

ABD London News

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Editorial

Two very important issues are covered in this edition: 1) Traffic congestion and how to solve it in London (see page 6); and 2) Air pollution and the ULEZ (see page 2).

My views: yes we have two much traffic congestion and the existing Congestion Charge (a.k.a. "Tax") is a very blunt instrument which has not reduced congestion. Whether a technically improved system would be more effective is very doubtful. At best it will enable a few wealthy people to buy road space to the prejudice of the rest of the population.

I also think the recent decisions on the introduction of a "T"-Charge and possible expansion of the ULEZ are very misconceived. They will impose enormous costs on Londoners for very little benefit.

One of the most dubious aspects of these proposals and the associated consultations is the failure to provide any estimates of the proposed benefits (solely wildly exaggerated claims about the number of deaths from air pollution).

Neither is there any proper cost/benefit analysis provided which is the norm now for consultations emanating from TfL.



Wealthy readers are no doubt the kind of people who can afford to buy new cars whereas most of us, even if we can afford to do so, prefer to keep them for 7 years or more. The Government suckered us into buying diesel vehicles and manufacturers responded to the tax incentives. But should the Government spend money on a diesel vehicle scrappage scheme. I think not because the impact may not be perceptible.

It is of course important that readers of this newsletter respond to the public consultations on these topics, i.e. don't just rely on the ABD to do so. But also for those who live in London you should write to your Greater London Assembly Member to give your personal views. They can be found here:

www.london.gov.uk/people/assembly

Roger Lawson (Editor)

Quotes of the Month

"Diesel cars are simply not the worst offenders for putting nitrogen dioxide and nitrous oxide into the air. The worst offenders are aircraft and heavy goods vehicles, with buses and black cabs also contributing.".....
Hammersmith & Fulham Councillor Greg Smith—see page 3.

"We are part of the London public transport system and yet we will be denied access"..... Taxi driver David Morris in the Financial Times on the closure of Bank junction—see p.8.



Air Pollution and the ULEZ

The EU Commission has given the UK a final warning over air pollution in the country. That particularly covers London but also 15 other cities.

Similar warnings have been given to Germany, France, Italy and Spain. There are persistent breaches of NO₂ limits and the European Commission may decide to take legal action if there is a failure to act within two months.

If not the UK could be taken to the Court of Justice of the EU, although that is one Court that will be affected by the UK departing from the EU. The UK Government is to publish a revised plan to deal with the problem in April.

Meanwhile London Mayor Sadiq Khan is not waiting for that. He has published the results of the public consultation on a new Emissions Surcharge and extensions to the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). The proposals were covered in our last newsletter (Dec 2016) and would impose major extra costs on road users of many kinds in London. The consultation was done without any data on the likely benefits in terms of reduced pollution, and without any cost benefit analysis. TfL neatly summarised our response to the consultation in this paragraph:



"The Alliance of British Drivers (ABD) is opposed to the implementation of the ULEZ. The ABD believes the consultation is fraudulent and that the ES/ULEZ may be a money making scheme for TfL."

Well they at least got that right, but of course with such biased information being provided, one might expect that the result would be as the Mayor desired.



Here's a brief summary of the results (the full data is available on the internet).

1. From 23 Oct 2017 some older vehicles will be required to pay a surcharge of £10 to enter the Congestion Charge (a.k.a. Tax) zone.

This is called the Emission Surcharge (ES or "T"-charge). They have provided a web site to enable you to check your vehicle for compliance with this and the ULEZ.

This is now definitely proceeding as it was a statutory consultation. Some 63% of respondents supported it, with 30% opposing. Most also supported the proposed start date.

2. Other consultation questions were non-statutory and there will be another consultation on those. One question was on the proposal for an earlier implementation of the ULEZ to 2019. This received 63% support versus 29% opposed.

3. A third question was on expansion of the ULEZ to within the North and South Circular. This received support from 59% of respondents versus 34% opposed. There was similar support for bringing that in during 2019.

