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Editorial

There are a number of important consultations on transport matters that London residents should consider in this edition. YOU DO NEED TO RESPOND TO THESE CONSULTATIONS IF YOUR VIEWS ARE TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

The ABD does a lot to represent the interests of the ordinary road user, but we cannot do it all. You should also consider writing to your Member of Parliament on the issues of the A14 tolling and HS2, and you might want to suggest that the Government introduces a ban on “fun” cycling events as promoted by Boris Johnson in London and Surrey County Council.

Note that I have nothing against cycling and cyclists (expect when they ignore the Highway Code and traffic signals or are aggressive towards other road users, as many are in London). But they should recognise they have chosen to take up a dangerous transport mode, and other road users should not be disadvantaged by their calls for road closures or lower speed limits, and their wish to participate in social and sporting events on public roads. No other road users would be allowed to do the latter.

Encouraging healthy physical activity is one thing. Giving them priority over other users is another matter altogether.

Roger Lawson, Editor

A14 Tolling



Many residents of East London, South London, Kent and Essex will use the M11, A14, A1 route to travel to the North of England. In future, they are likely to have to pay a toll of £1.50 each way to use an improved route which will include a bypass for Huntingdon. Indeed the existing A14 will be “detrunked” and made very difficult to use by the demolishing of a viaduct over a railway line, thus requiring an awkward detour if you don’t wish to pay the tolls.

The A14 is heavily congested at present as you can see from the photograph above taken from the consultation document on the proposed changes.

The tolling system to be used will be of the “free-flow” kind, the same as will be used on the Dartford Crossing in the near future. This requires people to pay in advance, or soon after, typically on-line or via phone. Indeed if you live in Kent you will be paying two tolls simply to drive to the Midlands or North.

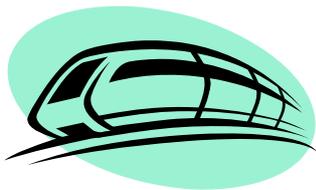
The Highways Agency is holding an “informal” consultation on the proposed route options (but it allows you to give your general views on the scheme also) which you can obtain from here: www.highways.gov.uk/consultations . Anyone who has concerns about this proposal should respond to the consultation as soon as possible.

If you oppose road tolls, please make it clear.

You should also write to your Member of Parliament (contact details obtainable from here: <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk>) and there are a number of petitions on the Government's E-Petition web site you may care to sign including this one created by ABD Member Peter Morgan: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/54823>

Note that the anticipated cost of the A14 scheme is £1.5bn which you may care to bear in mind when reading the next article – the Government says it cannot afford the £1.5bn without some charging system despite the roughly £50bn a year it collects in taxes on road users. For more background, see this article by another ABD member: www.fairdealforthemotorist.org.uk/A14toll2013.htm

HS2



Another major project on which you should give your views to your M.P. is the HS2 scheme – the High

Speed Rail Link to the Midlands and North of England from London.

We covered this scheme back in our April 2011 edition and your editor made it plain then that he thought the scheme was a ludicrous waste of money and the cost/benefit justification very poor. The latest Government estimates for the cost are £43bn, but others claim this is too low and it will escalate to as much as £80bn.

As your Editor said in his letter to his M.P. in 2011: *“The Eddington report, commissioned by the Government some years ago, had at least one good recommendation in it. Namely that rather than spend money on grandiose transport schemes, it was much more effective in the overall scheme of improving the transport infrastructure of the UK to spend money on small to medium scale projects to tackle specific bottlenecks. That applied just as much to rail schemes as it did to road schemes. It was a very wise conclusion, which is now being totally ignored.”*

Opposition to the scheme has been growing from a wide diversity of groups, including those opposed to its impact on the countryside and the demolition of homes in London. Another group is business people and economists (such as the well respected Prof. John Kay who writes for the Financial Times), who simply question the wisdom of the scheme when the investment return looks so questionable. The C.B.I. which had previously supported the scheme also came out against it. But Government politicians are still promoting the merits of HS2.

Not stopping in London?

Boris Johnson seems to have had a fit over the suggestion recently that one way to save money on HS2 would be have trains stopping at Old Oak Common, west of London, rather than travelling directly to central London (Euston). The Government made it clear that they will keep trains travelling to Euston (the main selling point for the line is that it will enable business people and politicians to move quickly from London to Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester).

But stopping at Toton Sidings?

Editor: on a personal note it amuses me to see that the proposed location of a station for HS2 in the East Midlands is Toton sidings (a former goods marshalling yard). This is between Nottingham and Derby, but as one local councillor said *“even people in Nottingham haven't heard of Toton”*. Toton is near where I was born and I fondly remember train spotting there in my school years, but as a location for a major passenger interchange I would not rate it very highly. It's a long way from anywhere.

A little more pressure from the public might get the Government to take a wise u-turn and abandon the scheme. So get out your pens, or your keyboards, i-Pads, or whatever, and encourage your M.P. to drop his support. There are better things to spend £43bn or more on and a number of road schemes offer better returns.

There are several petitions on the Government's e-petition web site on this subject – simply search for “HS2” in the site search function to list them. The most amusing one suggests that if the Government wants to spend money on a “grandiose project” they should send a man to Mars.

Surveillance Camera Code of Practice



Residents of London, who live in a “big brother” world of cameras monitoring their every move might like to know that the Home Office have published a “Surveillance Camera

Code of Practice”. With cameras being used to issue parking fines and for targeting those who infringe bus lanes, yellow box junctions, illegal u-turns and many other types of “moving traffic offences”, you are lucky if you drive in London to have escaped a fine to date simply from accidental and unintended infringements.

