

ABD London News

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

In this Edition

- **GLA Scrutinise Traffic Congestion in London**
- **Mayor Supports More River Crossings**
- **Tower Bridge and Shorter Street Closures**
- **Cable Street Road Closures**
- **Transgender Traffic Lights**
- **Profits from Yellow Box Junctions**
- **Speed Awareness Courses and Police Waivers**
- **Community Road-watch and Speed Awareness Courses**
- **Safer Lorries to Help Cyclists and Pedestrians**
- **Richard Branson Survives Speed Hump Collision**

See the last page for publisher and contact information.

Editorial

The main topic in this edition is traffic congestion in London. A perennial subject of complaint by road users which has lately got substantially worse. It's not difficult to identify the reasons why—see the article on page 2, and our submission to the Greater London Assembly inquiry into the subject, for the answers.

One titbit of news on this topic that came to my attention recently was an announcement by Transport for London (TfL) of changes to the Congestion Charge (a.k.a. tax). They have finally conceded that it has nothing to do with reducing congestion, and has not done so. It is now to be renamed the “London Road User Charge” (LRUC).

After the latest article on the closure of Shorter Street (see page 4), Leon Daniels of TfL has admitted that this was to prevent too much traffic funnelling onto Upper Thames Street rather than the previous excuse given. Similarly traffic lights on the Highway as far back as Canary Wharf have been artificially retimed to slow

traffic from entering the City. But as the Financial Times article mentioned on page 2 said, TfL is beginning to run out of road to hold back traffic queues and these technological tricks may soon be exhausted.

Ultimately London's traffic congestion problems, and the associated air pollution are self-inflicted. The main cause of air pollution, and the traffic that creates it, has been a series of traffic management schemes in recent years across the capital.

The result has been a large number of congestion hot spots. But there were no studies of the environmental impact of such schemes, and no cost/benefit analysis of them. The air pollution caused may well outweigh any road safety or other health benefits. Vehicles have been getting substantially cleaner but that is not reflected in air pollution in London.

This has surely been a monumental failure of leadership.

Roger Lawson
(Editor)



Quotes of the Month

“London is close to proving you can take away all private cars and still have chronic congestion. There needs to be a policy about what the roads are for”.....Tony Travers of the LSE—see article on page 2.

“Traffic levels [in London] have been fairly steady over the past four years; they have basically been the same. However, traffic speeds have fallen noticeably. If it isn't down to extra vehicles, it's down to a reduction in capacity”.... Dominic Jordan of Inrix in the Financial Times.





GLA Scrutinise Traffic Congestion in London

The Greater London Assembly Transport Committee is currently undertaking a "scrutiny" of traffic congestion in London.

They have apparently become concerned about recent increases in congestion. For example they report the following:

- *A reduction in traffic speed. On London's A-roads, average speed fell from 16.3mph in July 2013 to 14.8mph in July 2015.*

- *Excess waiting times for buses have increased from an average of one minute in 2013/14 to 1.2 minutes in 2015/16*

- *Journey time reliability on the TfL Road Network (major roads) has fallen from 89 per cent in 2013/14 to 87 per cent in 2015/16.*

Some of this increase has been blamed on the increase in the number of minicabs (private hire vehicles).

Also the use of booking systems such as Uber and other similar tools has possibly promoted the rise in private hire vehicles.

But the removal of road space and such projects as the Cycle Superhighways are surely the main cause.

The ABD has submitted evidence in a paper to this Scrutiny which you can read from the link given below.

In brief we argue that the cause is lack of consideration to the impact on the road network of projects that damage it, the failure to develop a proper road network in London, and a simple failure to spend enough money on it.

Congestion Scrutiny Submission:

<http://www.freedomfordrivers.org/GLA-Transport-Committee-Traffic-Congestion-2016-09-13.pdf>



The Financial Times published a supplement entitled "London and the World" recently which contained a very good article on the subject of transport in London.

One quotation from it by Tony Travers of the LSE is: "*London is close to proving you can take away all private cars and still have chronic congestion. There needs to be a policy about what the roads are for*".