Lastly the latest document from TfL repeats the very dubious claim that "The equivalent of around 9,400 deaths per year in London are attributed to air quality related illnesses".

This is simply wrong and exaggerates the scientific research that has been reported.

It confounds possible contributory factors with actual "causes" of death.

There is probably some impact on life expectancy from living and working in higher air pollution in London, but the impact is not nearly as clear cut as that and may simply mean some shortening of life in heavily polluted areas.

Note: there are about 48,000 deaths per year from all causes in London. Not a single one has air pollution assigned as a cause of death.

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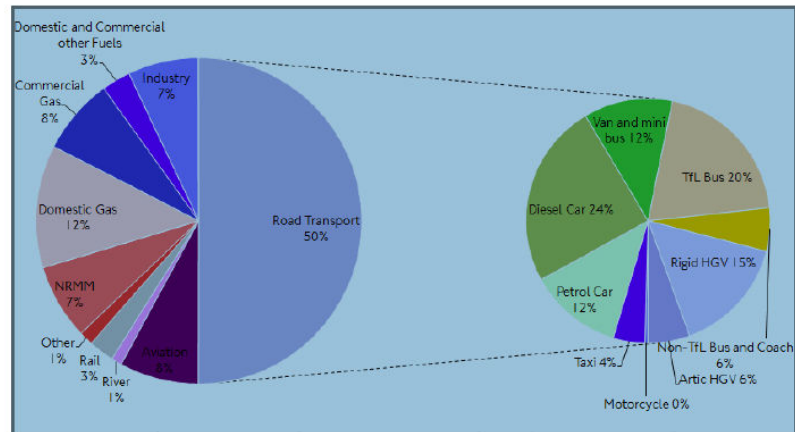


Air Pollution (Cont.)

Another example of data distortion is contained in a report from Clean Air in London: *"The Department of Health estimates Bromley (6.1%) has the lowest death rate in London attributable to air pollution and Westminster (8.3%) has the highest"* but that is based simply on categorising illnesses and causes of death as being affected to a lesser or greater extent by air pollution.

So lung cancer is included even though the vast majority of deaths from it are undoubtedly caused by smoking. There could of course be other reasons for the differences between Bromley and Westminster related to life styles and the demographics of the two populations.

Figure 3: NO_x sources in Greater London in 2013 (LAEI 2013)²⁰



Even if all cars were banned from London, there would still be very considerable air pollution from buses, taxis, HGVs, domestic heating, commercial activities, rail transport, etc, as you can see from the chart above. The message though from these facts is that cleaning up the rest of London's air to be as good as Bromley's could only reduce the health impact of air pollution to a

limited extent at best and the other demographic factors might mean there is no improvement in mortality. The cost of doing so may be outweighed by the other benefits on which money could be spent to improve the health of the community. For example on the NHS which is clearly desperately short of money as the national media keep telling us of late.

Diesel Parking Charges

The **London Borough of Westminster** is to trial an increased on-street parking charge for diesel vehicles. It will be a trial scheme in the Marylebone/Fitzrovia areas starting in April. Diesel vehicles will pay an extra 50% on the normal charge of £4.90 per hour.

The object is stated to improve air quality by deterring diesel vehicle usage and ownership. The additional money raised will be used to subsidise public transport schemes.

There are potentially two problems with this. Firstly it looks like a revenue raising measure when the law is quite clear on this matter (see *Camden v. Cran* and the more recent *Barnet* case). The Acts of Parliament that enable councils to charge for parking do not permit "revenue raising" measures.

Secondly, how will parking enforcement staff know whether a vehicle is diesel powered or not? Some models can be powered by either and the badge on them may not differentiate.

Will parking attendants have access to DVLA records or will they be relying on the honesty of vehicle owners?

Hammersmith & Fulham

Diesel surcharges for permit parking are also an issue in the Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham.

