

FFDF News

Freedom for Drivers Foundation Newsletter

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Editorial

This edition has been somewhat delayed and shortened because your editor had to spend a week in hospital. Let me say a few words about my stay in an NHS hospital, which was not for the first time. The popularity of the NHS is falling and quite rightly. It is a dys-functional organisation that does not compare well with the systems in other countries (bar the USA).

I cannot complain about the treatment I had but the big problem is the culture. Treating patients as children to be organised and disciplined, not as people. It was also very wasteful, keeping me in bed when I was only “walking wounded” as the army might say when I could have been treated at home for most of the time at less cost. How do you reform the culture of the organisation? With great difficulty is the answer. Easier to start from scratch.

The same applies to Transport for London (TfL) whose financial woes I cover in articles in this edition.

TfL has been chronically mismanaged since it was first created. It has its priorities wrong and is full of people who think it is doing a great job. That’s mainly because they come almost solely from a public transport background. Even the Mayor, who heads TfL, is the son of a bus driver.

The result has been a concentration on funding the bus network out of public taxation instead of making the users pay for it. When something like TfL is so massively subsidised it distorts the economics and leads to irrational decisions. Despite the praise being bestowed on the new Elizabeth line (Crossrail), it’s been horrendously over-budget and way overdue which has contributed to TfL’s financial woes.

It’s yet another example of TfL mismanagement and the only solution to fix TfL is to scrap it and start again. We need a new body to manage London’s transport network with less political interference.

Roger Lawson
(Editor)



Quotes of the Month

“There isn’t any legislation which accurately enables any type of licensing or regulation. It’s time – it’s high time.. ”.....Grant Shapps on regulation of pedicabs—see page 3.

There has now developed in Government an anti-car attitude as opposed to car management, a hostility to the motor vehicle rather than how we can manage this.....”..... John Spellar—see page 7.

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The Police, Crime, and Courts Act is Now Law

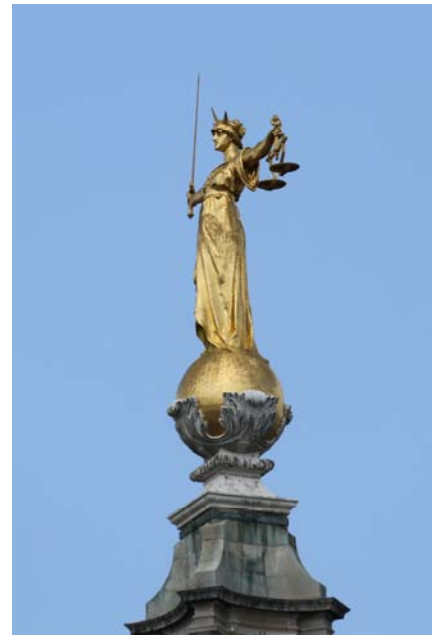
The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act is now law as it has received Royal Assent.

This Act includes the strengthening of police powers to tackle non-violent protests that have a significant disruptive effect on the public or on access to Parliament. For example demonstrations by such groups as Extinction Rebellion have closed roads, delayed emergency services and incurred millions of pounds in costs to the police. They have also been exceedingly noisy in some cases thus creating disruption and annoyance over a wide area.

The new Act does not stop peaceful demonstrations but it will hamper the activities of extremist organisations who wish to grab attention to their cause by creating disruption. It is surely therefore a positive move to clarify and reinforce the law in this area.

There are many aspects of criminal law tidied up in this Act but one negative aspect is Clause 67 of the Bill which provides a statutory footing for the charging of fees for courses offered as an alternative to prosecution for fixed penalty offences. It gives the police discretion to offer an educational course to a motorist who has committed a low-level driving offence.

This is as an alternative to a fixed penalty or prosecution and avoids liability to a criminal conviction, penalty points and higher fine.



As we have pointed out this for the first time makes it legal for the police to solicit a payment to waive prosecution and can be used by the police to raise funds.



For example it can be used to generate more offences by financing more speed cameras. See <https://tinyurl.com/4exh8f6e> for more information.

