

ABD London News

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Editorial

The main article in this edition is on the results of the consultation in Croydon on a wide area 20 mph scheme. There is also a mention of some other London boroughs who are implementing such schemes.

Even in Croydon the published overall result was close between those who supported and opposed the scheme, and it is very clear that it was rigged by unethical supporters.

It was very obvious from my attendance at one council meeting in Croydon that councillors were not likely to listen to reason. Their dedication to their manifesto commitment and reliance on dubious arguments from cyclists, 20sPlenty and other vociferous groups suggested to me that they intended to push it through regardless. That is exactly what has been happening.

But the fight for sanity and reason is not yet over in Croydon. Remember there is no proven road safety benefit in such schemes.

In reality the council is jumping the gun on a proper study being undertaken by the Department of Transport on the benefits or dis-benefits of such schemes. But it is very clear road users are already being inconvenienced, or are simply ignoring such limits.

If anyone reading this letter needs assistance from the ABD to oppose wide area 20 mph schemes in London, please contact me.

Lastly apologies if you think you might have missed an issue of this newsletter—the last one was in May and the gap was simply due to pressure of other business on my time. This is not the only newsletter I produce as I also write one on stock market investment!

Contributed articles on transport topics in London are always welcomed, and there is now also a blog that covers topical subjects (see page 6).



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Quotes of the Month

“Roads are there to move goods and people around, and they’ve been grid-locked for the rest of London road users”..... Richard Maffett of the LTDA—see article on page 3.

“Four fifths of all journeys in this country are by road, yet we rank behind Puerto Rico and Namibia in the quality of our network. In the last 25 years, France has built more than two and a half thousand miles of motorway - and we’ve built just 300”..... George Osborne in his Budget speech—see page 4.

“If you want a problem solved, beware politicians bearing gimmicks”..... Evelyn de Rothschild in the Financial Times – see page 6.



Croydon 20 - Consultation Results Rigged

Croydon Council have released the results of their consultation on a wide area 20 mph scheme for North Croydon. As readers may know the ABD distributed a leaflet in the area and otherwise made representations on what we considered a very biased consultation. See this web page for more information:

www.freedomfordrivers.org/Croydon20.htm .

The council reported that 50.4% of residents were in favour with 45.0% opposed (non-residents were ignored of course despite the fact that many will be using these roads).

But looking at the results more closely it is very apparent that there has been an attempt to rig the result.

How was this achieved on the paper responses? Allegedly by some councillors and their supporters actually taking masses of paper forms and getting personal signatures on them by canvassing. One way to rig the result is simply to discourage those opposed from signing, or to discard those completed by those not in favour. Or of course it could be by simple submission of fraudulent entries which is a lot easier to do on paper than on-line.

Councillor Bee said *"I am delighted that a majority of residents in the north of the Borough want to see reduced speed limits on their roads to make them safer"* - surely an inaccurate statement in more than one way.

The main method of response to the consultation was via the councils web site as with most public consultations nowadays, but for the few people not on the internet they could phone in to get a paper form. The council did not distribute a paper response form themselves.

The results of the consultation split between on-line submissions and paper show a very different story. They give 42.5% FOR versus 53.1% AGAINST on the on-line submissions (total 2824 submissions) but 90.7% FOR versus 4.0% AGAINST in the paper submissions (total 535). Now anyone who has been involved in public consultations knows that it is very rare, if not impossible, to get a response of more than 90% in favour of anything. And clearly the paper responses swung the overall vote. Why should the results be so different on paper responses to on-line?

For example, most of the residents did not respond to begin with.

The ABD is writing to the Council Leader and Chief Executive to challenge the probity of this consultation and the apparent rigging of the result. There will be a further formal public consultation on this matter and we will be making representations to that also.

Clearly if the Council does not reconsider this matter then when it comes to any future consultations of a similar nature in Croydon, we will know exactly how to get the right result.



Some streets to be affected above.



London Leads the Rest of Europe

But London residents may not be pleased to hear that London is now the most congested city in Europe, having recently overtaken Brussels according to a report in the Financial Times.

The average London driver spent 96 hours stuck in traffic last year, a rise of 14 hours on the year before according to data from Inrix. The cost of this congestion was reported as being \$8.5 billion.

Continued on next page



London Leads (Continued)

Explanations given were population growth, a strengthening economy, on-line shopping causing a rise in light vans, and construction projects.

Garrett Emmerson, Chief Operating Officer for London Streets (part of TfL) suggested this was because "We are a medieval city in many ways, certainly in Central London" which implied it was difficult to do much about it.