Councillor Greg Smith, Leader of the Conservative Group on the Council, had this to say at a recent meeting: *"It is nonsensical from an environmental perspective. Diesel cars are simply not the worst offenders for putting nitrogen dioxide and nitrous oxide into the air. The worst offenders are aircraft and heavy goods vehicles, with buses and black cabs also contributing."* He suggested the Council should encourage renewal of domestic boilers to cut pollution.

Continued on next page.



Diesel Parking Charges (Cont.)

He also said "Bizarrely from a party who are supposed to be about fairness and the redistribution of wealth, it is deeply unfair to those who can least afford to change their vehicle AND beneficial to the owners of more expensive, fuel inefficient cars.

Indeed, we must ask ourselves why is it that a Labour Council is taxing the owner of a diesel Ford Fiesta on Crookham Road in my ward more, but the £119,000, 16 feet long Porsche Cayenne Turbo S parked next to it gets a tax break by still only paying £119 a year, despite taking up five feet more in length!

Or perhaps they are proud of wanting to charge the owner of the 75mpg Skoda Fabia on Mimosa Street more to park, but the £132,000, 15mpg, 550hp, 5.0 Litre V8 Supercharged Petrol, Range Rover SV Autobiography parked next to it less.

Is that what the Labour Party has become? Champion of the supercar? Promoter of the Porsche? Friend of the Ferrari? All great cars, but it just doesn't add up with what they say they are trying to achieve.

To be generous, Labour are confused on this matter. To be more accurate, I think they are engaged on a mission of spite – desperate for a headline, but without any substance or foundation."

Comment: Yes these kind of taxes are token environmental gestures when there is little data provided on what the benefit will be. As so often these days we get policies promoted without any proper cost/benefit analysis and the cost of introducing these schemes is simply ignored. It's truly "gesture politics" of the worst kind.

Westminster Council is also a particularly bad example of a lack of democratic accountability and information provision. Try searching their web site for information on these proposals, reports on the topic, minutes of meetings that considered the issue, public consultations, or ways to object etc. You can't find anything!

More Cyclists and More Delays

Transport for London (TfL) have published a report giving the impact of the new East-West and North-South Cycle Superhighways. Although these have attracted large numbers of cyclists, they have also led to major delays for motor vehicles. For the latter, some journeys across London take 15 minutes longer (e.g. as much as 50% longer).

This is particularly so in the evening peak rush-hour on the east-bound journey. This is mainly due to removal of one traffic lane.

Comment: Yes this was one of the most ill-conceived changes to the London road network one could imagine.

It was introduced without any justification by a proper cost/benefit analysis and by a Mayor keen on cycling. It just demonstrates what can happen when so much power is put in the hands of one person with little democratic control over what they do.

Who would have thought when he was elected that he would promote such an ill-conceived and damaging scheme?



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 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 they appear.

Cycle Super-highway 11 Goes Ahead, but Another Halted

There have been lots of complaints about the proposed Cycle Superhighway 11 between Swiss Cottage and the West End running through Regents Park.

Transport for London (TfL) have made some minor changes to the scheme but otherwise it is going ahead. Some further consultation on the Regents Park routes is being done however. However the objectors are not at all happy.

The main campaign against said *"TfL and Camden Condemn Thousands of Residents And Commuters To Years Of Congestion And Misery"*; and

"Despite months of detailed meetings with us and other local stakeholders where we have repeatedly raised your concerns about unacceptable traffic 'reassignment' onto residential streets, increased pollution, increased disruption and severe adverse impact on the emergency services, disabled, businesses and road users who rely on motor vehicles, TfL (and Camden Council under the shameful direction of their Councillor Phil Jones - Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Transport & Planning) have condemned thousands of people to years of

misery from CS11 construction works and associated impacts.

TfL have only made minor, meaningless tweaks to the original CS11 scheme including: Allowing a right turn from the bottom of Fitzjohns Avenue / College Crescent into Finchley Road northbound and re-introducing a banned turn right from Finchley Road into Hilgrove Road (which we pointed out to them will cause traffic to back up all the way along Finchley Road)."