The new Act also increases the maximum sentence for the offences of causing death by dangerous driving and causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs to a life sentence. There is also the creation of a new offence of causing serious injury by careless, or inconsiderate, driving. The offence is committed if a person causes serious injury by driving a car or other mechanically propelled vehicle on a road or other public place without due care and attention or without reasonable consideration for other road users. But the drafting is ambiguous. What is meant by “serious injury” and it could mean that a simple driving error can result in someone being sentenced to a custodial sentence.

These changes are unprincipled in nature and should not have been made.

Queen’s Speech

The Queen’s Speech in Parliament on 10/05/2022 outlined the Government’s legislative programme. One item of interest for road users was the inclusion of a Public Order Bill to give the police new powers to tackle disruptive demonstrations.

It is likely to mean that “locking on” or gluing oneself to objects will become a specific criminal offence, as will Interfering with key national infrastructure. Police may gain greater powers to stop and search, in a bid to prevent disruptive protests. “Protest Asbos,” or “serious disruption prevention orders” will also become part of the Public Order

Bill – imposing conditions on repeat offenders. Penalties for obstructive behaviour will increase also to deter those who repeatedly offend and who frequently take little notice of the current fines imposed.

These proposals brought the predictable complaints from groups such as Extinction Rebellion.

Comment: This legislation is long overdue. Peaceful protest to bring issues to the attention of the public should be protected.

But behaviour that disrupts people’s lives, incurs large costs in transport delays and policing needs should not be accepted. Let us hope that this legislation gets through Parliament quickly and is not diluted by obstructive behaviour in the House of Lords.



Pedicabs/ Rickshaws to be Regulated

Grant Shapps, Transport Minister, has announced that he intends to introduce regulations for pedicabs, otherwise known as rickshaws. At present they are not regulated at all and local councils have no powers to impose regulations on them – for example in the interests of road safety, the safety of passengers or to avoid a public nuisance.

They are a big problem in some parts of London, particularly in the evening.

Mr Shapps said in Parliament that “There isn’t any legislation which accurately enables any type of licensing or regulation. It’s time – it’s high time – I know Parliament has expressed

interest through a series back-bench bills that for one reason or another...have not proceeded through Parliament. We will do that on Government time in the Transport Bill”.

Comment: some system of licensing is surely required and it would be a good idea to extend that to all pedal cyclists.

There was a time when most cyclists used to adhere to the Highway Code but now they tend to cycle through red lights and if they are involved in an accident they just walk away knowing they cannot be traced.

All users of vehicles on our roads should be traceable and insured. I would even extend it to the users of e-scooters which are proving to be positively hazardous for pedestrians with numerous reports of personal injury accidents involving them. There is very obviously a great deal



of infringement of the current regulations that should stop e-scooters being used on pavements or even on roads unless they are rented as part of a regulated trial. The law is being blatantly ignored.



Local Elections Postmortem

Now that all of the local council election results are in, it’s worth reviewing the results. Particularly in London where many local issues such as the problems caused by the LTNs should have had an impact.

Overall the Conservatives lost hundreds of council seats in the country in what was seen as a complaint about the cost of living, the dislike of Boris Johnson as a

result of “partygate” and other national issues. This was a particular problem in London. But there were very mixed results when the detail is examined.

In London Labour won Westminster, Wandsworth and Barnet from the Conservatives but they lost Harrow to the Conservatives.

Also Labour lost the elected Mayor role in Tower Hamlets to Lutfur Rahman who had previously been banned from standing after an Election Court found him guilty of illegal and corrupt practices in 2015. LTNs were a significant issue in Tower Hamlets.

Croydon has a new Conservative directly elected Mayor in Jason Perry who won by a narrow majority after a recount. Let us hope that he introduces some reforms after the previous regime bankrupted the council. The overall result in terms of other

councillors was that Labour lost overall control of the Council with the Conservatives having the largest number of councillors.

In Bromley there was a minor upset in Chislehurst ward where newly formed party Chislehurst Matters won all three seats after running a very effective campaign using social media and focussing on a few local issues. But Conservatives still retained overall control of the council with 36 seats won. Former council leader Colin Smith was re-elected so presumably he will remain in post which is surely to be welcomed as Bromley has generally been a well-managed borough both financially and otherwise in recent years.

In Lewisham the Labour Party retained control – it will remain a one-party state.

Continued on next page.



Elections (Cont.)