The article notes how a 30 minute road journey in early 2015 now typically takes 5 minutes longer. It also reports on the decline in private car use. Only one in twenty people entering London in the morning peak now arrives by car when it was double that in 2000.

It is very clear that private cars and their drivers are not the cause of the congestion but whenever congestion is discussed the debate tends to centre on how to encourage more public transport use, or "modal shift" as it is called.

But one of the problems in London is the growth of the economy and the associated increase in population—a policy promoted by former Mayor Ken Livingstone. Back in 1944 plans were proposed to disperse London's population to make the place more liveable. Hence we had the "New Towns" around London developed in the 1950s and 60s such as Crawley, Basildon and Milton Keynes. Businesses were also encouraged to relocate.

This was reversed by Livingstone who seemed keen to attract more residents, even immigrants. Was this for political motives? Who knows but it clearly affected the political complexion of the capital which has steadily become more socialist in nature. But the road infrastructure was not improved.

Leon Daniels of TfL is also quoted in the FT article. He said: "*Every crane you see is a building, all those buildings are eventually going to be full of people, and all those people are going to need their photocopier paper delivered*". Or he could have said toilet paper for all those new residential flats. Overall the actual recent changes in traffic volumes are small. So there are other causes of more congestion.



It includes plans for a new pedestrian and cycle bridge linking Rotherhithe and Canary Wharf but the Silvertown Tunnel to relieve congestion at the Blackwall Tunnel (see photo left) will go ahead and a bus shuttle service for cyclists will be included in that.

Mayor Supports More River Crossings

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has committed to building more Thames River crossings in a press release on the 4th October. These are to be "greener" and more "public transport focussed" he says.

He is also proposing to pursue an extension of the Docklands Light Railway from Gallions Reach to Thamesmead but there is no mention of a ferry or bridge for vehicles at that location as previously discussed. He has asked TfL to look at a new ferry between Canary Wharf and North Greenwich but there is also no mention of a replacement for the Woolwich Ferry where the ferries in use are nearing the end of their useful lives.

The new Silvertown Tunnel and the existing Blackwall Tunnel would be charged to pay for the construction of the former. The suggested figure is £2.50 per trip and there is a public inquiry being undertaken into the proposals of course.

Comment: This looks like a typical political compromise where Mr Khan is promoting his green credentials while at least pushing ahead with the urgently required new Silvertown Tunnel. But he has ducked some of the issues about the need for other crossings or a long term road structure plan. As Green Party London Assembly Member Caroline Russell has said, the measures appear to be "tokenistic", i.e. it's a political fudge to try and please everyone.

Below is what the ABD has said in our registration for the public inquiry.



The Silvertown Tunnel

The Alliance of British Drivers supports the proposals for a new Silvertown Tunnel on the basis that the existing traffic demand on the existing Blackwall Tunnels is higher than the capacity of those tunnels (in both directions). This results in excessive queues of traffic at most peak periods which is every expensive in terms of the wasted time of vehicle occupants. In addition if there is the slightest incident, or a requirement to close either tunnel for maintenance or vehicle recovery, the resulting traffic congestion can spread over a very wide area of south-east and north-east London. Also, the slow moving or stationary traffic that results causes high air pollution in the area.

There are currently very limited cross-river links east of central London which inhibits commercial develop-

ment and causes long detours to use other routes, particularly for large commercial vehicles. The existing bridges/tunnels are Tower Bridge, which has limited capacity with poor access roads and is also a major historic tourist attraction, the Rotherhithe Tunnel - a very old tunnel which is rated as a major safety risk even though usage is restricted to light vehicles, and the Dartford Crossing tunnels/bridge which is many miles from the centre and is also congested at peak times.

There has been clear demand for other Thames river crossings in this area for very many years, and numerous proposals for such crossings which for various reasons have not been progressed. Such crossings would enable the improvement and development of the areas east of London both north and south of the river which are major focuses for more housing and commercial devel-

opment as these areas are some of the few providing development potential in the outer London area.

