



London Region Newsletter

The Association of British Drivers - No. 33 (November 2012)

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A new organisation with a new name – the Alliance of British Drivers!

Editorial

One major item of news to give you is that the Association of British Drivers has merged with the Drivers Alliance. Both organisations have promoted the interests of motorists and campaign against road pricing, congestion charging, unjustified levels of taxation on car usage, draconian parking policies and other ways that private vehicle use is prejudiced. We support more enlightened road safety policies and more investment in road transport infrastructure. Bearing in mind that the “war on the motorist” is still being fought by those opposed to individual freedom, the directors of the ABD and the DA believed it was time to combine our strengths and operations.

The merged body will be called the Alliance of British Drivers (“ABD”) and will continue to fight for the fair treatment of ordinary road users, so the letterhead on this newsletter and our web site will be changing.

The Association of British Drivers was formed in 1993 as a membership based, not-for-profit organisation. It has fought many successful campaigns in the interests of road users.

The Drivers Alliance was formed in 2008 by Peter Roberts to campaign against road pricing. Its greatest success was the collection of over 1.8 million signatures on an e-petition against national road pricing.

ABD Chairman Brian Gregory had this to say about the merger: “This new organisation, which will combine the membership and leadership of the two bodies, will strengthen our presence on the national scene and enable us to campaign more effectively. The economies of scale achieved from a larger membership base will also help our operational efficiency and fund raising. We sorely need a stronger body to campaign for the rights of road users and the merger will give us just that.”

Peter Roberts said this; “The freedom to reach your place of employment, your family and friends is under threat. The costs associated with owning and running a car are considerable and much of this cost is down to taxation, parking charges and congestion charges. As drivers, we individually contribute around £1,300 every year to the treasury and it is about time we had the roads, bridges and facilities we already pay for.

The Drivers’ Alliance and the Association of British Drivers have worked together to defeat Road Pricing and Congestion charging but the threats to driving are not going away. We need a strong and independent group to argue for a fair deal for drivers and this union will provide that voice.”

This change will have few impacts in the short term on activities in the London area, and this newsletter will continue to be produced on an irregular basis. If you have any questions about the merger please let me know. Likewise if you wish to become actively involved in ABD affairs to help support our campaigns and policy initiatives please contact me (contact information on the back page).

Roger Lawson, Editor

New Thames River Crossings



No not the one above which was called the Thames Gateway Bridge and which was cancelled (it would have connected Beckton with Thamesmead). Now the Mayor of London is consulting on some proposed new ideas which may be of interest to those who can live long enough.

As everyone knows who lives in South-East or North-East London, there has been a need for new crossings to cope with the demand for many years. The Blackwall Tunnel has massive queues northbound each morning, and also at other times of day if there is the slightest hiccup in traffic flows. *(Editor: only a few days ago I was stuck in a queue there when one person ran into a car at the back of the queue, and a hundred yards further on someone else had clearly run out of petrol – chaos ensued).* In addition the Dartford Crossing has frequent problems because the design capacity is being exceeded.

The main new proposals are for:

1. A new tunnel near the existing Blackwall Tunnel to be called the Silvertown Tunnel – cost about £600m.
2. A new ferry with higher capacity to replace the Woolwich ferry at Gallions Reach (between Beckton and Thamesmead), as the Woolwich ferry boats are nearing the end of their useful lives and the location tends to cause traffic congestion as queues back-up onto the road system – cost about £150m.

A previous consultation showed 90% were in favour of more river crossings with 80% supporting the Silvertown Tunnel and 60% supporting the new ferry.

But the Silvertown Tunnel would probably be charged for as otherwise there will be no money to pay for it (allegedly), and to avoid people diverting to the old one, the existing Blackwall Tunnel would also have charges imposed. *(Editor: I thought the increased toll charges on the Dartford Crossing were justified on the need to finance new crossings?)*

The earliest a new tunnel could be completed is 2021, but the ferry could be in service by 2017. Another option is to build a bridge instead of constructing the ferry but that would of course take longer and cost a lot more.

