

ABD London News

Click on any index item below to go directly to the article in a digital edition.

In this Edition

- Croydon 20mph Consultation
- 20mph Speed Limits
- Large Numbers of Dartford Crossing Penalty Charges
- East London River Crossings
- Car Turntables
- Parking Regulation Changes
- Greens Lose Brighton
- Minicabs and Rickshaws Under Attack
- The Size of TfL
- It Pays to Challenge PCNs

See the last page for publisher and contact information.

Editorial

The main article in this edition is on the proposed 20mph wide area speed limit in Croydon—if you live in North Croydon make sure you object.

Before 1930, the UK had a nationwide 20mph speed limit and the death toll on British roads was appalling—about 7,300 per year. It's now only about 1,900 each year. The 30mph and higher limits were introduced in 1930 and the death toll then started to fall when it had been rising before.

It would seem obvious that the speed limit changes had very little impact on road casualties, which is counter intuitive. That tells us that you need to study the evidence and have some knowledge about road safety matters before jumping to conclusions. The improvements that cut deaths and injuries have been improved vehicles, better designed roads and improved health care after an injury accident.

As a reminder how dangerous the roads were around that time, I recently read an item in my father's diary which only came to light after my mother's death last year.

It's a day to day record of events from 1930 to 1950, and in the 1933 section he notes that my father's brother, who was a commercial lorry driver, had won an award from the local council, for "driving one year without an accident". Clearly expectations were not high at that time!

One road hazard we rarely have to cope with nowadays is fog so dense that it stopped buses from running. This was of course caused by the horrific air pollution solved to a large extent by the Clean Air Acts in the 1950s. We now have air pollution which is less visible, and arguably less toxic.

Incidentally the SMMT have published the facts about diesel cars which are the latest sufferers of irrational demonization by the ill informed—it's here and well worth reading:

www.smmt.co.uk/industry-topics/diesel-facts/

But the weather was just as variable in the 30s and 40s as it is now so it leaves me sceptical that the climate is changing much.

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Quotes of the Month

"It would be an enormous relief if he [Rod King of campaign group 20splenty] would drive away to the horizon at a speed considerably above 20mph, a speed which is nothing like plenty for the rest of us"..... Paul Withrington in Local Transport Today.

"It would mean higher prices, fewer jobs and would actually result in more congestion as people resort to using their own car again in the City"Jo Bertram of Uber on the proposed limit on minicab numbers—see page 7.



Croydon 20mph Consultation

Croydon Council have launched a public consultation on a wide-area, signed-only, 20 mph speed limit for North Croydon. This is the first of several areas of Croydon which they intend to impose this speed limit upon in due course.

The Alliance of British Drivers (ABD) is strongly opposed to this proposal and is circulating a leaflet within the area affected urging residents to oppose it. In addition we have set up a campaign web page which is present here: www.freedomfordrivers.org/Croydon20.htm to provide more information to the public. but you will be wasting your time in responding if you live outside the designated area.

The fact that a lot of the users of the roads within that area live outside it will be ignored in this consultation, plus of course all the visitors such as local delivery drivers.

In summary this is what we say: many roads in the area already have speed humps to reduce traffic speeds and many of the injuries to pedestrians and cyclists in Croydon occur at low speeds on main roads. The road safety benefits of a wide area 20 mph limit will be minimal and there are no other real benefits.

Why make a change that is bound to lead to many more vehicles breaking the law by exceeding the speed limit? Don't fall for the council's anti-car propaganda. Do you really think that 20 mph is appropriate for roads such as Auckland Road, Grange Road and Northwood Road? (pictures to the right).



Make sure you oppose the waste of money to create these 20 mph zones.

20 MPH IS TOO SLOW FOR A MAXIMUM LIMIT

Here are some detailed comments on the claims made by Croydon Council for the merits of their scheme, numbered as per their "Frequently Asked Questions" document on their web site:

1. What is this proposal about and how did it originate? The council's comments are misleading. The proposal arose as part of a Labour party manifesto for the council elections - in other words it was an idea thought up by politicians who might have little knowledge of road safety matters as a simplistic solution.