Residents and businesses who reside both north and south of the river would benefit from additional river crossings, particularly those south of the river as the major commercial centres in London are north of the river and to reach most of the rest of the country requires road access across the Thames. There are limited public transport services such as main-line train or underground services that provide the access required and what there are tend to provide access mainly to central London and not to other areas. This often requires travel into and out of central London to gain access to other areas which is time consuming and expensive. More direct road links are the answer which a new river crossing would provide.



Tower Bridge Closure and Shorter Street Closure

Anyone who has driven near the City of London of late will have realised that Tower Bridge has been closed for 3 months for substantial repairs. The traffic chaos on the first few days of closure has been enormous. Clearly an area to avoid for the present.

The unreasonable and unnecessary closure of Shorter Street which is nearby in the City of

London has been covered in previous articles. It was done as part of the East-West Cycle Superhighway works and is now open only to buses.

At a meeting with Transport for London (TfL) it was suggested an alternative route from The Minories to Tower Hill for those vehicles who wanted to go west was to go via Royal Mint Street, Dock Street and East Smithfield. However an examination of that route shows that it is likely that delays of over 8 minutes would result.

See photograph below of the queuing traffic on Dock Street (and that was before the closure of Tower Bridge which will create even more difficulties).

More representations are being made on this topic.



Cable Street Road Closures

In addition to the closures of Shorter Street and Tower Bridge mentioned above, there are proposals afoot to close some roads around Cable Street which is not far away.

Cable Street (famous for the defeat of English fascists in the East End before the Second World War which was recently commemorated on its 80th

anniversary) is a road that runs east-west parallel to The Highway. It was remodelled to accept part of the East-West Cycle Superhighway (see photo on next page), but clearly the design was done in a rush and it contains many defects.

The result is conflicts among cyclists (both going at high speed in two directions on a narrow strip of blue coloured tarmac), conflicts between vehicles and cyclists and between pedestrians and cyclists.

It could therefore certainly do with improving, but the proposals, include several road closures effectively making the area very difficult for any through traffic or even for local residents.

Some of the recent growth in traffic in the area may well have been caused by congestion on The Highway caused by the traffic backing up from Lower and Upper Thames Street. But this is no excuse for creating even more congestion.

Continued on next page.



Cable Street (Cont.)

This is what the writer has said to Tower Hamlets Council on this matter (Tom Rawlings is the Project Manager):

Please also note our objections to these proposals, which I explain in more detail below.

The consultation leaflet you issued in March is grossly biased. It refers to "rat-running" when that is an emotive and unreasonable term to use.

a - The design of the Cycle Superhighway along that stretch of road was poorly done and clearly was rushed through to ensure rapid completion of that stretch. There are numerous defects that almost ensure conflicts among cyclists, or between motor vehicles and cyclists, or between pedestrians and cyclists. Any new design should try to rectify those faults without removing vehicular traffic which is essential not just to local residents.

I will not attempt to define all the problems with the existing or new proposals, but it is clear from the responses you have already received that the proposed design does not even satisfy the views of many cyclists.

I think it is most unfortunate that you appear to have consulted closely on the new design with cyclists representative groups without doing the same with vehicle users. I request that we be so consulted and I suggest you should do the same for taxi drivers, the police, ambulance services, fire service, the Freight

Roads are there to be used by anyone and a lot of the traffic is clearly either local residents or vehicles serving local residents or businesses. Some of them may have turned off the Highway but they might be doing that simply to access locations further north than where the Highway would take them.

The note suggests that 76% of the road users are "non-essential" through traffic but that might apply to almost any road. Roads are meant to take vehicles from one location to another.

Transport Association, etc. Transport for London (TfL) could no doubt give you a list of relevant consultees if you do not have one. <end>

Anyone who uses the roads in the area of Cable Street should contact me, or write to Mr Rawlings at Tower Hamlets Council with your objections.

A photograph of the western end of Cable Street is shown below.