Comment: Mr Emmerson is being disingenuous. Not only has London failed to improve its roads and add more capacity over many years unlike other major cities, it has actually been reducing road capacity. The reduction of the Embankment, a major east-west route, from two lanes to one is an example.

This has contributed to a major increase in traffic congestion in central London in recent months which has been blamed on the road works to implement the cycle superhighway, but that congestion is very likely to be a permanent new feature in London.

Challenge to Embankment Superhighway

The previous article was about rising congestion in London and the impact of road space reductions such as the cycle superhighway on the Embankment. But London taxi drivers are not letting the matter rest. They have now lodged an application for a judicial review in the High Court on the grounds that TfL should have sought planning permission before beginning construction.

London taxi drivers are of course one of the groups who have been most severely impacted by road space reductions in London and have been threatening legal action for some time. Richard Maffett of the Licensed Taxi Drivers Association (LTDA) suggested that cyclists safety could have been improved by other means and said "Roads are there to move goods and people around, and they've been gridlocked for the rest of London road users".

Comment: One cannot but agree. See our main web site News page for the representations we originally made on this subject. The photograph below shows the recent congestion on Lower Thames Street that has already resulted (if you wonder why there is no traffic on the nearside lane, that's because it's held up further back in a jam).



Vehicle duties and other Budget Changes

Because of the popularity of fuel efficient car models that fall into lower tax brackets, the tax base was being eroded. In future most vehicles will be placed in a single category - a standard rate of £140 per year. But luxury cars (defined as those costing more than £40,000) will be taxed at a surcharge of £340 per year for the first 5 years.

Wealthy private investors might have to buy their Bentleys and Roll-Royces second hand to avoid high annual road tax. Only zero emission vehicles will be duty free.

It is not clear what logic is being followed here as it will turn the existing system on its head and result in a lot of distortion to sales of more expensive vehicles, particularly around the £40,000 limit.

The good news though (if future Government's stick to it) are that all vehicle duties collected will be put into a separate "Road Fund" which can only be spent on roads.



To quote the Chancellor, "*Four fifths of all journeys in this country are by road, yet we rank behind Puerto Rico and Namibia in the quality of our network. In the last 25 years, France has built more than two and a half thousand miles of motorway - and we've built just 300.*"



Islington 20mph Everywhere

The London Borough of Islington is proposing to introduce a 20mph speed limit on all roads in the borough. At present their wide-area scheme does not cover a few main roads such as those roads controlled by Transport for London (typically "Red routes"), but Islington are introducing this change by simply introducing a "Consolidation Order" to extend coverage. That's rather than do a fake and manipulated consultation as in Croydon.

Transport for London now seem to be supporting the extension of 20mph speed limits to other major roads in places such as Tower Hamlets, Camden and the City of London. They will of course be enforced by the police as has already been taking place in Islington.

There has been no wider public consultation on these proposals but the ABD has already objected to this change on the following grounds:

1. It is simply unreasonable to impose a 20mph restriction on main routes and will result in a considerable slowing of traffic and hence an increase in journey times.
2. There will be no road safety benefit as a result of this change as it has been clearly demonstrated in other parts of London, and in the rest of the country, that introducing such limits does not reduce casualties.

Indeed in some cases they have increased.

3. This change pre-empts the results of a Government study which has been commissioned by the Department of Transport which is investigating the benefits (or otherwise) of wide-area signed-only 20 mph schemes.

4. There has been no proper public consultation on this matter as there should be.

Hammersmith & Fulham

The London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham have also been consulting on a wide area 20 mph scheme.

The results are not yet available but they are not expected to be particularly conclusive one way or another.

Croydon Closure of Norbury Ave.

Another recent example of the attitude of councillors and council staff in Croydon to road transport was the closure of Norbury Avenue for a 3 month "trial period".

This is what one Croydon resident had to say before it took place "Croydon council has agreed to allow a "charity" to close the main access road (Norbury Avenue) to Norbury Station. They are closing the road at a point which divides the rich part of Norbury and the poor part of Norbury. The rich part of Norbury want to have no cars on their road and they can all walk to the station in 10 minutes or less.

These self-interested parties have managed to convince a council that they are entitled to quiet space, despite having a huge park on their doorstep.

They've tried to hide behind making it friendly for cyclists and have got cyclists to sign up to this. Does an entire road need to be closed for cyclists? They could create cycle lanes and separate these off, which would achieve the same result. I have nothing against cyclists getting safer options on the road, I would welcome it.

Not just that, public transport in south London is not great. There are no buses or trams connecting the area being impacted.