It also comments on the encouragement of walking and cycling, and the possible contribution to improving health and tackling obesity, but there is simply no firm scientific evidence in the public domain of 20 mph schemes having any impact on those.

2. Is it safer to drive at 20 mph? In theory maybe, but in practice there is no evidence that imposing a lower speed limit improves road safety. Indeed the evidence is to the contrary. Before 1930 there was a blanket 20 mph speed limit across the whole of the UK. When it was removed, the accidents fell. The recent evidence on wide-area 20 mph schemes, particularly those imposed only by signs with no road engineering measures, is

not supportive of the view that they are a cost-effective road safety measure. The Department of Transport (DfT) have recently commissioned a three year study into the effectiveness of 20 mph schemes because of this uncertainty, but Croydon Council are not willing to await the evidence as they have made their own minds up already.

4. Would there be fewer collisions/casualties as a result of the scheme? They allege there would be when there is no evidence there actually will be. Their claims about the benefits of such a scheme in Portsmouth are grossly misleading. There was no statistically significant reduction on overall accidents and the KSI figures rose.



Continued on next page.

Croydon 20mph (Cont.)

It is very unclear that there was any real benefit in spending the £573,000 that the Portsmouth scheme cost - in other words, no justification that it was a cost effective scheme in comparison with other possible road safety measures.

14. How much will it cost and is it worth it? The scheme for Croydon North alone will cost £300,000 with the whole of Croydon costing £1.5 million. They claim that they can justify the cost based on accident reductions (without any clear estimate of what the reductions might be so that a retrospective review of the benefits in Croydon North can be seen before extending it to other areas). In any case, and as we have already pointed out, the claimed benefits are unlikely to be achieved. Even the costs they imply might be saved by reducing accidents are misleading.

The DfT figures for collisions relate to the "value" attached to an accident based on what people are willing to pay to avoid them. This is a very subjective and biased measure. The direct costs are much lower so there is no realistic chance of recovering the proposed expenditure by cost savings. They also again make claims about the cost savings to be achieved (such as to the NHS) from improved health as people are discouraged from driving, for which there is simply no supportive evidence.

15. Is this scheme being funded from council tax revenues?

They say "No". This is grossly misleading. The funding is certainly coming from Transport for London (TfL), which is of course funded primarily by taxation, directly or indirectly. So for example, some of the funds come from the GLA Precept obtained from Local Authorities in London and some from central Government funding (again from the taxes the public pays). You the public are paying for this expenditure one way or another!

And some of it is definitely coming from council tax revenues!

26. Are other boroughs considering 20 mph speed limits? It is true that others are considering such limits or have introduced them. Many outer London boroughs have also rejected these proposals on the grounds that they are an expensive solution and there are better uses to tackle road safety for the available money. Would it not have been better to await the results of similar schemes already introduced to see what impact they have in reality? Regrettably councils such as Croydon are not interested in the evidence, but more in the concept while ignoring the negative aspects of their proposals for the ordinary road user.

More supporting evidence of the reason for our opposition to wide area 20-mph schemes is given on this web page:

www.freedomfordrivers.org/Road_Safety.htm



20 Mph Speed Limits

Wide area 20-mph speed limits are being adopted by a number of London boroughs despite there being no evidence that they have any benefit whatsoever - indeed what evidence there is suggests exactly the contrary. However, some politicians and anti-car groups (such as cyclists commonly) continue to push for their use and make spurious claims about the impact they are likely to have.

They also allege that drivers will not suffer any disadvantage as a result as journey times may not differ by much thereby ignoring the true reality, or that the 20-mph limit will not be enforced (which is not true in practice as recent reports from Islington and the City of London demonstrate).

The ABD's national executive have issued a press release calling for no new 20-mph limits until proper research on the matter has been undertaken. This is what it said:

No new 20mph speed limits should be allowed until a Depart-

ment for Transport study is published in 2017, says the Alliance of British Drivers (ABD).

In 2014 the Department for Transport (DfT) began a three-year study into all the impacts of 20mph speed limits, including their effects on actual speeds, accidents, emissions and whether they encourage more people to walk or cycle.

The ABD is a key stakeholder in the study and has supplied evidence to the consultants undertaking it.

Continued on next page.