Mayor Damien Egan actually increased his vote slightly to 58% of all votes cast, although that still equates to only 20.3% of the electorate on a low turnout of 35%. In Lee Green, the ward where there was a lot of controversy over the LTN, Labour retained all three seats but with reduced voting percentages.

Comment: there is clearly a lot of political apathy in Lewisham and campaigns by opposing parties seemed to be lacklustre.

In Lambeth, Labour retained control although the LibDems gained a few seats. The Conservatives were nowhere. In Islington, Labour won 45 of 48 seats to retain control with the Green Party winning the remaining three.

Labour retained control of Greenwich on a 34% turnout. In Southwark Labour retained control and the opposition to the LTN in Dulwich seemed to have little impact although in that ward the Conservatives and LibDems effectively split the opposition vote.

In Enfield where there was substantial controversy over LTNs the Conservatives reduced Labour's overall majority on the council from 29 to 13.

In summary the dislike of LTNs had some impact on the results in some boroughs but the national image of the Conservatives did not help with Labour talking mainly about issues such as the economy (which local councillors have no influence over) and ignoring local issues.

The outcome also depended to a large extent on the campaigning effectiveness and expenditure in

the local wards, with Chislehurst Matters showing how revolutions could overturn results even when there were no clear manifesto or policy commitments. Personal engagement can make a big difference.

Politics is also a long game and turning around the preferences of people to vote for individual candidates or platforms rather than a party as they should do is not easy.

Minor Accident in Chislehurst

It has been reported that a pedestrian was hit by a bus at or near the war memorial junction in Chislehurst on the 8th April at 10.35 pm. This would appear to be an incident that will be classified as a "minor injury". It has prompted renewed calls for a pedestrian



phase at these lights which has been used as part of a political attack on the Bromley Council Conservative administration who recently rejected a petition on this subject.

It would be wrong to jump to conclusions over the cause of this incident until the full facts are known, but it's worth pointing out that accidents late at night to pedestrians are often the results of alcohol consumption.

But let's look at this issue rationally rather than emotionally. Firstly is this location a particularly accident black spot? One can review that by looking at the Crashmap web site (see <https://tinyurl.com/mryhe4c5>) where you can easily see all the accidents in the area in the last few years. There are hundreds, and the nearby Chislehurst High Street is clearly an even worse problem area despite the fact that it has several pedestrian

crossings which unfortunately many pedestrians ignore and choose to cross elsewhere. The same issue also arises at the War Memorial junction if you review details of the incidents at or nearby.

One of the key principles when deciding whether to spend money on road safety measures is to look at the cost/benefit ratio and where the most benefit can be obtained. There are limited funds available for road safety projects so the money needs to be spent where it can be most effectively deployed.

Looking at the past accident data is much better than relying on often ill-informed opinions on where the most danger lies. The number of minor accidents is a good pointer as large numbers indicate there is high risk of more serious injuries or fatalities (KSIs).

KSIs have much higher values attached to them however you care to value them, but large numbers of minor accidents can point to where road safety budgets should be spent.

So people concerned with road safety should look at the statistical data on past accidents which they can easily do and you can obtain details of police reports on accidents (STATS19 reports) by using Freedom of Information Act requests. These provide a lot of information on the causes of accidents.

We don't need to guess at the causes of accidents or where money should best be spent. You can estimate the benefit of introducing a pedestrian crossing for example, as against the cost; and compare it with the benefit of spending the money elsewhere.

Continued on next page.



Accident in Chislehurst (Cont.)

You can also calculate the possible disbenefit if traffic is delayed by a new crossing, or diverted onto minor roads.

That is what sensible councils like Bromley do. The unwise ones instead react to political clamour for simplistic solutions and as a result waste a lot of money on ineffectual solutions.

You can see that in London boroughs such as Lewisham and Croydon where wide area 20 mph speed limits and speed humps everywhere have been installed at enormous cost and where the result has been a worse road safety improvement record than Bromley.

Money has been wasted on ineffective solutions.

Bromley used to suffer from the busybody syndrome 20 years ago before I got involved in road safety issues. People who thought they knew best when they knew little about the science and failed to study the data.

We certainly do not want that scenario back again when money was wasted on ineffective schemes (such as the speed humps on Watts Lane/Manor Park Road).