The results of the consultation as reported in the "Briefing Note" are exceedingly biased. The pie chart showing the numbers against include the automated responses from "The Wheelers" and "LCC" (counting 176 in total), but completely ignores the 700 signatures you received on an objecting petition. Why?

Please advise who organised the aforementioned petition and their contact details.

As regards the proposals themselves I have the following comments:



Be assured there are a lot more cyclists on that road during rush hours.

The proposals by Tower Hamlets Council are of course an example of how the road network is being degraded and road space removed in the name of improving road safety and the conditions for cyclists, without a proper examination of the issues and how they could be tackled by other means.





Transgender Pedestrian Lights

You have all seen those red or green lights indicating when pedestrians can cross a road or junction.

Normally they show a stationary red person, or a green walking person. Whether they are male or female is not obvious.

But since June, TfL have been installing "diversity" pedestrian lights - perhaps to support those confused about their own sexual-ity. But if anything they are just confusing ordinary members of the public who have no idea what the symbols mean.

See the photograph above that shows one of the lights in Trafalgar Square, but there are various designs of male, female and mixed symbols.

There is of course one thing wrong with this gesture. The design of pedestrian lights was previously laid down in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2015 document which had legal force (available on the web).

But the 2016 version does not appear to contain the same definitions. Is this a case of TfL using a new found discretion to use alternative signs? If so it is a mistake. Traffic signs should not be subject to gesture politics but should be consistent so that they are clear, not misleading and safe to follow.

Profits From Yellow Box Junctions

The BBC have been investigating the revenue that London councils make from fines on drivers who infringe yellow box junctions. In essence London Boroughs and TfL make millions from them.

The use of cameras to enforce these junctions has caused the figures to grow rapidly. For example one junction in Fulham has earned the council £2.4m in PCNs in 18 months.

The London Councils with the top income from this source are Hammersmith & Fulham with £2.1m and Waltham Forest with £1.7m in a year. Kingston, Hounslow and Barnet are also high but Transport for London control some junctions and they made £884,891 from Homerton High Street/Fire Station alone.

More information was provided by the BBC in the BBC London Inside Out programme, no doubt available from i-Player. It showed how some junctions create enormous driver frustration, and road rage, because it simply is not possible to avoid infringement at some (particularly where no traffic lights are present), or it is easy to accidentally infringe.

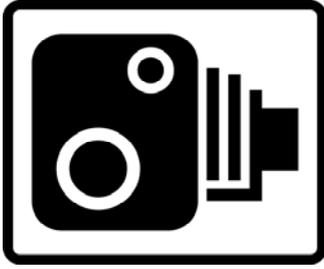
Comment: This is a pernicious fund raising system (yet another such scheme in addition to those covered in our last newsletter). Some years ago there was a study done of the benefits of box junction enforcement and in fact it showed that traffic flows were reduced as drivers were hesitant to enter.

There are clearly also some junctions where the traffic has particular problems because of the design of the junction or because of traffic lights before or after the junction. If in doubt whether your case merited a fine, you should go to appeal - as this writer has done more than once.

And successfully because as a normally law abiding driver I do not appreciate being issued with a fine. Evidence from one of the cases a few years ago in Lewisham is shown below (fine rescinded). But regrettably many people simply pay up.

The rule about box junctions is simple. You should not enter it unless your exit is clear. But as one commentator said, if there is a lot of infringement then the council concerned should look at the design. Unfortunately they have no incentive to do this and there is no overriding authority that can instruct them to behave more appropriately.





Speed Awareness Courses and Police Waivers

Our last edition covered the launch of a campaign by the ABD against the misuse of speed awareness courses to make money to finance police activities. It is led by the Editor of this newsletter.

That was even though the trial was poorly designed and before the trial was completed and the results fully available. Ever since there have been wildly exaggerated claims about their benefits, typically reported by "Safety Camera Partnerships" and others who have a direct interest in justifying their existence. I won't even attempt to present all the evidence on that point in this article because it is a complex and confusing story that others have commented on.