20 Mph Speed Limits (Cont.)

In the meantime, the pressure group 20s Plenty for Us is increasing its efforts to have blanket 20mph speed limits established in as many towns and cities as possible.

The ABD believes it is doing this because it realises that the study results are likely to undermine many of its claims for the 'benefits' of 20mph limits. It knows that, once lower limits have been introduced, it will be very difficult to get them reversed.

Its ultimate aim is to have the default speed limit in all built-up areas reduced from 30mph to 20mph. The ABD considers there is no justification for this whatsoever. The ABD has written to the Roads Minister, Robert Goodwill, to propose that a moratorium on all new 20mph speed limits should be brought into effect until the DfT study is published in 2017 and the true impacts of 20mph limits are known.

ABD chairman Brian Gregory comments: 'The campaign in favour of 20mph limits is nothing to do with road safety - it is an attempt at social engineering.'

Many of those leading the campaign are associated with left-leaning and environmentalist groups, with an ideological hatred of private motorised transport. They are not representative of the general population. These unelected, heavily biased individuals should not be allowed to tell people how to live their lives. The ABD believes that everyone has the right to choose the mode of transport that most suits them for each journey they make. They should not be made to feel guilty for choosing to use a car. Speed limits should be set for genuine road safety reasons and not to discourage car use.
ENDS

Large Numbers of Dartford Crossing Penalty Charges

Large numbers of drivers are being fined £70 for not paying the new "free-flow" fee on the Dartford Crossing now that the toll barriers have been removed. Plus they have to pay the £2.50 fee on top.

The Highways Agency have revealed that more than 4,000 drivers per day are failing to pay the charge via the means provided. That's about 10% of drivers using the crossing apparently.

That does not just include foreign drivers who may think they can escape payment although the Highways Agency is pursuing 18,000 of those.

Comment: the outcome is much as the ABD forecast with large numbers of people failing to pay simply because they are not aware they need to or have forgotten to do so.

It is surely wrong to introduce a system where it is known that a lot of people will default. This was anticipated because it is known that other similar systems in other countries have the same problem.

The toll should have been removed as was previously promised. The Free-Flow payment system may have improved traffic flows, but it is unfair and unreasonable.



One particular problem is that the signs near the crossing on the M25 that should warn people to pay are very unclear and are easy to miss. Perhaps the operators have no interest in ensuring people pay in advance or soon after?

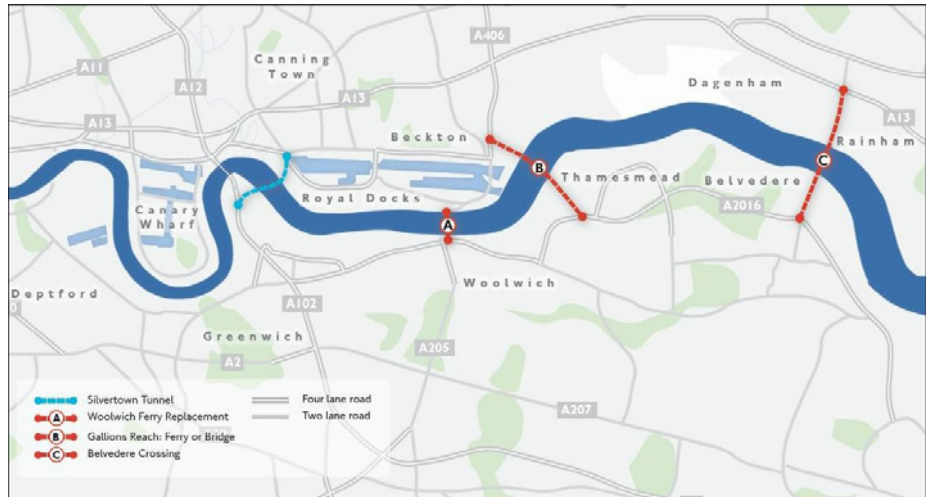
East London River Crossings

Transport for London (TfL) have published the results of their latest consultation on new crossings of the Thames River to the East of London, which have been demanded for many years. They got over 7,000 responses to the consultation, the vast majority from local boroughs such as Greenwich and Bexley. Over 98% of respondents expressed support for new crossings.