Editor's Comments: Yes it seems that TfL is yet again ignoring the views of road users other than cyclists in the name of the policy to get us all cycling.



There is in essence a major democratic deficit in the heart of London with the Mayor, and particularly TfL, not being accountable to the public.

Cycle Superhighway on Westway Abandoned?

Reports in LTT and elsewhere have suggested that the Cycle Superhighway planned to run along the A40 from Paddington to Action which was proposed to run along one lane of the Westway has been axed by the Mayor.

This would have taken up one lane of that elevated road, but with existing traffic volumes that might not have been an issue. The Mayor is now denying that the route has been abandoned, although the exact routing may be changed.

Comment: This all seems very odd to me because that seemed to be one of the few cycle super-highway routes that would not have created massive congestion and inconvenience to other road users, as the others have done. It seems likely there were doubts about its usage by cyclists, and perhaps the cost was a problem when Sadiq Khan's budget for TfL is proving to be ever more unrealistic.

TfL Business Plan: Enormous Bus Subsidies Still Rising

Transport for London (TfL) have published their latest "Business Plan". It gives a net cash deficit of £1.3 billion in 2015/2016 which is forecast to rise to £1.5 billion in 2016/2017.



That just shows how expensive some of Boris Johnson's policies have turned out to be, which will be aggravated by the new Mayor's commitments on fares. But it does forecast near breakeven in later years as fares income rises, presumably as a result of the growing population of London and some new capacity.

Continued on next page.



Bus Subsidies (Cont.)

Mayor Sadiq Khan is looking to reduce costs in TfL by £4bn which he has described as "flabby". Will he be successful in reducing the bloated empire that is TfL? We will have to see, but this writer is sceptical. It's always difficult to do so when an organisation is so unaccountable to the public for its activities as is TfL.

One problem is that bus usage has been declining - falling from 2,323 million in 2015/2016 to an expected 2,289 million this year. This is blamed on "reliability problems".

Which is no doubt partly arising from more traffic congestion compounded by the negative impacts of the cycle superhighways.

Bus subsidies in London are running at about £600 million per year.

This is expected to rise to £680m in 2020/21. Perhaps needless to point out to readers that these are not trivial sums.

The population of London is 8.6 million (including adults and children). So that means that the typical household probably contributes over £200 per annum to support bus passengers.

That figure ignores the cost London residents pay for the "Freedom Passes" paid for by the London Boroughs that enables pensioners and others to obtain free bus travel, and some other subsidies that TfL bus operations receive.

You can see exactly why bus usage in London is higher than in any other world conurbations other than three Chinese cities - because it receives greater subsidies. Surely it's time to reform this gravy train so that bus users pay for the real costs of their travel? Which of course they would be very reluctant to do.



Solutions to Traffic Congestion

The London Assembly Transport Committee have been conducting an inquiry into Reducing Traffic Congestion in London. Their report that invited comments and suggestions contained data showing that congestion in London has significantly worsened in the last couple of years.

Indeed many of the comments submitted provided further evidence of that and few people who have driven in London of late would disagree. Average daytime traffic speeds on week-days in London are now down to 7.8 mph. See previous blog post for more information.

You can see the ABD's submission to the inquiry from the link at the foot of this page.

So what bright ideas did the Committee come up with to tackle congestion (i.e. what are their recommendations)?

Firstly the Chair, Caroline Pidgeon, suggested that the Congestion Charge was initially successful but it was "no longer fit for purpose". It has been undermined by various changes such as the increase in private hire vehicles, and more goods vehicle deliveries driven by internet buyers having goods delivered to their offices. These were common themes noted by others.

Comment: The "initial success" of the Congestion Charge (a.k.a. tax) is a myth as we first reported in 2006 and repeatedly thereafter.

See the ABD London web site for further information.