You can obtain more details and respond to the consultation on this web page: <https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/rivercrossings/consultation> . Please ensure you do so if you use these crossings (the ABD will be submitting a response but the more the better). We will no doubt be encouraging the Mayor to push ahead with these proposals (at least in some form) as soon as possible.

Old Thames River Crossing



Meanwhile plans progress for raising charges on the Dartford Crossing, but easing traffic congestion by using a free-flow payment system where there are no toll booths. A public consultation on this and the supporting “Enforcement Regulations” have just been issued which you can find here:

www.highways.gov.uk/consultations/dartford-charging-scheme-order-consultation and here: www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-18

The proposals appear to be based on number plate recognition technology as used for the London Congestion Charge System. You will need to pay in advance, or pay soon afterwards (if you remember) whenever you use the crossing (both ways).

There is no apparent mention of an “autopay” system as was introduced into the London system more recently, based on a quick review of the document (although it is still being studied), but the Dart-Tag system for regular users would apparently still be offered. In effect, you will have to phone up or use the internet to pay, and no doubt take much more of your time to do so than throwing coins in a bucket as happens at present.

Charges for cars will rise to at least £2.50 (currently £2.00) to pay for this wonderful new system. As with the London Congestion Charge system, there will no doubt be enormous amounts of revenue collected from people who forget to pay – a fine of £35 a time and rising if you don’t pay on demand. The enforcement regulations seem particularly tough – no appeal possible unless you pay first (i.e. guilty until proved innocent), and “cloning” of plates no grounds for appeal.

Needless to say that the option of simply removing the tolls so there are no delays is not being proposed now that the bridge has been paid for despite many people demanding this as it was originally promised. Again the ABD will be making submissions on this but please make your own also.

20-MPH Speed Limits



The Historic Evidence Shows 20 Mph Blanket Speed Limits Are Not Effective

There are now frequent calls from road safety fanatics for 20 mph speed limits to be imposed on all suburban roads, even major “A” roads that run through towns and cities. For example, the London boroughs of Camden, Islington and Lewisham have been promoting this idea. But the historic evidence is being ignored. Before 1930 Great Britain had a blanket 20 mph speed limit across the whole country. But road deaths in the year before this limit was abandoned were about 7,300 compared with about 1,900 in recent years. They also fell in the years immediately after 1930 when they had been rising before.

So the moral is surely that wide area speed limits are ineffective in reducing road traffic accidents and that simply putting up signs without road engineering or other measures will have negligible impact on casualties. That is exactly of course what the Department of Transport used to say.

No doubt there were some people who ignored the increasingly unrealistic 20 mph limit back in 1930, as there are some today. But the ABD has always argued that speed limit setting should be based on the 85th percentile of free flowing traffic speed which has been demonstrated to be both the safest speed and the one that encourages compliance. The ABD is not opposed to local 20-mph zones in residential streets where traffic speeds are already near that limit or can be engineered to be so (without speed humps). But expensive wide-area, sign-only schemes are not likely to be cost-effective and will have a negligible impact on actual traffic speeds, as has been well documented. Money is being wasted on such schemes which could be much better spent on other road safety measures.

(Editor: Let’s have a halt to the polemics from 20-mph supporters, and get some real science back into road safety.)

ABD Chairman Brian Gregory had this to say only recently: “As with most pet road safety ideas proposed by amateur enthusiasts — speed humps, speed cameras, etc — there is little attempt to collect scientifically sound evidence of the benefit of such ideas. No proper controlled, “double-blind” trials are undertaken. The enthusiasts rely on the strength of their rhetoric and the use of selective data to make their case. Don’t be fooled by these methods but look at the facts. And remember that all road safety schemes should be cost justified because if there are better things to spend the money on, then that is where the limited funds should be spent.”

More Information

Road traffic fatalities in Great Britain from 1926 to 2010 are given on pages 5/6 of the report entitled “Reported Road Accident Statistics” from the House of Commons Library (see www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN02198). The increase in the years of World War II is known to have arisen from people driving in the black-out without lights.