The AMPOW Campaign (Against Misuse of Police Waivers) is not against speed cameras specifically, but about how they are being funded. This is distorting road safety policy and leading to massive numbers of people being fined, and losing their licence. This is one area of the law where the "crimes" are victimless and the need to show "intention" is redundant.

The following is an article that was published in the national ABD newsletter on this topic

Why You Need to Support the AMPOW Campaign

The ABD has recently supported the launch of a campaign named AMPOW against the use of police waivers and the offers of "speed awareness" courses. It's had a positive response from many members of the public but others say why should we try to stop people escaping from being fined and having points added to their license? Well there is one simple reason: the rise in the number of speeding convictions and the growth in the number of speed cameras in the UK is

It results in millions of people being threatened with prosecution for accidental infringements of speed limits when they might have been driving perfectly safely for the traffic and road conditions that applied at the time. This is surely wrong.

So how has it arisen? Simply because the original structure allowed fines for speeding to be diverted from the Crown to the Safety Camera Partnerships. This enabled them to fund more cameras and more staff to operate them so as with any business they were keen to grow their empires. More income means more staff, better pay and better facilities. Clearly putting up speed cameras in locations most likely to catch unsuspecting drivers was also encouraged by this system. After lots of complaints the Government in 2007 decided that in future all fines had to go to the Govern-

ment, who would separately fund Road Safety Partnerships. But a few years later, enterprising police officers devised a way to finance camera operations (and new cameras) directly. This is by the use of police "waivers" and the offer of "speed awareness courses".

The AMPOW campaign has taken legal advice on this matter from a QC and our view is that this is simply illegal. It has never been enabled by any legislation or regulations.

Although the police have the right to "waive" prosecution where there are minor infringements of the law, to do so while accepting money from the defendant is historically seen as corruption (and is undoubtedly a criminal offence).

Simply being driven by money, not road safety considerations. You might say that money is the root of all evil to quote the bible and it certainly is in this case.

The proliferation in the number of speed cameras was initially driven by concerns that speeding (i.e. driving above the speed limit) was a major factor in road traffic accidents. That's despite the fact that figures reported by the police show that exceeding the speed limit is a contributory factor in only 5% of accidents (source: DfT). Other factors such as "failing to look properly" are much more prevalent (44% in that case). But after a few speed cameras were installed on a trial basis, the roll-out nationwide began.

Continued on next page,



Speed Awareness Courses (Cont.)

The police (and UK ROED Ltd who now operate the NDORS scheme), and Government Ministers claim that all the police get out of the fees paid by course attendees are their administration costs. But we have evidence that contradicts that claim. In addition some police forces have been receiving kick-backs directly from the course operators. See the AMPOW campaign web site for more details on some of the evidence we have collected:

www.speed-awareness.org

In reality these arrangements are being used to fund more speed cameras including mobile camera vans and the staff to operate them.

Does diverting low level speed infringers (only those exceeding the speed limit by a small amount qualify) and having them attend a speed awareness course actually change their behaviour or improve their future accident record?

Nobody knows is the answer. Only recently has the Government commissioned a study of that issue.

The AMPOW campaign is considering legal action and we are also writing to politicians so as to get a halt made to these dubious arrangements. What will we see next if these arrangements are allowed to stand? Burglars evading prosecution by attending a "burglary education" course, or minor fraudsters attending a "fraud education course". One could see a wholesale "privatisation" of the criminal justice system in due course, because that is essentially what is happening. The police could fund their operations from such schemes while ignoring the need for justice to be impartial and unpaid for (see Magna Carta of course).



But it is also encouraging the police and road safety bodies to argue they are doing something about road safety when they are not. Instead of activity being focussed on reducing accidents, it is instead focussed on making money.

In response to those who like being offered a speed awareness course instead of being prosecuted or given a fixed penalty fine, let me say this: You can only attend one course, so repeated offences may still cause you to end up in court, potentially with points and the loss of your licence. With the growing number of speed cameras, this is ever more likely however conscientious and safe you are as a driver. In addition, you will still need to report it to your insurers who may increase your premiums (comments from some police officers that you don't need to report acceptance of a police waiver are wrong).