The proposals included a new tunnel at Silvertown to relieve the volume of traffic at the Blackwall Tunnel and cope with minor disruptions, a replacement ferry at Woolwich, a new ferry or bridge at Gallions Reach (linking Thamesmead to Beckton) and a crossing at Belvedere.

Many people wanted both a bridge at Gallions Reach and Belvedere.

As this writer said in response to the consultation, a number of people made comments that more crossings are needed, and that implementation needs to take place sooner rather than later. Improved crossings have been debated for very many years, with no ultimate action taken. There is surely a general feeling that prompt action is now required because it takes years to construct new bridges and the problems experienced by those in South-East London in particular (as they have difficulty accessing the rest of country let alone north London) will only get worse.



There was some opposition to a new ferry at Woolwich (although the existing ones are reaching the end of their useful life), with some arguing that more capacity would increase congestion as vehicles queued for the ferry, that ferries are unreliable and that a fixed link might be preferable.

There were similar objections to a ferry at Gallions Reach with

most people supporting a bridge instead for the same reasons.

There was also overall support for a bridge at Belvedere although concerns about increased congestion, increased air pollution, the costs and likely time-scales for construction were mentioned by objectors.



Transport for London are now to do further work to study the concepts of new bridges at Gallions Reach and Belvedere and will also consider the option of using tunnels rather than bridges. Tunnels might release more land for development. The impact on traffic flows, the environment, possible charging regimes and funding for those schemes will now be developed.

Comment: The outcome of the consultation and TfL's decisions on which options to pursue are sensible. But there is a grave danger that the projects will get delayed, or ultimately be thwarted by those who oppose an improved road network as happened with the previous bridge proposal.



Car Turntables

For those of us who live in London, where there is often no room to swing a cat on our driveways, and it can be tricky to back out onto busy roads, there is a solution. Just install a turntable on your driveway. One was spotted recently on St Pauls Cray Road in Chislehurst - see photo above. The starting price for such devices is about £5,000.

Parking Regulation Changes

Under the headline "Government delivers on parking promises to help local shops", Government Minister Eric Pickles has announced a number of changes to parking regulations. These will apply nationwide but will have particular relevance in London where boroughs aggressively exploit the shortage of parking and their ability to raise revenue from parking. The changes are:

1. The use of CCTV "spy cars" will be banned from being used except to enforce bus lanes, bus stands, red routes and school entrances (these are basically areas where not just parking is an enforceable offence but simply "stopping" incurs a penalty).

4. One particular useful provision is that local residents and firms can now petition a council to initiate a formal review of parking policies in their area, with councillors subsequently taking a vote on action to be taken.

For example this might be useful to obtain a review of the recent proposals in Bromley to increase parking charges substantially, but councillors will still ultimately decide on the matter. How many signatures do you need on the petition? The Government suggests a "low threshold" should be set by councils and mentions the figure of 20 people.

Communities Secretary Eric Pickles said:

"We are ending the war on drivers who simply want to go about their daily business.

Comment: it is not clear why these should be made exceptions to the general rule as they are enforceable by traffic officers in the normal way (there are rules available that enable the issuing of tickets where cars drive away as soon as a traffic warden appears).

2. Drivers will be given ten minutes grace at the end of the expiry of a parking ticket.

3. Revised statutory guidance will ensure that drivers will not be fined for parking at out-of-order parking meters, that using parking enforcement policies to generate a profit is prohibited,

For too long parking rules have made law-abiding motorists feel like criminals, and caused enormous damage to shops and businesses.

Over-zealous parking enforcement undermines our town centres and costs councils more in the long-term. Our measures not only bring big benefits for high streets, motorists and local authorities - they put common sense back into parking."

In summary these changes are a useful step in the right direction, but will surely not stop councils trying to raise as much revenue as they can from motorists.

(Postscript: Regrettably Mr Pickles lost his Ministerial job in the Government reshuffle after the General Election. The reward for doing a good job?).



that bailiffs do not use overly aggressive action, and parking adjudicators will be given stronger powers to hold councils to account on issues such as poor signage.