Instead of reducing congestion it has just been used as a money raising measure by TfL to support the Mayor's budgets - and the new Mayor is even shorter of money than the last having made some rash promises to get elected. Despite more than doubling the tax from that originally imposed, traffic continued to grow for the reasons given above and because of the general increase in the population and business activities.

One can therefore agree it was not "fit for purpose" and it was also a very poorly designed system where one had to pay the charge just by driving a few yards into the central zone and spending one minute there, while another driver who drives around all day within the zone pays the same.

ABD's Submission on Traffic Congestion:

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

Traffic Congestion (Cont.)

In other words the "tax" was not related to road usage, or focussed on the most congested areas.

Flat rate pricing is seen not to be effective so the Committee is recommending a more general "road pricing" scheme. How this would be technically done is not explained (Comment: politicians don't have to worry about the *practicality of what they are proposing*). They are also talking about covering a wider area than the existing central area with such a scheme, i.e. a congestion tax across the whole of London!

And they want it integrated with the new ULEZ enforcement system.

They also wish TfL to encourage local boroughs to implement a Workplace Parking Levy along the same lines as in Nottingham.

As regards the problem of delivery vehicles, they suggest TfL should encourage more consolidation, and also pilot a ban on personal deliveries to staff. (*Comment: this may be sensible if they are a real problem but surely more evidence on what the impact of such deliveries is should first be ascertained*). Click and collect at tube and other stations should also be encouraged.

There is also a suggestion that Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs or "mini-cabs") should pay the Congestion Charge. At present all licensed taxis and PHVs are exempt from the Congestion Charge. Why? Well it's probably because it was a sop to the vociferous taxi lobby to prevent them objecting when the scheme was introduced, but it seems odd that they should have such an exemption. After all they contribute to congestion very substantially. Private cars are a now a small proportion of traffic in central London (roughly 18%). It's all the HGVs, LGVs, taxis, PHVs, and buses that are the major contributors to congestion, and air pollution of course.



The Committee accepted that one of the contributions to traffic congestion was road space reduction in recent years. Lots of respondents complained about the impact of the Cycle Super-highways which has been one major cause.

In summary, this is a very disappointing report, with proposals to spend money on replacing the Congestion Charge with a new, larger system when it won't reduce congestion. The unsatisfied demand is so huge that any road space will quickly fill up however the charge is structured.

You can obtain the Committees Report and all the responses from the London Assembly web site.

Note that one Committee member, David Kurten from UKIP, made a contrary statement to the Committee's recommendations.

He supported reform of the congestion charge system but not a wider road pricing scheme. He also opposed Work Place Parking Levies, and expressed concerns about the Cycle Super-highways. *Comment: Very sensible reservations indeed.*

In addition the GLA later published an Addendum to the report that indicated opposition from another Member. This is what it said: *"Views of Steve O'Connell AM GLA Conservatives: would like to clarify his views on Recommendation 1 of report, London stalling: Reducing traffic congestion in London. Whilst Steve O'Connell is willing, in the interests of cross-party working, to see proposals brought forward for how road-pricing in London might work, he remains strongly opposed to the principle of road-pricing and would be almost certain to oppose any specific proposals."*

Why was this not published in the initial version of the report? We do not know.

If you want to read some of the comments submitted by various organisations to get some idea of how difficult it is to drive in London nowadays, try the one submitted by the "Driver-Guides Association" on page 84 of the report - they mentioned the closure of Shorter Street for example which the ABD has also attacked; and the one submitted by the Professional Tourist Guides on page 159 - they quote an example of it taking 2 hours to drive from the National History Museum to St. Pauls (approx. 5 miles) - one can believe it and it is doubtful that is exceptional at all now the Embankment has been reduced to one lane.



Bank Junction Closure

As first reported back in December 2015, the City of London Corporation are proceeding with a plan to close Bank junction to all but buses and cyclists. Black cab drivers are incensed by this proposal and ran several demonstrations at that junction and near the Houses of Parliament recently. This caused widespread traffic chaos.