What can you do to support the AMPOW campaign? A few simple things:

1. Register your support by clicking on the Join tab on our web site (and encourage your friends and relations to support us).
2. Make a donation to help us cover our legal and other costs (which have already been quite substantial - again this can be done via our web site - see the Donation tab).
3. Write to your Member of Parliament, via post or email, about the issue and send them the evidence (a summary document spelling out the facts is present on our web). Contact the editor if you don't know how to write to your M.P.
4. Send us any more evidence on the subject to add to our files (which is already very voluminous and is on the web site mentioned above).

Let's do all we can to defeat this duplicity and return the roads to places you can use without constant harassment by the law in the name of money making.

Roger Lawson

Follow the Blog

The ABD London region has a blog where many of the articles herein first appeared. It is present here:

<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 are posted there first although they will 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.

Community Roadwatch and Speed Awareness Courses

The "Community Roadwatch" scheme has been promoted by a number of police forces in the last few years. This is where the police train local residents to use speed guns who then report malefactors to the police who send the drivers a "warning" (one might even say "threatening") letter.

But so far as this writer is aware, such letters have no legal force. This scheme has been promoted by Transport for London and the Metropolitan police in London.

According to a recent press report, in the London Borough of Havering they have gone one step further. According to the Romford Recorder, after issuing a letter for the third time to a driver, the police will take further action by issuing a "mandatory speed awareness course" invite. It is not at all clear what legal basis the police might be claiming for having powers to do this.

Could they prosecute the driver for example if the speed awareness course invite is ignored?

This kind of scheme is effectively local vigilantism and is opposed by many. For example a poll by Populus conducted on behalf of the AA showed almost equal numbers of people in favour as opposed. As one person said, it was "just an excuse for local busybodies to interfere with neighbours behaviour" (quote from a Guardian article on the subject).

The writer is looking into this topic further.

Safer Lorries to Help Cyclists and Pedestrians

The Mayor of London has launched a consultation on proposals to improve road safety by ensuring that lorry drivers can see cyclists and pedestrians. Thousands of lorries could be banned from the streets of London as a result.

HGVs are involved in more than half of cycling deaths on London roads. Often lorries turning left and unable to see cyclists to their left are the cause. Pedestrians are affected in a similar way.

Previous proposals in this area have been changed. Now there will be a star rating system for HGVs and only those rated three stars or above will be permitted into London. The proposals would be brought in between 2020 and 2024.

But there are 35,000 HGVs (many of them serving construction sites) that are likely to be zero rated currently operating on the streets of London. There will be substantial costs in adapting those vehicles or replacing them.

The previous consultation on these proposals got a very mixed response with strong support from cyclists of course but lots of objections from those affected on the grounds that it would not solve the problems, be difficult to implement, on technical grounds and for other reasons. The ABD objected because we consider it wrong that there should be different regulations in London from the rest of the country (as vehicles do travel around). It should be tackled at a national level. If there are benefits to road safety from these proposals, why should not the rest of the country get them also?

See TfL for more information, but it does not seem that there will be any further consultation on this matter which is unfortunate.

Richard Branson Survives Speed Hump Collision

Well known entrepreneur Richard Branson has had a bad accident caused by a speed hump. When cycling in the British Virgin Islands he hit a speed hump and suffered a cracked cheek, torn ligaments and extensive bruising.

He said: *"I was heading down a hill towards Leverick Bay when it suddenly got really dark and I managed to hit a sleeping policeman hump in the road head on. The next thing I knew, I was being hurled over the handlebars and my life was literally flashing before my eyes. I really thought I was going to die. I went flying head-first towards the concrete road, but fortunately my shoulder and cheek took the brunt of the impact."*

Yes speed humps are positively dangerous. This is not the first such case reported by the Editor—see the BBRAG web site.



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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

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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