Greens Lose Brighton

Another casualty of the recent elections was the loss of control of Brighton council by the Green Party. It was the only council in the country controlled by the Greens and their unpopular policies included the introduction of a wide-area 20 mph speed limit and raised parking charges (other councils please note!). The Council is now run by a minority Labour group who have pledged to review expensive proposals to revise the A23 road which runs to the sea front (the Valley Gardens project). Chaos was common under the Greens—one Green councillor joined street protests to save a city centre tree, after she herself voted to fell it to make way for a cycle lane.

Minicabs and Rickshaws Under Attack

Boris Johnson is planning to cap the number of minicabs in London. Along with the growth of usage of cab hailing apps such as Uber, the use of minicabs has been rising rapidly in the last couple of years. This is allegedly contributing to worse traffic congestion. For example the number of licensed minicabs has grown by 20% in the last year to reach 78,000.

A Uber spokesperson was quoted in the FT as saying "It would mean higher prices, fewer jobs and would actually result in more congestion as people resort to using their own car again in the City".

The Licensed Taxi Drivers Association, who represent black cab drivers, supported the move. They have been very critical of the rise of minicabs, and pursued a court action to challenge the legality of the use of booking apps.

Boris Johnson is also looking to ban rickshaws which clog up streets in the evenings in Central London and are a potential hazard, but does not currently have the legal powers to do so. He is looking to the Government to assist on that.

Meanwhile the head of Britain's largest minicab company, Addison-Lee, has attacked the new licensing regime for taxis that will apply from 2018 (as part of the plans for the ultra-low emission zone). This requires taxis to be zero-emissions capable by 2018.

Mr Griffin of Addison-Lee says the vehicle types required to meet this legislation do not exist - which in essence probably means electric only vehicles, not hybrids.

Editor's Comments: if a limit is placed on London minicab licenses, surely they will just be based outside of London and drive in when required. It is not clear how this legislation can be easily enforced unless cabs from outside London are to be banned. Of course this is one of the unintended consequences of the London Congestion Tax (a.k.a. "Charge"), which encouraged people to switch to buses, taxis and cycling. All three create more congestion and the first two are usually more polluting than private cars - which is why we still have a NOX problem.



The Size of TfL

Few members of the public understand the size of Transport for London (TfL) and how it dominates the transport policy in the capital. For example, the number of full-time equivalent staff is now 30,377 which is substantially above budget. Some 21,000 are employed by rail and underground systems, but there are 4,227 in "corporate" and there are 270 people working on cycling projects alone.

Like all large bureaucracies it is unaccountable to its customers—it only reports to the Mayor and getting an answer to questions or some action out of him is not easy. He had more important matters to deal with even before his recent election as an M.P.

It Pays to Challenge PCNs

One way that TfL finances its operations is by issuing PCNs (Penalty Charge Notices) for infringement of box junctions and other moving traffic offences.

Most people pay up without challenge, but not your Editor. For the second time in 5 years, I recently rejected a PCN in London on the grounds that there was no infringement of a yellow box junction on Lee High Road. The answer from TfL was "*Due to an administrative error the above penalty charge has now been cancelled*". This time they did not even wish to take it to PATAS.

Follow the Blog

The ABD London region now has a blog so many of the articles herein first appeared there. The address is:

<https://abdlondon.wordpress.com/>

Please take a look at it and post your comments on the articles there (or of course send an email to the editor). Note that articles on topical news will be posted there first although they will still continue to be summarised in this newsletter.

You can register to "follow" the blog so you get notified of any new articles as soon as they appear.

Contributed articles to the blog are also welcomed.



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Address Changes

Don't forget to notify the ABD of any change of postal or email addresses. You may otherwise miss out on future copies of this newsletter without noticing that they are no longer being delivered.

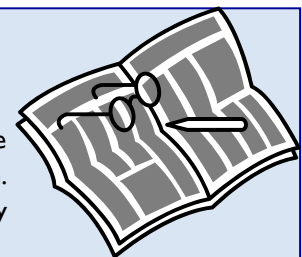
About the Alliance of British Drivers (ABD)

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

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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 anyone else who has an interest in traffic and transport issues in London. All material contained herein is Copyright of the A.B.D. or of the respective 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. The ABD London Region also publishes a blog which can be found here: <https://abdlondon.wordpress.com/>



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