The poor part of Norbury they are looking to cut off are the ones that use the road to access the station by car. This is absolute social discrimination because the well-off residents want to shut out everyone else so that they are only ones to be able to drive to the station or walk if they choose as its very close for them, so either option being only open to them.

The application to the council was made by a charity and allowed to go ahead without any consultation or notification to the residents that are going to be impacted (i.e. the ones being shut out). This is a privileged abuse of power and complete social injustice. The 'trial' closure has been agreed for 3 months and the 'test' of whether it was successful or not will be does it reduce cars and create a 'quiet' space for residents.

If the proposal was to reduce cars and was replaced by a tram service or another train station that was easily accessible then that would make a huge difference.

Instead they are cutting off access to a station used by thousands of people on a daily basis. All in the guise of safer and more open space (despite a huge park being completely accessible to these residents).

The real intention is to discriminate and shut out the poorer part of Norbury from accessing the station and improve the house value of the well-off residents."

Well of course it will! But only for those that live on that street. The argument was so that people could have a quiet area; these are the same residents that have a large park behind their houses!! Norbury Park runs parallel to Norbury Avenue.

The residents behind this action want the park all to themselves as well as the road. And the Croydon Council is allowing this to happen. It's facilitating discrimination against the poor.

The closure is due to start on 26.06.05, and this has happened with no notification or consultation.

The Council should be ashamed at facilitating such self-interest of a very small group of people and discriminating against so many others that use the road.



Trial Abandoned

There were so many objections to the above scheme that it was actually abandoned before the 3 months period for the trial had expired.

Editors Comments: It would seem that the new controlling political party in Croydon (the Labour Party) have yet to learn how to listen to the electorate and are dedicated to doing good and pursuing their manifesto commitments regardless. They may find that a difficult path to follow if they wish to stay in power as the Green Party found in Brighton, or the LibDems in the London Borough of Richmond.



Street Lighting

Another good example of why it is wrong to jump to conclusions on road safety matters is that of reducing street lighting. Many councils are reducing street lighting illumination levels, or cutting it out altogether overnight, for the sake of economy. With council budgets under pressure, there are substantial cost savings to be made. Street lighting costs £300m per annum in the UK.

But many people said it would result in more accidents. It is well known that road accidents rose sharply during the second world war when street lights were shut down.

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine have issued a study of 14 years of data from 62 local authorities.

Their conclusion is that reducing lighting shows no evidence of an impact on road accidents. Neither is there any obvious link to crime levels.

Billionaire Speaks Out

It is not often that the Financial Times provides a platform for those who oppose current transport policies in London, but they did on the 24th June. They published an article by billionaire financier Evelyn de Rothschild of the well known banking family. It is very well worth reading, and it certainly stimulated some debate.

It's title was *"On your Bike, Boris—Londoners need transport that works"*.

To quote a few choice sentences from the article:

"It is 12 years since the congestion charge was introduced in London—yet the centre of the City is often at a standstill, for reasons that defy common sense".

"And who truly believes the planned cycle superhighway along Victoria Embankment will do anything but slow the snake of cards along the river to a near standstill? Not everyone cycles Mr Johnson."

The writer concludes by suggesting the next Mayor needs more than a winning smile and a bike. It is certainly good to hear some public criticism of the perverse transport policies followed in London in the last few years by parties of both the left and right.

Air Pollution

Yet another report has been published, this time by King's College, London, suggesting that thousands of people are dying prematurely due to air pollution in London (note "prematurely").

Indeed they suggest that this is as many as 9,400 people which is of course many times more than the number killed by road accidents. They blame particularly the fumes from diesel vehicles (particulates and NO₂), but there was also a substantial amount of pollution in London that blew in from outside the capital.

Note though that not only is their report based on 5 year old data, but it is also "calculated". In other words it is not measured in the same way as road deaths.

Their figures are estimates based on various assumptions, extrapolations and have therefore a wide possible "degree of confidence" in their accuracy.

Note that buses, taxis and goods vehicles are of course the major sources of vehicle diesel fumes. In the meantime it has been reported that faulty new Routemaster buses (which are hybrid vehicles and are supposed to run on batteries for part of the time) actually emit more fine particulates than the older buses they replaced according to an investigation by LBC Radio. And it seems they have been running mostly on diesel due to suffering battery malfunctions.



Follow the Blog

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

<https://abdondon.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.



Registering to Receive This Newsletter

This newsletter is free of charge and is sent approximately bi-monthly to anyone who cares to request a copy. It is sent via email (as a link to a web page from which you can download it). To register for a free copy simply go to this web page: www.freedomfordrivers.org/Newsletters.htm and fill out the box to be added to our mailing list.

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

Contact and Publisher Information

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