Information on the 1930 Road Traffic Act (which abolished all speed limits for cars) and the preceding 1903 Act which set a 20-mph limit are present here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Road_Traffic_Act_1930

and here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motor_Car_Act_1903

Pedestrian Fatalities in London

TRL have published a report on pedestrian fatalities in London, commissioned by Transport for London (TfL). About half of the accidents appeared to show the pedestrian at least partly to blame for “not looking properly”. In a third of cases, the pedestrians were under the influence of alcohol. Elderly pedestrians were particularly likely to be involved in such accidents. Only in one eighth of the cases was vehicle speed above the speed limit given as a factor in police reports.

(Editor’s Conclusion: you cannot make a major impact on pedestrian accidents by reducing speed limits to 20 mph or getting tougher with enforcement, but politicians still want to waste money on those rather than more effective approaches).

Speed Humps and Spinal Fractures



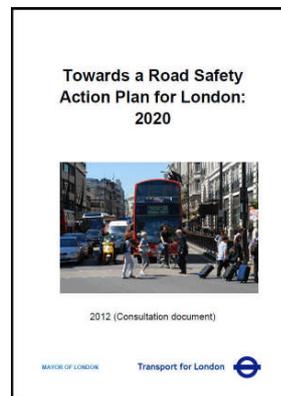
As readers will no doubt be aware, your editor has a strong interest in speed humps and the medical conditions they exacerbate. There is also evidence they actually cause such problems. A reader of this newsletter recently reported a most interesting study of hospital patients from Chile. This was a scientific study of 46 patients in one hospital over about ten years who suffered spinal injuries from riding in a motor vehicle over a speed hump.

That included fractured vertebra and an average time off work of 104 days. It seems it is particularly dangerous to sit in the last row of a bus. See

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21150664 for a reference to the full report.

(Editor: is it not astonishing that they could find so many such cases in just one hospital? It leads one to wonder what the toll of injuries might be worldwide from speed humps).

London Road Safety Action Plan



During the summer Transport for London (TfL) undertook a public consultation on road safety policy – the cover of the document is to the left. The report does contain some useful data but is otherwise more of a PR piece than a serious consultation on

options. The ABD did respond in full and you can read that on our web site – see this page: www.freedomfordrivers.org/Consultations.htm

Here’s what we said to start with: “*The major problem with the consultation document is that there are no budgets given for overall expenditure on road safety in London, and certainly no allocation between the proposed areas for action. Therefore it is impossible to determine whether the prioritization between those various areas, based on likely expenditure, is sensible or not.*

This makes it enormously difficult to comment intelligently on the proposals. Neither is there any information on the possible cost effectiveness of the different proposals contained therein.

In summary, this consultation document is therefore grossly defective because respondents will be commenting on it without any understanding of the associated costs or benefits”.

Distorted Road Safety Budgets

Just to give you some idea of how road safety expenditure in London has become distorted of late (these figures came to light after we responded to the above consultation), this is the breakdown of spending by TfL in 2012/13 out of the total of £14m on road safety (in addition local boroughs spent £9m, most of which is funded by TfL):

- Safety camera enforcement: £5.5m.
- Campaigns: £3m.
- Education and training: £2.6m.
- Engineering schemes: £2.2m.
- Research: £700,000.

(Editor: surely this is topsy turvy when the impact of speed cameras is so questionable and engineering schemes are known to be so effective – the latter have minimal future operating costs and the benefit continues for ever. The fact that this data was not even present in the Road Safety Consultation Document just shows how road safety policy in TfL is driven not by sound economics and judgements on cost effectiveness but by political posturing).

More Speed Cameras in London



TfL is pushing ahead with more average speed cameras in London. The ABD issued the following in a press release on the 3rd September:

TfL has gone out to tender for the installation and operation of more average speed cameras on London's road network. They plan to spend up to £15m on such devices on eight roads but TfL are unwilling to disclose to the public which roads are involved.

