Editor: Roger Lawson (Tel: 020-8467-2686, Email: roger.lawson@btclick.com). Contact the above for information on the aims and objectives of the A.B.D. or for membership information (membership costs £25.00 per annum if paid by cheque, debit or credit card; or £20.00 if paid by standing order (however there is an additional charge of £5 if you wish to receive the ABD national newsletter on paper rather than electronically). The A.B.D. would be happy to advise or assist anyone who is concerned about any traffic, transport or road safety issues in London. Complimentary subscriptions to this newsletter are available on request to elected politicians or those with a professional interest in transport matters.

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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 keep an eye on local news and advise on local transport issues then please let me know. Roger Lawson

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