Ignoring the advice of council officers is another failing of the busybodies. Good ones have both training and experience and should not be ignored unless there are very good reasons. In summary, road safety decisions should not be made by amateurs, or uneducated grandstanding politicians, who have not looked at the statistical data or the causes of accidents and who are ignoring the wider implications of their decisions.

Roger Lawson



Transport for London Performance Report – Clearly a Financial Basket Case

Transport for London (TfL) have published their quarterly performance report. It covers the quarter to 11 December 2021 and gives some useful information on the slow recovery in passenger numbers from the pandemic lows.

In Q3 demand plateaued however and is still only 68% of pre-pandemic levels. But to really get a good picture of how TfL is a total financial basket case you only have to jump to the Appendix.



That shows that the “Net Cost of Services” is £2,267 million (i.e. £2.3 billion of costs more than income) for the quarter. This deficit is only made up by £3.4 billion of “Grant income” no doubt mainly from central Government.

Indeed the Chief Financial Officer clearly thinks that he is doing a great job because he says “we are performing better than budget” while staff numbers have actually increased despite passenger numbers falling.

Somebody asked me recently how much London buses were subsidised. I did not know the immediate answer although the last time I looked at this it was an enormous figure. But this report gives you guidance on it. The Appendix reports that for the Operating Segment of “Buses, streets and other operations”

there is a deficit of £754 million for the quarter and that probably includes the income from the Congestion and ULEZ charges.

It is clear that TfL are still relying on enormous Government bail-outs to stay afloat and that shows no signs of changing.

Bus Routes Being Cut - And Not Before Time

The BBC have reported that many bus routes in London are being cut or reduced in frequency – see link below for details.

Up to one fifth of routes will be affected and there is a public



consultation to which you can respond – see link below.

Continued on next page.



Bus Routes (Cont).

Such cuts are long overdue. Not only do so many buses slow other traffic but TfL is running up massive deficits on bus services which have actually got worse during the pandemic as ridership fell.

In essence TfL continues to run totally uneconomic bus services for which the customers are unwilling to pay. Cuts to bus services should have been made long ago. The population of London supports these services from which a minority benefit out of the taxes they pay which is unfair and unreasonable. Why should cyclists, tube and rail users and motorists subsidise bus services?

BBC: <https://tinyurl.com/ycythtyj>
 TfL Consultation: <https://tinyurl.com/bd32f5nd>

He even suggests that his proposals will help to reduce traffic congestion. Again a nonsensical claim unless he manages to discourage vehicle use altogether which is clearly the plan. An outright attack on freedom of movement and the choice of how you travel.

His claims about the impact of the ULEZ in central London are grossly exaggerated. Emissions have reduced mainly because the vehicle fleet has been renewed as older vehicles are scrapped and central Government tax incentives have encouraged more fuel-efficient vehicles (including EVs).

The Mayor says that only one in five drivers in London will be impacted but the financial impact on them will be devastating.

The Mayor has proposed a vehicle scrappage scheme to support



ULEZ Expansion

The Mayor of London is pushing ahead with expanding the ULEZ to the whole of London despite strong opposition from outer London boroughs. He has launched a public consultation (see link below) on his proposal. The plan is to expand it in August 2023 and anyone with a non-

low income and disabled people and he mentions a reimbursement scheme for NHS patients but no details are provided. A vehicle scrappage scheme is likely to be very limited in scope and likewise any reimbursement scheme for patients (there is one already but it's administratively complex and limited so don't expect it to help much).

There will be a large cost involved in installing all the extra cameras required to enforce the scheme, which TfL can barely afford, and once installed it will give the Mayor the ability to charge all vehicles to drive in London. Don't expect the Mayor to give up on a new revenue source!

Make sure you respond to the public consultation below and object!
 ULEZ Expansion Consultation: <https://tinyurl.com/yevz8sbx>

compliant vehicle will need to pay £12.50 per day – that means older vehicle users, particularly diesel cars and vans.

He claims this is necessary to clean up London's air but it's really about raising tax to fill the yawning hole in TfL's budget.

The consultation document claims it will lead to a 9% reduction in NOx emissions in outer London and a 6% reduction in CO2 emissions but will anyone notice the difference?