The Association of British Drivers (ABD) objects very strongly to the installation of more speed cameras in London, particularly average speed ones. Spot cameras at least allegedly might tackle accident black spots but average ones are very expensive and are simply not cost effective devices to improve road safety. There are already 780 speed cameras in use in London, but the evidence for their effectiveness is very weak.

Average speed cameras are already in use on some roads in London (Lower Thames Street for example, but we have seen no evidence that they have had any beneficial impact there, in fact only the contrary).

It is disconcerting that these plans have been introduced without proper public scrutiny and soon after the Mayoral elections when this might have been an issue for public debate if it had been disclosed as part of the proposed future agenda for any of the candidates. It is disappointing that the 'war on the motorist' still seems to be alive and well in the heart of TfL. More fines will no doubt be imposed on motorists as a result when they may have been driving at a safe speed for the road conditions.

The ABD also objects to the secrecy attached to these plans. If TfL think they are a good idea, why should they hide information and proper justification for them from the public?

The ABD has asked for more information on the roads that are involved in this scheme, but this has been refused so we have submitted a Freedom of Information request.

We have also asked for details of when these plans (and the associated budgets) were approved, but answers to those questions were also evaded. There was approval given for expenditure on new speed cameras (to replace obsolescent ones with digital cameras which will no doubt lead to even more speeding fines for motorists), but no apparent new schemes so far as we are aware.

More information on the use of 20-mph average speed cameras in London is given on this ABD web site: www.no20cameras.org. An analysis by the ABD of the claims for the effectiveness of speed cameras in general is contained in our Press Release No. 034 and which includes a link to the full evidence, available from this web page: www.freedomfordrivers.org/Press_Releases.htm

Further Information

Editor: At the same time as submitting an FOI Act request to obtain more information, I also wrote to the Mayor of London asking why he was wasting money on more speed cameras.

I got a response from the “Surface Planning Department” claiming that speed cameras “helps prevent” (note the ambiguous wording) around 500 KSIs per year in London. I asked for the evidence for that claim which was treated as an FOI Request.

The response also claimed “*there have been no 20mph trials using camera enforcement in London*” which is simply not true. In addition it claimed that a study by the Department of Transport “*showed that average speed cameras can reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured by up to 75%*”, but my response was that the only such study I was aware of actually showed no such saving and asked for a copy of the evidence. This was likewise treated as an FOI Request.

The results of those requests were as follows: On the average speed camera data a link was simply provided to a DfT web site that gives data from local safety camera partnerships. None related to average speed cameras, so one can assume that claim was also spurious.

In the case of the claim of 500 KSIs saved, this is the evidence that was supplied:

Camera Type	KSIs in the 36 months prior to installation	KSIs in the most recent 36 months
Wet Film	1952	809
Digital	714	384
TOTALS	2666	1193

That gives a difference of 1473 over three years, i.e. 491 per year and hence their claim of “500” presumably. But why is it the “*most recent 36 months*” rather than the 36 months post installation which is the usual data used?

Also, as I have pointed out to TfL it ignores the impact of traffic diversion and the problem of “reversion to the mean” if cameras are installed where a serious or fatal accident has recently happened. It also of course ignores adjusting for the general trend in accident reductions over 6 years (or more), and the impact of possible road engineering changes. These effectively are “raw” figures without any proper scientific study. TfL are using this data in a most unprofessional manner to promote the benefits of speed cameras.

No Public Scrutiny

One might ask the question “where was the budget for this expenditure on new speed cameras approved and what public scrutiny took place on it”? Here are the answers:

1. The budget for this expenditure was approved by the “Surface Transport Board” (not to be confused with the “Surface Transport Panel”). The former is simply a group of TfL staff. A request for minutes of the relevant meetings caused a very heavily “redacted” version to be supplied – in other words, all the relevant parts blanked out.

Only the total figure of £6m of expenditure for the current year has been published in the March 2012 Budget under the heading of “Surface Planning” on page 24. No other description is supplied and there is no other mention of speed cameras.

It is apparently also included in the capital budgets specified in the TfL Business Plan under the heading “Better Routes and Places” £637m over 4 years – see Page 71), but there is not a single mention of speed cameras anywhere in that document either.