Here’s what one clause (1.12) says:

“When a relevant authority in England has civil parking enforcement functions under the Traffic Management Act 2004 or bus lane enforcement functions under the Transport Act 2000, and considers the use of surveillance camera systems in exercising those functions, it must have regard to the guidance in this code. The primary purpose of any surveillance camera system used as part of civil enforcement arrangements must be the safe and efficient operation of the road network by deterring motorists from contravening parking or road traffic restrictions. Motorists may regard enforcement by cameras as over-zealous and relevant authorities should use them sparingly. Such systems should, therefore, only be deployed where other means of enforcement are not practical and their effectiveness in achieving this purpose is subject to regular review.”

If you think this principle is being breached, then you should complain to the Information Commissioner who has responsibility for Data Protection issues, and to the Surveillance Camera Commissioner (yes there is one now!), and also dispute any penalty charges issued in contravention of this guidance.

Roads Task Force

We mentioned London’s “Roads Task Force” in our last edition, and the report they produced. A more detailed analysis of it has now been produced by ABD Member Brian Mooney which you can read here:

www.fairdealforthemotorist.org.uk/londonrtf.htm

Needless to say he is not very complimentary as much of the report covers topics such as “road pricing”, “demand management”, “reallocation of road space”, “restricting parking provision”, “extending the use of cameras”, “widespread 20 mph zones” and all the other guises under which attacks on the use of cars masquerade. The ABD is pursuing some of these issues.

More information is present here:

www.tfl.gov.uk/corporate/projectsandschemes/28187.aspx



Ride London Event

On the 2nd to 4th August there were widespread road closures in London and parts of Surrey.

What was the justification for the substantial inconvenience to residents and businesses? Simply that cyclists wished to have a “fun event”. About 16,000 cyclists took part in this 100 mile “race” including a sweating and sore Boris Johnson. He plans to run more such events in future.

But there were enormous numbers of people complaining, including your editor who wrote this letter to Mr Johnson subsequently:

“This event was simply a pleasure event for a very small minority of the population. It created enormous amounts of inconvenience for those who live or work in central London and in those parts of Surrey through which it travelled. The reports of people complaining about the traffic congestion and even having difficulties reaching their own homes are readily available on the internet.

There is simply no justification for creating such mayhem just so a small minority can occupy their personal leisure time in this way.

PLEASE DO NOT HAVE ANY MORE SUCH EVENTS IN FUTURE

I realise that you personally favour cycling and I did find your report in the Daily Telegraph on the RideLondon event very amusing. But you are really pushing your enthusiasm for this mode of transport too far. The amount of money you are proposing to commit to improving the lot of cyclists in London over the next few years is out of proportion to the numbers of people who might benefit. In the meantime, other road users will be severely inconvenienced and the general public will be subsidising these programmes from the taxes they pay.

There seems to be little recognition that encouraging cycling actually raises the number of road casualties as you are no doubt aware from the more recent accident figures. Cycling is by its nature one of the most dangerous forms of transport and particularly so per mile travelled.

The health benefits of cycling are also often exaggerated, and the higher risk of injury and death is not exactly a health benefit is it?

I suggest you are going too far in your desire to promote this minority sport, and will soon be losing the support of the general public who choose to travel by other transport modes, i.e. the millions versus the few hundred thousand of cyclists in London.

Please bear my comments in mind when you are considering other cycle events in London, and in your future transport strategy.”

Surrey Cycling Strategy

If you wish to have some influence on Surrey County Council who supported the RideLondon event, you can do no worse than respond to their consultation on Cycling Strategy. You can respond to the consultation on-line and personally tell them what you think of the RideLondon and similar events (there is a question on that subject).

News Snapshots

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

+ Barnet Council have decided not to appeal the decision of the High Court which ruled that their permit parking charge increases were illegal (see our previous editions for more background). It is surely good that prior legal precedents in this area have been upheld.

+ Your editor got a letter published in the Financial Times, in response to an article from one of their editors on feeling guilty about buying and using a car in London. My concluding remarks were “I advise Ms Fishburn not to feel guilty about buying a car. She should just enjoy it before it is made illegal by the ‘levellers’ who hate personal liberty and the freedom to choose one’s transport mode.”

+ Your editor also appeared on BBC TVs Newsnight programme explaining the dangers of cycling, particularly in London. Unfortunately it was a long interview which was cut down to short highlights and did not really discuss the serious issues about the growing rise in cycling casualties in London.

About the Alliance of British Drivers (ABD)

The Alliance of British Drivers was formed from a merger of the Association of British Drivers and the Drivers Alliance. 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 Alliance 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

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 other members would like to keep an eye on local news and advise on local transport issues then please let me know. Roger Lawson

Contact person	Borough	Email
Les Alden	Southwark	LHA@looksouth.net
Paul Hemsley	Ealing	ph@hemsleyassociates.com
Hillier Simmons	Hounslow	hilliersimmons@compuserve.com
Brian Mooney	Hammersmith & Fulham	fairdeal@abd.org.uk
Roger Lawson	Bromley, Barking & Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Havering, Islington, Lewisham, City of London, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest	roger.lawson@abd.org.uk
Peter Morgan	Croydon, Camden, Enfield, Harrow, Hillingdon, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston, Lambeth, Merton, Richmond, Sutton, Wandsworth, Westminster	southlondon@abd.org.uk

Contact Information

This Newsletter is published by the London Region of the Alliance of British (A.B.D.), PO Box 62, Chislehurst, Kent, BR7 5YB and is distributed free of charge to ABD Members in the London area and to those Members of BBAG who formerly received the Bromley Borough Roads Action Group newsletter. 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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