According to a report by the City of London Corporation, the benefit will be a significant reduction in casualties (often pedestrians and cyclists) .



In addition they say that average traffic journey times will be neutral or slightly positive. It will also improve bus services based on the modelling done.

All general traffic will be banned from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm from travelling through the junction, which is one of the key parts of the road network in the City of London.



Although much traffic already avoids it because it is very heavily congested, it will certainly cause a lot of difficulties for taxi drivers. Diverting traffic will surely make other alternative routes busier. The scheme will start in April, and last for 18 months on an experimental basis but such schemes tend to become permanent. The Corporation's report says "The experimental scheme will not solve all safety aspects at Bank, but will make a significant difference without the need for infrastructure changes, which will take more time to plan and deliver".

More information is available on the City of London Corporation's web site.

Comment: One of the key sources of congestion at Bank are in fact buses of which there are many and who move slowly.

The configuration of the junction and the narrow pavements (insufficient for the number of people exiting Bank underground) are major problems and a cause of the poor accident record. So one cannot dispute that some measures needed to be taken to tackle these problems.

However there were other alternatives, such as simplifying the junction, or allowing entry only from certain directions that would have surely helped. Closing this key junction to traffic will be similar to the redesign of other key junctions in central London such as Trafalgar Square and Aldgate which has contributed so much to reduced journey times in central London.

Taxi driver David Morris was quoted in the Financial Times as saying "*We are part of the London public transport system and yet we will be denied access*".

He suggested there would be horrendous gridlock as a result and questioned where all the traffic will go. One cannot but be sympathetic to his views because this looks like another step that will reduce the capacity of the road network of London. One cannot continue to remove road space and expect congestion to do anything but get worse.

If you wish to object to these plans, I suggest you write to Gillian Howard at City of London Corporation, Guildhall, PO Box 270, London EC2P 2EJ. Or send an email to bankarea@cityoflondon.gov.uk . There does not appear to be any formal consultation process as yet and given the timescale for implementation it would seem they are not going to bother with one.

The ABD has already submitted an objection.

Croydon Proceeds with 20 Mph Zones

The London Borough of Croydon are pushing ahead with imposing wide-area 20 mph speed limits on the whole of the borough. There are two regions already committed to implementation after public consultations, with three more to go.

On the public consultation on the last region, the North-East, they only got a narrow margin of support in response to the question "Do you support the proposal to lower the speed limit to 20 mph for residential roads shown in the plan".

There were 50.5% responses which said "Yes" versus 47.1% who said "No". Only responses from residents within the region were accepted though so all visitors and other road users from other parts of the borough or outside the borough were ignored.

The ABD put some effort into raising awareness of the public consultation which at least meant they got over 3,100 responses.

But for the remaining three areas, the Council have decided to do away with a wide public consultation despite previously having agreed that would be the process and will only perform a "Statutory Consultation" as required by law.



In other words, they will advertise the proposal and await responses. They will then consider them and like all such consultations, they can they ignore the result if they don't like what is submitted.

Now everyone who knows Croydon will be aware that the three remaining parts of the borough are more rural in character than the first two. So it was very likely that they would have voted the other way and opposed a wide area 20 mph limit.

It would therefore appear that after only narrowly winning the votes of residents in previous consultations (and in fact rigging the results in the first area as we previously reported), they have given up on proper public consultations because they feared losing the vote.

That is what happens when dogmatic politicians take control of a Council and decide they know best, as is clearly the case in Croydon.

Their idea of democracy is surely very different to most people's. The Statutory Consultation will ran from the 18 January 2017 till 15 February 2017 (in other words it has closed although anyone on the ABD contact list should have been notified). At the time of writing we are awaiting the result of the public consultation and the decision by the council on the matter.

We will provide more information on the outcome when known.



Photos above are of some of the roads in the first two areas that are having 20 mph speed limits imposed.

See this page of the ABD London web site for more information:
<http://www.freedomfordrivers.org/Croydon20.htm>



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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

Contact and Publisher Information

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