The conclusion surely must be that TfL have deliberately concealed this expenditure and its purposes from the public.

Editor: I will be writing to my GLA Member on this subject and I suggest other ABD members do the same. This is a useful web site to obtain their names and contact details: www.writetothem.com

Speed Camera Count in London



Previously we have reported on the number of speed cameras on London roads, but the London Safety Camera Partnership web site which contained that data no longer exists, so we cannot immediately do so. Going to the old site of www.lscp.org.uk simply diverts you to a TfL Corporate page – where they repeat the spurious claim about 500 KSIs saved from cameras.

Roads Task Force Consultation

The ABD in London also responded in August to a “Road Task Force Consultation” issued by TfL. Our response can be read here:

www.freedomfordrivers.org/Consultations.htm

The concluding paragraph said this:

“In conclusion, and bearing in mind we represent individual road users, we are keen to see the prejudice against personal transport modes of all kinds halted. There is too much money spent on public transport schemes as opposed to providing for private car users, motorcyclists, pedal cyclists and pedestrians.

We are also absolutely opposed to the classification of road users on any criteria into “worthy” and “unworthy” which we have seen so often in the past in the politics of transport in London. All people are equal. There should be no discrimination between them based on which transport mode they care to use, so long as they pay a fair cost for the services they use (and road vehicle users pay more in taxes by a factor of several times over the costs associated with the provision and maintenance of roads).”

Lambeth Speed Humps

The London Borough of Lambeth recently decided to put in a large speed hump scheme in the Knights Hill area – the total cost being about £200,000. Your editor failed to get simple answers to simple questions when the public consultation was issued. In effect the council was deliberately obstructive so I submitted a Freedom of Information Act request. This is the information so obtained:

Reports to the council contained not a single comment on the financial justification for the scheme, i.e. no cost effectiveness calculations.

Only 51% of residents were in favour of some form of vertical deflection traffic calming (humps, etc), versus 49% against, which is a very narrow majority. In reality the chosen solution of “cycle friendly humps” (a misnomer of course) was only supported by 22% of respondents.

The cost of the scheme was not made clear to residents.

(Editor: As usual Lambeth produced a biased public consultation, and then ignored the comments that opposed their plans. This scheme will not produce a good financial return on the money invested).

Road User Charging by the Back Door?

It is worth pointing out that the proposed “free-flow” charging system for the Dartford Crossing will provide the technology and legislation to introduce road user charging across the whole country. Indeed the procurement tender for the system to be used states that the system must be “scalable” and the system must be capable of being used and licensed by other UK highway authorities.

Not only are such systems being proposed for an A14 bypass road so that it can be charged and paid for by users, but it could be imposed quite easily on the major road network. It perhaps not surprising that ministers are floating the possible idea of a two tier road tax system – if you want to drive on a motorway or major A road you would pay a higher tax rate. To enforce that you would simply need number plate recognition cameras at each motorway entrance and exit, which would give you the basic infrastructure for national road pricing. With the technology and legislation already in place, will politicians really back off from pursuing their pet revenue raising schemes to extract even more money from motorists?

News Snapshots

Sundry news in the last few weeks that is worth a mention is as follows:

+ The Department for Transport has announced a further £20m of funding for bus operators to purchase “low-carbon buses”. That adds to the previous figure making an overall hand-out to the bus companies of £95m under this programme called the “Green Bus Fund”. As one ABD Member said “Don’t bus operators buy their own vehicles any more?”.

That subsidy is of course additional to lots of other financial subsidies that bus operators get which helps to explain why the UK has more buses per head of population than almost any other country in the world. *(Editor: why bus operators should get any subsidies at all in the current economic climate when the Government desperately needs to reduce expenditure beats me – but you will be pleased to hear that this new money came from an identified “underspend in the Department for Transport’s budget” – that’s OK then is it not?)*.

+ Charges for Boris Bikes are to double, probably because the scheme is losing a lot of money. Daily rate will now be £2 for a day, £10 for a week, or £90 for a year.