These changes will not have any significant impact on the health of Londoners and the Mayor's comments about cutting "harmful emissions to help save the planet" are just nonsense. It won't save the planet from anything but it will cost many Londoners an enormous amount in paying the charge or having to replace their vehicles.



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Any new FFDF blog posts are notified by Twitter and you can add your own comments.

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To get the latest news as it appears, follow the blog. Enter your email address at the foot of any recent blog post to be notified of new posts.

Petition to Halt Spread of 20 MPH Speed Limits

A petition on Change.org has been created by James Burdass which reads: "Stop every road in London having a 20mph Speed limit".

More details say "Let's face it, every driver knows that London is grinding to a halt under the Mayor's transport policies. So why is it that we need more expensive to implement new anti-car 20mph speed limits?

The Mayor has said that all Red Routes within the Congestion charging zone will have 20mph limits. Yes, the main roads not the high street or residential roads. Just outside the zone, Park Lane goes from 40mph to 20mph. Progress?

For more than half a century 30mph has been the default urban speed limit in the UK. 20mph limits are expensive to implement, wasting scarce road related funding that could be better spent elsewhere, create more pollution on our streets, lead to more congestion and do not deliver the benefits in terms of casualty reduction that proponents expected.

<https://tinyurl.com/bdcre8sj>

20mph leads to slower speeds for everyone and that includes bus passengers and ambulances looking to get people to hospital. Rather than winning hearts and minds it is the backs and spines that are affected.

It is time that this was rolled back and London's main roads restored to 30mph.

Please sign it here:

<https://chnng.it/C6pwgJ6FfM>

Good News and Bad

The good news is that Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham is proposing to drop plans for a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) scheme that would charge motorists similar to the Birmingham and London schemes. But it depends on agreement with the Government. The charging scheme had already been "paused" until 2026 but now looks like it will be scrapped. Signs already put up for the scheme will need to be removed. See <https://tinyurl.com/mry9xamf>

The bad news is that the Daily Telegraph have reported that the Government is to finance Mini-Holland cycling schemes to encourage people to ditch their cars in Britain's major cities under government plans. Nineteen local authorities, including Manchester,



Hull and Nottinghamshire, are to get government funds for mini-Hollands with segregated bike lanes, traffic calming and residential streets blocked to cars. It is suggested officials have steered away from describing any of the projects as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs), which have provoked intense local opposition over road closures and claims of increased congestion on boundary highways in some areas. But they did acknowledge some had LTN features.

Comment: I cannot understand why people think that Holland is a good example to follow. There may be more cycling in some Dutch cities such as Amsterdam but nationally there are more casualties to cyclists than in the UK and traffic congestion is also worse. There is no evidence that introducing such schemes increases cycling in the UK.

Cycling remains a fair-weather transport mode only followed by young males in flat locations. If people calling for mini-Hollands actually bothered to visit Holland they would see a very different picture. The only good aspect is that Holland has encouraged more off-road cycle paths that separate vehicles from cyclists. Instead of spending £200 million on encouraging cycling the Government should spend it on improving the road network to improve road safety and cut traffic congestion.

Another good article in the Telegraph was entitled "Why Boris and the elite are determined to wean us off the car". It said "Exasperated motorists are feeling pushed out of the picture with rising fuel costs, congestion charges, low traffic zones and speeding fines, and motorists, especially those who travel into cities, feel they are being hit from

every direction. Dead ahead there are closed off roads in low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs); to the left there are automated cameras monitoring their every move; to the right low emission zones and 20mph limits. And all around are parking charges and fuel costs that put a hefty dent in your wallet"; "There has now developed in Government an anti-car attitude as opposed to car management, a hostility to the motor vehicle rather than how we can manage this", says former transport minister John Spellar. He puts this down to a London-centric approach to transport that focuses on the problems cars cause in congested cities and ignores different conditions in other areas. As Spellar points out, working Britons outside the capital – particularly manual and shift workers – often rely on their vehicles to get to work.





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Address Changes

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

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The Freedom for Drivers Foundation (FFDF) is an 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 road tolls. We also campaign for more enlightened road safety policies. More information on the FFDF is available from our web site at www.freedomfordrivers.org

Contact and Publisher Information

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