+ About £250,000 was spent on a major traffic calming scheme for Orpington High Street a couple of years ago. It included road narrowing, speed tables and a 20-mph speed limit. We are reliably informed that accidents went up in the immediately following years in comparison with the previous period.

+ TfL plan to place an order for 600 of the New “Boris” buses for London.

+ Only 217,000 people have registered for the Congestion Charge Autopay system so far which is surely a small proportion of those who drive into London regularly.

+ Lambeth Borough and TfL are discussing how to replace the Vauxhall Cross gyratory system (and the bus station). *(Editor: it’s certainly a mess at present even if it is a key road junction, but knowing the attitude of Lambeth Council to road vehicles, don’t expect them to propose anything you will like)*.

+ A plan to improve congestion on the south-east section of the M25, near where the M26 joins it, has been put forward. It would basically become a “managed motorway” with hard-shoulder running. The ABD has responded to the public consultation, and made several objections.

+ Ealing Council says that 18 bridges will need to be replaced if HS2 goes ahead, causing massive disruption. That includes the Hanger Lane gyratory, one of the busiest road junctions in London. *(Editor: They are of course opposing HS2 as any sensible person who studies the financial projections would do so)*.

+ For those residents of Ealing who wish to know the impact of bridge closures, they might want to talk to residents of the Borough of Bromley where a railway bridge on Chislehurst Road (between Chislehurst and Petts Wood/Orpington) has been closed for a year for rebuilding. It is just about to reopen. This involved a detour of several miles for a lot of traffic including buses, and additional congestion on some roads. But it was not quite as disastrous as some forecast with traffic flows generally adjusting quite quickly. Only unsuspecting people who did not know the area and were following sat-navs or maps were dumbfounded to arrive at the bridge and find they had a 15 minute detour.

Bromley Council introduced a number of measures to help traffic cope with the move including banned turns on the diversion route. It even included suspension of a bus lane on the route. The result: was that there were no queues at all on Sevenoaks Way when your editor took that route unlike when the bus lane was in operation. Perhaps we could simply keep the new arrangements in place?

Similarly it seems some residents would prefer the bus routes to remain on the “diversion route” so they can get on and off at the Nugent Shopping Centre. Not sure everyone will be happy with that idea though.

+ The cost of a borough wide 20-mph scheme for Islington is estimated to be £423,000 most of which would need to be funded by TfL.

Note that the ABD maintains a list of members who are familiar with individual London boroughs and may be able to help with information on local issues in those boroughs. The current list is below. If any other members would like to keep an eye on local news and advise on local transport issues then please let me know. Roger Lawson

Contact person	Borough	Email
Les Alden	Southwark	LHA@looksouth.net
Paul Hemsley	Ealing	ph@hemsleyassociates.com
Hillier Simmons	Hounslow	hilliersimmons@compuserve.com
Brian Mooney	Hammersmith & Fulham	fairdeal@abd.org.uk
Roger Lawson	Bromley, Barking & Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Havering, Islington, Lewisham, City of London, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest	roger.lawson@abd.org.uk
Peter Morgan	Croydon, Camden, Enfield, Harrow, Hillingdon, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston, Lambeth, Merton, Richmond, Sutton, Wandsworth, Westminster	southlondon@abd.org.uk

About The Alliance of British Drivers (ABD)

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 Association is a "not for profit" voluntary organisation which is financially supported primarily by its individual members. More information on the ABD is available from our web site at www.abd.org.uk

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Contact 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 those Members of BBKAG who formerly received the Bromley Borough Roads Action Group newsletter. All material contained herein is Copyright of the A.B.D. or of the 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.

A.B.D. London Region Co-ordinator and Editor: Roger Lawson (Tel: 020-8467-2686, Email: roger.lawson@abd.org.uk). Contact the above for information on the aims and objectives of the A.B.D. or for membership information (membership costs £25.00 per annum). The A.B.D. would be happy to advise or assist anyone who is concerned about any traffic, transport or road safety issues in London. Complimentary subscriptions to this newsletter are available on request to elected politicians or those with a professional interest in transport matters.

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